

Finding Rebecca Study Guide

Finding Rebecca by Eoin Dempsey

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Contents

Finding Rebecca Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-2.....	6
Chapters 3-5.....	9
Chapters 6-18.....	11
Chapters 19-38.....	15
Chapters 39-43.....	20
Characters.....	23
Symbols and Symbolism.....	33
Settings.....	37
Themes and Motifs.....	39
Styles.....	52
Quotes.....	54



Plot Summary

“Finding Rebecca” tells the story of Christopher, a German man, who loves Rebecca, a Jewish girl. The two are separated during World War II after German forces occupy their home of the English Channel island of Jersey. Most of the text is Christopher’s quest to find and save Rebecca from the hands of the Nazi regime.

The novel begins in 1943 when Christopher is an SS officer at Auschwitz-Birkenau, a concentration camp on the Auschwitz complex. For the first two chapters, the reader learns Christopher’s role at the camp, that he despises his role there, and that his one and only mission is to find Rebecca.

Beginning in chapter 3, the story jumps back to 1924 when Christopher and Rebecca meet. They are each 6 years old and meet on a beach near their homes. The two are instant friends, Christopher instinctively wanting to protect Rebecca from the physical and emotional abuse of her father. Rebecca intuitively trusts Christopher and his family to take her in as one of their own. She and Christopher spend almost every day of their childhood together, until they are 15 years old. Rebecca’s father has gotten so abusive that she decides to run away from home. This is Christopher and Rebecca’s first of three separations.

While Rebecca is away, Christopher’s family visits Berlin to see his uncle Uli marry. It is the mid-1930s and the Nazis have begun their reign, as well as their propaganda against the Jewish population. At this point, Jewish persons are not in danger, but the Nazi party’s platform is getting increasingly superior and socialist in nature. Christopher and his family note that Uli is changing little by little, but they stand against any form of hate against one’s fellow man. Christopher dates other women but thinks mainly of Rebecca, which is something his father tried to prevent by hiding letters Rebecca had written to Christopher after she had run away.

Rebecca returns to the island of Jersey in 1938. She is engaged to Jonathan Durrell, the son of a wealthy Jersey man, but breaks it off soon after returning so she and Christopher can be together. She lives with Christopher for a short time until she can rent her own apartment nearby. The two enjoy their relationship, but it is soon overshadowed by the fact that World War II has begun and the German forces come to Jersey in 1940 to begin a five-year occupation.

During the occupation, fear and anxiety rule the island for the main characters, their families, and other residents of Jersey. There are soldiers everywhere, food and daily living material goods are in short supply, and restrictions on Jewish persons become increasingly strict. Rebecca remains optimistic that everything happening is only temporary, and that it will be over before they know it. Christopher and his family, however, especially after hearing from Uli, believe otherwise. Uli explains that the Nazis are just trying to rid the world of the threat of Bolshevism, and once that happens everything will be over. However, the island continues to experience a sense of daily fear.



Eventually, all Jewish persons on the island of Jersey are required to register with the Chief Aliens Office. Rebecca and Christopher decide that Rebecca will not register, not because she's not proud to be Jewish but because they want her to remain safe. Christopher and his father are coerced into taking a role as liaisons between the German occupying forces and the people of Jersey, as they are the only German-born citizens on the island. Their new role alienates them from some of the island folk, but it also puts them under the watchful eye of the German forces, who come to find out that Christopher is dating Rebecca, an unregistered Jew. She is then forced to register, and Christopher and his father are forced to resign from their position as liaisons.

Though nothing happens immediately after Rebecca registers, within six months her fate is known: all Jews are to be deported from Jersey. They are being sent to concentration camps in various territories taken over by the Nazi regime. In February 1943, Christopher and Rebecca are separated for a second time.

Later in 1943 (the exact time is unclear), Christopher becomes an SS officer stationed at Auschwitz-Birkenau, a concentration camp on the greater Auschwitz complex. He takes the position as a way to find and save Rebecca, but upon his posting learns of the realities of the concentration camps: mass murder of hundreds of thousands of Jewish persons. Christopher is disturbed and disgusted with what is going on, and therefore takes on two additional missions during his tenure at Auschwitz-Birkenau: Christopher protects more than 600 female prisoners in his charge from the SS's brutality; and he saves more than 100 children from immediate death by arranging for them to be transported to a convent outside of the camp. Christopher siphons some of the currency collected in order to bribe other officers to help him with his pursuits, one of which is finding Rebecca. However, what he thought would be Rebecca's train was actually her father's train. Upon arrival, and in private conversation, Mr. Cassin tells Christopher that Rebecca was executed when she stood up for a fellow prisoner at their camp. Christopher's new policies, such as a ban on executions and more human punishment practices, draws skepticism from his superiors and his comrades, but he is nonetheless determined that the prisoners under his command be treated with more dignity than before he arrived.

Christopher's time at Auschwitz ends within a year, though the reader does not know exactly when. After he has arranged for the transfer of two of his least favorite SS officers, the portion of the story taking place at Auschwitz. The reader is then brought to 1954 when Christopher is doing a radio interview about the lives he saved as an SS officer. Christopher is uncomfortable with the accolades, but carried on with the interview out of politeness. However, when he sees Rebecca through the window of the radio station, he goes silent, as he is stunned to see the face of the woman he loves and whom he thought was dead.

Rebecca and Christopher spend the rest of the evening talking, first in a walk around the park then, after he completes his radio interview, over dinner at his hotel. Rebecca speaks of her life in and since the concentration camps, and how she wants to live a life that may redeem all the lives lost during the Holocaust. She is married to a man named Ari, and both of them work for the Israeli government bringing justice to those involved



in murdering Jews during the Holocaust. Part-way through their conversation, Rebecca seems to regret coming to see Christopher, but ultimately decides it was good to see each other and clarify some misunderstandings. She is glad to know that Christopher was only an SS officer in an attempt to save her, and she is especially glad that he used his time there to save hundreds of other lives. Rebecca also speaks of the forgiveness she has extended to her father and to the Nazi party and its part in the Holocaust. Christopher is amazed at her strength, and seems to love her just as he always has.

Christopher speaks little of his time at Auschwitz, as he is ashamed that he wore the uniform in the first place. He is comforted to know Rebecca is alive and that she is doing well, though he wishes she could stay with him. Christopher also speaks of his daughter Hannah, whom he adopted right out of the Auschwitz camp. Hannah was the last child he saved, and when her family could not be located, he decided she would be his daughter. After their several hours together, Rebecca goes back to Tel Aviv and Christopher back to Jersey, thus the two separate for the third time.

Two months later, Christopher is at home with his family when his daughter Hannah gives him a note addressed to him that was hand-delivered. As soon as he sees the note, he knows it's from Rebecca. She is down at the Butterfly's Table, a portion of the beach she and Christopher named when they were children. Christopher rushes down to the beach where Rebecca is waiting for him. The novel ends with Christopher seeing Rebecca from afar. No words are exchanged, but the reader can presume that Rebecca is there to spend the rest of her life with Christopher, as the two had always intended.



Chapters 1-2

Summary

“Finding Rebecca” starts in the year 1943 at Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of the concentration camps on the Auschwitz complex. Main character Christopher is introduced as an SS officer; it is his first day as leader of the Sonderkommandos, a portion of the Jewish workforce. Christopher walks around the camp with Rapportfuhrer Friedrich, who becomes a major character later in the novel.

Christopher learns that his duty is to oversee the workers as they sort through prisoners' belongings. He is then to come up with an efficient system for sorting and distributing those goods back to the Reich.

On his first night, Christopher is invited by his roommate Lahm to go drinking with the other SS officers he will be working with on a daily basis. He declines, stating that it's only his first day and he'll start to get to know everyone the next day. Lahm returns at 3 a.m., drunk, but Christopher is still awake as he wonders how he will find Rebecca amidst the chaos.

Chapter 2 starts on Christopher's second day at Auschwitz. He is woken up by Lahm and told to get ready for the first shipment of the day, 1,200 Polish citizens arriving on a transport made for cattle. Christopher doesn't understand how so many people fit on such a small transport, and he watches with wide eyes when they get off the train, all of them looking scared, anxious, and suspicious. Christopher isn't sure what's about to happen, but he watches as the other SS officers are screaming orders to the prisoners and he wonders what this experience is going to be like. He asks his fellow officers Breitner and Muller how many transports come in and how often. He also sees a young boy get shot in the face, and then the boy's limp body thrown in front of the train. When Christopher sees no real reaction from any other officer, he realizes this is standard operating procedure and that if he wants to blend in, he better act okay with what just happened and give an order as soon as possible.

Christopher gives Muller the order to organize and clear out the luggage the prisoners have brought with them. Christopher and Breitner leave the area and go toward the gas chambers, which the prisoners are told is the inspection/disinfection area. Christopher feels hopeful for a moment as he hears an SS officer reassure the prisoners that their skill sets will be used at the camp after the inspection. After the prisoners clear out, however, Christopher hears their screams and realizes that the ones who weren't saved to work at the camp were gassed in a gas chamber.

Analysis

Chapters 1 and 2 set the tone for Christopher's main goal of “Finding Rebecca,” which is to find Rebecca, a young Jewish girl, after she's been deported by the Nazis from



their home in Jersey during the Holocaust. The themes of war, loss, isolation, nationalism, anti-Semitism, internal conflict, hope, courage, and human dignity all begin in these first two chapters, as Christopher begins his tenure as a lead accountant at Auschwitz-Birkenau, a concentration camp in the Economic District of the Auschwitz camp complex.

The reader's first insight into Christopher is that he is an SS officer who doesn't wish to be an SS officer, though he must hold in his true feelings if he hopes to stay alive, and if he hopes to accomplish his mission of finding Rebecca. The author uses dialogue between Christopher and the other SS officers to show what he is projecting to the outside world, but describes his inner world as one of turmoil and disgust, especially after witnessing the camp's standard procedure of pulling more than a thousand Jewish persons off of a small cattle transport, lying to them about what's about to happen, then sending them into the gas chamber for a mass execution.

Christopher's strong moral character is shown through the third-person omniscience. The reader can see that Christopher vehemently disagrees with what the SS officers are doing and how they're treating prisoners. It's also clear that he wants to affect change wherever and however he can, but that he has to bide his time. He gives an immediate order to one of his subordinate officers, but it is not until later that Christopher institutes new rules for his section of camp. The reader can see early on Christopher's patience, diligence, and commitment to his mission of finding Rebecca. It is Christopher that shows the reader a glimpse of a sense of hope, courage, internal conflict, and his belief in human dignity.

Every other character present in chapters 1 and 2 embody the themes of war, anti-Semitism, a lack of human dignity, nationalism, and loss. The SS officers show no remorse, and even take pleasure in, the almost-immediate death of every Jewish person who arrives on the transport. They are all absolutely devoted to the Reich's mission and make no apologies for being so. Though Christopher's words are not as extreme as theirs, Christopher seems successful in convincing his comrades that he believes what they do.

Discussion Question 1

What are some physical signs Christopher displays which indicate how disgusted he is by what he sees at Auschwitz-Birkenau?

Discussion Question 2

Why is the shipment of about 1,200 Polish citizens called a 'shipment', when that term typically refers to material goods and not people?



Discussion Question 3

What seems to bother Christopher the most in his first two days at Auschwitz-Birkenau?
How can you tell?

Vocabulary

warehouse, ledger, Herr, Rapportfuhrer, Obersturmfuhrer, vermin, Jew, Sonderkommandos, Germans, Poles, crematoria, reichsmarks, dollars, pounds, lire, pesetas, francs, rubles, clambered, procurement, Bolshevism



Chapters 3-5

Summary

Chapters 3-5 begin in 1924 and go through 1934, all on the English Channel island of Jersey. It is here that Christopher and Rebecca meet each other on the beach near their homes, when Christopher hears and then sees Rebecca sitting alone, crying. They are six years old and become fast friends as Christopher teaches her how to skip rocks across the water. When Christopher's father comes to the beach to have him come into the house for dinner, Rebecca hides until Mr. Seeler is far enough ahead that Christopher can run back and get Rebecca, bringing her back to the house with him. She hides in his bedroom but makes a loud crash, revealing her presence.

Mr. Seeler insists Rebecca be returned to her family, which is when the reader learns that her father is physically abusive to his daughter. Christopher and Rebecca are told they won't be playing together any longer, but Mr. Seeler soon convinces Rebecca's mom to allow them to play together. Rebecca and Christopher begin playing together every day, and Rebecca spends more time at the Seeler's house than she does her own.

Christopher and Rebecca have three regular spots for meeting: Butterfly's Table, the Lion's Mane, and the Angry Horse. Each is an outcropping of rock along the shoreline that Christopher and Rebecca have named based on what they think each outcropping looks like. The two spend as much time together as possible until 1934. Christopher and Rebecca are 15 years old, and Rebecca's father continues to physically abuse her, leaving bruises on her face. Rebecca decides to run away to London where her cousin Mavis lives. Both Christopher and Rebecca express sadness and dread at not being together every day.

Analysis

Chapters 3-5 begin Christopher and Rebecca's backstory, which helps the reader understand some of why Christopher sets his mission to find Rebecca, as briefly stated in chapter 1. A friendship that begins at 6 years old and moves forward into adulthood is a strong bond that would fuel the type of resolve Christopher shows from the start of the novel.

Christopher and Rebecca make up their own names for their meeting places, and the author touches on the fact that they basically had their own language. The bond created between the two of them from a young age is obvious and essential to the story. Here, the reader can see where the theme of love begins, as Christopher is devoted to Rebecca from the beginning of their relationship.

One of the most important aspects of chapters 3-5 is Rebecca's poor relationship with her family, as it is one of the reasons she and Christopher, as well as she and the



Seeler's, from such close relationships. When Christopher finds Rebecca crying, he immediately feels a need to protect her. He wants no harm done to her, and he wants to make her feel better and help her to smile. The initial interactions Christopher and his father have with Rebecca's father are full of animosity on Mr. Cassin's part, though the reader must read between the lines in order to fully see it. Ground is laid during these scenes for the theme of forgiveness, which is not experienced until toward the end of the novel. However, without Mr. Cassin's ill treatment of Rebecca, there would be no need for forgiveness.

Mr. Cassin's attitude and the way he treats Rebecca is one of the reasons Rebecca runs away. This first of three total separations for Christopher and Rebecca is a significant event for Christopher. He is obviously saddened by their separation, and at this point the reader doesn't know if she comes back before Christopher goes to Auschwitz. By connecting the events from the first two chapters with Rebecca's leaving Jersey, the reader knows that Christopher doesn't get over Rebecca, and in fact continues to believe they'll spend their lives together.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Christopher seem to take an immediate role of protector over Rebecca?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Christopher's father convince Rebecca's mother, instead of her father, to let Rebecca play and eat dinner at the Seeler's house?

Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of Christopher and Rebecca having their own meeting places that they together have named?

Vocabulary

surf, hedgerow, unperturbed, scuttled, unison, Jerriais, crags, headlands



Chapters 6-18

Summary

Chapter 6 begins three years later in 1937 when Uli, Christopher's uncle and Stefan's brother, returns from Germany. Christopher is 19 years old and he has become an accountant, working for his father. Uli says Germany is nothing like it used to be, but that there are a lot of exciting opportunities for accountants there. Uli, Christopher, Alexandra, and Stefan have a lively family dinner. Uli speaks of support for Hitler and the way the Fuhrer is running the German government, but Stefan speaks against Hitler's theories and ideals, citing his interaction with good Jews during The Great War (World War I).

Christopher leaves the room for a moment and upon returning, overhears his father and Uli talking about letters that came from Rebecca after she had run away to London. Christopher had never received the letters because his father thought it would be better for Christopher if he and Rebecca didn't communicate. Christopher confronts his father, who then brings the letters to Christopher so he can read them. There are five letters total, all wishing Christopher well and explaining some of her life in London. The last letter bids him goodbye, though it also states that she hopes to see him again someday when she returns home to Jersey.

In chapter 7, the Seeler family travels to Berlin for Uli's wedding to a German woman named Karolina. The family enjoys their time there, but Christopher is still thinking about Rebecca. Through chapters 8-10, Christopher learns Rebecca has returned. She is engaged to a wealthy Jersey man whom she met in London and Christopher tells her he is still waiting for the right girl to come along. The two share an almost-intimate time together at Rebecca's house, but when her family arrives home downstairs Christopher must escape through the window so nobody finds out. Soon after, Christopher cannot bear the thought of not being with Rebecca so he goes to her house late at night to tell her. She is not home, but her father is. Mr. Cassin forces Christopher inside, threatening him with a shotgun. He makes Christopher drink a shot of whiskey as he tells Christopher that Christopher is not to see Rebecca again. However, it is not long until she breaks off her engagement so she and Christopher can be together. Another relationship develops: Christopher's roommate Tom and Alexandra begin dating.

During chapters 11 and 12, Rebecca moves in to Christopher's apartment since her father doesn't want her living there, now that she is with Christopher. It is 1939 and an atmosphere of fear has overcome the island of Jersey because of the Nazi regime's impending occupation and the threat of another war. When war is declared, Rebecca remains optimistic, but Christopher is doubtful. Uli lives in Germany. He sends a letter to Christopher's family, speaking of support for the German government and mission. Christopher and Rebecca try to leave Jersey for England, but are told that since the war began all German citizens are barred from entering or leaving Germany or any of its protectorates, which includes England.



In chapters 13-15, the war continues on the mainland, but fear remained on the island. Thousands left the island, including Tom's entire family and Rebecca's mother. The Jews were leaving Jersey in droves but Rebecca refuses to leave Christopher. The German occupation begins. Christopher and his father are force-hired by the German soldiers to be liaisons between the people of Jersey and the German soldiers, to translate literature and conversation. They are hesitant about the job, but are essentially coerced into taking the position. In 1940 all Jews still left on the island become required to register with the Chief Aliens Office. Rebecca doesn't register, mostly at Christopher's insistence though she somewhat agrees with him.

Chapter 16 begins in 1941. Jewish persons on the island are now subject to curfews and additional reduced freedoms, and some are subject to slave labor. The Seeler's and Rebecca receive a letter from Uli, again expressing his support for the Nazi regime. Uli is fighting for the Nazi party, and the family has a difficult time accepting that fact.

Chapter 17 begins in late 1942. Christopher's superiors find out that Rebecca is not registered with the Chief Aliens Office, and therefore she is forced to do so. Christopher is promised nothing will happen to her or the other Jews registered. Chapter 18 goes forward to six months later, in February 1943, when Rebecca and all other Jewish persons on the island are deported from Jersey to a concentration camp. Christopher takes fault for what's happening, but Rebecca remains optimistic that when everything is all over, they will be together and will get married.

Analysis

Chapters 6 through 18 give more backstory for Christopher and Rebecca, starting from when she re-appears on the island until she is deported during the war. The reader is able to more fully see Christopher and Rebecca's romance as it blossomed during their young adult years, and it becomes even clearer why Christopher is so devoted to Rebecca. The two share a bond that transcends their culturally-opposed ethnicities. Christopher's desperation to have Rebecca in his life on a permanent basis shines through when he risks riding to her home late at night. The ride itself is not risky, but the fact that he could be seen by her father (which he eventually is) and the fact that he is trying to swoon a young woman who has a fiancé are both big risks. But Christopher shows resolve throughout the entire novel, committing himself to whatever cause convicts his heart. Not even his father keeping Rebecca's letters from him could keep Christopher from removing Rebecca from his heart or mind.

Christopher's sense of family unity is strong here, as well, as he works quickly to forgive his father for keeping Rebecca's letters from him. He admits it took time, but their relationship remains strong, honest, and one of mutual respect. The Seeler's also immediately welcome Rebecca back into their family when she returns from London. It is the Seeler family that exemplifies the theme of family in "Finding Rebecca."

Aside from Christopher and Rebecca's growing romance, the atmosphere of fear and trepidation among the islanders grows, as well. As the Nazi regime gets stronger and



more pronounced in their efforts to force their beliefs on their citizens and surrounding nations, the English Channel island of Jersey fears occupation. When the occupation happens and the threat of war is closer to home than anyone thought it would ever be, Christopher and Rebecca's relationship is put to the test. Christopher is a German-English man and is dating a Jewish girl at a time when the Germans are systematically exterminating the Jewish population. For the two of them to remain together despite the culture war going on around them shows their resolve and commitment not just to each other, but to what they believe is right.

To show love and war growing alongside each other is a powerful commentary on the time period and on the characters. For the time period, individuals had significant choices to make. On the island of Jersey, the members of the Seeler family were the only Germans, but there were plenty of Jewish families. The rest were presumably English families. Some island-born citizens were upset with Christopher and Stefan for working for the occupying forces, but the Seeler's loyalty to what is right – and to Rebecca – never wavered a bit. But each individual had a choice, whether they wanted to let the threat of war and all the emotions that come with it, and the anti-Semitic nature of the war, infiltrate their psyches and impact their relationships. Christopher's family and Rebecca didn't let it, which is why their relationship could stand so strong for so long and across such extreme circumstances.

Rebecca's optimism is important to consider for three reasons: one, because as the novel goes on the reader can see the lies purported to the Jews about the concentration camps; two, because her optimism is likely a driving force in keeping her alive; and three, it gives Christopher a reason to keep hoping and keep going forward with his mission once he gets to Auschwitz. Her optimism fits in with the theme of hope that is present throughout the novel, despite the fact that it is surrounded by war and death.

Discussion Question 1

What affect does Rebecca's positive attitude of believing the war will be over quickly have on Christopher? How can you tell?

Discussion Question 2

Why don't Christopher and his father want to be liaisons between the German soldiers occupying Jersey and the citizens of Jersey?

Discussion Question 3

Rebecca and Christopher decide not to have Rebecca register with the Chief Aliens Office. What seems to be their main reason for doing so, and how does it backfire on them?

Vocabulary

socialist, disenfranchised, swastika, revolution, L'Allemand, monsieur, Boche, politics, insidious, encirclement, war, conscription, Wehrmacht, protectorates, greengrocer, newsagent, occupation, kommandant, ordinance, invasion, propaganda, draconian, trepidation, deportation, amphibian, gangplank



Chapters 19-38

Summary

Chapter 19 jumps to 1943 and puts the reader back at Auschwitz-Birkenau where chapter 2 left off. Christopher is inwardly appalled at the happenings at Auschwitz, mainly the brutality of treatment from the guards to the prisoners. He works hard to hide his true feelings of discontent and disgust with the Reich's mission and methods. Despite what he must do to protect himself and by extension Rebecca, Christopher tells one of the female prisoners to spread the word that now that he is in charge, things will be changing for the better. The female prisoner is skeptical but Christopher follows through on his promise to make the camp procedures and standards more humane. Christopher learns that his section of Auschwitz is nicknamed Canada, the land of untold riches.

Christopher institutes a ban on summary executions, citing a need for strict discipline and good workers, which Christopher says will be gone if summary executions are carried out. Frankl is introduced as the chief Kapo of the Economic District. Frankl does not agree with the ban on summary executions, but does obey orders. All of the SS officers under Christopher's authority, as well as the ones at his level and above, openly express dislike and disgust for the Jewish prisoners kept at Auschwitz. Christopher wonders how he is going to survive as an SS officer, especially since he has no ally in the camp.

In chapter 20, Christopher receives a letter from his father, which brings him emotional relief, just to hear from a member of his family at a time when he feels so isolated. Christopher and Lahm share a conversation about Christopher's job. Christopher learns that Lahm works in the punishment blocks of the main Auschwitz camp. Christopher decides to join Lahm and the other soldiers for some drinks and card-playing later that night.

In chapter 21, Christopher dreams about Rebecca regularly. He spends his time wondering how he will find Rebecca, and how he will survive – physically and emotionally – the daily experience of brutality and chaos that is Auschwitz. Christopher finds out that Herr Liebermann is the head of prisoner records. Christopher works his way over to Liebermann's office and subtly bribes Herr Liebermann into searching for Rebecca's whereabouts. Herr Liebermann is suspicious, but takes the money Christopher leaves for him. Christopher returns every so often to check on the status of his request, each time bringing a sum of cash for Liebermann.

Christopher is struggling with the constant death and oppression of Auschwitz. He finds out there was an execution the day before and confronts Breitner, Muller, and Flick. Christopher reiterates that there are to be no executions without his say-so. The men are confused, but are forced to follow orders, as Christopher outranks them. Christopher passes on the information to the female prisoners.



In chapters 22-23, Herr Friedrich, Christopher's direct superior officer, expresses dismay at Christopher's rule of no executions. Friedrich says he should be the one making those types of decisions, but Christopher insists that since Friedrich has so much to do, Christopher is trying to lessen his load. Friedrich orders Christopher to transport suitcases of currency every two weeks up to Berlin, to be given to a superior officer and used for the Reich's mission. Christopher uses this opportunity to experience relief from his misery at Auschwitz. He visits his father and Alexandra, who live in Berlin. They are surprised and overjoyed to see him, as he is to see them.

In chapter 24, the reader sees that Christopher's time at Auschwitz wears on him, since there has been no news of Rebecca. There is an incident where a prisoner attacks an SS officer named Northen, but the prisoner and Northen both die. The body of the prisoner is hung up in the station with a sign that reads, "Look at me! See what happens to those who try to escape, and now the other 800 on my transport are dead too!" (page 171)

Chapter 25 is when a female prisoner, Martina Culikova, asks for Christopher's help in saving her sister Petra from the gas chamber. Christopher forces Martina outside and makes her change her appearance for the benefit of the other guards, so they think Christopher took advantage of her, even though he does fulfill her request and saves Petra from the gas chamber. He is unable to save Petra's two young children, which is something that continues to haunt him. Even the break from Auschwitz on his trip to Berlin in chapter 26 is not enough to make him feel better. Christopher starts spending more time drinking with Lahm and the other soldiers, but nothing provides relief. Christopher defends his help of the prisoners to his father and Alex, who are proud of him but very worried for his life.

In chapters 27 and 28, Christopher visits the Lagerkommandant for the Economic District, Herr Hoss. Christopher suggests the institution of the Anti-Corruption Committee, as well as a system to save the young children from the gas chamber and transport them somewhere else to work. Hoss readily agrees to the committee, but takes more time to think about saving the children.

The Anti-Corruption Committee isn't overly popular with the other guards and SS officers, but the new order is carried out. Because of the committee, additional currency is collected and delivered to Standartenfuhrer Kohl, a superior officer in Berlin, who is impressed with the increase in funds.

Chapter 29 finds Christopher back at Auschwitz making his rounds after one of the shipments. He notices Schultz, an officer, along with four prisoners, acting strangely. Christopher discovers a young girl, an 8-year-old Czechoslovakian named Anka, has survived the gas chambers. Through chapters 30-32, Christopher and Schultz hide Anka in Christopher's office for a period of five days until his trip to Berlin, when he planned to sneak her out of the camp and to safety with his father. Unfortunately, Friedrich orders a search of Canada, including Christopher's office, and Anka is found with Schultz and both of them are killed.



In chapters 33-36, Christopher is heartbroken but is still waiting for Rebecca to come on the transport later that evening. However, she doesn't arrive, and instead her father does. Mr. Cassin tells Christopher of how Rebecca stood up for another prisoner and because of that, was killed. The morning after, Christopher must go to Berlin to deliver the current stack of briefcases full of currency to be distributed to the Reich. In late 1943, Christopher presents his plan to save children from being killed at his camp. The plan is dangerous, as is any other humanitarian mission Christopher has embarked on, but Christopher feels like he needs to do something to redeem Anka and Rebecca's deaths. In January 1944 Christopher meets with Rudolph Herz, the head of metalworks at the Krupp factory at Auschwitz III on the Auschwitz complex. Christopher subtly bribes Herz about saving some of the children for an outside business venture of his own.

In chapters 36-38, Christopher returns to Canada to find that summary executions have been reinstated by Friedrich. Christopher has Frankl demoted in an effort to curb some of the executions, since Frankl is known for merciless executions for minor infractions. In response to Christopher's reassignment of Frankl, Friedrich has Christopher reassigned to the Eastern Front and replaced at Auschwitz-Birkenau by Breitner. Friedrich makes comments indicating that he knows Christopher has been speaking lies in order to get what he wants. Christopher's transfer is to come a week after he is notified of the order, so Christopher works quickly to ensure the transport system of the children is put into place before he can't do anything to help whom he wants to help.

The Friday morning that is to be Christopher's last morning at Auschwitz, he presents a transfer letter for Breitner, written by the secretary of Hitler's second-in-command as the result of a bribe. Friedrich doesn't want to believe it's true, but Christopher assures him it is. Christopher keeps his position as head accountant at Canada, thus reinstating the ban on executions as well as his role as head of the Anti-Corruption Committee.

Analysis

Chapters 19-38 all take place at Auschwitz. The length of time is unclear, though based on when Christopher arrives and when he carries through his last humanitarian effort, and based on the weather descriptions at each end, it seems to be about a year, give or take a couple months.

Chapter 19 begins where chapter 2 left off. Christopher is at Auschwitz-Birkenau, trying to figure out how he will physically, emotionally, and morally survive his post at this concentration camp. He is clearly opposed to everything going on at the camp, but he cannot express that to a single person at the camp. Doing so would risk his life, and by extension Rebecca's. Christopher becomes a master at framing his compassion into what would seem to benefit the Reich's mission. For example, when he bans all executions without his say-so, Christopher says it's because he needs able-bodied workers, and executing on the spot not only takes away workers but makes the current ones so scared they won't do as good of a job on their assigned tasks. Each female worker he is assigned over – approximately 600 – remind him of Rebecca. As such, he



wants to see none of them die. Not only that, but he fundamentally disagrees with how the Nazis are treating the Jewish population, and once he sees first-hand what is happening, he is compelled to do something more than just find Rebecca.

Christopher is driven by his commitment to a high moral standard. Ironically, he has to hide that high moral standard by showing that he supports the Reich's mass murder of the Jewish population. Christopher's entire time at Auschwitz is one big picture of internal conflict, one of the major themes of the novel. His dialogue with the other SS officers, prisoners, and his superiors shows faux support for the Reich, while his inner thoughts as described by the narrator describe his opposition, disgust, and anger toward the Reich and the concentration camps.

When Christopher decides that saving Rebecca isn't enough and that he must do more, he puts his own life into even more danger. Yet, it is because of his incredible resolve and strong sense of moral character that his desire to help others is stronger than his desire to protect his life. He is successful in doing both – protecting his life and saving the lives of hundreds of prisoners – but he knows for a fact that even if he does lose his life, he does not regret his compassion/humanitarian missions. Even after he learns that Rebecca is dead, he both hopes it isn't true, and pushes even harder to protect and save any prisoner he can.

This set of chapters embodies almost every theme present in the novel. Every theme has already been introduced, but each one is shown in more depth throughout Christopher's time at Auschwitz. Most pronounced are the themes of war, human dignity, anti-Semitism and nationalism, and internal conflict. The reader can see through Christopher's treatment of the prisoners that he believes in human dignity, and he believes in bringing it to every prisoner he can despite the beliefs of his superior officers and his comrades. He stops at nothing to save whomever he can save, even if he does it under the radar, which he learns will save more than if he were an open martyr or vigilante. Christopher's peers show their support for their nation and the war, and their engagement in the anti-Semitism that covers their jobs, and pretending to be part of that community is where the reader can see Christopher's constant internal battle. He can't stand being part of the community, but must pretend to be if he wants to carry out his missions.

Though Christopher does not find Rebecca during his post at Auschwitz, the author makes it clear that Christopher winds up having a greater purpose, and he carries out that purpose without regret. The moral character Christopher shows seems meant to be an inspiration for putting others before one's self, as well as for showing bravery in what seems to be an impossible situation. Christopher's resolve to find Rebecca turns into a resolve to reverse as much of the death present at Auschwitz as he alone can.

Discussion Question 1

What are the reasons behind Christopher's immediate ban on executions?



Discussion Question 2

Christopher has the most difficulty seeing the children be killed via the gas chambers. How does he attempt to redeem the lives lost, and why is he able to be successful in his efforts?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Christopher force Martina to make it appear as though he has abused her?

Vocabulary

crematorium, humane, Reich, trolleys, coagulating, subordinate, emaciated, secrecy, quarantine, carnage, vigilance, contrition, standartenfuhrer, noncommissioned, siphoned, pounds, zlotys, exhortation, contraband, banknotes, Hauptsturmfuhrer, industrialist, lagerfuhrer, retributions, blockfuhrer, kapo, convent, countersignature



Chapters 39-43

Summary

Chapters 39-43 jump ahead to 1954. The war has been over for almost 10 years, and Christopher is sitting in a radio station being interviewed. He has been nicknamed the Angel of Auschwitz for the women and children he saved during his tenure there. The interviewer insists that Christopher is a hero, though he still seems disappointed with himself because he did, in his role as head accountant, deliver hundreds of thousands of various currencies to the Reich. During the interview, Christopher is looking around for a girl named Hannah, though he doesn't see her. At this point, the reader does not know who Hannah is, only that Christopher feels incomplete without her nearby.

It is during his radio interview that Christopher suddenly sees Rebecca standing outside the studio. He stops talking and the interviewer has to cut their air-time short, since Christopher goes silent.

In chapters 40-43, Christopher and Rebecca walk through a nearby park, Christopher finishes his interview, and then the two have a late dinner at his hotel restaurant. Christopher learns that Rebecca is married to a man named Ari and they live in Tel Aviv, though Rebecca is reluctant to talk about him. She does not say that she loves Ari, but rather that he is a good man who treats her well, and her marriage to him is a service to her country. She tells Christopher she works in marketing, though the reader soon learns that she works for the Israeli government in bringing Nazi soldiers to justice. Rebecca has no children. At various points in the evening, Rebecca expresses regret for having come to visit Christopher, saying that she didn't mean to stir up any wrong feelings. She also expresses relief that Christopher was not a true SS officer. Christopher is amazed at her expressions of forgiveness toward not just him, but toward the whole of the Nazi regime. Rebecca speaks of wanting to redeem every Jewish life that was lost not only in her camps, but in the Holocaust.

Christopher tells Rebecca of some of his time working at Auschwitz, as well as Uli's fate, as he was killed in Russia and his wife was hanged for trying to escape the Gestapo toward the end of the war. Christopher tells Rebecca about his daughter, Hannah, who was the last child he rescued out of Auschwitz before the war ended. He tells her of his life with his father, Alexandra and Tom, Hannah, and Uli's son Stefan back on Jersey. He also gets the chance to tell her that he joined the SS for her, to find, protect, and save her from death-by-concentration camp.

At the end of chapter 43, it is November 1954 and Christopher is back on Jersey. Hannah tells him there was a letter delivered for him. It is only seven words: "Gunde de viznay bin Butterfly's Table nuen?" The letter is from Rebecca; she has come back to Jersey. Christopher meets her at Butterfly's Table, and the reader can assume that the two then begin to spend the rest of their lives together.



Analysis

The last bit of the novel rounds up what the reader is likely wondering at this point: is Rebecca still alive? Though her father stated that she was executed for standing up for her prisoner friend Anna, Christopher's hope for Rebecca's life may still be present for the reader. During the radio interview, Christopher is clearly uncomfortable being considered a hero, when he could not save more prisoners than he saved, even though that number is in the hundreds. His internal conflict is still present, and the reader can see that this time through his dialogue, rather than simply his actions.

When Rebecca appears, Christopher's world seems to stop. He stops talking on the interview and can focus on nothing else. Rebecca's reappearance is a testament to their bond that has held on through the years the two were separated, and his reaction is a testament to his commitment to her. Since love is one of the major themes of the book that is absent through the last set of chapters, it is significant that the concept reappears in the last section of the novel. The author connects the bond shared between the two before the war, shows through dialogue how their friendship-turned-romance helped each through the war, and validates for the characters why they did what they did from the time of their separation up until the present day.

During their conversations during their walk and over dinner, Rebecca's avoidance of her work and husband as talking points is important to consider. Coupled with the times she states that it was a mistake to see Christopher, as she doesn't want to stir inappropriate feelings, and the reader might assume that Rebecca still has strong feelings for Christopher that she is afraid to have resurface. Before she reveals the information, her avoidance is also a hint that she works for the Israeli government, as does her husband, and that she is in fact seeing Christopher to see if he was truly worthy of not being charged of any war crimes. Her initial deception is immediately regretted once Christopher finds out, and forgiveness is immediately granted, likely due to the strong emotional bond the two have shared since they were 6 years old.

Though Rebecca does not return until the very last page of the novel, her lack of joy and happiness is an indication that during her reunion with Christopher she is considering returning to Jersey to be with him. What's most important to note about the conversation, though, is that the two clear the air. They talk through what each went through during their separation, how each processed what they did and saw during the war, what each has done with the memories of the war, and how each has moved forward. It is fitting that Rebecca is married and that Christopher is a father, as Rebecca has always been romantically linked to another, and Christopher has always focused on protecting others. Rebecca's return via a note similar to the one she left him when the two were 15 years old pays homage to their history as well as to their future, since this time she is letting Christopher know in a symbolic way that her reappearance is a permanent condition.



Discussion Question 1

Why doesn't Christopher want to be hailed a hero, even though his nickname is the Angel of Auschwitz?

Discussion Question 2

What are some indications that Christopher still loves Rebecca, even though it's been more than 10 years since he's seen her and she is currently married?

Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the letter Rebecca left for Christopher at the end of the novel?

Vocabulary

torture, starvation, currency, appropriated, perpetrated, marketing, gypsies, languid, impregnate, internment camp, giddying, Volkstrumm, Mossad



Characters

Christopher Seeler

Christopher is the main character in "Finding Rebecca." His story spans from when he is 6 years old to when he is 36 years old. He is a boy, young man, and man of strong character, feeling great responsibility to care for and protect any and all who are in his charge, so long as they are seen as good in his eyes. When the reader meets Christopher, he is a 25-year-old SS officer at Auschwitz-Birkenau and as a superior officer has been hired as the accountant for the camp. He oversees an area of the camp nicknamed Canada where material goods and currencies collected from the prisoners are collected. Christopher does not believe in anything the Reich stands for, and in fact is only an SS officer so he can find and rescue Rebecca from prison and an early death.

Christopher is a resolute, hopeful character. He lives among abundant death, oppression, and anti-Semitism, yet takes on none of the attitudes associated with his surroundings. Though he is discouraged from time to time, Christopher does not quit any of his benevolent missions whereby he attempts to protect and rescue those under his command. For example, one of Christopher's first mandates is that his inferior officers quit summary executions of prisoners. Christopher sees no purpose in the act and therefore orders them to stop. Christopher shows a sense of compassion that the prisoners are unaccustomed to, yet they come to trust and appreciate him and his presence, since his gracious spirit has saved many of them from beatings and an early death. One of Christopher's last orders displaying his character, before he is removed from Auschwitz, is arranging for the transport of, and therefore saving, hundreds of children from Auschwitz to a safe haven elsewhere.

Though Christopher is unable to carry out his original mission of finding and saving Rebecca, Christopher uses his stature and influence to ensure that others are saved, making his time at Auschwitz feel a little less inhumane and a little more worth his time.

Rebecca Cassin

Rebecca is the namesake of this novel, and as such is one of the major characters, despite only being physically present in approximately eight chapters. Like Christopher, she does not stand for anything the Reich stands for, and certainly not their occupation of Jersey or the war crimes they carry out against the Jewish population. Also like Christopher, Rebecca has a strong, resolute personality and carries herself with strength of character. However, since she is Jewish, Rebecca is directly affected by the Reich's actions.

Rebecca grew up on the island of Jersey. Her parents were physically and emotionally abusive and therefore she spends most of her time with Christopher. As children, the two play together at the beach, in Christopher's treehouse, and at Christopher's house.



Christopher's family feels like her family, and she finds safety with them. However, as a teenager her father's abuse grows to be so oppressive that she runs away to London for a period of time. Upon returning, she is engaged to Jonathan Durrell, a wealthy young man her age from the island of Jersey, though the two met in London. However, she breaks off her engagement and chooses Christopher, knowing the depth of her feelings for Christopher are unmatched.

During the German occupation of Jersey, Rebecca is forced to deport along with other Jewish persons on the island. Though the reader is not privy to the exact order of events after Rebecca is deported, it is her deportation that causes Christopher to join the SS in an attempt to find and rescue her. When Rebecca reappears toward the end of the novel, in chapter 39, she is married to an Israeli and lives in Tel Aviv. She remains a strong character, as she has forgiven Christopher for what she originally thought was his wrongful involvement with the SS, and she has even forgiven the SS, Hitler, and other members of the Reich who attempted to wipe out the entirety of the Jewish population.

Rapportfuhrer Friedrich

Friedrich is a mid-level officer at Auschwitz-Birkenau to whom Christopher answers. He fully supports the Reich's mission and is not ashamed of his stance. His character shows immediately as he insults the Jewish population while showing Christopher around the camp in the first chapter.

As a mid-level officer who oversees other officers, Friedrich sees it as his responsibility to make sure the camp officers in his charge are carrying out their duties. He believes in summary executions, on-the-spot beatings, and a no-holds-barred brutality for prisoners. Because of this, he and Christopher often see things very differently. As Christopher tries to disguise his disagreement with the camp's discipline techniques, Friedrich seems often to doubt Christopher's loyalty to the Reich's mission. Though he doesn't always say as much, Friedrich's actions show that he is wary of his inferior's support of the Reich. For example, Friedrich questions Christopher's ban on summary executions, pushes back when Christopher wants to start the Anti-Corruption Committee, and institutes a search of Canada without Christopher's knowledge. Friedrich presents as a typical SS officer, in full support of the Reich's mission and wanting to be as committed as possible to his job at Auschwitz. He shows no remorse for any brutality he either carries out or orders from his inferior officers, and he expects the same level of commitment from his officers as he does from himself.

An important piece to note about Friedrich is that although he is obviously proud of his work at Auschwitz, he is also aware that the nature of the work is not popular with other parts of the world's population. Though he agrees with the force of the SS officers and their brutality toward prisoners, he also expresses to Christopher that the nature of their work is "sensitive" and therefore must be kept under wraps. For some, this secrecy might indicate embarrassment or an acknowledgement of wrong-doing. For Friedrich,



however, it is a mark of his feeling superior, not only over his officers but as a German man over the rest of the world's various populations.

Christopher's support staff

Christopher's supporting staff of officers includes many SS men, but some are named: Flick, Breitner, Muller, Lahm, Schwarz, Schultz, and Frankl.

Flick, Breitner, and Muller are the three with whom Christopher interacts the most. All three are confused by Christopher's ban on summary executions, though because Christopher is their superior officer they all comply. None support Christopher's more compassionate attitude toward the prisoners. Breitner is chosen to take over for Christopher when Friedrich decides to reassign Christopher, though before that can happen Christopher arranges for Breitner's transfer out of Auschwitz. Muller seems to be less intense than Breitner. He speaks ill of Frankl and largely stays under the radar. Flick seems even more non-plussed than Muller, though he seems to watch Christopher more than the others, possibly doubting Christopher's loyalty to the Reich.

Lahm is Christopher's roommate. He is described as a friendly young Untersturmführer from Regensburg, Germany. He plays poker and drinks regularly with the other men. He heartily believes in the cause of the Reich and has no difficulty seeing Jewish persons perish.

Schwarz is an officer who works the transports as prisoners are disembarking. He grants Christopher a favor when he lets Christopher take Petra, though Schwarz does not allow Christopher to take the children. He makes it clear that he expects a favor in return for saving a female prisoner from the gas chamber, though that request does not come to fruition in the novel.

Schultz is the officer who finds Anka and works just as hard as Christopher to care for and save her. In fact, Schultz ultimately gives him life in an effort to save her. Schultz seems to be like Christopher, in that he wants to do the right thing and does not see the decency in killing mass quantities of people. Also like Christopher, Schultz seems to have this attitude built into him and does not need bribes in order to do something kind or noble. In each situation, Schultz keeps his word, is discreet if he needs to be, and puts himself in front of those weaker than him in order to protect others.

Frankl is chief Kapo of the Economic District at Auschwitz. He is considered the most brutal of Christopher's support staff, as he carries out the most executions and seems completely unapologetic for doing so.

Female prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau

Christopher is in charge of a portion of Auschwitz-Birkenau nicknamed Canada, because it is "the land of untold riches" according to the other prison officers. The prisoners in this portion of camp are mainly women. While most of the SS officers and



prison guards feel as though these women are worthless except for when they can be taken advantage of, beaten, or executed, Christopher does not feel that way. He sees Rebecca in these women, and his heart reaches out to try and help them. Christopher ends up getting a reputation among the female prisoners that he is not like the other officers, and is therefore summoned by one of them to save her sister and her sister's children.

Martina Kocianova is a female Czechoslovakian prisoner who asks for Christopher's help in saving her sister Petra, as well as Petra's children. Martina is taken aside by Christopher and told to not approach him again, especially in front of the other guards, but Christopher does fulfill Martina's request to save Petra. Both Petra and Martina are thankful to Christopher for his actions. Toward the end of the novel, when Christopher is doing his radio interview nine years after the war ended, the reader learns that Petra and Martina are among two female prisoners who worked to protect Christopher and save his life when other SS officers were against him.

The prisoners are all described as extraordinarily thin, pale-faced and/or ashen, and not looking directly at the SS officers/guards as they work or move around their work area. When the prisoners arrive, they are filled with trepidation, though some seem to relax once the SS officers give them a reassuring speech. The prisoners are hoarded into the gas chambers to be stripped for "inspection", and the gassing is described through Christopher's perspective as he hears the screams of the prisoners.

Herr Liebermann

Herr Liebermann is the head of Prison Records. He is housed at Auschwitz and is described as a very busy, no-nonsense man. Liebermann enters the story when Christopher decides he might be able to monetarily bribe Liebermann to help him find Rebecca. When Christopher approaches Liebermann, Liebermann is irritated that Christopher is asking such a favor. He claims that he is too busy, and is wondering why a German soldier (Christopher) is trying to find a specific young Jewish lady (Rebecca).

Though at first Liebermann insists he cannot help Christopher, he ultimately does. To the reader, Liebermann's motivation could be a mix of monetary incentive and a shared humanity between Liebermann and Christopher. However, given Liebermann's high rank, the fact that he does not do more than a minimum amount of work each time Christopher gives him money, and the way Liebermann takes the money before Christopher even leaves the office, all suggest that Liebermann's main motivation is his own personal monetary gain.

Anka

Anka is a young Czechoslovakian girl, approximately 8 years old. Anka survives one of the gassing sessions, whereby the rest of her family is killed. She is found under her father's coat, coughing, and barely breathing. An SS officer named Schultz finds her



and is immediately willing to die for her when Christopher finds out that Schultz and a few other nearby officers are hiding her from him.

Anka is a typical young girl, shy, thin, and scared since she is in a foreign place by herself. She does not speak English or German, only Czech, and so Schultz is the only one with whom she verbally communicates. Schultz and Christopher hide Anka in Christopher's office, where she stays silent save for her coughing, presumably from the gas that did manage to get into her lungs. Christopher brings Anka remnants of his breakfast, and she passes her time either sleeping under his desk or coloring with blank paper and coloring tools Christopher supplies for her.

Saving Anka becomes Christopher's mission. He wants to help get her to safety, along with Rebecca, on his upcoming trip to Berlin. However, Anka meets a fatal end when Friedrich orders a search of Canada, including Christopher's office. Schultz tries to save her by breaking into the office, but they are caught and both are executed. Anka's memory stays with Christopher for long after the war is over, and she is the reason he initiates the transport of hundreds of children from Auschwitz to a safe haven.

German military officers

The senior German military officers SS officers listed in "Finding Rebecca" are Lagerkommandant Dr. Wilhelm Casper (ch. 17); Lagerkommandant Arthur Liebehenschel; Lagerfuhrer Fritz Ekhoﬀ; Rudolph Herz (ch. 36). Dr. Casper and Rudolph Herz are the only ones whom the readers get to know.

Dr. Casper is head of the German occupying forces on Jersey, and as such is the one who orders Christopher and his father to be liaisons between the forces and the people of Jersey. He is a coercive man who utilizes his position of power to get what he wants, such as forcing Christopher and Stefan to take the position, then forcing them to step down when he finds out Rebecca isn't registered.

Rudolph Herz is the head of metalworks in the Krupp factory on Auschwitz, and he is who Christopher approaches and subsequently bribes to help him relocate the children outside of Auschwitz. He, like the other senior officers of the German military forces, is confused by any showing that might be considered disloyalty to the Reich. However, Christopher is able to frame his idea in a way that makes it sound like the Reich would benefit, and therefore Herz agrees to help Christopher transport children out of Auschwitz.

Stefan Seeler

Christopher's father makes an early appearance in the novel. He is a single father with two children, Christopher and Christopher's sister, Alexandra. Stefan is a man who likes to do the right thing, and he expects the same of his children. When Stefan discovers that Christopher is hiding Rebecca in his room when they are young children, Stefan insists Rebecca be returned to her father. However, once he learns that her father is



abusive, Stefan talks to Rebecca's mother and the two agree to let Rebecca play with Christopher and spend time at the Seeler's house whenever she wants.

Stefan, along with Christopher, takes on a liaison role with the German soldiers when they first arrive on Jersey. He does not want to communicate between the soldiers and the residents of Jersey, because he does not stand for anything the Germans are doing. Stefan only takes on the job because he is essentially forced to do so. Stefan maintains his integrity, though, and does not do anything inside the job that goes against what he believes in.

When Christopher is an SS officer, Stefan encourages his son to stay strong, to remain true to who he is and not to take on the attitudes of Christopher's surrounding SS officers. Stefan believes in the strength of his children and he is not shy about telling them that, or in showing them ample affection no matter their age.

Stefan is also critical in helping Christopher arrange for the children's transport to the convent where they would remain safe from the war until the imprisonment of Jewish persons was over. Though Stefan was nervous for Christopher's plan and his involvement in trying to save so many from the camps, he felt strongly that what the German soldiers were doing was wrong, thus his willingness to help Christopher transport hundreds of children out of the camps to a safe haven.

Pierre Cassin

Pierre Cassin is Rebecca's father. At the beginning of the novel, Pierre is an alcoholic who physically and emotionally abuses his daughter. He doesn't want Rebecca playing at Christopher's house, likely because he perceives the Seeler's as believing they are better than the Cassin's. Pierre Cassin also despises Germans, especially after the war begins. Pierre stops physically abusing Rebecca when his wife threatens to shoot him with a shotgun, though Rebecca still runs away.

Christopher interacts with Pierre after Rebecca returns from England. Christopher wants to let Rebecca know that he still loves her, but she is not home when he goes to her house, forcing an interaction with Mr. Cassin. Pierre does not like Christopher, mostly because he's German and partly because he feels inferior to Christopher's family, especially since Rebecca always wanted to spend time at Christopher's house instead of her own. Due to his contempt for Christopher and Christopher's family, Pierre warns Christopher to stay away from Rebecca.

After the war starts, the reader doesn't see Pierre until he shows up to Auschwitz on the transport Christopher is expecting Rebecca to be on. Pierre reports to Christopher that Rebecca has been executed, because he thought she had been. The reader learns later that she hadn't been, but the scene described when Rebecca is taken away from the camp she and Pierre were both in indicates that assuming her death made sense. At the end of the novel, Pierre is living in Surrey, England, and he and Rebecca do not communicate regularly.



Uncle Uli and Karolina

Uncle Uli and his wife Karolina are minor characters in “Finding Rebecca.” Uncle Uli is written about first and seems to be helping his brother, Stefan, to raise Christopher and Alexandra. However, Uli ends up going to Germany and joining the German military. It is in Germany that he meets Karolina, and it is in Berlin that the two marry.

Uli seems to have a similar strength of character as his brother Stefan. He passes on life lessons to Christopher, does not interfere with Stefan’s parenting, and seems to have a soft, compassionate heart toward Rebecca when she starts spending time with the Seeler’s. However, when the Nazi regime starts, Uli adopts their mentality. He does not go as extreme as some of the officers Christopher meets at Auschwitz, but he seems to believe in the cause and power of the Reich. He wants Germany to reclaim her land, and he wants to help further that along.

Uli’s role in the war ended up being on the Eastern front, in Russia. He died in 1944 in a field in Russia, leaving behind Karolina and their son. The last time Christopher saw Uli, in 1944, Christopher describes Uli as being emaciated and not looking well. Karolina was hanged by the Gestapo when she tried to run, but their son Stefan was saved and raised by Christopher, his father, and his sister.

Alexandra Seeler

Alexandra is Christopher’s younger sister. She is a minor character, as she is not present for most of the story. However, she is important to Christopher’s narrative because she not only brings Christopher back to the house when Rebecca comes back from London, but she supports Christopher as he struggles with working as an officer in Auschwitz. She is a supportive sister and worries about her older brother, both his physical safety and his emotional health.

Alexandra’s personality is not extensively described, but from her loyalty to her family and the way she helps care for Uli and Karolina’s son Stefan, the reader can discern that she is a caring, loyal, family-oriented young woman who wishes the war would end. She admires her brother’s strength and determination to protect and save prisoners from an early death, but she cares more for her brother’s safety and wishes he wasn’t as much of a daredevil as he tends to be.

German soldiers on the island of Jersey

The German soldiers on the island of Jersey are the first look the reader gets into the Nazi regime and the effect it is likely to have on the Seeler and Cassin families. The soldiers’ take-over of the island is fairly subtle, at first just a mere presence. Over time, however, Jewish persons are required to register with the Chief Aliens Office, the curfew for Jewish persons grows tighter and more restrictive, and the amount of time Jewish persons are allowed outside of their home becomes less and less.



German soldiers on the island of Jersey are the ones who lock up the Jewish citizens if curfew is broken or any of the other restrictions are not abided by. They are also the ones who approach Christopher and Stefan for help communicating with the people of Jersey. The German soldiers want Christopher and Stefan to act as liaisons between the people of Jersey and the German military, since the Seeler's have a good reputation on the island but are also part German. The soldiers see the opportunity as Christopher and Stefan's duty to their homeland, even if the Seeler's don't see it that way.

The German soldiers on Jersey do not exert the same intense force the SS officers do in the camps, but they do not hesitate in punishing Jewish persons for inappropriate acts. The German soldiers line the streets during the occupation, and are sure to monitor the harbor when evacuations begin.

Tom Howard

Tom's place in "Finding Rebecca" goes along with Alex. Tom starts as Christopher's roommate when Christopher still lives on Jersey but not in his father's house. Eventually, though, Tom and Alex marry and Tom becomes Christopher's brother-in-law.

Tom is described as an honest friend; Christopher seems to appreciate Tom's presence in his life since there is no wondering what Tom's thinking. Tom talked about joining the army as his twin brother did, but ultimately decided against it. Tom and Alexandra are geographically separated for a time, when the Seeler family relocates to Berlin for a time during the German occupation of Jersey.

Tom survives the war and he and Alexandra are described as living a happy post-war life in Saint Helier, a section of the island of Jersey.

Sandrine

Sandrine is a minor character but is important for the reader to know. Sandrine is the only female Christopher is ever described as being with aside from Rebecca. She seems to be somewhat of a sad girl, as she openly cares for Christopher but Christopher cannot fully return her feelings. Christopher feels badly for leaving Sandrine in his room, alone, left to dress and find her way out by herself. However, since Sandrine's presence is not mentioned after the morning Christopher discovers Rebecca is back in town, the reader can assume that she either stepped to the side to allow Christopher and Rebecca to be together, or Christopher told her they could no longer see each other.

Sandrine's presence is important to Christopher's story because it shows the reader that early on, Christopher had given up some of the hope that he and Rebecca would be together. Their being together also shows the reader that Christopher was searching for companionship during Rebecca's absence.



Jonathan Durrell

Jonathan Durrell is a minor character, but an important one for the reader to note. Rebecca is engaged to Jonathan upon her return from London, where they met at a Yacht club. Jonathan is the son of a wealthy Jersey man who used to be the bailiff of Jersey. After he and Rebecca return to Jersey from London, they remain together for a short time before Rebecca decides to be with Christopher instead of him.

The one scene that includes Jonathan shows Jonathan as polite and respectful, especially to his elders. He also seems quite protective of Rebecca, and obviously cares for her a great deal. He does not seem pretentious or overly assuming of his wealth or stature. He simply seems to accompany Rebecca on her visit to the Seeler's home.

During the German occupation, Jonathan's family mansion is used as the headquarters for Dr. Gottfried von Stein, the Kommandant of the German occupying forces on Jersey.

Ari

Ari is Rebecca's Israeli husband, whom the reader learns about when Rebecca and Christopher reunite in New York in chapter 39. He is described by Rebecca as a good man, one who does great work for his country and treats her very well.

Ari serves his country and is proud to be Jewish. He works for the Israeli government, and Christopher learns that Ari found a file on him while doing his work. Upon finding the file, Ari wanted Rebecca to meet up with Christopher and see if he was who his file said he was. Rebecca describes their marriage as one more of social-political power than one based on love.

Hannah

Hannah is Christopher's daughter. She is a minor character and is only mentioned in the last four chapters of the novel, but she is important to the end of Christopher's story as laid out in "Finding Rebecca."

Hannah was the last child Christopher rescued from Auschwitz-Birkenau. She is Hungarian and was cared for by Alex while Christopher was still working in the camp. When Alex returned to Jersey after the war ended, Christopher adopted Hannah as his daughter. Her family was never found, mainly because there were no records of either Hannah or her family.

Christopher credits Hannah to saving him, likely because she gave him a solid purpose for which to go on. Hannah's personality is never described, though the reader knows she is a concentration camp survivor and helps to care for Stefan, Uli and Karolina's son.

Mavis

Mavis is Rebecca's cousin. She is a minor character in that she is only mentioned eight times in the novel, but she is paramount to the early part of Christopher and Rebecca's relationship. Mavis lived in London and was instrumental in helping Rebecca escape her parents, as Rebecca was able to live with Mavis after running away from Jersey. She is described as being more of a parent to Rebecca than her actual parents. She was protective of Rebecca, and even refused to see Rebecca's parents when they visited London. Before she died, Mavis was married to a man from Scotland. Mavis' kindness and guidance likely contributed to Rebecca's survival. Had Rebecca not been able to count on Mavis' protection, she may not have escaped her parents' house.



Symbols and Symbolism

Christopher and Rebecca's made-up language

In chapter 4, the author describes a language that Christopher and Rebecca have created for themselves. Apart from Christopher's sister Alexandra, no one else knows this secret language exists. They speak using words that sound like gibberish to others, but to them makes perfect sense. For example, when Rebecca left a note for Christopher to meet her at the Lion's Mane at 4 o'clock, she used the German word for four, but spelled it backwards.

Christopher and Rebecca's own language came about from them having different fluencies, Christopher's being English and German and Rebecca's being French. They combined their knowledge and created words and phrases only they would know. The language is representative of the strong bond Christopher and Rebecca have with one another from a young age. In this chapter, the two are still young children. They know from an early age that they are strongly connected, and having their own language only helps to solidify that.

Rebecca's letters to Christopher

An important object in "Finding Rebecca" is the set of five letters Rebecca writes to Christopher after she runs away. Christopher does not receive them until almost a year after she sends her last one, as his father hid the letters from his son. Christopher only found out about them because he accidentally overheard his father and Uli reference them in a conversation.

The letters are significant because they show that even though Rebecca leaves the island, she still very much cares for Christopher. She wants to keep the connection going and does not want to lose Christopher as a friend. Though the last letter is bidding him farewell, since Christopher had not written her back, but she still ends on a hopeful note of the potential for them to see each other again when she one day returns to Jersey.

Significance also lies in the fact that Christopher's father hid the letters from him. Mr. Seeler and his son have a solid relationship, and his keeping such an important thing from Christopher puts a chasm in their relationship, though for only a short while. The disagreement gives Christopher the chance to practice forgiveness, and it gives his father a chance to see his son as more of a grown-up.

Swastika flag

In chapter 7, it is 1938 and the Nazi regime has been the official government of Germany for five years. As such, the national flag has been changed to the well-known



red background with a black swastika in a white circle. When the Seeler's visit Berlin for Uli's wedding, the flag is flying proudly in Germany's capital.

The flag symbolizes the Nazi regime and everything it stood for, including the themes present in "Finding Rebecca", such as the following: war, anti-Semitism, nationalism, and power. For the Jewish prisoners and any individuals or groups persecuted during the Nazi regime, the flag also represented loss, as those persecuted lost either their own lives or their loved ones.

Christopher standing between his sister and anti-Semitic propaganda

While on the train heading to his uncle's wedding, Christopher stands between his sister and a poster that reads, "The Jews Are Our Misfortunes" (page 54). It is 1938 and though the mass murder of Jewish persons is not in full-swing, the anti-Semitic beliefs are propagated by the Nazi regime via mass amounts of propaganda.

Christopher's deliberate effort to stand between his sister and the poster is important for two reasons: one, it is a display of Christopher's need to protect those he loves; and two, it is representative of the internal conflict Christopher faces through much of the novel. On one hand, he has his sister, representing family unity, innocence, kindness, and human dignity, all of which he believes in. On the other hand, there is the anti-Semitism that takes over his homeland, and that ultimately causes Rebecca's deportation and his own joining of the SS in an effort to find her. For most of the novel, Christopher is caught between what he must do to save Rebecca, and what he really believes is the right thing.

Rebecca's notes to Christopher

Rebecca leaves two notes for Christopher, one when she wants to meet him after her return from running away, and one when she returns for good at the end of the novel. The first notes reads, "Gunde de viznay bin Lion's Mane shces" and the second reads "Gunde de viznay bin Butterfly's Table nuen."

The notes should be considered as an important object in the story. They indicate that no matter how much time has gone by – approximately five years the first time, and 16 years the second time – Rebecca remembers and cherishes the special nuances of her relationship with Christopher. She appreciates that they have their own meeting spots, and she appreciates that they have their own language, since 'shces' is German for six but backwards, and 'nuen' is German for nine but backwards. The connection between Christopher and Rebecca is present throughout the entire storyline, and objects such as this are evidence of that bond.



Jewish registry with the Chief Aliens Office

In 1940, all Jewish persons on the island of Jersey are forced to register with the Chief Aliens Office. As part of the war effort, the German government wants every Jewish person accounted for, likely to make sure they are all extinguished.

The Jewish registry is an essential item in “Finding Rebecca”, as it is part of what eventually causes Rebecca and Christopher’s second and most significant separation. Though Rebecca does not register at first, she is later forced to when Christopher’s bosses find out he is dating a Jewish girl who is unregistered. While at first, nothing is done with the registry other than to enforce curfews, the registry is what the occupying German forces use when they deport all Jewish persons on Jersey island in February 1943.

Suitcases of currency

The suitcases of currency collected by the prisoners and placed in the safe in Christopher’s office are significant to the story. They contain multiple types of currencies and are all supposed to be delivered to an officer in Berlin who gives them directly to the Reich.

The currency collected from murdered prisoners as well as those not murdered just simply kept alive to work at the camp, is representative of the power and influence Christopher exerts in order to carry out his humanitarian missions. The author does not call Christopher’s acts humanitarian missions, but as his actions are motivated by compassion and empathy for the prisoners, the reader might consider them to be humanitarian missions. The currency is meant to further the Reich’s mission, but Christopher uses it to show himself as doing his job, as he delivers it to the officer in Berlin, but also to bribe those in positions of power to help him protect and save hundreds of prisoners.

Christopher’s dreams of Rebecca

At the start of chapter 21, Christopher has a dream of Rebecca in which her blue eyes shine through the darkness surrounding her. She is jovially running toward the beach, enticing him to follow, but when he arrives to where she is supposed to be, she’s gone and Christopher wakes up.

The dream parallels Christopher’s time at Auschwitz. The hope that she is still alive and that he’ll see her again is keeping him moving forward, like the light in her eyes in the dream. Thinking of her is the light in the darkness that surrounds him in the form of death and brutality. The dream may also represent the fact that for the second time, Christopher and Rebecca have tried to be together only to be torn apart by an evil and destructive force.



Anka's drawing under Christopher's desk

After Anka and Schultz have been killed, Christopher returns to his office to find one of Anka's drawings underneath his desk. It is a happy drawing with a sunshine overlooking a large farmhouse. The drawing is described as childish, which is fitting since Anka was only about 8 years old.

The drawing is an important object for Christopher, indicated by the fact that he carries it around in his pocket for the rest of his time at Auschwitz. Anka was to represent Christopher's ability to do more good than harm as an SS officer working at Auschwitz. Her drawing is a reminder for Christopher of what he is fighting for and who he really is, a reminder that despite the uniform he wears every day, he is not one of them.

Finding her drawing under shards of broken glass symbolizes the hope that Christopher continues to exude – though only to himself and his family – that a happy life can be waiting on the other side of this war.

SS uniform

The SS uniform is something Christopher wears but is completely ashamed of. To him, it represents everything that is wrong with the Reich and its mission. To the prisoners, the SS uniform represents terror, fear, brutality, oppression, war, and likely death. The SS uniform might also represent Christopher's position in the novel. He is conflicted internally throughout his entire tenure at Auschwitz, and therefore puts on a facade of support for the Reich in order to survive, both physically and emotionally. The men who wore the SS uniform were not known to be compassionate, empathetic, or kind. Yet, Christopher had all of those traits, and more. But he could not show them. He had to keep on his facade of supporting the Reich and hating the Jews in order to carry out his missions of finding Rebecca, protecting the women in his charge, and saving as many children as he could from the gas chambers. Just like he had to wear a uniform, projecting to the outside world support for the Reich, while on the inside he despised everything it stood for, so was Christopher's survival mechanism throughout his post at Auschwitz.



Settings

Auschwitz-Birkenau

“Finding Rebecca” starts at Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of the smaller Auschwitz concentration camps run by the Nazis during World War II wherein they imprisoned millions of Jewish persons. The reader learns that Christopher is an SS officer at Auschwitz, though it is clear he does not wish to be. Auschwitz is described as a cold, gray prison spread out over several acres of land. There are different areas of the camp, one of which is Canada, the area of camp where goods from deceased prisoners are sorted. Christopher is in charge of Canada as a high-ranking accountant officer. Auschwitz is also described as being fairly secure, although for SS officers, trust is shared among one another and therefore gates and thresholds are easily cleared.

Christopher Seeler’s office

Christopher’s office is set inside Auschwitz, though it is away from Canada, the section of the camp for which Christopher is responsible. It is a significant setting for the novel because when Christopher’s mission changes from keeping only Rebecca alive to protecting women and children of the camp, a young girl named Anka becomes the symbol of that. She is housed in Christopher’s office for several days while Christopher waits for his chance to secretly transport her to Berlin. His office is described as neat with stacks of papers on his desk. The neatness and even cleanliness is to be expected, as the German military officers were expected to maintain a level of order in all aspects of their lives, including their physical environment.

The island of Jersey

The island of Jersey is the major setting of chapters 3-18. It includes the following: Christopher’s house, where he and Rebecca spend most of their time as children; Rebecca’s house, where Rebecca avoids but Christopher approaches with confidence when he wishes to confront Rebecca’s father; and the three places on the beach near Christopher and Rebecca’s houses, the Lion’s Mane, the Butterfly’s Table, and the Angry Horse, all three of which are rock formations that Rebecca and Christopher have named so they know where to meet one another. The island of Jersey is an English Channel island that was the property of Great Britain until the Reich took over. In the 1930s German soldiers arrived on the island and German occupation on the island of Jersey began. The very end of the novel returns to the island of Jersey, as the characters have found their way home once and for all.



Harbor of Jersey

The Harbor of Jersey is part of the island of Jersey, but is a significant specific setting. It is where Jewish persons were sent off when deported, which started in the early 1940s. In the novel, the harbor was bombed in June 1940, and all those waiting to be evacuated – to be saved – died. Though the harbor is never specifically described, it is clear that the typical scene is several boats surrounding the harbor, just as one might expect.

Berlin

Berlin is Christopher and Alex's birth city, as well as their father's original home. Christopher's family hadn't been back to Berlin since his grandmother's funeral. The first time the novel sets in Berlin, Christopher, Stefan, and Alex are traveling there for Uli's wedding to Karoline. Thereafter, many years later once Christopher is an SS officer working at Auschwitz, Christopher travels to Berlin twice a month in order to deliver the currency collected from prisoners, expired and remaining. On his bi-monthly trips, Christopher is able to visit his father and sister, who both live in Berlin with a family friend.

New York City

Chapters 39-43 take place in New York City approximately 10 years after chapter 38 ends. Christopher is giving a radio interview, as he has been deemed the Angel of Auschwitz. It is in the radio station, in New York City, that he and Rebecca are reunited. The two walk through the park and down several city streets before going to eat at Christopher's hotel.



Themes and Motifs

War

War is the most pronounced theme in "Finding Rebecca", as the novel is set during the Nazi regime before and during World War II. Although chapters 2-18 are set before World War II and chapters 39 well after, chapters 1-2 and 19-38 take place during the heart of World War II and the Nazi regime. However, the threat of war is present in other chapters, as well.

Dempsey starts the novel at Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of the concentration camps in the larger Auschwitz complex set up by the Germans for the Jewish population. The tone is immediately set that this will be a novel about the Germans trying to extinguish the Jewish population, and what one German man who loves a Jewish woman will do to save her. When the author goes back to the mid-1920s and writes through the early 1940s, the threat of war gradually appears and ramps up, from just before the German occupation of Jersey until Rebecca is deported because she is Jewish. The threat of war impacts the entire island, as fear and trepidation are spread not just among the Jewish residents but among the others, too. No one wants the island to be occupied by the German forces, because even for the non-Jewish residents, the uncertainty of what the occupation will be like is enough to cast a morose tone over Jersey. The author makes it clear in the mannerisms of the main characters, as well as the other residents, as he uses phrases such as, "Everywhere on the tiny island was suddenly very crowded," (page 107), indicating that residents were feeling claustrophobic with the occupation.

When the war is underway, the author does not shy away from scenes that depict war scenes, such as on-the-spot executions, large amounts of blood, brutality from the officers to the prisoners, and attitudes of nationalism among various groups of people. Even though the bulk of the text concentrates on Christopher's time inside Auschwitz and not one battlefield is described, the fact that the characters are experiencing an aspect of the war is clear and distinctive.

The impact of war on the characters is also shown. For Christopher, having to see what the war is doing to the Jewish population is tearing him apart. He is heartbroken for the people losing their families and their children, and he is desperate to find Rebecca before it's too late. Though he comes to despise many of his comrades for the acts they mercilessly carry out, the impact of the war on the other SS soldiers seems to impact Christopher, as well; he clearly doesn't like seeing such a nonchalant attitude toward their killing and torturing prisoners.

The effect of the war on Christopher's family is shown when he visits them in Berlin. Alex and Stefan are both frustrated, tired of the war and what it's doing to the country of Germany. They miss their home in Jersey and only want to return not only to the island, but to their way of life. The two seem to also have set themselves in a permanent state



of worry for Christopher, as they learn of what he's trying to do as an SS officer at Auschwitz.

The impact of war is shown throughout the novel. Though it is not the battlefield aspect of war, the author makes the text clear that the events are because of and part of World War II.

Love

The theme of love can be found right in the title, "Finding Rebecca", as the reader can assume from the title, cover, and back-cover synopsis that Christopher and Rebecca are two lovers separated by a horrific war. The two meet when Christopher and Rebecca are each 6 years old. The two instantly take to one another, and though they are young children the reader can see that they share a love from that young age, even if it is a friendship type of love. Over the years, however, their love for one another grows and evolves into a strong romantic love that is put through some significant tests.

Christopher and Rebecca's love must stand the test of time first as teenagers, when Rebecca runs away and is gone for about three years. During that time, Rebecca becomes engaged to a wealthy Jersey man and Christopher dates another woman. However, once they come back together, their affection for one another is revived and the two settle into a romance that lasts until Rebecca is deported about six years later. However, at that point, their love must withstand another test of time. Christopher and Rebecca don't see each other for approximately 11 years. When they reunite this time, Rebecca is married but Christopher is not, and Christopher is clearly still in love with Rebecca and would like to spend his life with her. Rebecca makes some indication that she feels the same way, but she is a woman of commitment and will not betray her husband.

The author's display of Christopher and Rebecca's love as spread out over 30 years is one of the main points of the novel. Their affection for one another across time and circumstances shows the reader that Christopher's purpose for living through his experiences and Rebecca seeking to thrive through hers weren't for nothing; the two ultimately were able to clarify any misunderstandings and finally, once and for all, almost a decade after the war ended, start their lives together.

The concept of love also shows up in how Christopher's father shows his love for his children, mainly through his constant presence and gentle, guiding tone in conversation. Uli, too, shows his love for people in his life when he married Karolina. Tom and Alexandra are also used to show love against the backdrop of war, as they fall in love, marry, and have children.

Family

Family is one of the strongest themes displayed through the characters of "Finding Rebecca", in both positive and negative lights.



For Rebecca, a sense of family unity and support is not nearly as strong as it is for Christopher. Rebecca is physically and emotionally abused by her father, and though her mother doesn't do the actual abuse, she is a bystander when Mr. Cassin is in one of his rampages. Rebecca learns what family means by watching the Seeler's, and by being treated like a daughter by Mr. Seeler. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Rebecca is able to forgive her father by the end of the novel; she knows what he could be like and what he might have wanted to be like, despite his misgivings as an abusive alcoholic.

In Christopher's family, unity is a priority. Mr. Seeler (Stefan) is constantly present for his children. He is a single father but takes on the role of both mother and father in order to raise his children well. When Christopher is of working age, Mr. Seeler and Christopher serve together as consultants for the German military occupying Jersey. Stefan also supports Christopher's resolve to be with Rebecca. When the two first meet, Stefan makes sure Rebecca is allowed to play with Christopher and have dinner with the Seeler's every evening. When they are older, Stefan supports Christopher standing up to Mr. Cassin in defense of his relationship with Rebecca. Stefan also encourages Christopher all throughout Christopher's time as an SS soldier, reminding Christopher that he is not one of them, that his mission is noble, and that it will all end eventually. Christopher can lean on his father and his sister for support, which instills in him a strong sense of family that helps him stay emotionally sane throughout his time as an SS officer at Auschwitz. Christopher carries with him the sense of family unity through the end of the novel, as he is back living on Jersey with his father and nearby Alex and Tom. What's more, is Christopher adopts a daughter, Hannah. Christopher's sense of family allows him to take in the last child he saved from Auschwitz; she didn't have a living family member on file anywhere he looked, and so Christopher unapologetically took her on as his own.

Loss

Loss is one of the strongest themes in "Finding Rebecca", as all of the major characters experience some form of incredible loss throughout the course of the novel.

Starting with Christopher and Rebecca, the two lose one another for several years at a time, two separate times. Christopher and Rebecca were inseparable from the time they were 6 years old, respectively, for about 10 more years. They spent almost every day together. So when Rebecca ran away, due to her father's continued emotional and physical abuse, both Christopher and Rebecca suffered a great loss in the form of a best friend. The loss saddened each of them greatly, as evidenced by Christopher's morose attitude after Rebecca leaves and the sadness in Rebecca's letters she sends to Christopher from London. Rebecca returns to Jersey, only to be deported a few years later when the Germans occupy Jersey during the Nazi regime. Again, the two best friends, now lovers, lose each other. Christopher spends the next several years trying to find and save Rebecca, trying to recover what he lost. At the end of the novel, the two reconcile and the loss is erased by their decision to be together.



For Stefan and Alexandra, Christopher's father and sister, their losses include losing Christopher to the German military, though only for the duration of the war while he tries to save Rebecca from an early death. They also lose their uncle and his wife, as Uli is killed in a field in Russia and Karolina is hanged by the German military for attempting to escape. Their family, therefore, is made smaller by their losses.

The prisoners, as described in "Finding Rebecca", lose not only their sense of dignity as they are stripped of all their rights, but they lose all of their personal belongings upon being deported and then stripped at the camp. Most of them lose their families, including spouses, parents, children, and extended family members, whether by geographical separation or death.

Every character, no matter their position, loses any sense of innocence they may have once had. Upon witnessing or committing various acts of war, including execution, gassing, physical beating, or sexual abuse, each character loses within him or herself any sense of innocence they may have once possessed, as it would be impossible to maintain given the gravity of the acts committed.

Isolation

Isolation is a strong theme in "Finding Rebecca," mainly for Christopher. The author repeatedly uses imagery and various descriptions of Christopher's psychological state in order to exhibit the isolation and loneliness Christopher feels not only during his time at Auschwitz, but also whenever Rebecca is not with him. When Rebecca is absent from his life, Christopher seems to see only gray rather than vibrant colors, and he seems more withdrawn and subdued. On his trips to Berlin, he expresses to his father that he has no one to confide in, that he's all alone at Auschwitz since the rest of the officers believe in the Reich's mission.

Behavioral examples of Christopher's isolation include the weeks he resisted drinking and playing cards with his SS officer comrades and the overall lack of socializing he participated in, the fact that he considered committing suicide, and the fact that he seemed to prefer to do his work without any help. The alliances he formed with Schultz concerning Anka and Liebermann concerning finding Rebecca did little to relieve any of the isolation he felt from working as an SS officer at Auschwitz. He was ashamed to be one in the first place, but felt like he had to be in order to find and save Rebecca.

Rebecca's sense of isolation happens when she is restricted during the German occupation of Jersey. When the Germans institute curfews and allotted time out of their houses for all Jews, Rebecca states that she can't stand the isolation, calling it a "stunted life" (page 115). The reader can assume she felt isolated as a prisoner in her concentration camp, based on the descriptions of the prisoners under Christopher's authority.



By the end of the novel, both Christopher and Rebecca seem to have recovered from their isolation. Christopher has a daughter whom he cares for, and he lives back on Jersey with his family. Rebecca is married and finds great purpose in her work.

Nationalism

Since “Finding Rebecca” takes place during World War II, and specifically within the Nazi regime, nationalism plays a large part in the storyline.

Throughout the entire novel, various characters display their attitude of nationalism. Christopher’s family shows the least amount of patriotism toward their native land of Germany. Christopher, Stefan, and Alexandra obviously care for their home on the island of Jersey, but at no time do they display an extreme sense of loyalty toward Jersey. The peripheral characters, however, especially the SS officers and members of the German military who occupy Jersey, all display serious loyalty to their homeland of Germany. Almost all of them believe wholeheartedly in the mission of the Reich and the superiority of Germany and her people over other nations and races, especially over the Jews.

This sense of nationalism displayed by the German soldiers significantly impacts Christopher as he works to find and save Rebecca. Because of Christopher’s comrades’ display of nationalism for all things German, Christopher must pretend to be the same. He must keep up a façade of German patriotism in order to fool every soldier in his charge as well as his peer and superior officers that he believes what they do. If he doesn’t, Rebecca’s future could be at stake. Not only that, but because Christopher sees the typical treatment of prisoners as inhumane, he creates for himself a mission to protect as many female prisoners as he can, as well as save hundreds of children from an early death. If Christopher were to show any kind of disloyalty to his fellow SS officers, all three of his missions would be impossible, as he would be doubted and likely punished. Christopher only reveals his discontent with how the Germans treated the Jews when he testifies in court against those brought on charges of war crimes.

At the end of the novel, when Rebecca returns, Rebecca shows a sense of Nationalism herself. She currently lives in Tel Aviv, Israel, and sees her marriage and her job as serving her country and her people. She believes in bringing justice to those who committed war crimes against her people during the Nazi regime, and she has made it her life mission to redeem the lives lost. She has always had pride in being a Jewish woman; in 1940 when the Germans started their occupation of Jersey and wanted all Jews to register, she was unafraid to do so, citing her pride in her heritage. Rebecca seems to carry that sentiment with her throughout the war and even after.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is another one of the most pronounced themes in “Finding Rebecca.” Much of the novel takes place at Auschwitz-Birkenau, a concentration camp meant to exterminate as many Jewish persons as possible. The way the Jewish are spoken



about by the SS officers, prison guards, other German soldiers, and even some general German citizens, puts the stamp on the anti-Semitic feelings of these characters present in the story. The comments made about Jews include calling them vermin, worthless, beasts, rats, enemies of the state, vile, disobedient, entitled, greedy, disease-ridden, and perpetually guilty. The main source of the anti-Semitism is from the SS officers and guards at Auschwitz.

The anti-Semitism sentiment begins right off the bat, as Christopher is given the tour of Auschwitz. It continues when the German occupation of Jersey commences in 1940. At first, in the German soldiers' initial conversation with Christopher and Stefan, there is no mention of the Jews on Jersey being impacted by the Germans' presence. Several months later, however, the Jews are targeted first by being required to register with the Chief Aliens Office, then with having stricter and stricter laws about their whereabouts, time allowed out of their homes, with whom they could associate, and where they could and could not be served. Every rule and restriction stemmed from an anti-Semitic attitude that was the crux of the Nazi regime.

The anti-Semitism sentiment is even stronger at Auschwitz among Christopher's comrades. In fact, it is so strong among Christopher's SS comrades and superior officers that when Christopher suggests anything that could be construed as showing compassion on the prisoners, he is met with doubt. For example, when Christopher orders a stop to all summary executions, his motives are sub-textually questioned. Also, when Christopher asks if the gassing chambers are more humane for the prisoners, Friedrich obviously wonders why he should care about humane treatment for the prisoners, as Friedrich meant the chambers were more humane for the guards and officers, as opposed to shooting every prisoner who was not deemed worthy of keeping alive.

Christopher and his family are the characters who have the most difficult time with the anti-Semitic attitude which surrounds them. Most of all, Christopher struggles with watching what he deems as inhumane acts as they are performed on the Jewish prisoners, i.e., summary executions for a perceived error; sexual abuse for disobedience; or a blow to the head just for sport. Christopher is surrounded by others who have fully adopted an anti-Semitic mindset, and he must pretend he feels the same. Christopher struggles to maintain an anti-Semitic façade; his only relief is when he is by himself in his room. Even though he shares a room with Lahm, the two are rarely awake and in the room at the same time. Outside of his room and his office, however, Christopher must pretend to support and uphold anti-Semitic ideals.

Ultimately, the anti-Semitic ideals as laid out in the novel end when the war ends, though in reality they lived on with the German soldiers who escaped being put on trial for the war crimes they committed. The last bit of Rebecca's story before she comes back to Jersey to be with Christopher is her and her husband's work trying to bring to justice all those who carried an anti-Semitic attitude and subsequently participated in the atrocities they witnessed in the concentration camps.



Internal conflict

The theme of internal conflict is present mostly in Christopher, though the reader can see it in Rebecca at various points in the novel as well. For Christopher, his internal conflict starts young when he wants to obey his father but also feels a sense of responsibility toward protecting Rebecca. He hides Rebecca in his room, but immediately comes clean with his father when his father realizes what's going on.

Christopher's sense of internal conflict continues years later when Rebecca returns from London. She is engaged, but Christopher's feelings for her have only gotten stronger in the years she's been away. Christopher holds himself to a high standard of morality, so he does not expect himself to pursue her while she is engaged. Yet, he finds himself at her house late at night, hoping to talk to her about his feelings. Though his plan is foiled when she was not home and her father was, Christopher ultimately resolves to tell Rebecca his feelings regardless of her engagement.

After Christopher and Rebecca are together, Christopher's internal conflict shifts from his relationship with Rebecca to an overall sense of duty to his country and his fellow man. He does not agree with the Reich's mission, but he is German-born and therefore must wrestle with what his fellow countrymen are doing to not just the Jewish population, but the people of the love of his life. His internal conflict worsens when he is asked by the German soldiers occupying Jersey to be a go-between for them and the people of Jersey. He doesn't want the people on Jersey – with whom he has forged good relationships – to perceive his loyalties as lying with the Germans. Yet, he and his father are not given a choice; they must take the job.

During the war, when Christopher is working as an SS officer at Auschwitz-Birkenau, his internal conflict is at an all-time high. He still does not agree with anything the Reich stands for, yet he is in a much more intense situation than when he was a liaison on Jersey. Christopher has to hide behind a façade of support for the execution, beating, verbal, emotional, and physical abuse of thousands of Jewish prisoners. Christopher's sense of right and wrong remains strong, no matter the atrocities and war crimes he witnesses.

The tug-of-war going on inside of him only intensifies throughout the story, and the only way he relieves some of the stress from that tug-of-war is by subtly saving prisoners. By saving Martina, Petra, and the hundreds of children he has transported to a convent, Christopher is able to lie to rest some of his guilt for being what he considers to be the worst of human nature he has ever witnessed.

Commitment

The idea of commitment is present throughout the whole of "Finding Rebecca", both in commitment to loved ones and commitment to causes.



For Christopher, commitment comes naturally. Once he is committed to a person or a cause, he is likely to see that commitment through to the very end. Though the beginning of the novel shows Christopher as an SS officer at Auschwitz, the rest of the novel reveals his true character and the reader soon learns that he is pretending to support the Reich in order to find and save Rebecca. While he still lived in Jersey, Christopher showed strong commitment to Rebecca before she ran away and even after she returned; he protected her, made sure she was safe from her parents, and carried his love for her throughout the years. He was also committed to his family, obeying his father and talking through decisions with him and Uli, rather than just making decisions himself because he felt like he alone knew what was best. During his post at Auschwitz, Christopher internally committed to save as many prisoners as he could; he was not only committed to their right to life, but also to Rebecca and he saw the saving of his prisoners' lives as a kind of redemption for not being able to save Rebecca. Christopher shows his sense of commitment through the end of the novel, when the reader learns that he has an adopted daughter. Hannah was the last child he saved out of Auschwitz, and because they couldn't find her family and she had nowhere to go, Christopher took her on as his own and is now lost whenever she is not near.

For Rebecca, the reader can first see her sense of commitment when she spends all her time as a child with Christopher. She is committed to being his friend, because he is committed to being hers. The reader can also see her sense of commitment when she resolves not to register with the Chief Aliens Office. She is committed against the Reich and its mission, and as such will not support it in any way. The reader does not see Rebecca for a large portion of the novel, since she runs away for a number of years as a teenager, then is separated from Christopher once she is deported. But when she reappears at the end of the novel, she is clearly committed to her work with the Israeli government, and to her husband, Ari, back in Tel Aviv. Though she does leave Ari for Christopher at the end of the novel, while she is visiting Christopher in New York City she remains committed to their marriage and shared cause of redemption and vindication for the Jewish persons harmed by the Nazi regime.

Power & Influence

Power and influence are common themes in any state of war, and their inclusion in "Finding Rebecca" is no exception. The theme plays out mostly through Christopher, though other characters display the sentiments as well. For Christopher, he mostly uses his power and influence as a mid-level officer in charge of other officers and prisoners to make changes at Auschwitz. The changes Christopher makes are not popular with his subordinate soldiers, but he gets a reputation among the prisoners as being different from the rest. It is because of Christopher's rank that he can order a ban on summary executions, as well as save Martina, Mr. Cassin, and hundreds of children from the gas chamber. To the other SS officers, Christopher is saving these prisoners as a war effort to benefit the Germans. In reality, Christopher is using his power and influence to carry out his own agenda, which is anti-Nazi.



Christopher also uses his power and influence to start the Anti-Corruption Committee. His true motivation for the committee is never fully explained, but the reader might consider that Christopher's purpose for the Anti-Corruption Committee was to obtain additional funding for bribes that he could use to secure more of what he wanted – woman and children saved, and the possibility of finding Rebecca. When Christopher approaches the Lagerkommandant about transporting the children, especially the babies, to a place where they could work instead of them being gassed at Auschwitz, Christopher's façade of Reich support and commitment to its mission has given him enough clout with the Lagerkommandant that his suggestion is strongly considered, and eventually executed. Without power and influence, Christopher's humanitarian missions would not have been possible.

Power and influence show up through other characters, as well. Mr. Cassin tries to exert his power as Rebecca's authority figure, though his drunkenness and abusive nature overrule any power and/or influence he might have had over her. Mr. Seeler exerts his power over Christopher as his father figure and keeps Christopher from speaking out against the German military in their meetings with those occupying Jersey. Mr. Seeler also uses some of his own influence to arrange for a wing of a convent in Germany to be used as a safe haven for the children transported out of Auschwitz. The SS officers in the concentration camps used their authority over the prisoners to treat them however they saw fit, no matter how inhumane or brutal that treatment seemed to others. And toward the end of the novel, Rebecca, in her capacity of a government worker for Israel, used her influence over Christopher to learn the truth about his involvement with the SS and the Reich.

Hope

The theme of hope is one that must be searched for within the text of "Finding Rebecca", but it is present throughout the entire story. The characters in the novel are repeatedly faced with challenging situations, ones that threaten to tear them apart from loved ones and situations that force them to do things they do not agree with or believe in. Such repeated frustrations can cause a person to lose hope, as they are routinely denied any kind of choice in the matter.

Still, the characters in "Finding Rebecca" maintain their hope throughout their various situations. Christopher exhibits the strongest sense of hope, but that is likely because the story is told from his third-person perspective. Even so, Christopher maintains hope that he will see Rebecca again after she runs away to London. He also maintains hope that she's still alive, even after Mr. Cassin tells him that Rebecca has been executed. Despite being surrounded by death and oppression, Christopher still wants to hope for a better future, a different life than the one he currently sees no way out of. For example, Christopher tells Anka that when she's free and everything is all over with, they can start living again. Despite his daily witnessing of war crimes, Christopher is holding on to the hope that there is life after Auschwitz. Christopher also exemplifies a hopeful attitude when he works to have the children transported to the convent upon their arrival to Auschwitz.



If Christopher had given up all hope of anything ever changing, or all hope of him being able to make even a small difference, he would have stopped any kind of humanitarian mission once he learned that Rebecca had died. Instead, Christopher seemed to work even harder to make sure other lives were saved. Again, if Christopher had lost all sense of hope, he would have thought none of those lives were worth saving.

Courage

The concept of courage is one that runs alongside the hope Christopher held throughout “Finding Rebecca.” From the beginning, Christopher is a boy, young man, and man with strong character. He is a protector of those he loves and only wants to do what he sees as morally sound. Having courage is important to him, both before and during the war.

Before the war, Christopher shows courage when he is unafraid to face Rebecca’s father. Mr. Cassin is an abusive man who threatens Christopher with a shotgun. Yet, Christopher remains steady in his pursuit of Rebecca, as Christopher feels not only that they should be together, but that he is better for her than her father is. His decision to love and care for Rebecca fuels his courage to stand up to any bully that might try to keep them apart.

During the war, Christopher’s courage is shown in subtle actions that have the potential to get him killed. He knows immediately upon entering his post at Auschwitz that he cannot show his true colors, as doing so would endanger – and likely end – his life. Thus, the courageous acts he commits under the radar are made to appear to benefit the SS soldiers and the Reich’s mission, when really he is working to protect and save as many prisoners as he can from an early and inhumane death. For example, Christopher saves a woman named Martina from the gas chambers at the request of Martina’s sister. It is courageous for Christopher to save a random prisoner from the gas chamber, as it elicits questions and doubts of loyalty from the other SS officers. Christopher’s request/bribe to Herr Liebermann to find Rebecca is also fairly courageous, as his loyalty may again come into question. Even further, Christopher’s plan to save hundreds of children from an early death and have them transported to a convent exhibits the same kind of courage it took to stop summary executions and request the whereabouts of Rebecca; each time Christopher worked to save or protect one prisoner, his loyalty to the Reich was doubted by his comrades and superior officers. In the Nazi regime, anytime loyalty to the Reich was questioned, one’s life was most certainly at stake.

Rebecca also exhibited courage, though hers is not known until the end of the novel when she and Christopher reunite. The reader finds out that she helped to protect other female prisoners at her camp. Why her life was spared is a mystery, since any kind of disobedience at a concentration camp typically led to immediate death. Yet, the threat of death did not inhibit Rebecca’s courage to stand up for what she believed to be right. After the war, Rebecca’s courage continues as she works for her country’s government to continue bringing Nazi soldiers and supporters to justice. She, again, is unafraid of



the consequences as she works to redeem the Jewish lives of those lost during the Nazi regime.

Human dignity/rights

Human dignity and human rights is a theme that is only natural for a novel set in World War II Nazi Germany. From the start of the novel, the author makes it clear that human dignity and human rights will be challenged and violated throughout the story.

For the prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau, as described in “Finding Rebecca”, their dignity is stripped before they even arrive. Not only are they made to register with a central governmental office in whichever country they originate from, but they are rounded up and shipped to a concentration camp. On the train to the camp, the prisoners are crowded into small, confined areas, and given little to eat. Once the prisoners arrive at the camp, their dignity is further stripped via manipulation by the SS guards who assure them that once their physical inspection is complete, a hot meal and a job matching their skill sets will be waiting for them. What the prisoners are unaware of, is that once they strip naked and go into the room where the “inspections” are to take place, they are gassed and therefore extinguished. Some prisoners are saved, many women and able-bodied men, in order to do the work of the camps. Most prisoners brought by train, however, are killed. Violation of the prisoners’ dignity continues even post-mortem, as their personal belongings are rifled through and pilfered for monetary and itemized gains, i.e. jewelry.

For the prisoners who are not gassed or immediately executed, their dignity is also stripped by the SS guards, just in different ways. They are made to do grueling work with no pay and little food for sustenance. Some of the females, especially if they disobey an order or do not move quickly enough, are sexually abused. Other prisoners, if they disobey an order or are not doing a satisfactory job, are beaten or even executed on-the-spot for punishment.

Christopher and his family are the characters in the book who are made to stand up for the ones who cannot stand up for themselves. While Stefan and Alexandra are not in the concentration camps and cannot directly impact the treatment of prisoners, Christopher can and his father and sister can help from the outside. By himself, Christopher works to restore some dignity to the prisoners by banning summary executions. With his father and Alex’s help, Christopher works to restore dignity to the children who arrive on the train, arranging to have them sent directly to a convent where they can “work”, instead of being immediately gassed upon arrival. Christopher’s actions are to be expected based on two exhibitions from before he became an SS officer: his father’s expectations of Christopher’s behavior and character, and the way Christopher cared for Rebecca and disagreed with how her father treated her when she was young. Christopher has never stood for the mistreatment of his fellow man, whether in major or minor ways.



Vindication & Redemption

Seeking vindication, or justice, is a theme present in “Finding Rebecca” and is again mostly seen through Christopher’s actions. As he vehemently disagrees with the war crimes the Nazi regime is committing, Christopher seeks to bring justice to as many prisoners as he can.

Christopher’s mission begins with finding Rebecca, as he wants to right the wrong of her being deported and the two of them being separated. When Christopher finds out from her father that she’s dead, after recovering from a momentary loss of purpose, Christopher seeks to vindicate and redeem her death by saving as many prisoners as he can. By disguising his ideas as supporting the work of the camp, Christopher saves hundreds of prisoners from an early death. For example, Christopher disguises his desire to save some of the female prisoners as a need for the camp. He also disguises his idea to save the babies two ways: one, they haven’t been poisoned yet and could be trained to the German way; and two, the young children could be put to work. Christopher frames his vindication and redemption so that other SS officers will believe he is doing it for the Reich, when in reality he is working to bring justice to not only Rebecca, but the other Jewish persons whose lives were lost in the Holocaust.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a theme that might be unexpected in “Finding Rebecca,” since most of the novel takes place during World War II and the Nazi’s imprisonment of the Jewish population. The inhumane acts committed against Jewish persons include sexual abuse, execution, beatings, and gas chambers. Christopher witnesses his fellow SS officers carry out these acts, and even at the end of the novel remains angry with them for doing so. Rebecca, however, displays an attitude of forgiveness, citing her desire to not be a victim of the Nazis any longer.

Though the concept of forgiveness is only present at the end of the novel, it is important to the whole of the story. Without Rebecca’s heart of forgiveness toward Christopher, she wouldn’t have been able to return to Christopher. Even though she did so under the duress of her husband and her job, her anger toward Christopher being an SS officer might have been enough to keep her from seeing him again. Yet, since she was able to move on from the hatred she had been holding on to, she could reunite with Christopher and hear his side of the story with an open mind and an open heart.

Also directly impacted by Rebecca’s forgiveness is Christopher’s attitude toward everything he went through. He remains scarred by the things he saw and heard in Auschwitz, but hearing of the way Rebecca could forgive not just the officers and guards at her camps, but the whole of the German government, seems to give him hope for himself and his future, that maybe he won’t be plagued by his horrible memories for the rest of his life. Rebecca’s forgiveness also allows Christopher to even further believe in all he went through in order to find her. Though he never found Rebecca and feels as

though he failed her, Rebecca's attitude of forgiveness and the fact that she is living a free, happy life, makes everything he tried to do, worth it.



Styles

Point of View

“Finding Rebecca” is written from Christopher’s third-person perspective. None of the other characters’ inner thoughts or feelings are revealed throughout the story. The purpose of this from the author’s perspective is likely to show Christopher’s struggle as he works to find Rebecca, which is the main point of the novel. Keeping the narrative in third-person omniscient also allows the reader to go in depth with one character, becoming fully immersed in one character’s full journey from the first to the last page.

Christopher’s third-person perspective allows readers to experience what he experiences throughout the story. This is particularly important for the reader to note the various themes of the novel, most of which come out through Christopher. Thematic elements also show through conversation and the described actions of other characters, as well as assumptions made by the reader based on various characters’ positions in the story.

The author, Eoin Dempsey, was born and raised in Dublin, Ireland, and therefore has a neutral cultural background when it comes to World War II and the Nazi regime. This may have aided his ability to write through some of the atrocities committed against Jewish persons.

Language and Meaning

The language used in “Finding Rebecca” is meant to illicit a great amount of imagery for the reader. Colors are frequently described, especially in regards to the outside, such as how the moon is lighting a particular scene or how the weather matches whatever happens to be going on in the narrative. Most of the imagery is fairly morose and devoid of color, setting the stage for the death and oppression which takes place through much of the narrative. And since most of the novel is set in a bleak and depressing time for the characters in the story, the author’s lack of vibrant scenes is appropriate.

Outside of the imagery language used by the author, his use of official German military terminology aids in the legitimacy and believability of the narrative. Official rank titles are used for the SS soldiers, which is important for the reader so the reader understands who is speaking to whom and why it matters what each of them says to the other. Also, since “Finding Rebecca” is historical fiction, there must be an underlying sense of truth to the story. The Holocaust is a historical event that impacted – and continues to impact – millions of people worldwide, so the author’s care in using correct terminology is important.

Structure

The structure of “Finding Rebecca” is 43 chapters. The author does not split the narrative into parts, but the reader can see a clear distinction in the storyline, as denoted in the section summaries in this guide. The structure is as follows:

The first two chapters of the novel take place in 1943 at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the concentration camp at which Christopher works during his time as an SS officer. These two chapters set up for the reader what will be the setting of Christopher’s main mission of finding Rebecca.

Chapters 3-5 could be considered Part II, as they take place on the English Channel island of Jersey and span 1924-1934. This section tells of between the time Rebecca and Christopher meet until she runs away to London to escape the physical and emotional abuse of her father.

Chapters 6-18 might be considered Part III, as it brings the reader from 1937 to February 1934. During this time, Rebecca returns from running away and she and Christopher decide to spend the rest of their lives together. However, German forces occupy Jersey beginning in 1940, so while this section of the novel contains much of Christopher and Rebecca’s relationship and plans to marry, it is also the beginning of the couple being directly impacted by the Nazi regime. The section ends when Rebecca is deported due to a Nazi order.

Chapters 19-38 could be considered Part IV, as this section tells of Christopher’s time as an SS officer at Auschwitz Birkenau beginning in 1943. Here, the text picks up where the second chapter left off.

The last four chapters of novel, 39-43, could be considered Part V. The novel jumps to 1954 and gives backstory to the rest of Christopher’s tenure as an SS officer. The section is also where Christopher and Rebecca are reunited, first temporarily, then permanently as they had both once dreamed of.

Having the author clearly delineate the sections of this novel would make for clearer understanding for the reader, but since each section of chapters is a distinct period of time, the flow of the story is not hindered.



Quotes

Our work here, although of vital importance, cannot be spoken of. I have no need to remind you of the oath of loyalty you took.

-- Rapportfuhrer Friedrich (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 5, paragraph 3)

Importance: Set in Nazi Germany during the 1930s and World War II, this quote immediately sets the tone for the novel. Christopher will observe, experience, and participate in things he never thought he would, all pertaining to the prisoners held at Auschwitz-Birkenau by the Nazi regime. While there are a few other SS officers Christopher is able to work deals with via bribery/favors, Friedrich is not one of them. Friedrich's statement here displays his own complete loyalty to the Reich and its mission, and his attitude of expecting the same from all of his inferior officers.

Christopher felt the dread of a life without Rebecca creep through his entire body.

-- Narrator (Chapter 5 paragraph Page 33, paragraph 10)

Importance: At this point in the novel, Christopher and Rebecca are 15 years old. She is preparing to run away from home due to the abuse of her father and her mother's inability to stop the abuse from happening. Christopher and Rebecca have been best friends since they were about 6 years old, so for Christopher, thinking of going just a day without her is not something he would like to entertain. The quote puts into perspective for the reader how intensely Christopher's feelings are for Rebecca. It also lets the readers know for the future how important it is for Christopher to find Rebecca later in the novel after she is deported.

I want to tell you...' she paused and looked at the ground, and he thought his heart would drop out. 'I just want to thank you. you're my favorite boy, the best I could ever...

-- Rebecca/Narrator (Chapter 5 paragraph Page 36, paragraph 2)

Importance: Since the novel is written from Christopher's third-person perspective, the words and actions of the other characters are all the reader has to go on in regards to how they're feeling and what they're thinking. Here, Rebecca is stumbling through her words a little bit, indicating that what she's saying is difficult for her to say. She doesn't have any problem sharing her feelings for sharing's sake, but since she knows they are going to be separated for a while, and she credits Christopher for saving her from her abusive father, it seems her emotions are overwhelming her, making it difficult for her to speak. Her statement is for Christopher (and the reader) to see that she reciprocates Christopher's strong feelings.

[B]ut they're my parents; I can't give up on them.

-- Rebecca (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 68, paragraph 3)

Importance: In chapter 9, Rebecca has come back to Jersey after living in London for a couple of years. She is engaged to Jonathan Durrell, the son of a wealthy Jersey man. In a conversation with Christopher where she tells him that she's living back with her



parents until she and Jonathan are married, she states that she cannot give up on her parents, no matter how they've hurt or abused her in the past. Her words touch on three themes present in the novel: loyalty, family, and forgiveness. Even though her father has left numerous bruises on her body and heart while her mother many times acted powerless to stop it, Rebecca still believes that they can change and become better people. She is loyal to the parents who bore and raised her. She is also exemplifying the idea of forgiveness, which she does again later in the novel toward the Nazi regime. Forgiving her parents for the emotional and physical scarring they imparted on her during her younger years is preparing her to forgive the even greater emotional and physical scars to be given to her by German soldiers at the concentration camps.

The light of the moon covered the apartment in a thin film of luminescent white, just enough for him to find his way out and he was gone.

-- Narrator (Chapter 10 paragraph Page 76, paragraph 1)

Importance: The importance of this quote lies in the imagery the author is attempting to evoke here for the reader. The overall tone of the novel is gray, morose, and fairly colorless: friends and family members are separated from one another, much of the novel happens during the winter months where the sun rarely shines, prisoners are killed on a regular basis, disagreements are tense, and happiness is in short supply. Here, the author is describing Christopher desperately needing to see Rebecca. The white of the moon is the only light available, since it's the dead of night. The author states that the light is, "just enough for him to find his way out." It's the only color present for the main character, and it's a small amount at that. Also, while the author is talking about Christopher being able to find his way out of the apartment, a bigger meaning could be gleaned from the words. Throughout the entire novel, Christopher acts as though he gets through one day at a time by the skin of his teeth. Each day, he finds a shred of hope he wasn't sure still existed, and because of it can continue on. Each day, he finds just enough for him to find his way out of the emotional darkness he finds himself in, especially while working as an SS officer at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The Seelers were finding it harder to be German, to associate themselves with the book-burning hordes.

-- Narrator (Chapter 12 paragraph Page 90, paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote shows the heart of the Seeler family. Though they are German and pay attention to the politics of their homeland, they disagree with what their government is standing for. It is a sign of the internal conflict to come for Christopher, as he fundamentally disagrees with the Reich's mission yet becomes an SS officer in an attempt to find and rescue Rebecca. It's important to note that Christopher is not the only one struggling with the idea of the Reich; his father as well as Alexandra are having a hard time dealing with the fact that they are German, yet they believe none of what their fellow countrymen do. The Seeler family resides on the island of Jersey, an English channel island controlled by Great Britain. Yet, they are still German and their fellow islanders know that. While the Seeler family does not want to be associated with their home of origin, their neighbors are giving them no choice.



And the Jews there, they're as close to beasts as I've ever seen, more like vermin.
-- Lance Corporal Steiner (Chapter 15 paragraph Page 109, paragraph 7)

Importance: Lance Corporal Steiner is one of the German soldiers who occupies the island of Jersey. At this point, Christopher and his father are working for the German soldiers in a consultative role, as go-betweens for them and the people of Jersey. The statement touches on the obvious theme of anti-Semitism present throughout the novel, but this is one of the first times Christopher is exposed to it. The Seeler's are aware of the Germans' general attitude toward the Jewish population, but they don't share the sentiment. They aren't completely comfortable working for the German military, and just hearing the anti-Semitic speak is enough to make Christopher angry. In fact, Steiner's statement makes him so angry that he appears ill and is given the rest of the day off from work. The statement is essential to the novel, though, because it shows the ideals the Seeler's are up against every step of the way, from their work with the German soldiers in Jersey all through Christopher's time as an SS officer at Auschwitz.

Rebecca walked through the soldiers with her head high.
-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph Page 111, paragraph 4)

Importance: During the German occupation of the island of Jersey, German soldiers were stationed all over the island. When the ordinance was handed down for every Jew on the island to register, Rebecca needed to make sure her father knew about it. Christopher traveled to her father's house with her, but on their way the two had to weave through scores of German soldiers, meant to keep order should chaos ensue. Christopher's attitude was less courageous than Rebecca's; he wanted to dodge the soldiers and get the interaction over as quickly as possible. In contrast, Rebecca seemed to want to communicate to the German soldiers that she was proud to be Jewish. The narrator's statement at this juncture shows Rebecca's strength and courage, and her ability to remain true to what she believes no matter the circumstance. It is just a foreshadow of the torture she will eventually endure at a concentration camp.

The walls of the apartment and the island itself seemed to close in further and further, the vise tightening on them from all sides.
-- Narrator (Chapter 18 paragraph Page 125, paragraph 1)

Importance: There are a few points to note in this one statement. First, it is the concept of isolation. Even though Rebecca and Christopher lived together, they felt isolated from the rest of the world. At this point in the novel, the German occupation in Jersey has ruled that Jewish persons have a curfew, a certain number of allotted hours outside of their home, and that punishment would come in the form of jail time. Christopher and Rebecca, though very much in love and enjoying each other's company, couldn't stand being shunned from the outside world and forced to be indoors most hours of the day. Second, it is important to note the feeling of helplessness present for the characters, a common emotion/experience for Christopher and Rebecca throughout the rest of the novel. Rebecca's helplessness is not revealed until the end of the novel, as the story is told through Christopher's third-person perspective. Christopher's helplessness is displayed throughout the narrative, though, and the fact that he and Rebecca were



stuck in their apartment for most of the day, or else they would face jail time, was enough to make him feel helpless. In regards to the metaphor used by the author, neither Christopher nor Rebecca could break free from the captive grip of the German soldiers' oppressive rules.

The intense hatred for everything around him began to infest him like a swarm of locusts. Every breath burned in his lungs, and the urge to rip off the uniform was almost impossible to resist.

-- Narrator (Chapter 22 paragraph Page 150, paragraph 1)

Importance: This statement comes at a time during Christopher's post at Auschwitz when he was growing more and more tired of everything his uniform stood for. He couldn't stand his SS comrades, his superiors, or his inferiors, because he believed none of what they stood for. This statement is a clear picture of Christopher's internal struggle, which is one of the major themes of the novel. Christopher has direct opposite beliefs of just about everyone in his environment, yet he must pretend that he is on their same page in order to save not only his own life, but the hundreds of women and children he helps, plus Rebecca. While the actions of the officers around him are emotionally impacting him and his ability to clearly focus, so is the fact that he is wearing a uniform which represents everything he is against: hatred, anti-Semitism, and superiority. An indication of Christopher's strong resolve to find Rebecca lies in the fact that these feelings never make it past his insides. He laments in private and is able to fake it enough with his comrades, superiors, and his charges that he is successful in saving/helping hundreds of women and children at his concentration camp.

He turned around to thank Liebermann. The money was already gone.

-- Narrator (Chapter 22 paragraph Page 159, paragraph 6)

Importance: Two of the themes in "Finding Rebecca" that go together are the ideas of power and influence. Christopher's main mission while working at Auschwitz is to find, protect, and ultimately save Rebecca from death. At the point where he offers Liebermann a wad of cash to help Christopher find Rebecca, he is still on point for attempting to carry out his mission. As time goes on, however, Christopher learns whom he can bribe with cash he swipes from his area in Auschwitz. The bribes end up helping Christopher accidentally find Rebecca's father, as well as save hundreds of children from immediate death once they arrive at the camp. Christopher uses the power he is able to exert due to the volume of cash he can provide to influence other SS and German soldiers to carry out tasks they would ordinarily not participate in, such as finding a specific prisoner or saving children from an immediate death. It is unclear as to whether or not the SS whom Christopher bribes care more about the people they are saving or the cash they are receiving, but either way, Christopher's power and influence via monetary bribes has a positive, lasting impact on hundreds of lives.

It was strange that a world still existed outside. The camp seemed to envelop everything in his mind, whereby it was the entire world.

-- Narrator (Chapter 23 paragraph Page 162, paragraph 2)



Importance: As Christopher exits Auschwitz on his first of many bi-monthly trips to Berlin to deliver currency for the Reich, the contrast of life inside and outside the camp strikes him immediately. The oppressive nature of the concentration camp, since it goes against everything Christopher believes is right and decent, has made Christopher almost numb to any other existence. He has had to shut off his brain toward any other kind of existence in an effort to stay focused on his mission at hand, which is finding and saving Rebecca. In a situation where one's surroundings are so extreme, as is the case for Christopher inside Auschwitz, it would be easy for one to forget that rest of the world is not the same.

It's amazing what years of conditioning and propaganda can achieve," his father answered. "No one is born with that brutality in them.

-- Stefan Seeler (Chapter 26 paragraph Page 183, paragraph 2)

Importance: Christopher's father tells this to Christopher on one of Christopher's visits after delivering the confiscated currency to a superior officer in Berlin. Christopher has just been describing some of what goes on at Auschwitz. Even though Christopher has braced himself against the brutalities he witnesses and hears about on a daily basis, he is still not used to the conditions and wishes they didn't exist. He is looking to his father to provide some kind of solace, because he cannot reconcile how the soldiers are able to carry out such atrocities on their fellow human beings. Stefan's reaction shows two things: one, that he is proud of his son for not taking on the attitude of the other SS officers, and also that he believes in the inherent good in people. The Seeler's have maintained their belief in the inherent good in humanity, despite what they have witnessed and experienced, and their strength of character is one of the reasons Christopher is able to protect as many women and save as many children as he does. Stefan has expected a high moral character from his children since they were young, and he does not hesitate to show the same in himself.

There were still places like the beaches of his youth in the world. There was still happiness to be found.

-- Narrator (Chapter 31 paragraph Page 217, paragraph 1)

Importance: These are the thoughts of Christopher after he and a few other SS soldiers find that a young girl named Anka has survived the gas chamber. Anka's survival, and unfortunately eventual execution, is what inspires him to make the arrangement for the children to be transferred from Auschwitz to a safe haven. For now, though, he must deal with Anka. And the hope Christopher holds with him that there is life outside of the camp, that the oppression and war crimes will eventually end, are amplified when he interacts with Anka. This hope is essential to the overall narrative as well as to Christopher's emotional survival. For the storyline, Christopher's hope of finding Rebecca and that there will be an eventual end to the horror he experiences on a daily basis keeps him moving forward. For Christopher, without this hope, he would have long since turned toward supporting the Reich and participating in the brutal treatment of the prisoners. Rebecca and the prisoners at Auschwitz whom he protects need Christopher's hope as much as he needs it.



Thursday morning will come. We can start to live again, because this isn't life, Anka. This is just the absence of death.

-- Christopher (Chapter 31 paragraph Page 221, paragraph 6)

Importance: Christopher is trying so hard to hold onto his hope of having a normal life after Auschwitz. He is expecting Rebecca on the Wednesday evening train, and is hoping to transport her and Anka to Berlin/safety on Thursday morning. His statement here touches on the theme of hope, present here and there throughout the novel. Christopher's true character shines through in moments like this, because even amidst the death and oppression and evil acts being committed by the officers around him, Christopher continues to reach for a return back to the happy life he led before the Nazi regime grew to what it currently is. The fact that he is saying this to Anka, a child he is hoping to save, shows that he believes enough in the possibility of a better life that he's passing down his hope to a child. Christopher's statement also touches on the theme of Life and Death. Depending on the character and his or her own experience in regards to the Nazi regime/Gestapo/SS officers, life and death may have completely different meanings. For example, the prisoners may define 'life' as surviving one moment to the next, trying for zero missteps so as to avoid a beating or an execution. For Christopher, he shows with this statement that his meaning of 'life' resides outside the camp.

There was no mission left now. He was just an SS man, trying to do his job, trying to stay alive. There was no purpose left for him, no reason for him to ably assist in the murder of innocent people.

-- Narrator (Chapter 35 paragraph Page 241, paragraph 2)

Importance: Christopher is on his way to Berlin to deliver suitcases of currency to be handed over to the Reich. Though he has been doing this for several weeks and has not morally supported the action, recent events have made it even harder for Christopher to reconcile bringing the money to the officer in Berlin. Anka and Schultz, the officer helping him hide Anka, have just been executed, and Rebecca's father came on the train, not Rebecca. What's more, is that Mr. Cassin told Christopher that Rebecca is dead; she didn't make it out of her concentration camp. Rebecca was his first motivation to become an SS officer and work at Auschwitz; the women in Canada were his second motivation, as he helped them be treated better by the officers; and saving Anka was his third motivation. Even though the women in Canada were still being treated better than they would have been without Christopher's presence and orders, he cared more about saving Rebecca and Anka than about the mass female prisoners. With both Rebecca and Anka dead, what is his purpose? He feels there is none left for him. Thus, he wonders why he should continue carrying the money to Berlin. His moral trade-off for dropping off the money was the greater cause for which he was working. Now that his cause has been defeated, he wonders why he should continue in this work. Christopher is so desperate and devoid of purpose when he thinks these thoughts that he contemplates killing Friedrich, as well as himself.

It's funny, but I don't think I would have made it through if I'd had what people think of as 'normal' parents. Their bad parenting gave me the best possible training for life in the camps.



-- Rebecca (Chapter 40 paragraph Page 282, paragraph 5)

Importance: One of the major themes in “Finding Rebecca” is the concept of forgiveness, even though it isn’t shown until toward the end of the novel. When Rebecca acknowledges that her parents’ terrible ways of parenting her actually helped her through her concentration camp experience, she is exhibiting her ability to forgive and pull a positive lesson out of an extremely negative situation. Her ability to forgive someone who struck her repeatedly as well as emotionally abused her is a strong character trait that she exemplifies in her and Christopher’s conversation in New York. It is likely this kind of strength of character that helped her survive the concentration camp.

I never had a choice. How could I leave you there? I had to do what I did. I never had a choice in any of it.

-- Christopher (Chapter 40 paragraph Page 282, paragraph 6)

Importance: Christopher’s statement to Rebecca after she thanks him for joining the SS to look for her shows both Christopher’s depth of feelings toward Rebecca, even after all their years of separation, and it shows his incredible sense of responsibility to those he cares about. Both Christopher’s strong feelings and sense of responsibility to protect Rebecca started at a very young age. By the time he joins the SS in order to find and save her, he has loved Rebecca for nearly 15 years. The fact that years after Christopher did what he did to try and save her, and knowing she is married and not available to him, he still does not regret his actions, shows not only his strength of character, but that he would do it again if he had to. Christopher is a character who displays concrete resolve when he makes up his mind about something, especially if that something will help, protect, or save another person or group of people. Though Christopher had to endure years of failing on his original mission of finding and saving Rebecca, he remains certain that it was the right choice in at least trying.

I felt indebted to those who died there, as if when I met them again when I died, they’d ask me what I did for them, and what they died for. I have a duty to them, for the rest of my life.

-- Rebecca (Chapter 42 paragraph Page 294, paragraph 8)

Importance: Rebecca makes this statement about her experience after the war and after the concentration camps. Her character shows through as she shows her selflessness and her sense of responsibility to her fellow prisoners. Her sentiment of feeling indebted to the prisoners who did not make it out of the concentration camps alive show a sense of healing, as well. If Rebecca hadn’t been able to heal and move forward after her experience in the camp, she would likely have a different, much more bitter attitude. Though she would still likely feel sympathy and sadness for the prisoners who died in the camps, she would likely not make redeeming their death any kind of life mission.

I found that by forgiving them, I held the ultimate power, and the pain stopped. Now I know that what they did to me and all the people I knew is no longer going to hurt me,



and that my life, my happy life, will be the ultimate tribute to all the people I saw die.
-- Rebecca (Chapter 43 paragraph Page 306, paragraph 7)

Importance: Rebecca's statement toward the end of her conversation with Christopher touches on the power of forgiveness, one of the themes in the novel. Though the theme of forgiveness isn't shown until the last 6 chapters in the book, as Christopher and Rebecca reunite, it is a major theme and is embodied in Rebecca's quote. Considering the gravity of Christopher and Rebecca's experiences inside the concentration camps, the fact that she can be leading a normal life – she is married, she is happy, and she is free – has been enough for her to set herself free from the anger toward the officers who controlled the camps all those years ago. Her forgiveness of the SS officers and by extension Hitler's Reich shows that everything Christopher hoped for, all wrapped up in a normal life after Auschwitz has come true for the love of his life.