

# **The Fountainhead Study Guide**

## **The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand**

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# Plot Summary

Written in 1943 by Ayn Rand, the founder of the philosophy of Objectivism, “The Fountainhead” is set in New York City and spans the decades of the 1920s and 1930s. “The Fountainhead” details the struggles and challenges of an individualistic and brilliant architect, Howard Roark, and the people who surround him.

Howard Roark is a student at the Stanton Institute of Technology together with another student, Peter Keating. The Institute is filled with people who preach and advocate for a design of tradition. However, Roark refuses to design in the way they want him to. Because of this “insubordination,” Roark is expelled. Peter Keating does exactly what his professors and the school want him to and graduates with highest honors.

Roark works the next three years for a disgraced architect, Henry Cameron, whose ideas are too revolutionary for current times. Cameron begins his career successfully, and his provocative designs end up with the advent of the first skyscraper. However, his work is increasingly deemed unsuitable and henceforth rejected. Cameron’s refusal to conform only increases the public’s aversion to his work, solidifying his downfall.

Meanwhile, Peter Keating begins working for an extremely successful architect, Guy Francon. Francon spends more time in societal events than designing, and he lacks any real skill in architecture. However, because of his talent for winning people over socially, Francon has earned the reputation as the most prestigious architect of the time. Dominique is Francon’s daughter. She writes a column on design and interior decorating in a newspaper owned by the omnipotent publisher, Gail Wynand. Dominique is a challenging and provocative character. She is outspoken and, recognizing that Francon and Keating are only succeeding through fraudulent building methods and social endeavors, is unafraid of speaking out against the mediocrity of the buildings that they have designed. Dominique is disillusioned because she is disappointed by the vulgarity and conformity of the society she lives in. In her view, passionate and true beliefs will die in a world that is weak and corrupt.

Although she speaks out against him and Francon, Peter Keating is enamored of Dominique and her pure beauty, strength, and elegance. He wants to marry her, but she responds she will only agree to marry him if she wishes to subject herself to terrible punishment. Through his machinations and political maneuvering, Keating eventually becomes the top designer at Francon’s firm. He wants to become Francon’s partner, but this spot is occupied by Lucius Heyer, a sickly man.

An announcement is made for the design of the Cosmo-Slotnick Building. Keating is slated to take part in the competition with Francon’s expectations that he win. Aware of his own mediocrity, Keating turns to Roark for help and submits it in his own name.

Keating schemes to immediately become Francon’s partner. He confronts the sickly old Heyer and blackmails him. This causes Heyer to suffer a stroke, and Heyer succumbs



to death. He leaves Keating all his money. Subsequently, Keating wins the competition and becomes Francon's partner.

After Cameron retires, Roark is unable to find employment. He works briefly at Francon's firm but is fired for refusing to conform. He becomes a modernist designer at an office headed by John Erik Snyte, who combines various different schools of design into whatever the public wants. This normally results in work of clashing principles. Finally, Austen Heller hires him to design him a home. At this time, Roark decides to go out on his own and starts his own firm. However, because his work is too provocative and revolutionary, he does not get many contracts after the Heller House. He temporarily shuts down his firm and goes to work at a quarry in Connecticut.

The quarry is owned by Francon, and Dominique catches sight of Roark while at the family estate close by. She is irresistibly drawn to him, and this attraction culminates in a violent rape scene where she both resists and accepts him. Dominique is overwhelmed by an inner conflict; this event is the most powerful experience she has ever had.

Roark leaves the quarry before they can develop their relationship. He is hired by Roger Enright, who wants him to build a new version of an apartment building. Roark obtains more recognition and gets more commissions. He catches the eye of Ellsworth Toohey, a renowned architectural critic. Toohey feels threatened by Roark's independence and schemes to have Hopton Stoddard ask Roark to build a temple that edifies the heroic human spirit. Toohey's plan is to denounce the temple as an attack on religion, turning Roark into an enemy of religion. Roark agrees and designs a genius and brilliant plan for the Stoddard Temple. Toohey denounces the temple as heretical and society is horrified.

At this point, tortured by what has happened to the temple, Dominique decides to marry Keating as a self-punishment. She is attempting to destroy the greatness within herself that will allow her to love only Roark. The incident with the temple has solidified her feats that creativity and character will not survive in this world filled with followers of taught beliefs.

Eventually, Dominique divorces Keating in order to marry Gail Wynand, who she believes is even more despicable than Keating. Wynand panders to the public by publishing commercially popular works like *The Banner*, a scandal sheet. However, he falls in love with Dominique and her pure idealism. Dominique runs into Roark. She then says she wants them to get married but he must give up architecture and she can cook and clean. Roark realizes now is not the right time for them to be together and tells her so.

Dominique marries Gail Wynand. Wynand cannot help but love Dominique and what she represents. He wants to lock Dominique up in a private fortress away from prying eyes and commissions Roark to build this fortress/home for him. Wynand finds redemption through Roark and with his powerful connections, rebuilds Roark's reputation.



Roark is commissioned to build the Monadnock Valley Resort, whose owners actually want it to fail. They choose Roark as the architect because they do not believe he can build a resort with separate private houses. However, Roark's work is a big success and his career improves.

Keating's career has been going downhill. He turns to Roark to help him design a project called Cortlandt Homes because he knows he cannot do it. Roark agrees to help Keating only on the condition his designs are built exactly as he specifies, with no alteration. Keating will get the credit for it. Toohey accepts Roark's design that Keating submits under his name. However, when Roark is away on a cruise, his designs are altered. Roark and Dominique blow up the project with dynamite and Roark is arrested.

Wynand tries to save Roark by using The Banner. He believes he can influence public opinion through the paper, but he is wrong and instead they stop reading the paper and Wynand loses many advertising contracts. As he is out of town to save a contract, Toohey gathers his followers to take over the paper through a strike. Toohey has wanted to take over the paper for years. His followers now incite the workers to strike. With Dominique's help, Wynand manages to continue printing, but no one reads it. To save his paper, Wynand decides to go back on his stance and renounces his support for Roark.

During his trial, Roark defends his work in an eloquent speech on the sacred link between the creator and the product. The jury is favorable and they vote to acquit him. Roger Enright then buys Cortlandt Homes and Roark is to build it. Wynand also commissions him to build the tallest skyscraper in the city. At the end of the novel, we see Roark's unflinching stance has withstood the machinations of those who have sought to bring him down. Roark's new designs and revolutionary ideas are finally gaining acceptance in a world that once rejected them.

Dominique's inner conflict is resolved—she now sees the world has changed and she marries Roark. Wynand, whose entire public and professional life was founded on a lie, is destroyed psychologically. He now realizes he should have embraced his inner nobility and not pandered to the public masses.

Toohey's scheming is for naught. He has failed in destroying Roark and failed in taking over the paper, because Wynand shuts it down. He restarts his career at another newspaper. However, Keating's career is completely destroyed and he is a shadow of his former self.



# Part I, Peter Keating, Chapters 1–5

## Summary

The opening scene features Howard Roark standing naked on a granite cliff. He is young and stern. It is 1922, and Roark has been expelled from the Stanton Institute of Technology even though he is an exceptional student. Excelling in mathematics and engineering, Roark's beliefs are too controversial: he is an individualist and refuses to conform to the traditional teachings of the school. Roark goes back to his room and works on his drawings. He almost forgets to meet with the dean, with whom he has an appointment, but his landlady, Mrs. Keating, who is the mother of Peter, a fellow student, reminds him of it. At this meeting, the dean expels Roark for his modernist work but says he will be able to return upon maturity, at which Roark refuses on principle. The dean is enraged and tells Roark he will fail and will never become a true architect. For Roark, it is evident the dean and he will never be able to reconcile: Roark cannot understand men like the dean.

In chapter 2, Peter Keating, Roark's fellow student at Stanton, is at his commencement ceremony. He is thinking about the greatness of his achievements and how well he has done. At the end of the ceremony, Keating is offered a job by Guy Francon, a very prominent architect. Keating is torn between accepting the offer or taking on a prestigious scholarship. He goes back home and turns to Roark for advice, at which Roark tells Peter he should make his own decisions. In the end, Keating listens to his mother's manipulations and accepts the job offer from Francon. Roark says the job will mean much more practical application for Keating, since he will actually be building, and Keating is very pleased with his options and future.

In chapter 3, Keating is now working in New York for Francon & Heyer. Keating is a master at office politics, and he discovers the talent and brains of the entire operation lie with Claude Stengel, who is the chief draftsman and architect of the firm. Keating gets to know Francon better. Meanwhile, Roark has found a job with a once-renowned architect, Henry Cameron. Henry Cameron is currently disgraced as he believes in the purity and truth of his buildings more than his clients. His views are too modern for the current society, and people shun his work because he refuses to conform or pander to them. Roark and Cameron work mostly silently together in a run-down office.

As chapter 4 begins, two years have passed, and Keating is doing extremely well at Francon & Heyer. He gets a friend fired at the firm through absorbing his work. He goes out with a woman called Catherine Halsey, who loves him. During one of their times together, he finds out she is the niece of Ellsworth Toohey, who is a famous architecture critic. When he finds this out, Keating is suddenly overwhelmed with the feeling and premonition he is going to be dirty and lead a professional life of impurity and untruth. He tells Catherine he does not want to meet Toohey.



Henry Cameron is giving advice to Roark. Disillusioned, Cameron tells Roark nothing but destruction will face Roark if he has integrity. The world will crush Roark, and he predicts even though Roark will design the world's most beautiful building, he will lose the commission to lesser architects. He will beg and cry and plead like an animal, but he will fail to get it. When asked if this is what he wants, Roark says firmly that he does.

In chapter 5, Keating is now the chief designer and top architect at Francon & Heyer through his manipulations of making Stengel leave. When Keating is given his first design job, he is unsure of his abilities and approaches Roark. Roark unifies Keating's messy work. Although he is inwardly ashamed, Keating puts his own name on those sketches. He is grateful to Roark.

## Analysis

Most of Ayn Rand's novels are premised on her ideas of philosophy, and the plot in her novels normally serves as a vehicle for readers to learn about her philosophy. Because of this, her characters are fairly cut and dried, given to long expositions on their ideals, and complexities or human emotion are not common. Additionally, Rand writes very literally and has a very sparse style. In this way, the language of this text is similarly absolute. We have trustworthy narrators who present the characters accurately from the outset. (A contrast of this would be Ian McEwan who utilizes untrustworthy narrators frequently.) Qualities of the characters are black and white: Roark is a noble, pure, and subscribes to strong ideals and Rand's philosophy. Keating is weak, inferior, yet yearns for better. He is the antithesis of Rand's philosophy. There are four parts to *The Fountainhead*. Each part is titled with the name of a character in the novel—Keating, Toohey, Wynand, and finally Roark. However, Roark is the chief character and protagonist around which the others revolve. Keating, Toohey, and Wynand function to serve as methods to accentuate Roark's character and ideals. There are enough similarities between Roark and Keating to make them comparable, but their philosophies and lives are set up to be completely divergent.

This guide will dissect each part of the novel and each character to discover which value and belief each character stands for. For example, in this first part entitled Peter Keating, we see that Roark represents individualism, strength, and nobility while Keating is his antithesis, representing conformity, weakness, and impurity. In these five chapters, we see the differences between Keating and Roark, and because they both start out in the same situation, this accentuates the diverging convictions (or lack thereof) that will mark the trajectory of their lives. For example, at the very beginning, Roark and Keating are both living in the same place and go to the same school, but very early, Roark is expelled for his beliefs, whereas Keating, the ever-conforming conformist, is lauded.

Rand likes to add contrast of success—whereas Roark is morally successful, he is commercially unsuccessful. Keating, on the other hand, is morally bankrupt, but commercially successful. Additionally, Rand has introduced mentor figures—Cameron for Roark, and Francon for Keating. The description of these mentors will serve as



tableaus for how Roark and Keating themselves will turn out. Francon is self-serving, takes credit for work he does not do, just like Keating, and Cameron stands firm for his beliefs and is publicly denounced for his modernist ideas. Francon and Cameron are older versions of Keating and Roark, and we will have to wait and see if their fates will likewise be similar.

## Vocabulary

contempt, revered, contract, indifferent, resignation, reticent, benevolent, austere, reproach, fastidious, incredulous





# Part I, Peter Keating, Chapters 6–10

## Summary

In Chapter 6, there are a series of events. First, in January of 1925, Ellsworth M. Toohey publishes a history of architecture entitled *Sermons in Stone*, which becomes a raging success. Just one month later, Henry Cameron loses a commission that was very important, and he collapses. He leaves with his sister to go home to New Jersey, and Roark closes the office and burns all the work they have done at Cameron's request.

Peter Keating is still at Francon & Heyer. He has become even more successful, living in a very nice apartment off Park Avenue. Keating's domineering mother is in town to help him succeed, and she wants Keating to try to meet Francon's daughter, Dominique. However, Francon is not interested in seeing them together and makes no attempt to introduce them. Keating asks Katie, Toohey's niece, if they are engaged, and Katie mistakenly thinks this is a proposal, at which Keating insists they keep it secret.

In Chapter 7, Roark gets a job at Francon's firm with Keating's help. He only accepts the offer because he needs money, and only on the condition that he not do any of the design. However, Keating secretly asks Roark for help with designs while putting his name on it. He is disturbed by Roark's silence and obedience. Roark enjoys going to the building sites and is very familiar with construction work. On one such visit, he becomes friends with Mike, who is an electrician. Mike appreciates Roark for the skills he has.

In Chapter 8, Roark is asked by Francon to design a building similar to one of Cameron's most successful works, the Dana building. Francon wants Roark to design the building in the Classical Greek style, but Roark does not believe that will be true to Cameron's style. He insists something innovative would be much more in Cameron's spirit. Francon is upset someone is talking back to him—none of his architects have ever dared, and he fires Roark. Roark tries to find a new job, but he is unsuccessful.

Eventually, he finds a job at the firm of an architect named John Erik Snyte. Interestingly, every architect at this firm designs a project from different perspectives, and Snyte basically does a combination of each for the final design. Roark is designated as "Mr. Modernistic."

New York building-trade unions go on strike for higher wages, and the most vocal anti-union publications are those owned by the prominent publisher, Gail Wynand. The critic Ellsworth Toohey supports the strikes, but he cannot say so publicly because he has a column in *The Banner*, one of Wynand's papers, and his career would be over if he opposes Wynand.

Katie no longer seems to be completely interested in Keating, which is upsetting for him. Katie is at a rally and Keating arrives to persuade her to leave. They are just about to go



when Toohey starts speaking, very charismatically. Keating is hypnotized by Toohey's passionate appeal for unity and selflessness. However, because Katie appears to be completely enraptured, Keating attempts to get Katie to leave. The day after, Wynand gives Toohey a bribe to get him to be quiet, and the strike is settled. Another day, Keating finds his boss, Francon, in a terrible mood because his daughter, Dominique, has written a scathing denouncement of one of Francon's own buildings in *The Banner*.

In Chapter 10, during a prestigious New York society party, Francon finally introduces Keating to Dominique. They have an amusing conversation, but Dominique is unimpressed and rejects him. Meanwhile, a man named Austen Heller is looking for a firm to design a home for him. He doesn't quite know what exactly he's looking for, but he wants a pure and innovative building and he hires Roark's firm. Roark is excited and designs a home around the granite cliff where it will stand. Snyte modifies the design and submits it to Heller, who says it is not quite there. Roark steps forward and brings forth his original design by writing all over the final design, and he is fired by Snyte. However, Heller loves this design and gives him the commission. This is Howard Roark's first personal commission and he receives his first check made out to Howard Roark, Architect.

## Analysis

Throughout the novel, readers will see that Rand gives explicit labels on "strong" or "weak" for each character, putting different people into categories. In this book, Rand's categories are formed around the strength of Howard Roark, and each new character is measured on his or her abilities vis-à-vis Howard Roark. For example, weak people cannot understand Roark's individualism and refusal to conform; strong people do and are able to express their own individualism through varying methods and degrees.

Weak people can be likeable and successful in society like Keating and Toohey, but they are also dishonest and hate Roark for his pure talent and abilities. Strong people, however, love and respect Roark. People like Cameron, Mike, and Heller are in this category, and they inevitably feel a deep connection with him. It is sufficient for a short interaction for strong people to recognize each other. Although not very realistic, this is very characteristic for this novel, and in most of Rand's other works. Roark need only say two sentences (it could be anything from laundry to coffee) and he would instantly be recognized as an outstanding, strong, and genius individual. The initial reaction to Roark is how Rand is categorizing each category and is a very reliable indication for which "side" they are on.

Ellsworth Monkton Toohey is Roark's arch nemesis. Although he is seen only very briefly in these chapters, he is a formidable enemy because he is a very persuasive figure. He is talented in his ability at speech and writing, but he uses these talents to brainwash people and not to change their minds. Toohey might seem like an affable, likeable character, but he espouses views that Ayn Rand opposes strongly, such as socialism and communism. We see in her description of the speech Toohey makes, the general atmosphere is extremely oppressive and manipulative. A speech about



cooperation and unity should be uplifting, but instead, Rand sets the scene up as people who are being imprisoned and enslaved by Toohey's voice.

In these chapters, we are also introduced to Dominique Francon. She is the only strong woman in *The Fountainhead* and is the female counterpart to Roark. In contrast to manipulative characters like Mrs. Keating or the weak Katie, Dominique is able to see through Peter Keating and snubs him when she meets him. Like Roark's cold lines of genius, which are pure and elegant, Dominique is described with the same words—angles, coldness, and poise. The difference between Dominique and Roark is Dominique recognizes talent and stands for it, but she does not possess it herself. Dominique is also slave to her own psychology. She wants to remove herself from the world and desire and the pureness of creativity because she believes the world destroys this purity.

The incident with Austen Heller's house accentuates the clash and contrast between forced design that is commercialized and the purity of true design. For Roark, the most important thing is the building and how it is shaped, whereas corporate architects try to impose ostentatious styling and ornaments on the building without thinking about how the building needs to grow and express itself.

Similar to when Francon wanted a Classical Greek representation of Cameron's Dana building, the architects at Snyte's firms firmly stick to the principles of each period without thinking about the constraint of their design, preventing their buildings from becoming the works of art they should be. Roark does not do so; he allows each building to design itself, in harmony with its environment, like the Heller house on the granite cliff.

## Vocabulary

aesthetic, inevitable, reticent, candid, insolent, philanthropy, erudite, pragmatic, bewilder, earnest, tangible, assiduous, prosaic, serene



# Part I, Peter Keating, Chapters 11–13

## Summary

In chapter 11, Howard Roark decides to open his own firm. He goes to see Henry Cameron after he signs his first commission with Austen Heller, and Cameron feels his life has been validated when he sees a photo of Roark's office. Roark's first office visitor is Peter Keating. Although Keating is outwardly filled with praise, inwardly he is jealous and resentful of Roark. Roark runs into Mike, the electrician, at the Heller site, and Mike says he would not miss Roark's first building for the world. Roark and Heller become good friends. The house is built to little fanfare.

In chapter 12, the editor-in-chief of *The Banner*, Alvah Scarret, gives Dominique Francon the assignment of investigating living conditions in the slums of New York. Dominique does so fervently, and for two weeks, she lives in a tenement. At the end of her investigation, she writes a scathing and brilliant article, and when she gets back to her wealthy surroundings, she insults affluent landowners and denounces them for the living conditions of the tenements they own. Meanwhile she also interacts with a group of social workers and shocks them by describing the laziness and greed of the people she met. Scarret is bewildered by Dominique's lack of propriety and her completely neutral stance.

Keating tries to see Dominique again but fails to do so. Francon then arranges for them to meet and they have a nice time. Contrary to his fears of her, Keating falls in love with Dominique and begins to see her often. One night, Katie comes to see Keating. She is frightened of her uncle Toohey with whom she lives. Because she is terrified, Keating agrees to marry her but his mother objects the moment Katie leaves, and Keating postpones the wedding again. Katie accepts this, but they both realize that something has happened and they may have missed forever the opportunity to get married.

In chapter 13, after the Heller house, Roark has a number of customers who want him to design something in a past style, to which Roark patiently explains he can only build something according to beliefs, and not the past, since every context is essentially different. Whitford Sanborn, who is a former client of Henry Cameron, approaches Roark to build a new country home. He had previously approached Cameron, who recommended Roark. Roark's designs please Sanborn, but Sanborn's wife is not as pleased. Roark refuses to compromise and eventually builds the house he wants, but Mrs. Sanborn adamantly refuses to live in the house.

## Analysis

In these chapters, readers see both Roark and Keating making different choices in their careers. These choices will serve to cement the trajectory they are on, as well as highlight the developing characters and true natures. Rand repeatedly tells us Roark is



“determined” and “independent,” and each incident will only highlight those traits. He will continue to be seen as unwavering and indomitable. Incidents such as the Sanborn house show Roark’s commitment to his ideals and his strength in keeping to his guns. He will not compromise despite the pressure. We also see all the work Roark gets is not through social pandering and political games. Instead, his clients have recognized the past beauty of his work and approach him based on his talent. He is calm, cool, and focused in his beliefs. He does not care about public opinion and will build according to his beliefs.

In contrast, we see Peter Keating, whose motivations are based on a need for people to approve of him—whether his mother, Francon, or Dominique. For example, he abandons his plan to marry Katie because he is swayed by his mother. He cannot save her from Toohey because he himself is weak, and his weakness causes hurt in others. Roark, as we know, only cares about the purity of work and has no mind for what others say.

Similarly, Dominique’s character is further shown to be as strong as Roark’s. She does not care for public opinion and viscerally lashes out at those she believes are causing harm. Her frankness offends others, but she sticks to her principles and is uncompromising in her refusal to side with one side or another. She would rather tell the truth and annoy people than please one side over another.

An important event to note is Katie’s suddenly, and perhaps seemingly irrational, fear of Toohey. At first, we might believe the only reason why we are shown this is to see Keating’s failure to be strong and save her. However, this event is a foreshadowing to another outcome later in the plot and is typical of Rand’s work, where every incident has a reason, and we should be prepared to see the dark consequences of Keating’s failure and Katie’s passiveness.

## Vocabulary

deride, meticulous, pensive, lecherous, colonnade, delimit, avocation, tremulous, resonate, zealot, inertia, cornice, conduit, Helios, Elizabethan



# Part I, Peter Keating, Chapters 14–15

## Summary

In Chapter 14, a Hollywood company, Cosmo-Slotnick Pictures, is holding a prestigious international competition to select the architect to build a gigantic skyscraper. Keating is encouraged by Francon to submit a design, but Keating knows he will never win even though Francon expects him to. Ashamed, he turns to Roark, who works through the night to rework Keating's messy work. Roark is running out of money and work. One day, he finds out from Cameron's sister that Cameron is on his deathbed. He races to see him, and there, Cameron tells him to pursue his dreams and to never compromise on his ideals. Keating asks Katie again to postpone their marriage till after the results of the competition. He will become a partner at Francon's firm if he secures the winning entry. Meanwhile, he spends a lot of time with Dominique and attempts to kiss her one night, but she is frigid and indifferent to his advances. Keating is once again panicked and overwhelmed with fear that his life is impure and built on falsity. He asks Dominique to marry him, and she refuses, telling him if she ever feels the need to severely punish herself, she will do so.

In chapter 15, Keating is increasingly anxious about the results of the competition because the other partner of the firm, Lucius Heyer, is dying and the position will soon be vacant. Keating is afraid if he does not win the competition, Francon will give the position to someone else. One night, he goes to Heyer's home with inflated construction estimates that Heyer once did. He means to blackmail him into retiring before the results of the competition are announced. As Heyer pleads for Keating not to expose him, he suffers a second stroke and dies. Keating is shocked to discover he wanted Heyer dead. Heyer left all of his wealth to Keating, and Keating finds out a few days later he has won the competition.

Although he is now celebrated and lauded, Keating cannot rest easy because Dominique sees right through him, and he did not actually create the winning design—it was Roark's work. Keating goes to see Roark, who is now destitute. Roark is awaiting a call from a bank for his only prospective commission, and Keating writes Roark a check to keep him quiet. However, Roark will not accept the check, saying Keating must keep quiet about Roark's involvement with such mediocre work. At this, Keating breaks down and he swears he will destroy Roark. The bank Roark was waiting for will give Roark a job to construct a Greek façade, which will be in keeping with their image as a sound financial institution, but Roark refuses and he has to close his office. At this point, he turns to Mike, the electrician, and Mike points him to a granite quarry in Connecticut.

## Analysis

In these chapters, we see that Keating and Roark's diverging paths are getting farther and farther away from each other with every choice they make. Once again, we see a



similar situation like when they were both students at architectural school. This time, it is with the deaths of two old men who are also architects—Cameron and Heyer. Roark rushes to Cameron's side out of genuine respect, and Cameron affirms Roark's path and his beliefs. However, when Keating rushes to Heyer's side, it is to blackmail him and threaten him into retiring. He ends up killing Heyer, and he also has to admit he wanted Heyer dead, revealing a murderous side to him we did not previously see.

Once again, we see Roark standing by his principles and not being swayed by commercial decisions. He would rather reject his only possible prospect than to have to abase his purity of design and individualism. The bankers only wanted a small change, but even that was enough for Roark to refuse, showing us how strong he truly is.

Keating, in contrast, is shown to be more and more repulsive at each turn. Now, in addition to being weak, he is also a blackmailer and murderer. He desires recognition, whereas Roark does work for the sake of the work and its beauty. Roark's commissions come from people who are similar to him and who recognize his greatness. Keating wants to be in a position of power so people will look on him as a genius. The two can scarcely be more different.

Dominique is an interesting eclectic mix of the two. Although she is true to her ideals and admires strength, she does not actually resist Keating despite her lack of interest in him. Dominique is disinterested in the world and its situations. Dominique is a frigid character, and that is probably because she has not experienced passion before, and in this way she is similar to Keating, who has never really known what he wants because he has never experienced the purity of true passion.

## Vocabulary

relapse, quip, saturate, disillusion, stupor, intangible, premonition, clamor, treason, solicitous, edifice, aghast, paralysis, excavate, vapid, accord, mollify, delude



## Part II, Ellsworth Toohey, Chapters 1–5

### Summary

Howard Roark is now working at the granite quarry in Connecticut, which is actually owned by Francon. Dominique is living at her father's estate near the quarry and spends most of her time wandering the countryside. She visits the quarry one day and catches sight of Roark and is captivated by his gaze, which is one of "ownership." Her first feeling toward him is of hate, because she knows she could fall in love with him. Although she tries not to, Dominique goes to the quarry once more and sees Roark again. They meet several days later at the quarry, and she asks him why he works there, to which he replies it is for the money that she is paying him.

We see in chapter 2 that Dominique cannot help herself from visiting the quarry and Roark. One day, she scratches her marble fireplace and hires Roark to replace it. He agrees, and she is overwhelmed with pleasure, and shame. Roark orders a new piece of stone, but when it arrives and she sends for him, Roark does not come, but sends an old laborer in his place. Dominique finds him and demands to know why he did not come earlier. A few days later, she is alone in her bedroom and Roark arrives. He rapes her brutally, and she is overpowered by him. He then leaves and Dominique is humiliated, yet she realizes she would have remained frigid if he hadn't been as violent with her. A week later, Roark leaves for New York because he gets a job from an industrialist, Roger Enright. Dominique is relieved Roark has left and she no longer has to be vulnerable to her feelings she cannot control, and she believes she will never see him again.

In chapter 3, Peter Keating, replete with his success, receives a letter from Ellsworth Toohey requesting a meeting with Keating. Toohey also encloses a draft of his upcoming column, which prominently features a tribute to Keating's great work.

A sculptor called Stephen Mallory tries to kill Toohey but fails, and when Keating finds out, his initial reaction is to wonder if the column extolling his work will still be published. However, Toohey is uninjured, and when Keating meets him, they get along well. Keating is asked to join a group of architects that Toohey is organizing to share ideas, and he asks Keating to be chairman.

Later, in chapter 4, at tea with Toohey, Keating sees Katie, but she is silent and does nothing but stare into space. Toohey is very interested in Roark and grills Keating about him. At the same time, Toohey also gives a commission to Keating from Lois Cook, an author who writes in a very complicated fashion, but who writes essentially nothing. Cook wants to build the ugliest house in New York, and Keating accepts.

In chapter 5, Dominique returns to New York and is visited by Toohey at The Banner. When he mentions the picture of Enright House on her table, she flatly says the





architect should never have built it, because people will ruin it. Work of that caliber is too good for people like Toohey.

Toohey's group of architects, The Council of American Builders, has their inaugural meeting where they denounce modern architecture but have no real alternatives to offer. Toohey gives a speech but he is interrupted by Dominique, and she makes all the members feel uncomfortable. In this meeting, Keating attempts to kiss Dominique but she brushes him off as he repulses her, and she reveals she has been with a workman in Connecticut.

## Analysis

Chapters 1-5 of Part II delve deep into the psychological motivations and inner thinkings of Dominique. She is very much a masochist and prefers to destroy and live among things that hurt and torture her, and she sees society as being an all-powerful threat to perfection and pure beauty. She firmly believes the world will destroy everything that is good, just like during her interaction with Toohey at her desk, when she says the Enright house should never have been built because it was too beautiful for the world to ruin. In a sense, Dominique would prefer to destroy something rather than to have it ruined by the world, and she will eventually see herself as the same way. Dominique is frigid and refuses to love anything because she fears the love will be ruined and debased by the world. Therefore, she prefers to live in a cold, empty, place filled with spite. She interacts only with people she despises because she will not love them, but her meeting with Roark destroys her attempt at isolating herself, because she has fallen in love. Instead of reveling in this, she wants to destroy him so the world cannot.

Dominique's rape has seen quite a bit of controversy over the years, but Rand meant it as a necessary function of the text. Essentially, the rape was exactly what Dominique needed. The depiction of frigidity being dominated by male mastery is hard for some palates to take, but one should read it not as a sexual encounter in itself, but as the interaction of symbolic meaning. Rand's characters are not meant to be read as people, but as symbols, and the rape is meant to be looked on as a meeting of frigidity and violence rather than man's violent domination over women, and it actually marks a mental union between the pair. In the rape scene, Dominique is really attempting to resist herself, and not Roark, and Roark is also a victim because he has succumbed to his passions. The rape is completely silent and internalized, almost calculating in its cold description, and marks the melding of two mental states into a single union.

In these chapters, we see that Toohey's motivations and character are also significantly developed. Toohey, as Roark's arch nemesis, wants to suppress people like Roark. He prefers to enshrine conformity and mediocrity so that he can rule supreme, such as with Keating, and destroys what Roark embodies. Toohey's advocacy of the mediocre is counter to every principle that Roark and Dominique stand for—perfection, truth, beauty, individualism, and genius. Toohey tells the architects he has assembled to enshrine the common and the everyday, to not dream of ideals and standards, and to be comfortable with achieving small goals.



This essentially details Rand's idea of what the world is like, where there is a small pocket of people like Roark who are creative geniuses and can shape a world's destiny. They are opposed by masses of small thinkers who are like sheep in the way they conform and follow. Toohey is a leader of the masses. Only when people like Roark are decimated can he truly be comfortable in his power to wipe the world clean of such men.

## Vocabulary

patronize, martyr, unobtrusive, loathe, precarious, endeavor, flaunt, sensuous, atrocious, flagrant, indignant, belligerent, ascetic, incongruous, superfluous, diffident



## Part II, Ellsworth Toohey, Chapters 6–10

### Summary

Roark is able to reopen his office with the money he gets from the Enright commission. He goes to a cocktail party with Austen Heller, only because Heller told him Dominique will be attending. He is introduced to Dominique by Heller, and they do not talk about their encounter in Connecticut. Throughout their interaction, Dominique thinks Roark is testing her, while Toohey observes Roark.

In her next column, Dominique does a critical attack on Enright House. However, Toohey tells her that hidden in her text is actually praise of Roark. Joel Sutton, a potential client of Roark, asks Dominique if he should hire Roark, and Dominique tells him to do it only if he wants a beautiful building. Sutton says he wants a safe building, and Dominique then recommends Keating.

That same night, Dominique goes to see Roark, and she flatly admits she wants him but also hates him at the same time because she cannot understand her desire, which is so strong. She swears she will do all she can to destroy him because she has a compulsion to see how strong he truly is, and Roark understands completely and admires her conviction.

The story progresses and in the next months, Keating manages to obtain four more commissions through Dominique. She is visited by Toohey, who wants them to form an alliance against Howard Roark. Dominique agrees, but she is seeing Roark very often at night, where she is unable to resist his indomitable strength. During the day, she attempts to destroy him. Roger Enright is very upset with Dominique for trying to destroy Roark. He brings her to the unfinished Enright House, and just standing inside the frame creates a sense of euphoric happiness for Dominique. She then writes an article saying no one should live in that house, and her actions confound everyone, including Keating. Everyone believes Dominique loves Keating, but she is still repulsed by him and does not speak to him in private.

We learn more about Toohey in Chapter 9. When he was a boy, Toohey hated anything unique and distinctive, trying to disguise his destructive nature through a false guise of humility. Surprisingly, he managed to fool everyone, and when he was at Harvard, he was very popular with wealthy socialites and heirs.

In his adult life, Toohey began espousing a doctrine of being submissive to the needs of others, and when he was an educational counselor, he would advise his students to pursue careers they were not interested in, in lieu of following their dreams. He eventually became a publisher and gained an enormous following and popularity.

It is June 1929, and the opening of the Enright House is met with success, and Roark is able to obtain more commissions. Anthony Cord gives him a commission to build a fifty-



story skyscraper, and it will be Roark's first ever office building. Then, Kent Lansing, a corporate magnate, approaches Roark to build a luxurious hotel called Acquitania Hotel. Lansing goes to battle with the rest of his corporate board in order to secure Roark's selection as the architect.

One of Toohey's followers, Hopton Stoddard, decides he wants to build a temple, and Toohey seizes the opportunity to pass this commission to Roark, as part of a plan to destroy Roark. Toohey tells Stoddard what to say to Roark in order to get Roark to agree to build the temple. Roark is very unimpressed and disgusted by Stoddard's appearance, but his arguments are impressive—he wants a temple to enshrine the human spirit and would like Roark to do it through infusing it with his own soul. Roark agrees, thinking he has misjudged Stoddard.

## Analysis

The core of these chapters is the relationship between Dominique and Roark, in a violent balance of struggle, and eventually submission. The contradiction that makes up Dominique—wanting to destroy Roark while admiring him immensely and wanting to shield him from the world's abasement, is key to understanding the premise of the novel. Dominique tries to ruin him and hopes she will fail and therefore disprove her disillusioned and cynical world view, and Roark comprehends perfectly what she is doing and why she has to do it. The friction between them is essential in bringing them together, and they unite every night in ecstasy after a day of public antagonism.

This love affair can be contrasted with Keating and Katie, whose relationship has failed because it was insipid and tender without any real feeling. Unlike Katie and Peter, Roark and Dominique fully understand each other even though what Dominique does might seem incomprehensible to anyone else. In a Darwinian sense, Rand is bringing strength as a preferable trait in personal relationships not restricted to professional life and ideals.

Toohey is someone who thrives on destroying great things. His entire life is built on trying to preach conformity and mediocrity. However, we get the feeling genius such as Roark's will always endure, and while Toohey might win over the masses temporarily, he will never be able to snuff out exceptional things from the world.

At the same time, Toohey also realizes he himself is not a genius and is bitter about it. Instead of reveling in strength and advocating for it, Toohey chooses instead to destroy it. By destroying strength, Toohey himself becomes a great man. Toohey's tools are religion and socialism, and knowing Rand's background of atheism and capitalism, we see Toohey stands for something she finds repulsive. She is attempting, through her portrayal of Toohey, to show us people should not renounce greatness for anything, whether it be religion or others, and individualism and strength should be revered.

## Vocabulary

impertinent, bourgeois, dissipate, monopoly, remnant, contagion, audacious, trite, surreptitious, immutable, vulgarity, debunk, crusades, gregarious, preposterous



## Part II, Ellsworth Toohey, Chapters 11–15

### Summary

The Cosmo-Slotnik building (which Keating won the competition for) is completed, but Keating is not pleased with it. However, Toohey berates Keating and tells him to give it up. Meanwhile, Roark is designing the temple to the human spirit, and he wants to install a sculpture in it. He searches for Stephen Mallory, the sculptor who attempted to murder Toohey.

Mallory finds a kindred spirit in Roark, and he weeps with joy. Roark wants a human statue to symbolize the human spirit in the temple, and Mallory agrees. Dominique is chosen as the model of the statue. Roark continues to work with uncompromising focus. His design is innovative and brilliant, the concept being to bring the sky downward to man, so visitors can find strength in themselves.

Kent Lansing's project, the Aquitania Hotel, has to be halted because of the corporation having problems, but he promises Roark that one day, it will be finished. The temple is finished, but Stoddard cancels it and then Toohey completes the assault with a cutting criticism of it. Stoddard files a suit against Roark claiming breach of contract and every publication is supportive of him. Toohey is elated and says to Dominique the only thing Roark will be known for now is his failure to build the temple.

During the trial, many people, including renowned architects, testify against Roark. Per usual, Dominique does a backhanded defense of Roark: When she testifies against him, she says the world is undeserving of the temple, therefore it should be destroyed. Roark's only defense is ten pictures of the temple.

Roark loses, and Dominique, over strenuous objections from Scarret, wants to submit her testimony for her next article. She threatens to leave the paper and Gail Wynand tells Scarret to fire her. Katie is now a social worker and hates her job. She turns to Toohey for help, but he bluntly tells her to be less self-serving and forget about her ego, at which she agrees. Keating, regretting his testimony against Roark, runs to Katie and tells her they will get married immediately the next day. Katie then tells Toohey she is no longer afraid of him.

Unfortunately for Katie, Dominique decides to punish herself by asking Keating to marry her that same night, and he, still in love with her, agrees and they get married that same night. After the ceremony, Dominique goes to Roark and they make love, and it is the first time she tells him she loves him. She also tells him she is now married, and Roark accepts it because she says she refuses to be happy in a world that cannot revere Roark for who he is. Roark allows her to continue because he knows the time is not right yet for them to be together.



In chapter 15, Dominique moves in with Keating, and even though it is a farce of a marriage, Keating is still proud of it and how people are looking at them and envying him. The Stoddard Temple is redesigned into a home for subnormal children. Roark no longer has any work after he completes his last commission of the Cord Skyscraper. With the stock market crash and his bad reputation, he becomes almost destitute. He visits the temple one day and Toohey comes out to mock Roark, but he fails, because when asked by Toohey what he thinks of him, Roark says he doesn't "think of (Toohey) at all."

## Analysis

In these chapters, the media is the tool that Toohey utilizes to destroy Roark. It is portrayed as an omnipresent public institution easily manipulated by Toohey. Through it, Toohey is able to reach the masses and convert them over to his thinking and publicly denounce Roark. Initially, Toohey simply chooses not to write about Roark in order to contain his influence, but at this point, he actively uses the media to attack Roark. Toohey's redoubtable nature is more fully revealed here, as well as his bad intent and cruelty when he manipulates Stoddard in his plan to destroy Roark's reputation.

We also see the different ways personalities react to Toohey. Dominique, in her typical cynical way, thinks Toohey is well-matched with the world and its stupidity and mediocrity; she will do nothing to stop him. Stephen Mallory, on the other hand, sees Toohey as the greatest threat to the world and tries to murder him, whereas Howard Roark is the most cutting in his cold indifference to Toohey. This is epitomized by their meeting at Stoddard Temple, where Toohey expects to be argued against and envisioned a clash of the titans. Instead, what he gets is cold indifference, and Roark does not deign even to think about him. Essentially this confirms the mediocrity Toohey represents. Toohey leaves, dejected.

The marriage between Dominique and Keating is cold and unhappy and is a testament to what Keating lost when he did not marry Katie. Keating might have been able to save Katie and she would have affirmed him as a man, but instead, he chose Dominique, who only married him as a punishment for herself.

In this text, we see multiple references to Rand's distaste for public institutions; this is embodied through Roark and his apathy toward them. Whether it is the school that expelled him or the firms that fired him, Roark is indifferent to them and works solely for his art and his genius. He is similarly unconcerned about Dominique's marriage to Keating because he sees it as another meaningless institution. In short, the only value system Roark finds meaningful is his own.

## Vocabulary

ponderous, curt, ebb, imbue, wizened, perplex, deplore, audible, allege, desecrate, imperious, expulsion, arbitrary, futile, notorious, servile, eminent, exalt



## Part III, Gail Wynand, Chapters 1–4

### Summary

In this new part of the text, we get deeper insight into Gail Wynand, the newspaper magnate. He is trying to come to a decision about a real-estate project called Stoneridge, and unsurprisingly, Toohey has recommended Keating to design the project. Wynand is not completely convinced, and Toohey tells him to talk to Dominique Keating before he makes a decision. Toohey also says he will give Wynand a present that will ostensibly help him make his choice.

Rand now shows us a memory of Wynand when he was growing up in Hell's Kitchen.

Seeing no use in going to school, Wynand begins working for the local paper called "The Gazette". The paper attempts to frame an honest man for something he didn't do, and Wynand calls on one of his journalistic heroes at the paper for help. However, his hero refuses to aid him, and Wynand becomes disillusioned and feels contempt for people who value integrity. Following that incident, a few years later, Wynand manages to seize control of a paper from a political gang/group, and he renames it The Banner. As part of a big campaign, The Banner tries to raise money for two people—a genius scientist and the pregnant girlfriend of a murderer who was executed on death row. Because the donations for the pregnant girl far outstrip the scientist, it is a clear sign to Wynand what is important to the public and what the paper should focus on in order to be popular. By the time he is thirty-five, Wynand has control of many major publications in the United States. Toohey's gift for Wynand is the statue of Dominique that Stephen Mallory had done. When he sees it, Wynand decides to meet Dominique.

In Chapter 2, Keating and Dominique have a frank conversation one evening, where Keating mourns the loss of her soul. Dominique tells him Keating himself has no real soul or opinions of his own. Before Keating can reply to Dominique, he is interrupted by a phone call from Toohey—Wynand would like to meet Dominique, and he would also like to discuss Stoneridge.

Dominique and Wynand have an instant connection the moment they meet. Dominique's beauty impresses Wynand, and she says she will sleep with him if he agrees to give the Stoneridge commission to Keating. Wynand refuses, because he realizes astutely Dominique is saying that only because he repulses her. She is surprised he understands her motivations. Later, Wynand offers Stoneridge to Keating in exchange for Dominique, and he takes her to see his secret collection of art.

One day, Wynand brings Dominique out for a cruise on his yacht, which is ironically called I Do. The yacht is named this way because as a child, people would constantly tell Wynand what he couldn't do and that he couldn't run anything. Wynand then proposes marriage to Dominique because he is in love with her. She is taken aback and is now unsure about how she has categorized Wynand. Then, she recalls Wynand had





run a caustic campaign against Roark in *The Banner* during the affair of Stoddard Temple. She then agrees to marry him.

## Analysis

Gail Wynand is an interesting character in *The Fountainhead* because he is the only one that is not immediately categorized as one type or another. He is also the only truly tragic character as well, and he embodies qualities from both Roark and Keating. For example, Wynand is strong, self-made, and a genius. However, he did not stick to his beliefs because he was disillusioned early on by those he admired, and now he resembles Toohey because he panders to the public. On the one hand, Wynand has sold himself to the public, but on the other, he still possesses integrity—in wanting to prove that no beauty can exist. He belongs in both worlds, and because of this, Dominique has a mixed reaction to him.

The secret art gallery is Wynand's kryptonite. He needs the beauty of it, yet it makes him suffer because he knows he will never give up his public life for it.

Wynand appears fairly late in the narrative, and we are meant to see him as a tragic figure who lost his idealism, yet possesses many of the good qualities that Roark embodies. When Wynand and Roark do finally meet, we anticipate something will change in Wynand and he will reclaim his lost feelings of individualism and strength. Roark is able to change people with one meeting, such as Mallory, who decides men who are not corrupt like Roark can actually exist.

Similarly, Roark's first encounter with Dominique altered her very perception of who she was and how she lived. We anticipate the meeting with Wynand will have a big impact on his trajectory.

We also see a different side of Peter Keating in these chapters. Keating is able to see the emptiness inside him, although he is unable to do anything to fill it. On the one hand, Keating despises Roark and views him as a great threat to him, but on the other hand, he knows without a doubt that Roark is a genius destined for greatness. Perhaps Keating's hatred of Roark could be conceived as a redirected hatred of himself and his own inability to embrace strength. In these chapters, Keating is a pitiful character, in love with Dominique, yet grotesque and unable to redeem himself and his many flaws.

## Vocabulary

assortment, gratification, mystic, luxurious, munificent, sardonic, appraise, avenge, disconcerting, stolid, wistful, consummate

## Part III, Gail Wynand, Chapters 5–9

### Summary

In Chapter 5, Wynand offers Keating a deal: He will give Keating \$250,000 as well as the Stoneridge contract if Keating gives him Dominique. Keating accepts, then in a moment of revelation later, realizes he loves Dominique. Toohey is not altogether happy about this turn of events because he does not like the idea of the union between two strong people like Wynand and Dominique.

Dominique visits Roark at a construction site in Clayton, Ohio, and tells him about what she plans to do. Roark recalls that Wynand was a hated figure for Henry Cameron, and he is unhappy about the news, but does not say anything to object. Dominique finds being with Roark extremely painful.

Because of Toohey's influence, the group of architects formed by him have become known by the public as the cream of the crop. At this point, Toohey is now supportive of modern architecture, because there is now a group of architects following the same style of modernism. This is contrary and hurtful to Peter Keating, who mostly utilizes a mix of different styles. Francon retires, and Keating appoints a mediocre, lazy architect by the name of Neil Dumont to succeed him. The firm is now at the beginning of a downward spiral.

Wynand wants to have a quiet and quick wedding ceremony with Dominique, but Dominique has other ideas. She wants to have the loudest, most vulgar ceremony possible, and she shows up at her wedding in an extravagant black dress.

She is denounced in public through letters to *The Banner* as an immoral and divorced woman.

In Chapter 8, Wynand and Dominique stay indoors for two weeks and do not leave their home. Wynand remains a contradiction to Dominique: She finds his actions evil, especially what he has done to Roark, yet she still believes he is also somehow heroic. Wynand does not bother to defend himself or his paper, stating coldly he will not apologize for *The Banner*. One evening, Dominique brings Wynand to see a play *The Banner* has highly praised. It is written by one of Toohey's followers, and it is terrible. In a very frank moment, Dominique calls Wynand and herself traitors. He is a traitor for turning his back on integrity in order to control the world, and so is she, for giving up on happiness in order to escape the world. Wynand's answer is that perfection does not exist; he detests that idea, and also believes there is no perfectly honorable man.

Wynand plans to erect a beautiful building in Hell's Kitchen as tribute to his past and the future. When Dominique warns him about Toohey's growing influence in the paper, (Toohey has replaced many of the staff members in *The Banner* with people loyal only to him) Wynand dismisses the warning. The two sometimes do not speak to each other,



but Wynand loves Dominique and does not care that she loves Roark. To him, his love for her gives his life meaning, and he has never had that before.

## Analysis

These chapters chronicle Toohey's rise to power and Rand makes sure that they are likened to the events that followed the Russian Revolution of 1917, when Joseph Stalin came to power. Toohey has replaced many members of The Banner with people loyal to him, even though they are mediocre and lack talent. Like Stalin, who replaced members of the communist party with his loyalists, Toohey hopes to overthrow Wynand. Toohey's followers have grown to a great number, and even though they are mediocre and poor examples of men, they have gained great celebrity because of his manipulation of the sensationalist media. Toohey plans to turn the paper against Wynand and take it over from him.

When Keating decides to sell Dominique to Wynand, we see the point from which he can never return. He will start on a big downward spiral and his fortunes will disappear. He gives up the woman he loves, Toohey now ignores him, and his firm begins to deteriorate. Toohey betrays Keating by advocating a style of architecture Keating does not do, and his career takes a beating. Keating is no longer mentioned as a counter to Roark—he is not worth the breath. Keating can also no longer turn to Katie, who used to love him, because she has become broken by her uncle Toohey. A man who only finds sustenance in the praise of adulation of others, Keating is now bound to fail.

In contrast, with his marriage to Dominique, Wynand moves from strength to strength and finds again the power of his youth he had lost in cynicism and disillusionment. Dominique is unable to get Wynand to say he has made mistakes, but at least he begins to think deeper about his actions, and we see him being prepared to meet Roark and come to his side.

## Vocabulary

crass, mirth, scoundrel, notwithstanding, obliged, omit, cohesive, emigrate, immolate, entwined, bromide, anemic, liquidate, manifest



## Part IV, Howard Roark, Chapters 1–5

### Summary

Chapter 1 opens with a young, discouraged, unnamed man cycling through the woods in 1935. He comes upon a resort designed by Howard Roark, and this viewing of the design gives the man enough bravery to last his entire lifetime.

We are told the back-story of how Roark becomes the builder of the resort. He hears of the developers doing a project in Monadnock Valley for people of moderate income. Although he does not think he will get the job, Roark goes to see the developers nonetheless, and surprisingly, they give him the job after he argues the resort should make the people feel individually unique and sheltered. He becomes engrossed in carrying out this project and notices the board might be a little too eager for their own good. And as it turns out, we learn the board actually has nefarious purposes. Roark continues to work on the project with Stephen Mallory, and they all live together in harmony in some shacks on the mountain. The resort is so popular that the board has to turn people away, but the board actually meant for the resort to fail; they had chosen Roark specifically because they thought he would fail. Mallory is upset, but Roark says the important thing is that the resort was built. Roark receives a phone call from Gail.

There is a strong, instantaneous connection between Wynand and Roark. Wynand is ignorant of the history between Dominique and Roark, and Dominique is unaware they are meeting. Wynand wants Roark to build a private fortress for him to protect Dominique from the world. He is impressed by Roark's buildings and the beauty they share. Roark is surprised yet heartened by how deeply Wynand understands him, and he agrees to do the project. After Roark has departed, Wynand reads every single article The Banner has published about Roark.

In Chapter 3, Wynand and Roark go to the proposed site of Wynand's fortress, and for hours they discuss how similar they are and the different circumstances that have led to where they are right now. Roark is unconcerned about how The Banner has previously viewed him and his work. Roark finishes his sketches and goes to Wynand's office to show them to him. He tells Roark he will only build the house if Roark will agree to design all future buildings in the style Wynand wants and says Roark will be destroyed if he does not agree. In answer, Roark decides to show Wynand a sketch of a home in the traditional style, asking Wynand if that is what he wants. Wynand is repulsed, and Roark tells him not even to bother to try to corrupt him any further. Wynand is very pleased and laughs; he has truly found an incorruptible man true to his ideals and principles.

Dominique is shown Roark's drawings, and even though Wynand does not tell her who did them, she recognizes the style and knows it is a proclamation of Roark's own love for her. When Roark comes to their apartment, however, both Dominique and Roark pretend nothing has happened before between them. Dominique, seeing the close interaction between Wynand and Roark, realizes Wynand is now a redeemed man



because of Roark's purity and strength. Wynand tells Toohey never to mention Roark in any of his writings, and Toohey agrees.

Because his true convictions and intent have now been regained, Wynand cannot stand to be at work and surrounded by mediocrity and falseness. He is disgusted, and to feel redeemed, he calls Roark and sees him. Dominique is in a state of conflict and torture—Roark is still impossible for her to get, and he is still testing her, yet he is so close. She says she will do anything she can for him.

## Analysis

In these chapters, we see another contrast to Roark—Wynand. We are meant to see Wynand's strength is not a pure strength, like Roark's. Power and dominance do not equate to strength: Wynand has plenty of both, but he does not have independence. We see again (as with the earlier contrast with Keating) that a true man's character shapes his choices, not circumstances, and if Roark were to be in Wynand's role, he would have done differently. Wynand and Roark both come from poor backgrounds, but Roark chooses to be individualistic and forge his own path; Wynand is disillusioned and chooses to obtain power over others through outward pandering to the public, while harboring inner love for true beauty. Compromise is for the weak, and this is something Roark believes wholeheartedly. However, Wynand believes smaller compromises are acceptable, as long as he is able to amass enough power so as never to have to compromise again. His mistake is he does not realize true strength comes from independence and self, not from dominating others.

Roark is Wynand's redeemer, and Wynand recognizes that fact almost immediately. He attempts to change himself and how he interacts with the world. He has built his world on cynicism and the belief man is always corrupt. He has long searched for the incorruptible man and believed he did not exist, but he has finally found him in Roark. Roark becomes Wynand's savior. Wynand must now attempt to retract all the ugliness and mediocrity he has helped to propagate in the world. It is not an easy task.

Meanwhile we see Toohey's corrupting influence is spreading, even as Roark's work is focalizing on itself, as a counterfoil. Rand hopes to let us see the beauty and integrity of art can combat the evilness of falsehoods and impurity, and we see Roark's work is starting to gain popular acceptance. Although he was picked as a foil to a scam in building the Monadnock resort, Roark managed to overcome through sheer genius, creating a haven for people both individual and sheltered. Rand was a big believer of art being able to save lives, and this is seen by how the young man in the beginning of Part IV finds validation and courage through just seeing Roark's work. The strength of the human spirit is never fatigued, and Roark's work and creations highlight the perfection that can be created even in an ugly world.

## Vocabulary

blockade, artifice, anticlimax, illogical, sadist, prelude, invoke, barometer, concerto, reactionary, diagnose, preamble, ingenuity, devoid, amok, appalling, commensurate, transient, caustic

## Part IV, Howard Roark, Chapters 6–10

### Summary

Ellsworth Toohey is at a dinner party filled with his puppets who have zero talents of their own. They support Toohey's works and disparage Wynand, arguing for unselfishness as the one virtue worthy of having. Toohey is exhilarated by this party and affirmation of himself. The party is hosted by one of Toohey's followers, a rich heir who is talentless and lacks any kind of ability.

In Chapter 7, we snapshot to Keating, who is now overweight, older, and bitter. After the retirement of Francon, Keating lost his good reputation and is now known as being old-fashioned.

He goes to the woods to paint, and it helps him to feel a little better. He has one last chance at professional success in the form of Cortlandt Homes, a large housing project. He approaches Toohey for help in securing the contract and asks to be recommended to the committee, but Toohey refuses. Upset, Keating confronts Toohey and asks him why he is being abandoned in favor of another architect, Gus Webb. Toohey's response is he only supported Keating in order to prevent gifted people from rising to prominence. Cortlandt Homes is a project that is challenging because the building must be kept economical and easy to maintain at the same time. Toohey agrees to back Keating on the condition Keating rise up to this challenge. Keating is aware of the fact he cannot do this, so he calls Roark.

Keating and Roark talk openly and discuss the project. When Keating returns the next day to Roark's office, Roark says he will agree to do it because he wants to overcome the challenge, and he will agree to let Keating take credit for the work on the condition nothing is changed in his design. Keating swears to it, and at the same time, he realizes although he will get the reward of credit and money, it is Roark who will obtain the reward of designing genius. Keating is brave enough to show Roark the paintings he has done that he has never ever shown anyone else, but Roark lets him know, very gently, it is now too late. Roark pities Keating, and is sick with disgust.

Roark's designs are genius. They create an airy, innovative, and very functional area. They are genius, and Toohey calls them as such even though he knows Keating did not do them. Wynand uses *The Banner* to promote Roark, but it backfires because the public begins to scorn the publication and what it supports. Wynand does not care and continues to try to use his immense power to sway people over to Roark's side and eventually win commissions for him. He brings Roark one day to his old neighborhood in Hell's Kitchen and reveals to Roark he wants him to build a great skyscraper on that site.

In chapter 10, Keating runs into Katie Halsey, and they have lunch even though Keating is uncomfortable. However, Katie is lively and happy. Keating discovers during lunch



Katie is a completely changed person, completely deformed by her uncle Toohey. She does not speak of anything but selflessness, charity, and giving to others. She submits to fate and claims while she suffered when he married Dominique, she has learned to accept things as they are. Keating says he should have married her and that he committed a great sin in marrying Dominique. He says what he really wants is extremely difficult although other people think it is easy. Before leaving, Katie scolds him for being selfish. Her spirit has been crushed and destroyed and she sounds like a happy parrot.

## Analysis

Two main characters, Keating and Wynand, find themselves in a position of questioning and self-doubt. They both try to find salvation through Roark, but whereas Wynand succeeds, Keating fails. Keating had ample opportunity for many years to change himself, but he failed because he did not immediately recognize what true greatness is. Wynand, on the other hand, knows immediately what he sees in Roark, and he is able to find some redemption, setting out on a quest to change what he has done his entire life.

At the same time, although he fails to change and it is too late for his self-realization, Keating finally turns honest and recognizes the true value of strength and architecture. He does so because he no longer has success and wealth to corrupt his views, and his poignant meeting with Katie only reinforces his realization. It is too late for Keating, but not for Wynand, and he enters the bullring ready to fight. He struggles to regain his strength and true mastery of himself and the values that have been reinvigorated in him. Wynand manages to succeed where Keating fails because he was always waiting for such a realization. Keating was blind and saw too late; Wynand had half an eye open.

## Vocabulary

fallacy, chronic, perish, dialectic, shrewd, nurture, allusion, gratification, parasitic, rebuke, essence, pervasive, collaborate





## Part IV, Howard Roark, Chapters 11–15

### Summary

The Cortlandt project is almost completed, and Roark embarks on a long voyage with Wynand on his yacht. They discuss what selfishness is, and for Roark, those people who are selfless are “second-handers” because they live through others and not themselves. Independence of spirit and strength are the greatest threats to second-handers.

On his return to New York, Roark discovers someone has altered his construction design, and there are now additional features over his original design. These additions were made in secret by Toohey’s disciples, against Keating’s will. Keating fought valiantly to stop them, but they overpowered him. Roark visits Dominique, and the following Monday, she distracts the night watchman with a request to get gas, and as he leaves, Roark dynamites the entire building. Dominique crawls into her car and fakes injuries by cutting herself; when the police find her, Dominique is almost dead.

When Dominique finally awakens back home, Wynand rebukes her, but he secretly approves of the destruction of the building. He still does not know of the true feelings Dominique has for Roark. She realizes if he knows, it will cause him immense pain. Meanwhile, Roark is arrested for dynamiting the building. Wynand posts bail for him, and Roark comes again to visit Dominique. Roark gives Dominique an ultimatum: If he is convicted, she must stay with Wynand, but if not, she must leave to be with him or their relationship is over. Roark is denounced by the public, and some people think he was jealous that Keating and Webb might have used some of his ideas and produced such great work.

Wynand forces all of his publications to come to Roark’s defense, but it hurts him more than it helps, and it is only then Wynand realizes how corrupt his organization has become through Toohey.

In chapter 14, Keating is in hiding from all the media attention when Toohey pays him a visit. Keating admits to him that it was indeed Roark who designed the Cortlandt Home, and Toohey wants him to go public with this information. Keating does not want to think about how evil Toohey is, but Toohey goes to great length to explain to him in detail exactly how he controls people through forcing them to be selfless. Keating is broken by him, and he begs Toohey not to go or leave him, but Toohey finds that funny and laughs in his face.

Toohey continues his attack on Roark by writing a column criticizing him. Wynand fires Toohey, along with the other employees who approved the column. Before he leaves, Toohey vows to Wynand he will soon own the paper. The union is filled with Toohey followers, and they go on strike to demand that Toohey and the others who were fired be reinstated. They also want to return to becoming anti-Roark. Wynand manages, with



the help of Dominique, to print the next edition as no one can get into the building due to the violence of the picket lines. They turn out the paper, fewer copies every passing day, but no one reads even the few copies they manage to print.

## Analysis

This last part of the book is titled after Howard Roark, but there is no special focus on his history and motivations. Rather, we are given detailed back stories of the other protagonists to highlight the pureness of Roark. We do not know how Roark grew up except he was born into a poor family. Perhaps her reason for doing so is to emphasize history is irrelevant, and Roark is the epitome of unbending perfection. The mystery of Roark's past makes him more obvious as a representation and symbol of an ideal, rather than a real person. His character and everything he symbolizes are found in his buildings and how he builds them.

At the same time, we see a humanizing view of Roark, who pities Keating (and despises himself for pitying him). He also loves Dominique and Wynand. It is also in this part that Roark does two declarations of his individualistic and strength of ideals—on Wynand's yacht, as well as during the Cortlandt trial.

The act of defiance from Roark is the culmination of the novel, pitting the opposing forces in a final climatic conflict. Roark has been provoked by Toohey, because for the first time, his work has been physically altered by Toohey. He prefers to destroy the blasphemy rather than let it live on in its disgusting state. The difference between the Stoddard Temple and Cortlandt is that Stoddard was a finished work. Roark cannot abide the fact his building was not finished before it was perverted. Roark cannot live with this compromise and must therefore destroy it.

The bombing is a pact between Dominique and Roark, and now, Dominique is free to love Roark. By affirming her loyalty and devotion to him through aiding him with the bombing, Dominique finds stimulus in violence, and it makes her ready to finally begin her relationship with Roark. Her rebirth is signified with the annihilation of the building. It has been destroyed, and now she can be renewed. Her relationship with Roark has always been violent, and with this act of destruction, she can be reconciled with Roark, whom she loves.

In these chapters preceding the bombing as well as following it, Rand essentially does a run-down of her ideas of philosophy. Like in a courtroom with opposing counsel, both Roark and Toohey make lengthy monologues on their doctrine and their ideals. Both of them talk with Keating, but whereas Roark is calm and collected, Toohey terrorizes Keating and goes into a tirade. It is clear there is no decision to be made on which is the better philosophy, and Rand is only emphasizing once again that Roark has always been on the correct side.



## Vocabulary

mawkish, impetus, nirvana, enthrone, antonym, microcosm, espouse, instigate, derelict, besiege, ostensibly, indict, meteor, avarice, libel



## Part IV, Chapters 16–20

### Summary

The Banner is in trouble. All of the paper's advertisers have stopped their sponsorships and the paper is in financial ruin. Wynand knows the paper is doomed if he does not make a compromise, and he haunts the streets of New York in an attempt to find his answer. In the end, he caves, and he feels like he is putting a gun to his own head and pulling the trigger. The very next day, a formal letter signed by Wynand appears in the paper, apologizing for defending Roark.

Everyone buys the paper, and although Roark forgives him and writes a letter to Wynand saying so, his letter is returned to him unopened. Dominique visits Roark to offer herself to him. Roark thinks about rejecting her for Wynand's sake, but in the end, he realizes Wynand has lost himself again, and it is right for them to be together. Finally, Dominique is ready to love Roark. They make love, and the next day, Dominique calls the police, reporting a stolen ring. When they arrive with two reporters, she makes sure to greet them in Roark's pajamas, to hit them over the head with the fact that she is now sleeping with Roark. Dominique tells Roark she wants the scandal to unite them. The story runs in every newspaper, and the scandal makes Wynand divorce Dominique. Dominique is waiting for him at home, and she reveals to him finally it has always been Roark she has been in love with.

Francon, Dominique's father, calls her. Surprisingly, he is happy for her as he knows Roark is the right person for her. Scarret wants Wynand to agree to use the scandal to increase the circulation of The Banner, and they run an article detailing how Dominique forced Wynand to defend Roark. Wynand receives thousands of letters of condolence for his torture and receives public forgiveness.

Roark chooses to be his own representation during the trial and deliberately ensures the least sympathetic jury is chosen. Keating testifies it was Roark, not he, who designed Cortlandt and he was afraid of what would happen after the project was changed. Roark does not bother to have any witnesses called, instead he gives an eloquent and moving speech describing creators and his principles. Creators free the world with the innovation and genius of their actions and work; Man wants truth and will seek it; he needs to create. Man must not serve fellow man. Roark condemns the second-handers, the so-called selfless people who can only live through others and who feed on the creativity and genius of the creators. The United States is being corrupted by this weak form of altruism, and he destroyed Cortlandt because it was now impure and corrupted. After the jury deliberates, they find Roark not guilty. Roark looks up at Wynand, but Wynand departs wordlessly.

Enter Roger Enright, who has always believed in Roark. He buys Cortlandt and commissions Roark to rebuild it the way he wants. The project has reasonable rates of rent for inhabitants but it still makes a profit for Enright. Wynand is told by the labor



board to rehire Toohey. Rather than do so, Wynand closes The Banner. When Toohey returns in what he thinks will be triumph, he finds Wynand in the office with no one else. Toohey is now unemployed and has to start again from the beginning. He finds a job at another paper and starts to probe into the publisher's beliefs.

Months later, Roark goes to Wynand's office. There, Wynand tells Roark he wants Roark to design the Wynand Building as an act of integrity and defiance against the world. He wants Roark's spirit to be encapsulated by this building.

Eighteen months later, Dominique is walking to the site of the Wynand Building, where she knows she will find Roark. She is lifted up through the finished sections and is finally surrounded by the steel and naked structure of the building in its core. There, she looks up. It is so high there is nothing really visible, but standing between the endless sky and the ocean behind, is her husband, Howard Roark.

## Analysis

Wynand is truly a tragic figure in these last chapters. His tragedy is highlighted by the fact that he was given the choice of redeeming himself, but failed. Where Roark would have never compromised and would have closed his business rather than give up his principles, Wynand cannot bear to lose everything he has built and chooses the weak path. Unlike Keating, Wynand is not ignorant of his choices. His tragedy is he was able to succeed, but he does not. In the end, he closes the paper to prevent Toohey from taking over, and he gains absolutely nothing. Wynand loses himself, and then he loses the paper, which he compromised everything for by destroying it himself. There is a symmetry in the ending scene of the book when one recalls the opening scene. Once again, Roark is looking out at the world. Before, he was surrounded by nature on a granite cliff while being naked and raw. Here he is standing between the earth and the sky and the ocean, and rising above it. The last part of the book deifies Roark—he no longer has any pretense of being human, and he stands far above everything that is mediocre beneath him. While Roark has found triumph at the end, Toohey is not dead, and in fact, will probably thrive. He did not succeed in destroying Roark, but he will surely try again, if not with Roark, then with some other genius. In the end, Roark does not convert the world, but he survives, and his ideas do with him. That is a triumph in itself, because genius and strength of integrity can

## Vocabulary

corrosion, combustion, condolence, anesthesia, sloth, supersede, carnage, nimble, pendulum, ligament, mutilate, vestige, strenuous



# Characters

## Howard Roark

The novel revolves around the life of Howard Roark. He is Ayn Rand's ideal hero, a genius of true integrity and strength of character. Roark is a supreme being, and he is described as "gaunt," "cold," and "angular." These are words that are reminiscent of certain motifs in the text—granite, stone, buildings. Not much is known about Roark's history except he is born into a poor family. He loves his work and will not compromise for it. He and Dominique Francon have a violent love for each other. He brings beauty to the world, and innovation and progress.

## Ellsworth Toohey

Toohey is the anti-hero of the novel. He represents everything that Howard Roark detests. Toohey has no talent of his own and only wishes to exert control over others. He wants to promote mediocrity and hates everything that is unique and progressive. Frail and weak-looking, Toohey preaches a doctrine of selflessness and altruism. Toohey's ideals are everything Ayn Rand stands against: Fascism and socialism, and he has been compared to Josef Stalin, the Russian dictator who plunged his country into collectivism and Stalinism.

## Dominique Francon

Dominique is the female counterpart of Howard Roark, the differences being she does not actually possess genius although she can recognize it. Also, she is a masochist, determined to punish herself as much as possible since the beauty of the world cannot emerge. She is young and beautiful with blond hair and gray eyes, but she is cold, frigid even, cynical, and impervious to passion from others. She deliberately sets out to destroy Roark to test his ability to withstand her attacks, then she punishes herself by marrying Peter Keating, a man she detests.

## Gail Wynand

Wynand is one of the novel's truly tragic characters. He has many of Howard Roark's qualities, but has failed in living up to his ideals because he was disillusioned at an early age. He sells his sense of self for power over others and is a self-made, self-taught, successful man. Wynand's inner self is still pure and seeks out integrity, which explains why he falls in love with Dominique and marries her. Wynand has the chance for redemption when he meets Roark. He becomes a great friend of Roark's and sets out with vigor to revalidate himself and his life. However, in the end, he caves into pressure and makes the ultimate compromise, betraying Howard Roark.



## Peter Keating

Initially, Peter Keating is contrasted often with Howard Roark. They start out from the same place, being classmates in the same school, but Keating sets out on a completely divergent path, living only for the acclamation of others. Because he does not live for himself and his integrity, Keating obtains commercial success in the beginning, but can only continue through help from Roark and by putting his name on Roark's work. Keating goes on a downward moral spiral, socializing, killing, lying and stealing, and finally, he even exchanges Dominique, his wife, for a project. His fall from grace is complete at the end of the novel, and he is a broken person.

## Henry Cameron

Henry Cameron is the architect who hires Roark after Roark is expelled. He becomes Roark's mentor and is a brilliant, yet disillusioned man. His ideas are too far ahead of his time. Like Roark, he loves his work, but he does not possess the intractable will of Roark, who is impervious to all attacks. Cameron dies reaffirming Roark's trajectory, telling Roark that he is doing the right thing in fighting for his ideals.

## Katie Halsey

She is Keating's love interest and Toohey's niece. She and Keating make plans to get married multiple times, but he is not strong enough to save her from Toohey. At first innocent and sincere, her love for Keating affirms him and might have been enough to save him, but because he abandons her, she is destroyed by her uncle and ends up a completely changed puppet.

## Guy Francon

Francon is Dominique's father. He is also Keating's boss, and eventually, Keating's partner at the firm. Like Keating, Francon essentially possesses little talent and rises to the top through social machinations. Although weak, Francon loves his daughter, and through this love, he finds redemption.

## Stephen Mallory

Mallory shares many qualities with Roark. He is a gifted artist but feels the world is destroying all beauty. He attempts to kill Toohey, but fails. He is on a downward spiral when Roark saves him and shows him an incorruptible man can indeed exist.



## **Alvah Scarret**

Dominique's boss and the chief editor at Wynand's paper, The Banner, Scarret is a barometer for public opinion and does not really have any talent or opinion of his own.

## **Mrs. Keating**

A manipulative woman, Keating's mother pushes him toward a path of money and success. She is a big reason why he makes his choices. Mrs. Keating worships at the temple of money and believes it is the only indicator of a person's worth. She encourages Keating to abandon Katie and to pursue Dominique.

## **Mike**

Mike is the salt of the earth, a very capable electrician who is able to recognize and admires talent and genius of any form. He sees this in Roark and supports him throughout the novel, helping him with his work at the construction sites.

## **The Dean**

The dean stands for tradition. He is the leader of the school from which Roark is expelled. He is leery of Roark and believes he is dangerous.

## **John Erik Snyte**

A fraud, John Erik Snyte is seen as a very progressive architect because he melds different styles. In reality, what he does is to combine different designs from the architects in his group and mashes them up into a final design. He does not appear to do anything of his own besides combining other peoples' work.





# Objects/Places

## Granite Quarry

Howard Roark goes to work at a granite quarry after he is forced to close his office. It is there that he meets Dominique for the first time. Stone and granite form an important motif throughout the text, and when the novel opens, Roark is standing on a granite cliff. They represent strength, integrity, and cold pureness. Rand associates the stone and granite with strength of character. Roark is very often seen in parallel with these objects, although he is actually even stronger than granite—in one particular scene, he is seen breaking the granite.

## Architectural School

Architectural school is the starting point for both Peter Keating and Howard Roark. It is the first institution to be mentioned in the text, and in an unflattering light because it stands for old traditionalist principles and people who value conformity more than they value ingenuity.

## The Yacht “I do”

Particularly significant for Gail Wynand, Wynand named the yacht “I do” because his entire life, people told him he “couldn’t.” It is on this yacht that he and Roark have long discussions on the meaning of selflessness, integrity, and strength. When they are on the yacht, Toohey has his followers deface Cortlandt Homes, tipping off the climax of the book.

## First-Handers

A term from Howard Roark, first-handers are creative and strong individuals who survive through their own strength and integrity, as well as talent. They are the innovators of society, the ones who grow crops, cure diseases, and build buildings.

## Second-handers

Another term from Howard Roark, in his view, second-handers are people who have no talent of their own and who feed off the creativity and ingenuity of individualists like himself. They preach selflessness and altruism because they live through others and cannot live through themselves.



## The Statue of Dominique

Roark wants a statue to adorn Stoddard Temple as a testament to the strength of the human spirit, and he suggests to Mallory that Dominique would be the perfect model for it. Dominique poses nude for the statue. The statue is later given as a gift from Toohey to Gail Wynand. When he sees the statue, Wynand cannot rest until he meets Dominique.

## The Banner

The Banner is a scandal sheet publication that is one of the flagship newspapers of Gail Wynand's empire. Both Toohey and Dominique write columns for it. It is the scene of Wynand's ultimate failure—he makes the compromise to Toohey to keep the paper open and therefore betrays Roark, and then, he closes the paper in the end to keep it from being taken over by Toohey.

## Stoddard Temple

Stoddard Temple is designed by Roark to embody the human spirit and its greatness. Unfortunately, the entire project is a ploy by Toohey to discredit Roark. Roark builds a great edifice, but it is denounced by Toohey as being sacrilegious.

## Skyscraper

The skyscraper is essentially an invention of Henry Cameron, who unlike popular thought at the time, wanted to make a building look as tall as it was, as opposed to shorter than it was. At the end of the book, Wynand commissions Roark to build the Wynand Building, a great skyscraper in Hell's Kitchen. The book ends with Dominique finding Roark at the building, staring into the distance, so high up there is nothing between him but sky and water.

## Cortlandt Homes

The Cortlandt Homes are an architectural challenge because they must be affordable to live in, yet attractive and airy. Peter Keating is given the commission, but he knows he is unable to fulfill the premise, so he turns to Roark for help. It is Roark's design that is finally accepted.



# Themes

## Objectivism

Although not explicitly mentioned in the text, Ayn Rand is the founder of the philosophy of Objectivism, which directly counters and contradicts socialism and fascism. Objectivism is a celebration of self and the strength of the individual above all else. There is no room for weakness and altruistic behaviors as these encourage conformity and injustice. Scientific progress, artistic endeavors, and all talents are encouraged and lauded, for they all ultimately advance a society and culture. One must live for oneself, and by doing so, everything is enriched. Howard Roark is the embodiment of Ayn Rand's ideal of Objectivism, which thus serves as a major and underlying, though not explicitly mentioned, theme.

## Individualism

Individualism serves to be the strongest theme running throughout Ayn Rand's novel, "Fountainhead", appearing consistently through the character of Howard Roark. Not only does individualism form the core theme of the novel, but individualism forms the core component of Rand's philosophy of Objectivism. Throughout the text, we see how individuals behave vis-à-vis their surroundings. Howard Roark is the only individual who is able to withstand the sway and pull of society to compromise, refusing to give in to popular taste. He works for himself and for his art (buildings) more so than anything else. Roark must face great struggles in order to maintain his individualism and his genius. There are many scattered examples of failed individuals (Henry Cameron, Gail Wynand, etc.) who have great talent but who ultimately are not strong enough to withstand society's pressures, changing popular tastes, or conformity. Roark believes that individuals will drive history forward, not society.

## Selflessness as Weakness

While Ayn Rand's novel "The Fountainhead" does not specifically oppose the act of good deeds, it does oppose the act of good deeds insofar as they may result in laziness and greed on the part of those who are on the receiving end of the good acts. Additionally, manipulators tend to use the act of selflessness as a way of bringing people under their control, by causing those in need of good will to become dependent on good will –and thus slaves to powers beyond their control and their individuality. People will never be able to live selflessly, but they will obey whoever preaches it. Selflessness is herded with the idea of conformity, the anti-individual. Howard Roark is not a proponent of sentimentalism, from which selflessness tends to spring. Evil people like Toohey control others around him through preaching selflessness, which becomes a synonym for collectivism –the good gesture in exchange for control over the individual.



## Love

Love serves to be an important and underlying theme in the novel “Fountainhead” by Ayn Rand. The novel is not without its share of love between characters. Ultimately, the central love story is the relationship between Dominique and Roark. Theirs is not a conventional relationship, and their first act of intimacy is one of calculated violence, where Dominique is raped by Roark. Dominique is frigid to everyone but Roark—the comparisons between her and ice are frequent in the beginning and fade as the novel progresses and her relationship with Roark develops. Dominique attempts to shield herself from the world and to not feel anything because she wants to punish herself for being in a world that lacks integrity. Throughout the novel, Dominique and Roark have various interactions, and even though she marries two other men before finally getting together with Roark, their passion is an intriguing mix of love and hate. Dominique even vows to destroy Roark, but she does so because she would rather see perfection destroyed than made impure and debased by society and the world. In this way, the destruction of innocence as opposed to the corruption of innocence is preferable for Dominique. One would posit the relationship between them is also very scientific. Roark sees her as an experiment that is growing up nicely: She needs to be with Keating and Wynand before she can be with him. Even when they are in the throes of passion (and violence) during their lovemaking, the prose utilized by Rand is coldly scientific, creating an interesting dichotomy.

## Rationalism

Rationalism, including the importance of scientific progress, forms a major theme found consistently throughout Ayn Rand’s novel, “Fountainhead”. Even though architecture is used as an important marker for individualism, the novel denotes progress of a society through scientific inquiry, not through artistic achievement. Art in literature and theatre are ridiculed and made to look as insipid and undeserving of praise. An example of this is the play written by Toohey’s follower and how it is described as a ridiculous and mediocre piece of work. Architecture, however, serves as a physical and useful manifestation of the creative impulse, and serves as a monument to the individual’s creativity. Skyscrapers, for example, symbolize the human spirit and its ability to exert will over nature, as well as the advent of modernism. The ideal art form is architecture because it also involves scientific principles –and so blends reason and passion.

## Mass Media

Ayn Rand is heavily critical of mass media in her novel “The Fountainhead”. The media is a corrupt tool used by manipulators to control the mindset and popular tastes of the public. In particular, The Banner is instrumental in exploiting the masses, and it is also the tool through which Wynand finds his downfall. Rand does not seem to believe in a neutral, reasonable journalism, and instead strives to show us how people like Toohey sway the public to mediocrity through his columns. Falsehoods abound in the media;

the only truth can be found in the integrity of man's spirit, not by those who think to judge or report on it.



# Style

## Point of View

The novel is in third person and omniscient throughout the text, giving us analyses of thoughts and actions of each character. The novel is divided into four sections, each of which is named after a main character in the novel. Despite each section being named after a different character, the text essentially revolves around Howard Roark. The narrator is unknown, but we can safely assume that Ayn Rand is speaking to us and espousing her views of objectivism. She is a trustworthy narrator, meaning that we, the audience, are given clear, truthful representations of the characters and there are no surprises to be had, e.g., in certain novels, the narrators are actually confused or deceived or have imperfect information. The tone is extremely formal and moralistic, with a heavy bias for Howard Roark. The point of view clearly divides the main cast of characters into two camps, one of which is highly desirable, and the other, despicable. There is no pretense of neutrality from the point of view. We are meant to revile Toohey and be repulsed by his actions and thoughts, whereas we are meant to deify Roark. The frequent associations the narrator does with positive items—beauty, freedom, progress, individuality with Roark vs. conformity and mediocrity with Toohey—makes it extremely easy for the audience to discern her preferences and point of view.

## Setting

The novel is mostly set in 1920s – 1930s New York, spanning the decades when Howard Roark is expelled from school up till the moment he triumphs while standing at the top of the skyscraper he is building. Other settings are Connecticut, Monadnock Valley, Massachusetts, and Ohio. Construction sites figure as key setting points in the novel as well. The only time there is a departure from firm land is when Roark goes with Wynand on board his yacht.

## Language and Meaning

A novel of ideas that is heavily allegorical, Rand uses formal, moralistic language to espouse her ideals. She uses colloquial terms in some instances and also utilizes contrasting sentences to highlight the differences between the strong and the weak. Rand means what she says, meaning if the narrator says Howard Roark is strong, there is no question he is strong. There is no second-guessing the analyses done by the narrator. No hidden meanings are found and Rand makes it obvious whose side we should be on. This type of writing could be construed as a little heavy-handed. Essentially, the text was written to espouse a philosophy, not to reveal it. The plot is almost secondary, and the characters are more symbolic than anything else.

## Structure

The novel is long, at 694 pages in most editions, and is divided into four main sections. Each section is named after a character in the book, beginning with Peter Keating, Ellsworth Toohey, Gail Wynand, and finally Howard Roark. In each section, Howard Roark is contrasted and compared to the other characters, and each section highlights a particular value of society that is represented by the character. The novel is chronological, with some flashbacks, and we see the passing of roughly twenty years, in which there is the rise and downfall of some of the characters. The action of the book leads up to the climax that happens at the last section and then closes with philosophical arguments from both sides.



## Quotes

He studied Roark and the house with the same meticulous scrutiny; he felt as if he could not quite tell them apart.

My dear fellow, who will let you?" "That's not the point. The point is, who will stop me?"

No two sites on earth are alike. No two buildings have the same purpose. The purpose, the site, the material determine the shape. Nothing can be reasonable or beautiful unless it's made by one central idea, and the idea sets every detail. A building is alive, like a man.

Never ask people about your work.

You're too good for what you want to do with yourself.

Were he to be told that this was the best or the ugliest house in the world, he would agree with either.

And it made them sit silently, facing each other, in astonishment, in resignation.

She knew suddenly that he was not telling her about himself; he was speaking of her.

You know that I hate you, Roark. I hate you for what you are, for wanting you, for having to want you.

I will fight to starve you, to strangle you on the things you won't be able to reach. I have done it to you to today-and that is why I shall sleep with you tonight.

If you make people perform a noble duty, it bores them. If you make them indulge themselves, it shames them. But combine the two and you've got them.

People want nothing but mirrors around them. To reflect them while they're reflecting too...Reflections of reflections and echoes of echoes. No beginning and no end.

She thought how strange it would be if she ever said 'Hello' to him; one did not greet oneself each morning.

They stood straight, facing each other for a moment, as if at attention; it was almost like a military salute.

I'm a parasite. I've been a parasite all my life.

Being with Howard is like being alone with myself, only more at peace.

I don't wish to be the symbol of anything. I'm only myself.

It's I who have destroyed you by helping you.





Independence is the only gauge of human virtue and value. What a man is and makes of himself; not what he has or hasn't done for others. There is no substitute for personal dignity.



# Topics for Discussion

## Topic 1

How is love portrayed in the novel? Do Keating and Wynand truly love Dominique?

## Topic 2

Why is there a scene between Roark and the Dean of the school, and how does it set the stage for Roark's struggles?

## Topic 3

How is violence (whether physical or psychological) depicted in the novel, and why is it condoned in some instances?

## Topic 4

What is the role of women in the novel? What purpose does Katie serve and how is she different from Dominique?

## Topic 5

Which philosophical and political systems are attacked in the novel? What was happening in historical context during the writing of this book?

## Topic 6

Ayn Rand has stated before that the main crux of the novel is about individualism opposed to collectivism, but she does not mean that in a political sense. In what sense does she mean it?

## Topic 7

Peter Keating starts out as the anti-hero to Roark. Does he remain so throughout the text, and why is following his progress through life important in understanding Roark's own trajectory?



## Topic 8

How can one reconcile the violence between Dominique and Roark as love, and how does Rand depict their relationship?

## Topic 9

What is the connection between buildings and the people who build them? How does Rand utilize her descriptions of certain buildings to enlighten us about a particular character?

## Topic 10

What has become of Toohey at the end of the novel? Why does Rand not destroy him like she did Keating?