

# **The Great Gilly Hopkins Study Guide**

**The Great Gilly Hopkins by Katherine Paterson**

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# Contents

<a href="#">The Great Gilly Hopkins Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 1-3.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 4-6.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 7-9.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 10-12.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 13-15.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Settings.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>



## Plot Summary

“The Great Gilly Hopkins” is a young adult novel by Katherine Paterson, which details the experiences of eleven year-old Galadriel “Gilly” Hopkins in the foster care system. Gilly prides herself on being a rambunctious and difficult child. She hopes that one day she will be reunited with her true mother, Courtney Rutherford Hopkins, a stunningly beautiful woman and member of the flower child movement.

Gilly comes to live at the Trotter household in Thompson Park, Maryland, overseen by Mrs. Trotter, and lived in by William Earnest Teague, a slightly mentally-handicapped seven year-old. Mrs. Trotter cares for her elderly neighbor, Mr. Randolph, who is blind and black –things which annoy Gilly at first. Everything about Mrs. Trotter, William, and Mr. Randolph annoys Gilly at first. So, she plots to flee the home and head to California to see her mother. Despite the genuinely kind nature of Mrs. Trotter and Mr. Randolph, Gilly steals money from both of them and attempts to flee west. She is caught by the police, and Mrs. Trotter brings her home rather than pressing charges on her.

Soon after, Gilly writes a letter to her mother, speaking of deplorable living conditions, but she hears nothing back. Time passes, and Gilly grows much closer to Mrs. Trotter, William, and Mr. Randolph. She feels loved and needed by her unorthodox family. Ultimately, Nonnie, who is Gilly’s grandmother, shows up. Having heard from her daughter Courtney for the first time in thirteen years, Nonnie is checking to see how things are with Gilly. A case is made, and Gilly is taken from the Trotter household by social services. Nonnie brings Gilly to her home in Virginia. Gilly regrets leaving Mrs. Trotter, William, and Mr. Randolph behind. However, though she misses them terribly, she and her grandmother warm up to each other. Over time, Gilly comes to love her grandmother very much, although

Surprisingly, Courtney comes to visit from California, but Gilly is horrified by two things. First, Courtney looks nothing like her old photo. She is haggard and disheveled, having wasted away much of her life. Secondly, Courtney has only come to visit Gilly because Nonnie has paid her to do so. Gilly is beside herself with grief. She calls Mrs. Trotter from the airport. But, Mrs. Trotter tells her that Gilly’s home is with Nonnie. Gilly accepts this and tells her grandmother she is ready to go home.



# Chapter 1-3

## Summary

### Chapter 1

Eleven year-old Galadriel "Gilly" Hopkins has a meeting with her social worker, Miss Ellis. Miss Ellis informs Gilly that she needs to make an effort because her new home will be her third foster home in three years. Miss Ellis is emotional and wants to make sure Gilly is placed in a good home, but Gilly is bored with Miss Ellis. Miss Ellis explains that the new foster family, the Trotters, will be unlike the others. Gilly is notorious across America as being a problem child with whom few wish to tangle. Miss Ellis and Gilly arrive at the Trotters' house, a big old home in an old neighborhood in Thompson Park, Maryland. Maime Trotter, the matriarch of the family, comes out to meet them.

Gilly is brought inside where she meets her new brother, William Earnest Teague, a small boy. Everything inside the house is old, from the television to the piano. While Miss Ellis and Mrs. Trotter aren't looking, Gilly glares at William and scares him into hiding. Gilly is very unhappy with her surroundings. It's an old, dusty house with a fat and gross guardian (Mrs. Trotter) and a freaky kid (William). Gilly decides she can hack it, so long as she is in charge.

### Chapter 2

Gilly is taken to her bedroom, a small, cramped space, where the bed takes up most of the area. Mrs. Trotter tells Gilly to make herself at home, and Gilly gets to unpacking. She has very few possessions because she is never in one place long enough to acquire much or have reason to unpack. Gilly's most prized possession is a photograph of her mother, Courtney Rutherford Hopkins. Her mother is dark-haired and beautiful. The photograph is signed, " With love to Gilly."

Mrs. Trotter asks Gilly for help with preparing dinner, but Gilly says no. Mrs. Trotter offers Gilly the opportunity to hang out and watch television with William, but Gilly says no because Sesame Street is a retard show. Mrs. Trotter then sternly tells Gilly that she will not make fun of William and she will not ever take the Lord's name in vain. Mrs. Trotter then sends Gilly out next door to get Mr. Randolph, who eats with the Trotter family every night. Gilly goes to Mr. Randolph's house. She finds a small, old black man with large white eyes, and she runs back to Mrs. Trotter. Mrs. Trotter explains that the man is Mr. Randolph. He is blind and must be led by the hand. Gilly, frustrated and in a huff, goes back to get Mr. Randolph.

Gilly introduces herself to Mr. Randolph and leads him over to Mrs. Trotter's. As she does, she wonders what she has done to deserve a religious fanatic foster mother, a retarded seven year-old brother, and a blind black man. Mr. Randolph almost trips, but Gilly helps to steady him. They have dinner, and Mr. Randolph and Mrs. Trotter have a



wonderful conversation about the food, which Gilly resents, though she does enjoy the meal.

That night, Gilly considers writing to her mother to tell her about the place where she has been forced to live. Gilly recalls Miss Ellis telling her that Gilly's mother was from Virginia where eating with blacks was frowned upon. If Gilly's mother knew this, then surely she would come to rescue Gilly. Gilly wonders if Miss Ellis is deliberately trying to stop Courtney from coming to get Gilly. Gilly promises herself that she will find a way to contact her mother and get out of the foster system once and for all.

### Chapter 3

Gilly has gotten bubble gum in her hair. She is delighted that she will look a wreck to Mrs. Trotter. Mrs. Trotter tells Gilly that she will bring Gilly to school around nine that morning. She tells Gilly that William has made wonderful advances with his reading. Mrs. Trotter sends William off to school. She asks Gilly to make the beds. Gilly reluctantly goes upstairs. She is enraged that she does not look better for her first day of school, Gilly deliberately hacks away at the bubble gum in her hair with scissors.

Mr. Evans, the principal at school, decides that Gilly needs to be in a class that will challenge her. He decides to send her to Miss Harris's sixth grade class. Gilly is appalled to find out that her teacher is black. Miss Harris is delighted to meet Gilly, choosing to call her Galadriel, and compliments her on being named after characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's books. Gilly has no idea about whom she is named after, she but goes along with it. Gilly insists that she is called Gilly, and Miss Harris consents. Gilly feels superior and far more intelligent than her classmates. She believes their stupidity will bring her down. Gilly is further horrified by the fact that half the class is black.

At recess, Monica Bradley, a white girl, is given the task of sticking with Gilly. However, Molly decides to gossip with some of the other girls, including one who is black with braided hair. Gilly interrupts a basketball game, scoring a point. She is angry at all of the kids playing. A fight breaks out between Gilly and six boys, and she gets the better of them. Miss Harris breaks up the fight and brings Gilly to Mr. Evans. Mr. Evans tells Gilly that she has a chance to start anew, if she wants it. But Gilly is raring to turn the school upside-down.

## Analysis

When Katherine Paterson's young adult novel "The Great Gilly Hopkins" begins, eleven year-old Galadriel "Gilly" Hopkins is a rough-and-tumble girl who has been shuffled between foster homes for years. She has made it her mission to cause trouble. Her ultimate goal is to one day track down her mother who is a beautiful woman and member of the flower child movement. Gilly hopes to find her true home. When the novel begins, Gilly has been through three homes, and she is going to live with Mrs. Trotter and William. William is Mrs. Trotter's foster child. Mrs. Trotter has been caring for



foster children for more than twenty years. She does so well that the children she fosters write to her regularly long after they have left her care.

Gilly, however, is all about causing trouble, both at home and at school. She is an intensely brilliant girl, but she has a proclivity for doing bad things, such as stealing and fighting. Yet, despite her difficult past, and her troublemaking ways, the school principal is prepared to allow Gilly to start the school year with a clean slate, and to turn her life around, and start fresh.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why do Mrs. Trotter, Mr. Evans, and others, want to give Gilly the chance to begin anew? What do you believe motivates them to give her this chance to start over?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why do you believe Gilly acts out so much? What is her motivation for burning through foster family after foster family? Explain.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Miss Harris compliment Gilly on being named after characters in J.R.R. Tolkein's books? Do you believe there is any significance to her name with respect to her story as an individual? Why or why not?

## **Vocabulary**

nonprofessional, laboriously, luxuries, necessities, fanatic



# Chapter 4-6

## Summary

### Chapter 4

At recess the next day, Gilly meets Agnes Stokes, a redheaded girl, who reminds Gilly of Rumpelstiltskin. Agnes has heard about Gilly's encounter with the boys the day before. Agnes thinks it is great and that she and Gilly should get together. She invites Gilly over to her house, saying her grandma won't mind, but Gilly rejects the offer. Agnes then wants to come over to Gilly's house, and Gilly tells her no. The next day may be okay

At home, Gilly gets a letter from her mother. It is a short, quick note letting Gilly know that her mother knows she has moved again. She wishes that the move had brought them closer to each other. Her mother signs the letter as Courtney instead of Mom. She discovers a return address on the envelope and envisions herself hitchhiking to California. Gilly begins crying because she misses her mother so much. She hasn't seen her mother since she was three. Mrs. Trotter asks her if everything is okay, and Gilly hides her mother's message. Gilly wants to write to her mother.

At dinner, Mrs. Trotter and Mr. Randolph pray before everyone eats. Gilly menacingly offers William help in reading. William looks terrified, but Mrs. Trotter intervenes. Mrs. Trotter then turns the tables on Gilly, telling her she should read aloud to Mr. Randolph. Worried that Mrs. Trotter and Mr. Randolph will want to listen to the Bible, Gilly runs to grab a book of her own choosing.

Gilly goes to Mr. Randolph's house to get a book. Mr. Randolph owns many, many books, and Gilly wonders how long that he has been blind. She begins straightening out some of the books on the shelves, wondering if Mr. Randolph only keeps them for show. She discovers ten dollars. Before she can take it, Mrs. Trotter arrives. She and Gilly select the "Oxford Book of Poetry." Gilly tries to read from it, but the words don't seem to make sense. Mr. Randolph explains the earlier poems are in very old English, but the later poems are more modern. Gilly then reads a poem by William Wordsworth.

As she reads and pauses, Mr. Randolph encourages her to continue by reciting the next few words. As Gilly continues to read, Mr. Randolph joins in at different places. Gilly is not impressed with Wordsworth, but Mr. Randolph explains that different words have different meanings. It is all a part of the poem. William surprises everyone by telling everyone the flower Wordsworth is writing about is a dandelion—a flower that blows. As Mr. Randolph thanks Gilly for reading, she goes upstairs to her room. Gilly plots to steal more of Mr. Randolph's money and to take a bus to San Francisco.

### Chapter 5



On the way to school the next morning, Agnes is waiting for Gilly. Agnes offers to help fight the boys if Gilly wants to fight them again. Agnes says she knows lots of things about kids and their families and offers this to Gilly, who says she only wants to be left alone. But, Agnes keeps at her. Ultimately, Gilly decides that Agnes just might come in handy. Gilly, however, insults and makes fun of Agnes, who still determinedly follows Gilly around. Gilly steals masking tape from Miss Harris's desk to use to tape the money she has stolen from Mr. Randolph to the bottom of a drawer. But as she does so, William bursts in with cookies and milk.

As she eats the cookies, Gilly decides that she will use William in her life of crime. She begins spending time with William to get him to warm up to her. She even makes him a paper airplane that they fly outside. She compliments his paper airplane throwing skills. Mrs. Trotter looks on, as Mr. Randolph reflects on how he always thought paper airplanes were meant for annoying teachers. Mrs. Trotter compliments Gilly for her kindness, and Gilly is secretly moved, having always wanted that kind of approval, but not from someone like Mrs. Trotter.

## Chapter 6

By October, Gilly has caught up to her class and even surpassed her fellows. She makes it her mission to annoy Miss Harris. She knows Miss Harris is a strong-willed teacher, who herself appears to be hiding something, but what, she doesn't know. In class, Miss Harris treats Gilly like everyone else, and this annoys Gilly. Her intelligence had allowed her to get away with a lot in the past. However, now it gets her no special treatment from Miss Harris. Since Miss Harris seems distant, it makes it harder for Gilly to find a way in to annoy her.

She decides to make a card using a cutout of a black woman. She uses it to insult Miss Harris. Though it will be an anonymous thing, Gilly hopes it will drive Miss Harris up a wall. She sneaks into class early to put the card in a book, waiting for Miss Harris to find it. At the end of the day, Miss Harris holds Gilly back and thanks her for the card. Miss Harris explains that she was always taught to hide her anger, but the card allowed her to "curse creatively" for twenty minutes, finally confronting her anger head-on. She says she envies Gilly, who is always able to handle her anger and become friends with it. Gilly then flees and heads home.

## Analysis

Despite Gilly's rough-and-tumble exterior, she is actually deeply wounded as an individual. She desperately longs to be with her mother, but the only sort of contact at all that she has comes through the form of cold, uncaring letters, which mean the world to Gilly. The letters mean so much to Gilly because they are all that she has of her mother. Indeed, these letters and the lack of meaningful contact between Gilly and Courtney lead Gilly to tears. This is a far cry compared to the public Gilly, who is ready to fight and manipulate others to her will. She resolves to get to her mother, no matter the cost. But, just as the reader begins to feel deeply for Gilly, her next actions destroy that recently-





found compassion. She steals money from Mr. Randolph. As if theft weren't bad enough, the knowledge that Mr. Randolph is blind, old, and trusting makes Gilly's actions heartbreaking.

Despite Gilly's stealing from Mr. Randolph and her decision to include William in her schemes and machinations, Gilly is beginning to warm up to Mrs. Trotter. Gilly receives bits and pieces of praise as she does things correctly, and she secretly treasures these forms of approval. Approval is the one thing that she has never had but has desperately wanted from her mother. Ironically, despite Gilly's poor behavior and decisions elsewhere, she excels in school, having surpassed her classmates' achievements very quickly. Perhaps, Gilly's ability to learn academically will also allow her to learn personally, as a human being.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the primary form of communication between Gilly and her mother? Describe the typical communication between mother and daughter. What does this say about the mother? What does this say about the daughter?

## Discussion Question 2

Gilly decides to go to her mother out in California. How does she plan to get there? Why does she want to go? Based on Courtney's letter, do you think this is a wise or poor decision?

## Discussion Question 3

Gilly's attempt to humiliate and hurt Miss Harris fails miserably. How? What does it allow Miss Harris to do? What is Miss Harris's reaction toward Gilly? Why do you believe she responds in this way?

## Vocabulary

acquaintance, delinquency, vigorously, obscenity, imbecile



# Chapter 7-9

## Summary

### Chapter 7

Gilly begins to panic. She knows that to make it through life you have to be tough. But, being around Thompson Park was beginning to make her soft. If she cannot be tough, she will be had. Two days later, Mrs. Trotter asks Gilly to babysit William while she and Mr. Randolph head to the dime store. Gilly had discovered previously that Agnes's parents had abandoned her to her seventy-five year-old grandmother, Gertrude Berkheimer. Agnes agrees to be the lookout in Gilly's plan. Gilly also has a part for William, lying to him to get him to go along. She tells William that Mr. Randolph needs some help getting some things down from his shelf. William agrees.

Using a blue chair, Gilly hoists up William to retrieve the cash which is a roll of bills. Agnes demands just rewards for helping, and Gilly promises her a reward in due time. Altogether, Gilly has thirty-nine dollars from the heist plus another ten from her past burglary. She curses herself for involving Agnes because Agnes will receive some of the money. While watching television that evening, Gilly becomes anxious and decides to do some cleaning to relieve the stress. Mrs. Trotter and Mr. Randolph are impressed. Gilly insists she also has to clean the chandelier, but she needs a stepladder to do it. Gilly insists that she can also clean Mr. Randolph's house, but she needs a stepladder, which Mr. Randolph has in his basement.

After dinner, Gilly gets the old and rickety stepladder. She cleans the chandelier. She also gives Agnes five dollars for helping, and Agnes is ready for more. But, Gilly tells Agnes that she can't hang out. She must scrub pots and pans instead. Gilly is secretly plotting to leave that night, bound for California. Gilly sits down with Mrs. Trotter at the table, who is writing a letter to one of her children. Mrs. Trotter compliments Gilly to no end for her cleaning and taking such good care of William. Gilly doesn't want to hear it, though.

She goes to help Mr. Randolph, but Mr. Randolph says she doesn't have to worry because his son over in Virginia always comes to help out with a cleaning lady. But, Gilly says that helping Mr. Randolph will be like helping Mrs. Trotter, and Mr. Randolph consents. He rests in his chair while Gilly cleans. She begins searching the bookshelves for more money, and she is worried that Mr. Randolph can somehow see her. She can find no more money, and she is enraged. She goes home, ignoring the thanks of help from Mr. Randolph.

At Mrs. Trotter's, Gilly writes a letter to her mother. She explains her situation and asks that her mother send her money for a bus ticket. Gilly tells her that she will find a job and pay her back. She needs \$136.60. Gilly then steals an envelope and a stamp. She runs down to the corner mailbox to send the letter.



## Chapter 8

Gilly hates Sundays because Sundays mean church. The church Mrs. Trotter attends is an old-fashioned church on a hill overlooking the sprawl of Washington, D.C. Gilly is also forced to attend Sunday school. It is taught by elderly Miss Minnie Applegate. Gilly believes that the teacher and all the people who attend church services are religious fanatics. After church, Gilly discovers that Mr. Randolph's son is coming to visit. He has pie with Mrs. Trotter and Gilly, only to discover his tie is slightly soiled from the filling. He explains his son is always looking for a reason to get him to come and live in Virginia, but Mr. Randolph doesn't want to go. Mrs. Trotter offers one of her late husband's ties to Mr. Randolph, and he accepts.

In Mrs. Trotter's room, Gilly finds her purse and steals over a hundred dollars from it. She then finds a tie with barely clothed dancing girls on it. She takes it down to Mr. Randolph. Mrs. Trotter's late husband would buy wild ties to cheer himself up at the end. Mr. Randolph is excited and amused to wear the tie, hoping it will throw his son for a loop. Mrs. Trotter is very amused as William walks Mr. Randolph back home. She reveals that Mr. Randolph's son is a wealthy lawyer. Gilly packs up her things later and prepares to leave that afternoon. She runs into William, who tells her not to leave, but Gilly tells him she has to leave.

Gilly buys a ticket at the bus depot. She's told that she must wait four hours for the bus to leave. She protests, and the clerk says that she'll have to get a ticket for Washington. Then, she'll transfer to another bus which will take her to San Francisco. The clerk then goes to make a call, and a police officer shows up to ask Gilly what she is doing. The clerk hands the police officer the money Gilly had given him, and the police officer takes Gilly away. At the station, the police search her suitcase. They find the photo of Courtney and the postcard with the San Francisco address.

A little while later, Mrs. Trotter and William arrive, and the money is handed over to her. The police suggest locking up Gilly overnight, but Mrs. Trotter doesn't want to press charges. The police ask Gilly what she wants to do, and Gilly decides to go back with Mrs. Trotter after William begs her to come back.

## Chapter 9

Miss Ellis and Mrs. Trotter argue. Miss Ellis is ready to remove Gilly, saying it won't affect Mrs. Trotter's record as a foster parent. However, Mrs. Trotter doesn't want to give Gilly up. She wants to keep taking care of Gilly because Gilly needs to be favored for a while. Miss Ellis disagrees. She says Mrs. Trotter is only a foster mother, not a real mother. Gilly is told she has to be the one to decide whether she wants to stay or leave.

Gilly asks Miss Ellis about her real mother. Miss Ellis says that she wrote to Courtney, but she never received a reply. Gilly protests, saying she has a note from her mother, saying how much she wants Gilly to come to California. Miss Ellis counters that if Courtney really wanted Gilly with her, then why hadn't she come to get Gilly in the eight preceding years, even when she lived nearby? Miss Ellis also levels with Gilly about the



stolen money, but Mrs. Trotter tells Miss Ellis to leave it alone and that she will handle that situation. It isn't the first time, either.

When Miss Ellis leaves, Mrs. Trotter turns on Gilly, asking her where the rest of the money came from. Gilly confesses, and she will have to work off the five dollars given to Agnes. Each chore is worth ten cents, and doing homework for an hour with William is worth twenty-five cents. Gilly comes to discover that William is not as dumb as she once thought. Gilly even goes so far as to teach William how to defend himself against bullies. Mrs. Trotter kisses Gilly on the forehead, and Gilly then heads outside with William to finish self-defense lessons.

## Analysis

Gilly, who has always gotten by through being tough, begins to feel as if her time in Thompson Park is wearing away at her. It's making her soft. She doesn't understand how she will be able to get by if she isn't tough, so she decides to ratchet up her plans and schemes to the next level. She enlists Agnes in her plans to steal money from Mr. Randolph, but the plan doesn't go exactly as hoped, as Gilly still ends up being \$136.60 short. She decides to write a letter to her mother, asking for the needed funds in exchange for repayment when she gets a job. This is how desperately Gilly wants to be with her mother. This continued desire to get to her mother is heartbreaking. On the other hand, Gilly's combative and manipulative nature keep eating away at any support Gilly may have from the reader.

Gilly lashes out with her new plans, getting caught purchasing a ticket for California. This brings on a meeting with Miss Ellis, who confronts Gilly with a large number of unsettling truths. They are, however, necessary for Gilly to hear and understand. These include that Courtney truly doesn't want Gilly with her. If she had, then why didn't Courtney make more of an effort to come and get Gilly over the course of eight long years? While Courtney may not want Gilly, Mrs. Trotter does. She insists on keeping Gilly. Gilly, unfortunately, does not realize that Mrs. Trotter can give her the love that her own mother refuses to give her.

## Discussion Question 1

What difficult truths does Miss Ellis tell Gilly about Courtney? What do these facts mean for Gilly?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Mrs. Trotter wants to keep Gilly, despite all of the trouble Gilly has caused her?



## Discussion Question 3

Why is it that Gilly Hopkins enjoys causing trouble? Why does she always feel the need to act tough? What things does she do in order to make herself tough and to prove to others that she is tough? Are her actions justifiable? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

trifled, fracas, piously, fledgling, delectable, solemnly, anonymous, painstakingly



# Chapter 10-12

## Summary

### Chapter 10

One week before Thanksgiving, Mr. Randolph comes down with the flu. Mr. Randolph comes to stay in the Trotter house, and Mr. Randolph and Mrs. Trotter discuss whether to notify Mr. Randolph's son. By Thanksgiving, Mr. Randolph is getting better, but Mrs. Trotter and William are both sick. Gilly stays home from school to help care for them. On Thanksgiving Day, an elderly woman shows up at the house. It is Gilly's grandmother. The woman is at a loss for words as she tries to tell her story of how her husband died twelve years before. She has not heard from Courtney in thirteen years. The woman didn't even know she had a granddaughter.

William enters the room, having wet the bed, and Gilly excuses herself to tend to William. She then returns to talk to her grandmother. Her grandmother reveals that Courtney's first letter to her in thirteen years detailed the horrible living conditions Gilly was facing. Suddenly, Mrs. Trotter comes down the stairs, looking sick and wild, worried about the turkey. Mr. Randolph wakes up after Mrs. Trotter falls, Gilly realizes that she does not want to leave because she is needed there.

### Chapter 11

Gilly is very unhappy. She knows that her letter has been the source of her grandmother's visit. She is now very worried about everything that might happen. She had originally imagined her own mother coming to save the day, but that was not the way things were shaping up. Mrs. Trotter asks Gilly about the woman who had come to visit, but Gilly lies and says that the woman was there to convert them to a different religion. When Gilly gets home from school on the following Monday afternoon, Mrs. Trotter does not look happy.

Miss Ellis has also arrived at Gilly's house. Gilly is to go and live with her grandmother, permanently. Gilly opposes this idea, having wanted to live with her mother, not her grandmother. Miss Ellis informs Gilly that she has no say in the matter. Gilly desperately looks for help from Mrs. Trotter, but Mrs. Trotter says nothing. She and William leave the room as Gilly cries, and Miss Ellis tells Gilly that she will be leaving the following morning. Miss Ellis chastises Gilly for writing the letter in the first place, telling her she could have stayed indefinitely. Gilly begs Miss Ellis to let her stay, but Miss Ellis responds that it is out of her hands.

### Chapter 12

William cries throughout dinner that night. Gilly realizes that everything she has wanted, such as a home, Mrs. Trotter was willing to give her. No one is very happy at dinner. Mr. Randolph remarks on Loudoun County, Virginia, as horse country, the place where



Gilly's family is from. Mr. Randolph gives Gilly a going-away present, the "Oxford Book of English Poetry." Gilly reads a poem which says that "God is our home." Gilly tries to understand how God could be home and what home is really like. Gilly wakes up in the middle of the night crying, and Mrs. Trotter comforts her and tells her how she doesn't want Gilly to go. As Gilly falls asleep, Mrs. Trotter tells Gilly to make her proud.

## Analysis

If Gilly has ever wanted to feel needed, Thanksgiving proves to be the perfect setting. Mrs. Trotter, Mr. Randolph, and William all come down with the flu. Gilly becomes their primary care provider and helps to handle cooking, the house, and the other chores that go along with running the household. Gilly discovers that she excels at taking care of others, even more than she excels at taking advantage of them. She helps William learn how to defend himself, and she cares for her foster family through the Thanksgiving holidays.

Gilly has managed to undermine herself by mailing a letter to her mother, which leads to a visit from her grandmother. Her grandmother's visit means that Gilly will be leaving Mrs. Trotter and her foster family's home. Gilly has finally gone too far, and she will have to pay for the situation she has personally created.

## Discussion Question 1

What is so special for Gilly about her Thanksgiving with Mrs. Trotter, Mr. Randolph, and William? What does Gilly finally realize, and how does it affect her?

## Discussion Question 2

What is it about Mrs. Trotter, Mr. Randolph, and William that Gilly realizes only all too late? Why do you believe Gilly finally comes to this realization?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of false promises in the novel "The Great Gilly Hopkins" by Katherine Paterson. What are false promises? Which false promises appear in the novel? Why are they false? Are there any promises in the novel that were not false? Explain.

## Vocabulary

fluted, antique, appalling, moral obligation



# Chapter 13-15

## Summary

### Chapter 13

Mrs. Hopkins, Gilly's grandmother, brings her back to Jackson, Virginia. Gilly realizes her grandmother doesn't truly want her, that she is only taking Gilly in as a matter of responsibility and obligation. Gilly realizes she loves Mrs. Trotter and William. Gilly is given her choice of bedrooms. Her grandmother hopes that Gilly actually wants to live with her. Mrs. Hopkins lives alone and hopes to have a good relationship with Gilly. But, Gilly misses Mrs. Trotter and William terribly.

Settled into Mrs. Hopkins's son's old bedroom, Gilly wonders why her mother would leave such a kind and peaceful place. Gilly unpacks her mother's photo and wonders more about why Courtney had to leave her. Then, she puts the photograph away.

### Chapter 14

Gilly writes a letter to William, as she had promised him. She tells him about looking after horses and exaggerates that her Grandmother Nonnie is rich. Miss Harris writes to Gilly, sending along some Tolkien paperbacks and good wishes. Soon, Gilly is told that her mother will be coming to visit on December 23. Over time, she comes to respect and love her grandmother. Both Gilly and her grandmother are nervous about Courtney's visit. They are not sure about what they will say to her or how they will handle things.

### Chapter 15

Courtney's arrival at the airport is a letdown. Courtney is not the glowing flower child of her photograph or the stunning beauty in Gilly's mind. She is a haggard-looking woman who has wasted her life away. Gilly is still excited to see her, but Courtney doesn't want to stay long. She tells her mother not to bother her, that she only came out to see Gilly because her mother paid her to do so. Furthermore, Gilly isn't going home with Courtney.

Gilly feels sick to her stomach. She uses the payphone to call Mrs. Trotter to tell her about everything that has happened. Mrs. Trotter encourages her, telling her to stay with her grandmother and not to worry about the tough parts of life that don't always turn out right. Gilly says she wants to come home, but Mrs. Trotter says her grandmother is home. Gilly then goes to her grandmother to tell her she is ready to go home.

Gilly, because she lives her life as a tough girl, is determined not to let Mrs. Trotter's kindness, compassion, or Christian nature get to her. She rejects this kindness, knowing she has only survived the past eight years alone because she has been a difficult case. Her failure to flee to California by bus only strengthens Gilly's determination to get out of





the foster care system She wants to live with her mother in San Francisco. Gilly decides that if she can't make it to her mother, then she will find a way to make her mother come to her. In order to do this, Gilly sends an angry letter to her mother, explaining that she lives in dire circumstances. She tells her mother that she needs help. But, nothing comes of the letter for weeks.

In the meantime, Gilly's walls give way to love and tenderness, and she comes to love and respect and deeply care for Mrs. Trotter, William, and Mr. Randolph. She even ends up taking care of them when they get sick during Thanksgiving week. Ironically, on Thanksgiving Day, everything seems to begin to fall apart. Gilly, who believes she is needed and loved by her unorthodox foster family, receives a visit from her Grandmother Nonnie. Nonnie says she will get Gilly out of her current situation, but Gilly realizes she doesn't want to go. She realizes she has come to find Mrs. Trotter's house a home and all those within its walls as a family.

Nevertheless, social services force Gilly out of her home and to Nonnie's house in Virginia. Gilly slowly warms up to, respects, and comes to love Nonnie. Gilly even begins to wonder why her mother would ever want to leave a place as beautiful and peaceful as Nonnie's home. Ultimately, Gilly's mother comes to visit a few days before Christmas, and Gilly discovers to her horror that her mother is a wasted-away, grotesque looking woman, whose lifestyle has gotten the better of her. She also discovers that her mother only came to visit because Nonnie paid her to do so. This is horrifying to Gilly, whose dreams are all shattered. But, through encouragement from Mrs. Trotter, Gilly comes to discover that her true home is with her grandmother. She does, indeed, have a home after all.

## Analysis

All of Gilly's hopes and dreams for reuniting with her mother come tumbling down, but it also proves to be a wake-up for Gilly as well. Courtney is not the beautiful girl in the photo that Gilly has treasured for so many years, but an older, haggard, wrinkled woman, her physical state a clear indication of her horrendous lifestyle. Courtney, furthermore, will not be staying long, not even for Gilly. It is further revealed that Courtney has only come to visit because Nonnie is paying for everything for Courtney. This does two very important things for Gilly, at least, in terms of a wake-up call. On the one hand, it reveals to Gilly, in startlingly clear detail, that her image of her mother is a lie, that her mother is not a good person. Second, it demonstrates the already deep love that Nonnie has for Gilly and the heartache that Nonnie has because of Courtney. This heartache, on the part of both Gilly and Nonnie, will enable them both to grow together as grandmother and granddaughter.

Gilly is not yet aware that she and her grandmother will grow close. With the illusion of her mother shattered, Gilly reaches out for the one person whom she knows she can trust beyond a shadow of a doubt -Mrs. Trotter. Mrs. Trotter reaffirms that deep down, Gilly is a good person. She also tells Gilly that she is home now and that she can



indeed have a wonderful life with her grandmother. Gilly accepts this and goes back to her grandmother in the airport.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of family in Katherine Paterson's novel, "The Great Gilly Hopkins." What is family? How does family appear in the novel? Where does family succeed, and where does family fail? Why? Do you think Gilly will have the same sense of family she had with Mrs. Trotter, Mr. Randolph, and William, with her grandmother? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Gilly react after encountering her mother for the first time in eight years? What is the image of her mother she keeps in her mind like? What is the reality when she meets her mother? What do you think the effects of this will be?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Christian faith in the novel, "The Great Gilly Hopkins" by Katherine Paterson. What is Christian faith, and what does it involve doing? Describe one of the three aspects of Christianity portrayed in the novel – honesty, charity, or compassion. How does it appear in the novel? Further explain how it affects and impacts the character of Gilly. What does she learn from this aspect and why?

## Vocabulary

anxiously, pervades, indefinitely, belligerently, monogrammed, elaborately



# Characters

## Gilly Hopkins

Gilly is an eleven year old girl who is the main character and principal protagonist of Katherine Paterson's novel, "The Great Gilly Hopkins". Gilly is a notorious foster child whose foster parents end up in the hospital due to stress, or moving to other states because of her antics. Her hair is the color of straw, and she always wants to make sure she is in charge. Whenever Gilly thinks of her mother, Courtney Rutherford Hopkins, she starts to become emotional, and shuts away her emotions. She secretly wants to be reunited with her mother, whom she has not seen in eight years. Gilly is placed into the home of Mrs. Trotter, who helps care for her blind and elderly neighbor, Mr. Randolph. She also cares for a foster child named William.

Gilly attempts to escape from Mrs. Trotter's by stealing money from both her and Mr. Randolph, and then fleeing to California to be with her mother. She is caught by the police, but Mrs. Trotter will not press charges. Instead, she has Gilly work off her debt. Enraged, Gilly sends a letter to her mother, demanding help, exaggerating her living conditions by describing them as bad. After sending of the letter, Gilly comes to love and respect her unusual family and home. She is happy to be with them. But her letter has consequences: she is sent to go live with her grandmother in Virginia. Over time, she comes to respect and lover her grandmother, Nonnie, though she misses Mrs. Trotter, Mr. Randolph, and William badly.

By the end of the novel, Gilly's idealistic images of her mother are shattered, as the years of her vagrant, hippie lifestyle show their wear on her, and knowledge that her mother has only come to visit because Nonnie has paid her to do so, come to light. Gilly calls Mrs. Trotter, wanting to go back, but Mrs. Trotter tells Gilly that she is at home with Nonnie. Gilly ultimately accepts this, and looks forward to life with Nonnie.

## Maime Trotter

Mrs. Maime Trotter is the large, rotund matriarch of the Trotter household, and a widow of Melvin Trotter. Mrs. Trotter is a devout Christian, and is unfailingly kind and considerate, caring and forgiving, even when Gilly steals money from her and says unflattering things about her. Mrs. Trotter nevertheless knows that Gilly needs to feel like she has a home, needs to feel like she is needed, and like she belongs. Indeed, Mrs. Trotter is such a wonderful mother to the foster kids she cares for, that former foster kids write to her ceaselessly. When Gilly goes to live with her grandmother, Mrs. Trotter tells her that she is now home.



## **Mr. Randolph**

Mr. Randolph is the black, kindly, elderly, blind neighbor and friend of Mrs. Trotter. He comes over for dinner each night. He befriends and cares for Gilly and William. He has a son who lives in Virginia. The son wants Mr. Randolph to come and live with him and his family, but Mr. Randolph doesn't want to leave his home.

## **Miss Ellis**

Mrs. Ellis is Gilly's social worker. She is kind and caring, but strict when needed. She does everything she can to make sure Gilly is taken care of and makes Gilly aware that she could stay with Mrs. Trotter indefinitely. But, when Gilly writes to her mother, the situation is out of Miss Ellis's hands.

## **William Earnest Teague**

William is a seven year-old who is frail and slightly mentally handicapped. William is the resident foster child of Mrs. Trotter, whom he loves deeply. Afraid of Gilly at first, William ultimately comes around to admire and love Gilly as well, begging her not to leave home.

## **Mr. Evans**

As the principal of Gilly's school, Mr. Evans recognizes that she is a brilliant girl, with a penchant for trouble. It is Mr. Evans who places Gilly in Miss Harris's class. Mr. Evans also exercises a lot of patience with the combative Gilly.

## **Miss Harris**

Miss Harris is the black, sixth grade teacher who is in charge of Gilly's class. She is patient and kind, but distant, making it hard for Gilly to mess with her. Even when Gilly attempts to harass Miss Harris because of her race, Miss Harris handles things coolly, brushing the incident off her shoulders.

## **Agnes Stokes**

A redheaded, ill-bathed girl, Agnes Stokes lives with her grandmother, having been abandoned by her parents. She has gossip-like information on all the other kids, and looks up to and follows Gilly around.



## **Nonnie Hopkins**

Nonnie Hopkins is the sweet, kindly grandmother of Gilly and the mother of Courtney. She lives alone. Her son was killed in Vietnam, and Courtney left home to be a hippie. Nonnie has no idea that Gilly exists, until Courtney contacts her for the first time in thirteen years. Nonnie readily and happily takes in Gilly, and the two ultimately come to love each other. Nonnie becomes a mother figure to Gilly when her own mother, Courtney, will not.

## **Courtney Rutherford Hopkins**

Courtney Rutherford Hopkins is the vagrant, hippie mother of Gilly, and the daughter of Nonnie. She is a hippie and a member of the flower child movement, Courtney abruptly leaves home and does not speak to her mother for thirteen years. Courtney is a haggard, ugly, and unkempt woman, who has wasted away years of her life in California. She only comes to Virginia to visit Gilly because Nonnie has paid her to do so.

# Symbols and Symbolism

## Photograph

A photograph of Courtney is all the personal connection that Gilly has to her mother. She carries it around with her from house to house, and jealously guards it, until she comes to realize that her mother truly wants nothing to do with her.

## Postcard

A postcard is mailed to Gilly from Courtney, full of half-hearted feeling and false promises for reuniting. Gilly jealously guards this postcard when she gets it, and brings it with her to Virginia.

## J.R.R. Tolkien Books

Named after a character in J.R.R. Tolkien's books, Gilly is given these same books by Miss Harris as a souvenir and as a measure of kindness.

## Letter

Letters are one of the two primary forms of communication in the novel (the other being the phone). Courtney sends a letter to Gilly, which prompts Gilly to want to go to California. Miss Ellis writes a letter to Courtney about Gilly, only to not hear back. Gilly writes a letter to her grandmother, asking her grandmother to come and take away.

## Money

Money is what Gilly needs to pay for a bus ticket to see her mother in California. Money is hidden among the books in Mr. Randolph's house. Gilly steals all of the money she can find tucked away among the books but still comes up short for her ticket.



# Settings

## Thompson Park

Thompson Park is the quaint, older suburb of Washington D.C., in Maryland, once its own town, that Gilly has gone to live in. It is the town where Mrs. Trotter and Mr. Randolph live, and where Gilly will attend school. Above the town is an old white church on a hill that overlooks the capital of the United States of America.

## Virginia

Virginia is the state directly south of Maryland, where Gilly's grandmother, Nonnie, lives in Loudoun County. Virginia is where Courtney lived and grew up.

## Mrs. Trotter's House

Located in Thompson Park, Maryland, Mrs. Trotter's house is a large, old, dusty place, but one that is full of love and belonging. It is the scene of family dinners with Mr. Randolph and a place that Gilly comes to call home.

## Mr. Randolph's House

Located next door to Mrs. Trotter's house, Mr. Randolph's house is a big old house, full of books voraciously read by Mr. Randolph before he went blind.

## San Francisco

San Francisco is in California. It is where Courtney Rutherford Hopkins has lived for an unknown amount of time. It is to San Francisco that Gilly attempts to travel, but she is stopped by police before leaving the train station.



# Themes and Motifs

## Family

Family is a major, overarching, and dominant theme in the novel, "The Great Gilly Hopkins" by Katherine Paterson. In terms of the novel, family, which includes mutual love or affection, emotional support and compassion, and unconditional loyalty towards relatives and relations who may or may not be blood related, affects the course of the entire plot of the novel. Family is presented in two major ways: as a triumphant and wonderful thing, and as a cause for heartbreak.

In terms of heartbreak, the idea of family –of unconditional love and affection and support –breaks down along the mother-daughter line between Courtney and Gilly. Courtney is an unkind, uncaring, and unsympathetic mother and daughter. She rarely contacts her daughter and has not spoken to her mother in thirteen years. Courtney ultimately comes to visit Gilly briefly, only because her own mother has paid her to come and do so.

In terms of family triumph, two beautiful examples can be observed. The first is the mother-daughter/mother-family relationship between Mrs. Trotter and Gilly, and between Mrs. Trotter, Gilly, William, and Mr. Randolph. Mrs. Trotter emerges to become a mother figure to Gilly, the kind of which Gilly has never known. Even when Gilly steals from Mrs. Trotter, lies about her, and tries to run away, Mrs. Trotter still wants her. She loves Gilly, and cares deeply for her, unconditionally, and loyally. Gilly, in turn, ultimately comes to love and respect Mrs. Trotter. Indeed, she comes to love and respect William and Mr. Randolph as well. When they are all sick, it is Gilly who cares for them, and demonstrates the strength and triumph of family.

The second instance of the triumph of family has to do with Nonnie, Gilly's grandmother. Without giving it a second thought, having never before met or even known that Gilly exists, Nonnie takes Gilly into her home, and takes care of her. The two quickly come to love and trust one another, and find comfort in each other when Courtney rejects both of them.

## False Promises

False promises are a major, underlying theme in "The Great Gilly Hopkins" by Katherine Paterson. The theme of false promises has to do with the anticipation, expectation, and promise of greatness, completeness, fullness, or happiness, being false and deceptive. In the novel, there are two glaring examples of false promises.

The first glaring example of false promises has to do with Gilly Hopkins and her mother, Courtney. Gilly has carried around a photograph of a young, vibrant, and beautiful woman that is her mother, Courtney. For years, Gilly has dreamed of being reunited with her mother, and living a happy, complete, and wonderful life. Indeed, Gilly imagines that





one day, her mother will arrive to rescue her. But the promise of being reunited with her mother is dashed by her own mother, who wants nothing to do with Gilly. Indeed, Courtney only comes to see Gilly because her own mother, Nonnie, pays for her to come and visit.

The second glaring example of false promises has to do with Courtney Rutherford Hopkins herself. Lured away from home by the hedonistic promises of the hippie lifestyle, Courtney becomes a flower child, ultimately going to live in California, the poster state for the movement. Yet, rather than find health, completeness, peace, and wholeness, Courtney wastes away her life living a deviant lifestyle. Her return to Virginia reveals that she is nothing like her former self. She is now haggard, unkempt, dirty, and ugly.

## Christian Faith

Christian Faith is a major and consistent theme that runs throughout the novel ‘The Great Gilly Hopkins’ by Katherine Paterson. Christianity, which involves belief not only in God, but in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior of Mankind, also entails moral laws, ideas, and values. Among these are honesty, charity, and compassion. Each of these ideas are noted by Christianity as being intrinsically-valuable, in and of themselves, and also core components of a Christian life. Each one of these ideas is on full display in the novel.

Honesty, which means being truthful about oneself, one’s words, and one’s actions and intentions –is in abundant supply with Mrs. Trotter, but in short supply with Gilly, who uses dishonesty to achieve her ends. Ultimately, Mrs. Trotter is able to get Gilly to come clean about stealing money from her and Mr. Randolph, and to become more and more honest after that. Being honest about certain actions also leads Gilly to becoming honest with herself –about her feelings for her foster family, her grandmother, and her mother, as well as herself.

Charity makes its mark on the novel almost immediately. Charity involves doing acts of kindness for others, with no thought of reward for oneself. This is especially true of Mrs. Trotter, who is very charitable. Not only does she have the kindness and patience to raise foster children, but she also makes sure that her blind, elderly neighbor, Mr. Randolph, has a meal every night. She does all of these things without thought of reward for herself.

Compassion is the greatest Christian element on display in the novel, and is practiced especially by several characters, including Mrs. Trotter, Mr. Randolph, Nonnie, and William. Each of these characters come to love and care for Gilly, complimenting her, soothing her emotional distress, and seeking to understand who she is and what she is all about. They don’t view her as just another foster kid, but as a person who is invaluable, and worthy of love and kindness. Because of this, Gilly herself also becomes compassionate towards her family and her foster family.

# Styles

## Point of View

Katherine Paterson tells her novel, “The Great Gilly Hopkins” from the third-person limited omniscient narrative, from the perspective of main character and principal protagonist, Gilly Hopkins. This is done for at least three reasons. The first is that the novel is about Gilly Hopkins’ experiences, and so the novel itself should focus around its main character, which is done. The second is that it allows the novel to read in a more mature fashion because the main character is only eleven. The third is that certain complex emotional elements may have been incredibly difficult for such a character in the first person, and critical parts of the novel may have been unknown to its narrator had the narration been in first person (such as Miss Ellis receiving a call from Nonnie in Virginia), allowing the reader to fill in what would have been gaps in the plot.

## Language and Meaning

Katherine Katherine Paterson tells her novel, “The Great Gilly Hopkins” in language that is simple, gentle, and straightforward. This is done for at least two reasons. The first is that the target audience is younger, young adult, and children, and so the language the story is told in must not exceed their vocabulary range and understanding. The second is that the story is about an eleven year-old girl, and is narrated with her perspective in mind. Because of this, it is only appropriate for the language to match the character.

## Structure

Katherine Paterson divides her novel, “The Great Gilly Hopkins,” into fifteen consecutive, chronological chapters that span the time before, during, and after Gilly’s placement into Mrs. Trotter’s house as a foster child. This is done because the target audience is younger, and will be more interested in plot than the structure of the novel itself. Consecutive, chronological chapters allow the reader to therefore focus on the story itself, making transitions between chapters effortless.



## Quotes

She could stand anything, she thought – a gross guardian, a freaky kid, an ugly, dirty house –so long as she was in charge. She was well on her way.

-- Narrator (1, Page 6)

**Importance:** This explanation of Gilly truly reaches Gilly's core. It is important because it sets the tone for her character: someone who is tough, unfriendly, manipulative, and willing to do whatever she has to in order to get by.

As she dropped off to sleep, Gilly promised herself for the millionth time that she would find out where Courtney Rutherford Hopkins was, write to her, and tell her to come and take her beautiful Galadriel home.

-- Narrator (2, Page 15)

**Importance:** Here, the reader comes to realize just what it is that motivates every fiber of Gilly's being: she wants her mother. She wants her mother to come and rescue her, and take her away from foster families, and out to California.

I hope you'll give yourself – and us – a chance, Gilly.

-- Mrs. Trotter (3, Page 25)

**Importance:** Placed with Mrs. Trotter in her house by the agency, Gilly expects she is going to have the run of the place. She is determined that she will be able to cajole and manipulate her way to success. But Mrs. Trotter surprises Gilly by telling her that she hopes Gilly will give her -and Gilly herself- a chance. This is striking to Gilly, though she ends up brushing it off as nothing more than a first-day-welcome speech.

If I wrote you –if I asked, would you come and get me? You're the only one in the world I need. I'd be good for you. You'd see. I'd change into a whole new person. I'd turn from gruesome Gilly into gorgeous, gracious, good, glorious Galadriel. And grateful. Oh, Courtney, oh, Mother, I'd be so grateful.

-- Gilly Hopkins (4, Page 30)

**Importance:** Despite Gilly's outward hostility, she wants to be a shining angel for her mother. She wants to be loved, applauded, and supported. She believes that the only one who can do this for her is her mother. She writes such in her letter to her mother, demonstrating that she is willing to do whatever it takes to get to her mother.

She took his elbow and guided him carefully down the stairs, taking care not to look back over her shoulder because the look on Trotter's face was the one Gilly had, in some deep part of her, longed to see all her life, but not from someone like Trotter. That was not part of the plan.

-- Narrator (5, Page 52)

**Importance:** Here, Gilly begins to realize that Mrs. Trotter looks at her with kindness,



with approval, and these sorts of things Gilly has always wanted. But she has not wanted them from somebody like Mrs. Trotter -she has wanted them from her mother. This also reveals that Gilly does indeed have a soft side, and longs to be accepted, praised, and approved of, in all that she does.

We do different things with our anger, of course. I was always taught to deny mine, which I did and still do. And that makes me envy you. Your anger is still up here on the surface where you can look it in the face, make friends with it if you want to.

-- Miss Harris (6, Page 59)

**Importance:** Miss Harris, speaking to Gilly following a racist prank, explains to Gilly that it is nice that Gilly can handle her anger so well. Miss Harris must deny hers, and deal with hers in different ways, whereas Gilly can embrace her anger, and use it to her advantage.

People were so dumb sometimes you almost felt bad to take advantage of them –but not too bad. Not when it was your only way to get where you had to go.

-- Narrator (7, Page 68)

**Importance:** Here, Gilly reflects on stealing from Mr. Randolph, which is incredibly easy, because Mr. Randolph is old and blind. But even this moral nagging that Gilly has at her conscience is shut away by her overwhelming and underlying motivation, of getting herself by in order to get back to her mother.

He's got to learn to take care of himself in the world, Trotter.

-- Gilly Hopkins (9, Page 101)

**Importance:** Here, Gilly is teaching William how to defend himself in a fight. But the truth with respect to Gilly is much deeper. This is also a reflection of Gilly herself, who has had only herself to rely on -or so she thinks- the past eight years.

God help the children of the flower children.

-- Miss Ellis (11, Page 119)

**Importance:** Miss Ellis is one of the many individuals who are dealing with the fallout from the 1960s and 1970s, when rampant drugs and promiscuity, as well as the abandoning of stable living through the counterculture and the hippie movement, was the order of the day. The reckless irresponsibility of those people came back to haunt the rest of the country, and affected none more so than their children, who directly had to deal with the unstable lives of the flower children.

I don't understand why a smart girl like you goes around booby-trapping herself. You could have stayed here indefinitely, you know. They're both crazy about you.

-- Miss Ellis (11, Page 121)

**Importance:** Miss Ellis, frustrated, cannot understand why Gilly would go through such lengths to pull the rug out from under her own feet., especially when she has people



who really do love her, and have spared no expense to demonstrate true, unconditional love. Gilly would have had everything she desired with Mrs. Trotter, but she chose to throw it away in pursuit of her own self-interests.

You're home, baby. Your grandma is home.

-- Mrs. Trotter (15, Page 148)

**Importance:** Mrs. Trotter tells Gilly that she has to focus on her own family now, her grandmother, that her grandmother is her home. Her grandmother did everything she could to bring Courtney back for her granddaughter, and this demonstrates just how much love she already has for her granddaughter. Gilly finally has a stable place to call home, and someone to love her, and she needs to embrace it.

Well, it didn't matter what the woman thought. Miss Ellis could explain about today. No one could make her leave here, not when everyone needed her so. Besides –Trotter wouldn't let them take her. "Never" she had said. "Never, never, never.

-- Narrator/Mrs. Trotter (10, Page 113)