

The Glass Bead Game Study Guide

The Glass Bead Game by Hermann Hesse

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Plot Summary

The Glass Bead Game by Hermann Hesse was first published in Switzerland in 1943 and it was to be his last major work. It is Hesse's story of the life of Magister Ludi Joseph Knecht, and is written in novel form. The novel is basically a parody of biography as Hesse tells the story of Joseph Knecht. Knecht is a member of the intellectual elite and has been obsessed with mastering the Glass Bead Game since he was a child. He finally becomes a Master of the Game, or Magister Ludi, when he is an adult. Hesse tells his story with the parody of humor in it.

The Glass Bead Game is a mind game that Hesse used to play when he was raking and burning leaves in his garden. It was a way to keep his mind busy while he was doing something physical. It was a form of intellectual pastime that the author played. The game is a way of mentally synthesizing spiritual values. It was a mental exercise that the author performed long before he thought of writing the novel of the same name. The novel has the narrator, Joseph Knecht learning to perfect this mind game during the course of his life. He begins to play the Glass Bead Game as a child and is fascinated with it.

Knecht lives three parallel lives during the course of the novel, which are basically summarized in the form of poems that are contained in the book. Knecht is working towards a form of perfection of the spiritual values contained in the Glass Bead Game as he goes through childhood and adulthood. He has many debates with messengers from the outside world when he is in Castalia. The outside messenger tells him that a life that is devoted totally to the mind is more or less dangerous. It is not as productive as Knecht thinks that it is and will not result in the perfect spiritual institution that Knecht thinks that it will. In the end, Knecht defects from Castalia. Some interpret the defection of Knecht to be synonymous with shift in the author's own thinking from the belief in the elitism of Nietzsche to the social consciousness and historicism of Burckhardt. Knecht's departure symbolizes his telling Castalia that it will destruct eventually from its own autonomy based on arrogance and self-indulgence. When Knecht dies, his pupil, Tito, is left behind and Knecht's death is a form of sacrifice where the spiritual ideal is more or less put back into life's service. There cannot be a mindless revolt, but only actions based on thinking and commitment. This is how Knecht arises to the highest order, by actions based on purposeful thinking about the implications for Castalia and himself.

The book is interesting reading and it offers a glimpse into the minds of the intellectuals and how they function. It also shows us how the author coped with the change from the Weimar Republic to Nazism. Hesse wrote many novels and other literary works during the course of his life, and The Glass Bead Game was the last. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946 and had his own literary following. The humor and parody are refreshing and make for enjoyable reading.



Introduction

Introduction Summary

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The purpose of the Introduction is to provide some details about Joseph Knecht, the narrator and main character, even though it may be counter to our intellectual life to do so. It runs contrary to custom to develop a sketch of the main character. "For, after all, obliteration of individuality, the maximum integration of the individual into the hierarchy of the educators and scholars, has ever been one of our ruling principles. And in the course of our long tradition this principle has been observed with such thoroughness that today it is exceedingly difficult, and in many cases completely impossible, to obtain biographical and psychological information on various persons who have served the hierarchy in exemplary fashion. In very many cases it is no longer even possible to determine their original names. The hierarchic organization cherishes the ideal of anonymity, and comes very close to the realization of that ideal" (Introduction, pp. 11-12).

Hesse does not believe that it is a form of disobedience to try to ascertain some of the details of Knecht's life. Every aspect of the Glass Bead Game comes from the person who made the change, and that is Knecht. Most biographies are of people who have gone beyond the ordinary. Biographies are usually of people who have distinguished themselves in some way and the meaning of their personality has changed over the times. Personality used to be synonymous with some form of personality aberration. This isn't true of the modern biographers. An individual is deserving of having his biography told if he has distinguished himself through education or intellect as an individual. He cannot be a rebel driven by passions and desires. The subject is usually someone who has performed service to the suprapersonal. They aren't interested in his family history, his favorite books, or his likes or dislikes. They are interested in what distinguishes him, and this is their interest in Joseph Knecht, Master of the Glass Bead Game. Because of this, Hesse says, they have gathered everything they possibly could about him.

Hesse says his book isn't just intended for people who play the Glass Bead Game, but is intended for anyone who has an interest in the game. Because of this, the book needs an introduction which it wouldn't have required if it had been intended for players within the order. It does not serve the purpose of clarifying any questions that exist within the order itself. The introduction is not a history of the Glass Bead Game and it in



no way tries to give the rules of the Glass Bead Game. There will never be any textbook for the game and the only way to learn it is by the experience of many years. The game draws upon knowledge from many different disciplines and is a way of playing with a totality of all of the values within the culture. There is no fast way to learn the game since it is based on all of knowledge. Adding anything like new language to the game is not up to the whims of the individual player, it is up to the directorate. There is no way to expand on the contents since they already contain all of knowledge. The player basically has the whole universe of knowledge available to him. This means that no two players experience the game in the same way, since different themes and information are used by different players.

Hesse next looks at the age of the Glass Bead Game and says that it can find itself in the days of Pythagoras and ancient Greece or ancient China. The age given to the game is almost a matter of personal choice for the player. He also places various players of the Glass Bead Game throughout history. He also says that the Glass Bead Game is tied up with music. The actual beginning of Glass Bead Game goes back to the beginning of the intellectual movement. Hesse places it with Plinius Ziegenhals, who he calls the historian of literature.

Hesse next looks at the development of intellectual life in Europe and concludes that it is based on two things. First was the separation of thought and belief from authority. People basically began to think for themselves and some had to try to justify these phenomena in order for it to be a legitimate endeavor. It is easy to fit periods of time into history but it is difficult for people to see their own role in the events of the time and how they fit into history. Music comes about from harmony.

As to the origins of Glass Bead Game—Hesse seems to feel that the game began simultaneously in Germany and England as an exercise by musicians. It began as a memory improvement exercise. Musician Bastian Perrot of Calw of the Musical Academy of Cologne is said to have constructed an abacus-type contraption with glass beads strung on wires. The wires represented the musical staff and the beads represented the notes. This was used for memory improvement. The game became popular and was soon called the Glass Bead Game. The game soon made the move to mathematics and was used for formulas. It gradually spread to other disciplines as a form of mental exercise, and each discipline had its own rules and language for the game. The Jocolator Basiliensis expanded the game with new language, symbols and formulas.

The Glass Bead Game can be played alone or in groups of two or more. Sometimes the rules are written down, sometimes they aren't. Eventually, the game became a form of public ceremony. These games are officiated over by ceremonial Masters. A game can be started with any theme. The game eventually came to acquire the status of a public institution with a Game Commissioner in each of the different countries. The supreme head of the game was known as the Ludi Magister, and he officiated at official matches.



Introduction Analysis

The humor and irony of the parody are evident in the Introduction where Hesse says he does not think he is disobeying the rules by developing a sketch of Knecht's character. There is also the discussion of why there is a need for an introduction and why there is no attempt to include the history and rules of the Glass Bead Game in the introduction. Hesse goes on to explain that the game can't be expanded because it is already based on all of knowledge. He does include information about the origins of the game.

The Glass Bead Game includes all of human knowledge, which is why the parody that Hesse sets up is amusing for the reader. What date do we give to the beginning of the game? What are the rules? Are there any shortcuts? These are amusing concepts if they are viewed within the context of what the game actually involves.



Chapter 1, The Call

Chapter 1, The Call Summary

Hesse claims that there is no knowledge of the origins of Knecht. They assume that he was an orphan or lived in foster-care. Knecht, therefore, did not experience the conflict between home and elite school that others have faced. Knecht seems to have been destined for Castalia and the Board of Educators. Knecht is not a fanatic and he easily acquires his destiny. Unlike Mozart and Bach, Knecht does not leave any creative works behind him. It is the later part of Knecht's life that becomes a legend. Whether or not the legend is true is not important. His life is reported in terms of stages and it is in this spirit that the legend is accepted. He becomes Magister Ludi and is the prototype for all those who follow. In this role, he enhances the cultural heritage. When he achieves the title of Master, he moves into a dimension beyond what is previously known. Hesse says he will report on Knecht's life in a historical context.

Knecht is twelve or thirteen years old and a student at the Latin school in the small town of Berolffingen. His teachers recommended him for admission to an elite school but he was not told this, only that he must practice for a visit from the Music Master. He is very talented in music, playing the violin and the lute. On the appointed day, he is summoned by the music teacher and introduced to the Music Master, who wants him to play from memory. The Music Master plays a few notes and Knecht plays the rest of the work from memory. The Music Master has Knecht play the tune several times. Lost in their music, the student and the master play and sing together.

The experience makes an impression on Knecht. He views the world differently. He has received his calling to his vocation. Based on this encounter, his name is placed in the golden book, also known as the climbers list. This is the list of names of those recommended for admission to an elite school. But Knecht does not know any of this. The boy's education continues and he realizes that his teachers are treating him differently, almost as if he were a colleague, rather than a student. As he grows and develops, his way of life in Berolffingen does not seem appropriate. The faculty eventually informs him of his admission to an elite school.

The boy's life is different with his admission into the elite. He now has a sense of vocation as he is headed to a school of Castalia. Knecht does not have any family ties to sever when he goes to boarding school. The schools of Castalia are for the extraordinary gifted students. Students gain entry through their teachers, not through examinations. The elite schools then admit the student on probation. The staff is on the Board of Educators, which controls all of education in the country. The Ludi Magister, the director of the Glass Bead Game, is a member of this Board. The successful student is admitted to the Order when he graduates at the age of twenty-one or twenty-two. At this point, all of the educational and research facilities are open to the graduate as are all the facilities of the Glass Bead Game. The student specializes in what he is good at and most become teachers. Once they have left Castalia, they are life-long members of



the Order. This means poverty and bachelorhood. They cannot become professionals unless they leave the Order. They are called the Mandarins by the common people. The Mandarins lead the life of the intellectual. They can study for their entire lives if they so choose, drawing a pension from the authorities. Their scholarly works are published and studied by others. They basically renounce wealth and live simple, monastic lives.

Knecht leaves Berolfingen with his music teacher seeing him off at the train station. He is on his way to the Eschholz school, the largest school in Castalia. There is no town in the area. He is met by a schoolmate, Oscar, when he arrives and shown around. He shares a room with two other boys. His years at Eschholz are uneventful. Most of the school records have been burned by a fire but enough remains to show that Joseph excels in Latin and music, and that he is average in math and Greek. Most of what is known of his days there is from his lectures on the Glass Bead Game, which were in the form of notes taken by a student. He talks of finding a volume of Schubert music that he borrowed from his music teacher.

The Music Master appears at Eschholz every few months, and these are always rewarding visits for Knecht. The Music Master considers Knecht to be one of the chosen and a friend of his. Knecht is sent to the next level when he finishes his studies at Eschholz. The principal's graduation speech addresses the fact that there are free professions which aren't available to those who would be admitted to the Order. Knecht asks the Music Master what that means. He explains that a free profession means that the student chooses the profession himself. The student then follows a rigid, narrow program at a university and must pass examinations. If he passes, he works at his profession for money. The elite, on the other hand, can study what they want. He is not a slave to a curriculum or to money. The Music Master tells him that the word free is more or less used in a humorous sense.

Knecht is seventeen when he leaves Eschholz. Since Knecht has a few days vacation before going on to the next stage, he is invited to spend the time as a guest of the Music Master. While there, the Music Master asks him which school he would like to enter, and he answers Waldzell, because that is where the skillful Glass Bead Game players come from. They discuss the Glass Bead Game and the Music Master tells Knecht to strive for perfection in himself. There will be many conflicts along the way. The Music Master tells Knecht to write him a yearly letter with progress of his studies. Knecht gets his assignment to Waldzell.

Chapter 1, The Call Analysis

Hesse points out that we cannot view Knecht in the same vein as we view a Bach or a Mozart. Knecht did not create anything that he left behind. The facts of his life are historical and the knowledge is the result of research. The facts begin when Knecht is twelve or thirteen and attending the Latin School in Berolfingen, where the Music Master comes to visit. The Music Master spends some time playing and singing with Knecht and places his name on the list of those headed for acceptance by an elite school. This is the way into the Order.

Those chosen for the Order are called Mandarins, and the life of the Mandarin is a simple monastic life dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. They are basically the intellectuals of society and have no desires for wealth or worldly possessions. They run the educational system and have access to all of its facilities in the country. This is the life to which Joseph Knecht is admitted.



Chapter 2, Waldzell

Chapter 2, Waldzell Summary

Waldzell is where the best Glass Bead Game players come from and it is Waldzell that is the next stage in Knecht's education. It is also the school that is most devoted to the arts. "That is to say, whereas at other schools a particular branch of scholarship was distinctly dominant, such as classical philology in Keuperheim, Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophy in Porta, mathematics in Planvaste, Waldzell traditionally cultivated a tendency toward universality and toward an alliance between scholarship and the arts. The highest symbol of these tendencies was the Glass Bead Game. Even here, as at all the other schools, the Game was by no means taught officially and as a compulsory subject. But Waldzell students devoted their private studies almost exclusively to it. Then again, the town of Waldzell was after all the seat of the official Glass Bead Game and its institutions. The famous Game Hall for the ceremonial games was located here, as was the enormous Game Archives, with its officialdom and its libraries. Here, too, was the residence of the Ludi Magister" (Chap. 2, pp. 86-87). The school is not officially attached to any of them but that doesn't matter to Knecht.

The Waldzell school is host to the most elite of the scholars: there are only sixty of them. It also produces most of the Masters and the Glass Bead Game players. Many people think that Waldzell graduates are good for nothing but the Glass Bead Game. Knecht is captivated by the place as he explores the area. The school itself is just an extension of his days at Eschholz, with the only difference being meditation exercises. Knecht spends his early years there more interested in music than in the Glass Bead Game. He devotes so much time to music that it earns him a meeting with the headmaster, who says he is neglecting his other studies, including the Glass Bead Game. This phase continues for the first one and one half years of his studies. He tells the headmaster that it is his right to devote his time to music. He becomes friends with two students, Carlo Ferremonte and Plinio Designori. Designori is a hospitant, or a guest student, who has no intention of entering the Order.

Knecht joins other students listening to Designori, who is quite vociferous about returning to the world and not wanting admission to the Order. He attacks everything that is held sacred in Castalia. Designori's talks raise doubts in Knecht, and he confides this fact to Ferremonte, who feels that Designori isn't worth the time spent listening to him. Knecht feels that he can't discuss the situation with headmaster Zbinden because of his falling out with him over the time he had devoted to music. As the conflict within Knecht grows, he finally writes to the Music Master, telling him of his dilemma. He knows that if he is converted to Designori's way of thinking, he is ruined in the Castalia. Knecht has no family to return to if he leaves the Castalia. He confesses to the Music Master that some of what he hears from Designori makes sense to him. The Castalians analyze but don't produce. They don't earn their own keep. He tells the Music Master that he needs advice.



The Music Master arrives at Waldzell soon after receiving Knecht's letter. He is there for exams, but he spends a lot of time with Knecht. He decides that the headmaster was right about the time Knecht spent on music and re-establishes the relationship between Knecht and the headmaster. The Music Master also orders Knecht to defend the Castalia when it is attacked by Designori. Knecht has to spend time learning about the Castalia in order to defend it, and he becomes very good at it, good enough for Designori to understand that there is something in the Castalia that he didn't understand. Their debates become well-listened to at Waldzell, and they each come to respect the position of the other. Knecht feels that he belongs in the Castalia. Most people do not live the kind of life that he lives because they are outside of the Castalia. But it is the world of Castalia that serves the outside world. The Music Master tells Knecht that he also went through periods of doubt.

Knecht completes his introductory lessons in the Glass Bead Game and begins doing his own games. He finds the game to be relaxing and pleasurable, and feels refreshed and strengthened by the game. He also begins to write poetry. The only poems that survive are the ones that Ferremonte keeps. Designori tells him that he won a struggle with his father to stay with the Castalia if he decided that was what he wants. He says that remaining with the Castalia would be an escape, which is why he will return to the outside world, but he will take many of the Castalia principles with him. Knecht is invited to vacation with Designori's home. Leaving the Pedagogic Province is not usually allowed, and the Board of Educators refuses the request. Before leaving Waldzell, Designori tells Knecht that he thinks that Knecht will become a Magister. Knecht now spends his free time with the Glass Bead Game, keeping copious notes.

Chapter 2, Waldzell Analysis

Waldzell is a school for the elite of the elite. It doesn't teach the Glass Bead Game officially, but it produces many of the Masters of the game in addition to the game players. Strangely enough, Knecht isn't interested in the Glass Bead Game or anything but music for his first eighteen months at Waldzell. He also questions the existence of the Castalians after listening to Designori, and writes to the Music Master for advice. The Music Master arrives at Waldzell and looks into the situation. He orders Knecht to continue the discussions with Designori but to defend the Castalia. Knecht does this, and both he and Designori learn from the experiences. Before leaving Waldzell, Designori tells Knecht that he thinks that Knecht will become a Magister but that he still wants to keep in touch with him. For Designori, leaving the Castalia is not a failure and is not looked upon as such because he was a hospitant. Knecht begins his study of the Glass Bead Game.



Chapter 3, Years of Freedom

Chapter 3, Years of Freedom Summary

Knecht is twenty-four years old when his schooldays end with his graduation from Waldzell. He is now in his years of free study and he feels that these are the happiest days of his life. He could now study what he wants in order to expand his own mind without the structure of a curriculum. He has no doubts about himself or his dedication at this time. Students have much more intellectual freedom because of the availability of resources. There are no restrictions of any kind on the free studies, and most of the worldly dangers and temptations are absent. It is rare for a student to marry and leave the Order. The only restriction on the student is that he must present a plan of study each semester. He only has to file a yearly report on what lectures he attended, what books he read, and what research he performed, unless he is working at music or the Glass Bead Game—then he has to pass examinations. They are allowed to explore whatever areas they want, but they don't gain admittance to the Order until they specialize.

Students occasionally have to compose an essay called a Life. They write a biography of themselves in whatever period they choose. This is basically a carry-over of the Asian doctrine of reincarnation and transmigration of souls. All Castalians believe that they have had other existences. It is a way of learning of other time periods and cultures. The Lives give insight into the authors. Knecht writes three Lives during this time—at least three were preserved. Knecht basically withdraws from public life at this time. He even stops writing to Designori. He also more or less neglects the Glass Bead Game at this time, even though he had studied the game so much during his years at Waldzell.

Knecht decides to concentrate on music instead of the Glass Bead Game and he writes to the Music Master about his decision. The Music Master is not comfortable with his decision. Most of his correspondence with Ferremonte focuses on music. Knecht basically refuses to study the higher levels of the Glass Bead Game at this time, even though everyone feels that it is his destiny. Even so, he also keeps a copy of the Game he had worked on in his earlier courses. This is the Game he always comes back to.

During this time, he spends time at Monteport. Sometimes he is there as a guest of the Music Master, other times he goes to attend seminars. He also spends time at Hirsland, which is the headquarters of the Order. He is there for the days of fasting and meditation. He studies Chinese during this time. Knecht studies the I Ching and wants to study with Elder Brother, but is not able to, as it is not an area of study that the Order encourages strongly. He does go to see him at the Bamboo Grove, which is in the southern part of the country. He tells Elder Brother that he wants to stay and study with him. He remains there for several months, learning to manipulate yarrow sticks. He learns to do many things in the Chinese way, but Elder Brother will not discuss the Glass Bead Game or how to incorporate the I Ching into the game. "Afterward Joseph Knecht described the months he lived in the Bamboo Grove as an unusually happy



time. He also frequently referred to it as the 'beginning of my awakening' - and in fact from that period on the image of 'awakening' turns up more and more often in his remarks, with a meaning similar to although not quite the same as that he had formerly attributed to the image of vocation. It could be assumed that the 'awakening' signified knowledge of himself and of the place he occupied within the Castalian and the general human order of things; but it seems to us that the accent increasingly shifts toward self-knowledge in the sense that from the 'beginning of his awakening' Knecht came close and close to a sense of his special, unique position and destiny, while at the same time the concepts and categories of the tradition hierarchy of the world and of the special Castalian hierarchy became for him ore and more relative matters" (Chap. 3, p. 132).

Knecht continues his Chinese studies when he leaves the Bamboo Grove. He also overcomes his resistance to returning to Waldzell. He attends some of the advanced classes on the Glass Bead Game and becomes one of the best players. All of his studies now focus on the Game. One day, while walking through the Player's Village, he runs into Designori. His old friend is now a government official who is taking a short vacation by taking a class on the Glass Bead Game. Knecht finds that Designori has studied law and is engaged to get married. Designori has traveled a great deal and tells that there is trouble in the world and that Knecht might find his way of life at Castalia coming under attack in the future. Castalia is expensive for the country to maintain.

Thomas von der Trave, the Grand Ludi, sends for Knecht and asks him to come to his home every day for half of an hour. He shows Knecht a proposal he received from an organist that he wants Knecht to work on. Knecht helps the Magister Ludi organize the suggestions, and then realizes that the Master is using this as a form of examination for him. He tells Knecht that he should apply for admission to the Order, and that there will be no problems with his admission. He also warns Knecht against using the Glass Bead Game for philosophizing. The Game is a discipline in its own right.

Knecht is admitted to the Order, with the Music Master performing the ceremony of admission for him. The Music Master, who is ailing, tells him that he is resigning his position. Knecht returns to Waldzell as a full member of the Order. Knecht's years of freedom have come to an end. He is being sent to the Benedictine monastery of Mariafels to teach the Glass Bead Game.

Chapter 3, Years of Freedom Analysis

This is the beginning of Knecht's years of free study. He can study whatever he wants for however long he wants. However, he will not be admitted to the Order until he specializes in an area. Knecht decides to concentrate on music and not on the Glass Bead Game, much to the dismay of the Music Master. His years of free study also involve the study of Chinese. This is not favored by the Order, but is allowed. He travels to the Bamboo Grove to study with Elder Brother and stays there for several months. He finally returns to Waldzell and begins to take advanced courses on the Glass Bead Game. He becomes a part of a small group of expert players.

Knecht's years of free study have come to an end with his admission to the Order. The ceremony is performed by the Music Master. The Magister Ludi gives him an assignment to teach the Glass Bead Game at the Benedictine monastery of Mariafels. Now if Knecht wants to study something, he will have to request time. This concludes the period that Knecht refers to as the happiest period of his life.



Chapter 4, Two Orders

Chapter 4, Two Orders Summary

Knecht, a member of the inner circle of Glass Bead Game players, is now going to be teaching the game. His friend, and later assistant, Fritz Tegularius, is also a good Game player, and Knecht feels that he would make a good instructor. He is good at analyzing games and at finding errors in them. When they were in their twenties, Tegularius let Knecht look at some papers and comparisons that he had on the Glass Bead Game, and Knecht said they were very good. Knecht found them so good that he borrowed them to study them. He recommends Tegularius as a consultant, but not as a teacher. Tegularius is truly happy for Knecht in his assignment after being accepted by the Order.

Knecht cannot leave for Mariafels until the bureaucratic red tape is completed. He has to be cleared by the Political Department of the Board of Educators and instructed in the rules for being in the outside world. Dubois, of the Political Department, tells Knecht that he wants to be informed of any political discussions that the Benedictine monks have. They have many sources, so they are not dependent on him alone for information. Finally, Knecht is allowed to leave.

Knecht has mixed feelings about leaving Tegularius, even though he doesn't show much emotion. He is concerned about Tegularius. Knecht has spent the last year living in the Glass Bead Game village, where he either taught high level classes or helped the Magister or Archivist. Tegularius is not as much a part of this group as Knecht is. Knecht is popular with the superiors because he is not ambitious. He was fated to be a member of the elite and to move in high circles. He would always be moving to the top through no doing of his own even though he prefers the contemplative life of study.

The monastery at Mariafels has all the markings of its past greatness, including a huge library of medieval theology. It is famous for its music. Knecht is received with politeness at the monastery. He is the first Glass Bead Game player of high caliber to be sent there. He is there as a representative of the Castalia, not as a private individual, and he is expected to act accordingly. He spends his first few days exploring the grounds. When he requests more precise directions about how he should act, he is told to be himself and spend the time learning and not to force himself or be impatient with the people there. One day, he mentions the I Ching, and much to his delight, finds the Abbot to be well versed in the book. This common ground gives them new material for discussion.

One evening, Knecht hears music. He knocks on a door and finds Father Jacobus playing the piano. They begin to talk. Knecht finds that Jacobus isn't very interested in the Castalia and thinks it is an imitation of Christian orders, except that there is no religion. Knecht tells him that that doesn't detract from their intentions or their goal of the life of the mind. They also discuss the Glass Bead Game. Their discussion leads to a



mutual understanding and a friendship of sorts. Each understands the other a little better, and they have many discussions during Knecht's time there.

The Castalia receive good reports about Knecht from the Abbot, who he is teaching Chinese to. It is assumed that Knecht dabbles in Christianity while he is at the monastery, but there is no record of it.

Chapter 4, Two Orders Analysis

Knecht's friendship with Fritz Tegularius is discussed. They meet in their mid-twenties during a course on the Glass Bead Game. Fritz remains a loyal friend to Knecht for his entire life. Tegularius is also a good Glass Bead Game player. He is good at analyzing games and at finding errors in games, and Knecht indicates that he needs him for help in teaching. He says that Tegularius would be valuable in the highest review courses.

Knecht also realizes that he was marked for the upper circles and the life of the elite, whether he wants it or not. He would have preferred to remain in the contemplative life, but that is not to be. He also learns from Father Jacobus that the Christians do not think favorably of the Castalia. They find it to be an imitation of their own orders, without any religion. Knecht responds that those views don't detract from the purpose of the Castalia.



Chapter 5, The Mission

Chapter 5, The Mission Summary

Knecht spends two years at Mariafels on his first visit. He is thirty-seven at the time, and one day was called into the Abbot's office. The Abbot tells Knecht that he has a commission for him. He is also requested to return to Waldzell, but he will be allowed to return to the monastery at some point in the future. He doesn't have to stay to finish the course he is teaching unless the Abbot so requests. Now that he is leaving Mariafels, he realizes that he has grown attached to the place and the people there. But the absence of Castalia had made his heart grow fonder. Knecht leaves for Waldzell.

He stops at Monteport to visit the Music Master. They talk of Knecht's stay at Mariafels. The Music Master is more interested in the organ and the music than he is in Knecht's work there. He doesn't ask about the Glass Bead Game. Knecht goes on to Waldzell, and it suddenly seems to be the most beautiful place in the world when he sees it. He enjoys the time he spends at Waldzell. He is back with the elite at the Vicus Lusorum, and has an audience with the Glass Bead Game Master. He is interested in Father Jacobus. Dubois has succeeded Zbinden and the Magister invites them all to dinner. Two members of the Supreme Board arrive and join them. One is the new Music Master and the other is the Archivist of the Order. Knecht is taken aside and spoken to, which means he is being considered for high office.

Knecht has a vacation of four weeks without any official duties being assigned to him. During this time, he becomes known to the Board of the Order and with most of the Masters and directors. He tries to keep his visits to a minimum so he can devote his time to the Glass Bead Game. The new Music Master has Ferremonte on his staff, and Knecht is able to visit with him several times. Tegularius has attended seminars by the Magister on the Glass Bead Game for two semesters, and lets Knecht go over his notes.

The Magister discusses Knecht's next assignment with him. They are considering the possibility of having a representative at the Holy See. Knecht gets the feeling that if they send him to Rome, it will be a permanent assignment. The groundwork is laid with his stay at Mariafels. He won the confidence of his superiors and was not returning to Mariafels with broader powers. He is to gain the support of Father Jacobus for their plans for Rome even if it takes him several years to do so. Knecht accepts the assignment, but asks for frequent visits to Waldzell and radio contact so he can keep up on the Glass Bead Game. His request is granted. He also says he doesn't want to be assigned to the Holy See or any other diplomatic mission. The Magister tells him it is too early to discuss that.

Knecht returns to Mariafels and is treated as a high ranking official of the Castalia. Rather than spend time on teaching the Glass Bead Game or spending time on music, he spends his time with Father Jacobus. Even though they are close and Jacobus



eventually agrees to support rapprochement, he is still slightly distrustful of Knecht because of the lack of religion in the Castalia. Knecht tries to learn as much as he can from Father Jacobus. Jacobus tells him that he is different since he returned from his vacation, that he knows why he is there. He has a diplomatic assignment and wants Knecht to tell him about it. Knecht tells him.

Knecht is still learning from the Abbot. He learns methods of historical knowledge and how to use historical research. Knecht also picks up Father Jacobus's political views, even though they don't actively discuss them. Those in Castalia are more or less ignorant of politics and have little interest in the subject. Knecht acquires an interest in the subject from his discussion with Father Jacobus.

Knecht still keeps up with the Glass Bead Game at Waldzell. He is involved in the competition that requires Games based on three or four themes. They could use new symbols and vocabulary for the competition. Knecht builds his Game for the competition. He uses what is called the psychological method of Game construction. Controversy and discussion are two different opposing concepts in the Game. There are two game types: formal and psychological. Knecht prefers the latter. If the Game is formal, the player uses mathematics, linguistic, musical and other elements to form the objective content of the Game. The object of the psychological Game is to form unity and harmony through meditation. The player is steered toward perfection. Tegularius has to do the paper work in the archives for Knecht, and receives permission to visit the monastery to work on the task.

Knecht has Father Jacobus write a letter saying that he will support their diplomatic mission and asking that Knecht remain at the monastery a little longer. Knecht is afraid that he will be permanently assigned away from Waldzell, and he doesn't want this. He confides this to Father Jacobus.

Knecht is surprised when he wins first prize for the Glass Bead Game competition. Tegularius wins second prize. He writes to the former Music Master that he is happy at winning the competition and that he doesn't want to be sent to the diplomatic service. He wants to return to Waldzell and the Glass Bead Game. Both Knecht and Jacobus are sad knowing that Knecht will soon be leaving.

Chapter 5, The Mission Analysis

Knecht's time in Waldzell is pleasant. He is back with the Glass Bead Game players and becomes acquainted with the Board and the higher-ups in the Order. He is being groomed for a high position and this becomes evident to him when he is taken into private talks with the Supreme Board members. He is able to devote time to the Glass Bead Game.

His new assignment is back at Mariafels, where he is to gain the support of Father Jacobus for the Castalia to establish a permanent representative at the Holy See. His only request is to keep in touch with the Glass Bead Game at Waldzell. His request is

granted and he is allowed frequent visits. He enters the Glass Bead Game competition and has to have Tegularius help with the paperwork. He is elated at winning first place and at Tegularius winning second place.



Chapter 6, Magister Ludi

Chapter 6, Magister Ludi Summary

Knecht decides to remain at the monastery until spring. He wants to be in Waldzell in time for the public Glass Bead Games. They usually last for ten to fourteen days. Knecht's request to return to the Vicus Lusorum is approved and he knows he will receive another assignment. Knecht wants Father Jacobus to come to Waldzell for the Games, but he doesn't want to. "Then he left, feeling some sadness at parting from a place he had grown fond of and from a stage in his life he was now leaving behind, but also in a mood of festive anticipation, for although he lacked guidance and companions, he had, on his own initiative, scrupulously undertaken the whole series of meditation exercise prescribed as preparations for the festival Games" (Chap. 6, p. 205).

Knecht arrives before the Games begin. He is welcomed by the deputy to the Magister Ludi. The Magister is ill and Knecht is to go to Hirsland to report his return. It is possible that the Magister will not be able to conduct the Games. Knecht had been looking forward to talking with the Magister, who would have reinstated him in the community of Glass Bead Game players, but that is not to be now. He is well greeted at Hirsland and is told that he could devote himself to the Games for the present time. He and Tegularius spend the rest of the week in preparation.

Knecht explains that the deputy, called the Shadow, is a position that is selected by the Magister itself. It is not an appointment from the Order. It is basically a dead-end position in that the deputy never moves into the position of Magister. The Magister is responsible for all of the actions of the deputy, so the deputy is never blamed officially for any of his actions. Bertram is the Shadow for Master Thomas von der Trave. He is not looked upon favorably by many in the Castalia, and as such, he is protected by his Magister. As a result of his Magister's illness, Bertram is now in charge of the Vicus Lusorum, and it is a very trying experience for him because of the lack of support for him within the community.

The day before the games are to begin they make the announcement that the Magister is ill and would not be running the Game. There is concern about the festival and the Magister's health, and people come to Waldzell for the Games. The opening ceremonies take place the night before the Games, with Bertram presiding. As the week goes on, Bertram looks worse, and there are rumors that the Magister is dying and that he had dictated his will and named his successor. This casts a pallor over the Games. The Magister dies the day before the end of the Games. The elite and Game players are not allowed to mourn his passing while the Games are in progress. Knecht had tried to shield himself from this by not receiving any news of the Magister's condition. This is his way of trying to concentrate on the Games. The post-Game celebrations for the students and players are canceled due to the Magister's death, which is announced at the end of the festival. The period of mourning began.



A debate ensues as to who should succeed the Magister. The Board usually does not allow the office to be vacant for more than three weeks. Bertram goes off into the hills and is gone from the community. They later find that he has fallen off a cliff and is dead. Tegularius tells Knecht that Bertram's sacrifice was necessary. He, Knecht, did not know what was going on during his long absence from Waldzell. Members of the community are questioned about the situation.

Knecht learns from Tegularious that there are rumors that Knecht will be elected as Master of the Glass Bead Game. The strongest candidate, the director of the Achieves, had been eliminated from consideration the previous day. Knecht, Tegularious tells him, has the support of three members of the conclave. Knecht is cautious when he hears the news, which stuns Tegularious.

Several days later, Knecht is summoned by the directors of the Order and informed of his appointment as Magister Ludi. His official swearing in ceremony will be the day after next. The next day would be devoted to meditation and preparation for the investiture. Not all in the community are happy about Knecht's appointment. He has his rivals and those who did not like him for whatever reason. The investiture ceremony is not public, but much to Knecht's delight, the former Music Master is there.

Knecht already knows most of the functions of the office because he had assisted the previous Magister on numerous occasions. Providing the Game courses is the most important function. Even though Knecht would have preferred some time to study various situations, he assumes the duties of Magister Ludi. He also knows he must pay some attention to the elite to prove himself to them, which he does.

Chapter 6, Magister Ludi Analysis

Knecht's return to Waldzell isn't all that he hoped it would be since the Magister Ludi is ill, but he receives the approval from Hirsland to devote his time to the Glass Bead Game festival that will take place. The pomp and circumstance of the Game is presided over by the disliked Bertram, and it takes its toll on him. He did not have the support of the community and Knecht points this out to Tegularius after the Games. They could have helped Bertram, but they choose not to. Tegularius tells Knecht that he doesn't know what has gone on during his absence and that Bertram had to be sacrificed. He doesn't elaborate on what he means by this.

The Magister dies before the end of the Games. Knecht is in the guest house when Tegularius comes and tells him that there is a rumor that Knecht will be elected as Master of the Glass Bead Game. Knecht has support within the conclave and the only objection to him is his age. He is just forty, while most people didn't become Magister until they were five to ten years older. He is appointed Magister Ludi and formally invested. He knows he has to gain the trust and respect of the elite and that paying attention to them can't be postponed.



Chapter 7, In Office

Chapter 7, In Office Summary

Knecht's promotion to the office of Magister is a strain on him. Even so, it brings him new observations and experiences. "The greatest of these, now that the battle was won, was his collaboration with the elite on the basis of mutual trust and friendliness. He conferred with his Shadow. He worked with Fritz Tegularius, whom he tried out as an assistant on his correspondence. He gradually studied, checked over, and supplemented the reports and other notes on students and associates which his predecessor had left. And in the course of this work Knecht familiarized himself, with increasing affection, with this elite whom he had imagined he knew so well" (Chap. 7, pp. 232-233).

He does not feel himself to be an intimate part of the community as he had before because he now is the head of the community. At the conclusion of a course for teachers of beginners, Knecht tells them that the Game must always remain at the apex of their cultural existence and they must work to further develop the Game and to keep it interesting. They don't want to allow a deterioration of the Game. He says that the Game Archive is the core of the whole apparatus and it is used daily by players of all levels. The Castalia selects the elite of the country for education, and they become the players of the Game. The best Glass Bead Game players are the elite of the elite.

The Game must also be protected from abuse. Playing the Game can lead to vanity, power seeking, and abuse of that power. This is the diabolus contained in the Glass Bead Game just as there is a diabolus in every branch of knowledge. This speech firmly establishes Knecht in the office of Magister. He is a good teacher of the Game, and once he establishes himself with the elite, he turns to the Archives. He wants them to know that he is friendly.

His friend, Tegularius, is more or less neglected during Knecht's first few months in office. Knecht does have several assignments for him to keep him from idleness. In the course of his duties, Knecht learns about some of the secret functions of the Order. His residence has a garden and he now tries to spend at least fifteen minutes a day in it for relaxation. He also finds a note in his daily calendar that he should begin thinking about the next Game competition even though it is almost a year away. The note is from one of the Magister Ludis of previous generations. The calendar is handed down from generation to generation.

He decides on the theme he would use for the Game, one he had thought about for years. He would use a Confucian pattern for the construction of a Chinese house. All of the parts would be based on the different parts of the house and their relationships and coordination and symbolism. He assigns the background work to Tegularius, who accepts the assignment. Knecht suggests that he go to the Far Eastern College and that he consult with Elder Brother. Elder Brother writes that he can't make the trip to



Waldzell, so Tegularius is sent to the Bamboo Grove. Tegularius makes the trip, but finds that the information he obtains is useless. He did better at the Far Eastern College finding all of the information that he needed.

Knecht and Tegularius work on the Game together. One day he finds a note in his calendar that a student recommended by the former Music Master at Monteport has arrived to do research in the Archives. He sends for the student, named Petrus, so he can meet him. The student says his former mentor has invited the Magister to come for a visit. He is told to stay at Waldzell until Knecht leaves for Monteport. Petrus then admits that those were not the exact words of the former Music Master. He finds that Petrus is worried about the old man, who is getting old. He tells Knecht of some of the changes in the old man.

Knecht makes the trip to Monteport and the old Music Master is very happy to see him. Knecht notices the difference in the old man. After greeting Knecht, the old man basically just stares instead of answering questions or engaging in conversation. When Knecht returns to Waldzell, he discusses the old Music Master's condition with Ferromonte.

Chapter 7, In Office Analysis

Knecht, who is now head of the Glass Bead Game community, feels differently than he did before he assumed his new position. He no longer feels an intimate part of the community since he is not the head of the community. He does not share in the daily life of the community in the same way. When he addresses the teachers of the low level course, he talks about the structure of the Castalia, how the best are chosen to be educated and how the elite of the elite become the Glass Bead Game inner-circle. He says it is a tradition that must be preserved, that the integrity of the Game must be protected from deterioration and abuse. The Glass Bead Game has its diabolus just as other branches of knowledge do. It can lead to vanity, empty virtuosity, power seeking, and abuse of that power. His speech is well received by the community.

Knecht deals with the issues one by one. After he establishes himself with the elite, he turns to establishing himself with the Archives. He needs to show them what kind of Master he is as he and Tegularius begin the work for the next Game competition. Knecht decides on a Confucian theme based on a Chinese house, and sends Tegularius to do the research with Elder Brother and at the Far Eastern College. He is happy at being able to use a theme he has thought about for years.

Knecht finds that his mentor, the old Music Master, is failing. He travels to Monteport to see him and finds that the old man basically just stares into space instead of engaging in conversation. Knecht is worried about him and discusses the situation with Ferromonte. Hesse marks this as the beginning of Knecht's transfiguration.



Chapter 8, The Two Poles

Chapter 8, The Two Poles Summary

The first Game competition put on by Knecht becomes known as the Chinese House Game. It is received very well and makes the Board feel justified in selecting Knecht as Magister Ludi. The affair, conducted by the youngest ever Magister Ludi, is well attended and highly successful. "Not for many years had the annual Game been such an event as it was this time, with the youngest and most-discussed Magister in Castalian history making his first public appearance and showing what he could do. Moreover, Waldzell was determined to make up for the failure and disgrace of the previous year. This time no one lay ill, no cowed deputy awaited the great ceremony with apprehension, coldly ringed by the malevolent distrust of the elite, faithfully but listlessly supported by nervous officials" (Chap. 8, p. 262).

Knecht conducts the ceremonies in grandeur, writing the characters on his tablet so they are magnified on a giant board behind him for all to see. When he finishes with the summary formula, he takes his seat for meditation. The Game is so impressive that it wins many new converts. In spite of his brilliance, his tenure in office comes to a scandalous end when it ended. Hesse points out that their purpose is to show that it had nothing to do with Knecht's achievements while he was in office. Knecht was always aware of the history and the glory of the Castalia and his part in it. He felt his own place in the history of the Order and the glory of the Games.

The Castalia choose the best students to educate and groom for the Order. Sometimes they make bad choices and a student has to be dismissed. This is considered very serious, and a grave misfortune to serious students like Knecht. The way of life of the outside world is contrary to the Castalia and everything that it stands for. This is sin to the Castalian point of view. Knecht is a representative of the Order. In some ways, he is placed in the situation of confronting the outside world with Designori and Father Jacobus, and defending the Order. He learns from both of them and they both respect his views. This is how Knecht learns of the outside world, and this makes him more receptive to the outside world than most of his contemporaries.

Underlying everything is the concept of friendship. Knecht does not need friends for companionship. His friendship with Tegularius is based on Tegularius' admiration for Knecht. Tegularius irritates any of his superiors and they always assigne meditation. Even Knecht does this at times. He prefers to maintain his constant student status and freedom. Tegularius represents what Castalia might become unless it is rejuvenated, and Knecht realizes this. Measures have to be instituted to keep Castalia from being populated by people like Tegularius. A little more deterioration in Castalia, and most of its population would be like Tegularius. Knecht tries to keep Tegularius in line. Knecht reaches many of his conclusions after a study of the history of the Castalia.



Knecht receives news of the death of the old Music Master. The old man had died peacefully in his sleep.

Chapter 8, The Two Poles Analysis

Knecht proves himself with his first Game competition, which became known as the Chinese House Game. His selection as Master was justified in the eyes of the Board and the annual Game competition he conducts was the grandest that they'd had in years.

Hesse delves into Knecht's character in this chapter. The Castalia had its own rules and laws. It selected only the most brilliant to educate and admit to the Order. The Order was not a part of the outside world, which contained everything that was anathema to the Order. Knecht is cast in the role of defending the Order against the outside world; first as a student with his classmate Designori, and later at the monastery with Father Jacobus. Through all of this, Knecht remains a representative of the Order and its Laws. He learns as much as he can from both of them.

Knecht sees in his friend Tegularius all of the things that could happen to Castalia if it is allowed to deteriorate. He feels that steps must be taken to rejuvenate the Castalia. He feels the pull of service and loyalty to the hierarchy, and yet at the same time, he feels the need to experience an awakening to reality. He holds the Order, the Glass Bead Game, the Castalia, and his role in it as sacred but he feels that members of the Castalia have to look outside. This is why he has problems devoting himself solely to the Glass Bead Game in his earlier days.

Knecht is becoming worried about life in the closed-off society. This is why he has more desires for contact with the outside world, and why he decides to teach beginners who have had the most recent experiences with the outside world.



Chapter 9, A Conversation

Chapter 9, A Conversation Summary

Knecht has reached the highest level of the Order at an early age, even though he was not ambitious. He had not sought the Magister Ludi position and would have been happier leading the free life of a scholar. He does not like all of the duties his position requires, especially those involving the politics of the Order. Many of the functions of his position, even the training of Glass Bead Game players, are a burden to him. He does enjoy teaching. "We have come to that point in our study when we must focus our attention entirely upon the remarkable change of course which occupied the last years of the master's life and led to his bidding farewell to his office and the Province, his crossing into a different sphere of life, and his death. Although he administered his office with exemplary faithfulness up to the moment of his departure, and to his last day enjoyed the affectionate confidence of his pupils and colleagues, we shall not continue our description of his conduct of the office now that we see him already weary of it in his innermost soul, and turning toward other aims. He had already explored all the possibilities the office provided for the utilization of his energies and had reached the point at which great men must leave the path of tradition and obedient subordination and, trusting to supreme, indefinable powers, strike out on new, trackless courses where experience is no guide " (Chap. 9, p. 286).

Knecht's decisions causes a rift in the Castalia. He becomes highly critical of his own work and in life within the Province. Many of the events surrounding his last days are the result of rumors and conjecture. He is looking for a way out of the situation he is in because he is finding it confining and stifling. The way comes in the form of Plinio Designori, his former classmate, who is now a member of the Chapter of Deputies and a political writer. Designori is also a member of the commission that decides the budget for the Castalia, and meets Knecht at a meeting of the directorate.

Knecht studies Designori at the meeting and decides that the man has changed. For some reason, he seems sad and not as lively as he used to be. He seems to have the appearance of worldly suffering as many men in the outside world do. Designori seems to shun Knecht, who works to regain his trust. Several months after the meeting, Designori accepts an invitation to visit Knecht at Waldzell. On this day-long visit, the two men spend time together talking. Knecht seems to try to explain his life and lifestyle to Designori. This is important to him for some reason.

Designori tells him that Knecht has his life within the Order but he has no family or concept of family, and this gives them a different set of values. Designori tells Knecht that speaking to him is like speaking to a foreigner and he wouldn't understand him if he hadn't been at student at Waldzell. But, he says, Knecht doesn't understand him when they do speak. They speak different languages with different meanings behind the words. Knecht responds that this doesn't mean that they shouldn't try to communicate.



Designori tells him of a conflict within himself that began when he left the Castalia and that continues to the present time. The ways of the Order had shielded him from the outside world, and he had a problem with not being accepted the way he had expected to be. His days at the university were a contrast to his days of study at Waldzell. He never found the life that he wanted or expected from his days in the Castalia. The Castalia and the motherland are alienated from each other and exist as separate entities with little in common. Designori says he tried to function as a mediator between the two but failed. He tried to live a life consistent with the rules of Castalia when he was in the real world of the university. He found he could not reconcile the two worlds. He gradually abandoned the ways of the life in Castalia and adopted those of the real world. Whenever he returned to Waldzell for vacation courses in the Glass Bead Game, he realized how far he had grown from the life at Waldzell. He goes on to relate his experiences with the former classmates and how he was treated. The two men discuss their feeling about the evening they spent together many years ago. Knecht spends an evening with him, but it was strained and the experience ended Designori's illusions. They led different lives with different values and goals and the two worlds cannot mesh. Knecht agrees with Designori's comments about the evening, and says that they should laugh at it now. Knecht tells Designori his impressions of that evening and agrees that they had grown apart at that time.

Knecht tries to impress Designori that what happened that evening is behind them now and that he wants to renew their friendship. Designori is Knecht's link with and way into the outside world, and Knecht tells him that he needs the contact with the outside world. Knecht tells Designori that he wants them to put the past behind them. Designori, he says, has a love-hate relationship with the Castalia and their way of life. He wants to help his friend with his problem and he wants to explain his own life and problems in future discussions.

Chapter 9, A Conversation Analysis

This chapter explores the factors that lead to the end of Knecht's days as Magister Ludi and a member of the Order. He is already questioning the way of the Order and its isolation from the outside world. Much of this questioning is the result of the role he was cast in by the Music Master from his days as a student when he was told to defend the Castalia in his discussion with Designori. His discussion with Father Jacobus had opened his mind further to the outside world and the limitations of the Castalia.

Knecht does not really enjoy his position or the privileges and responsibilities that go with it. To him, most of the functions of the job are a burden, even the training of Glass Bead Game players. He is looking for a less confining situation and this is one of the reasons he begins to explore a relation with Designori.

The bulk of the chapter consists of a conversation between the two men. They discuss what happened years before when Designori attended a Game course and spent an evening with Knecht. They talk of their feelings of that meeting. Designori was hurt by the evening and Knecht says they now should laugh at it. Designori tells Knecht of his



struggles when he left Waldzell, at how he tried to follow the rules of Castalia at the university and how and why he failed. He opens up and talks to Knecht quite freely of his life, problems, and feelings, most of which stem from his love-hate relationship with the Castalia.

Knecht wants to renew their friendship and help his friend with his problems. He also wants his friend's help with his own problems. They part as friends who know they will meet again and have future discussions.



Chapter 10, Preparations

Chapter 10, Preparations Summary

Knecht is successful at re-establishing a relationship with Designori. Tegularius is somewhat jealous of Knecht's new relationship with Designori, as Designori makes frequent visits to his friend. Knecht learns all of the details of his life and knows that Designori is bitter because of his experiences. When he sought the comfort of the Castalia, he was rejected.

Designori's father was a political conservative. He was loyal to his class and to tradition, which is why he was so opposed to change. His son became involved with liberals that supported change, and this brought them into conflict. His father ordered him out of the liberal movement and left laughing at his son, telling him not to meddle in grown-up affairs. This resulted in a rift that was never fully mended. He married the daughter of the liberal, Veraguth, and worked in the liberal party. He soon came to have doubts about the liberal cause and his role in it. He was not a happy man.

Knecht and Designori maintain their frequent visits and discussions as they learn about each other's lives and problems. Designori learns that Knecht's life is one of loneliness, in spite of all of his achievements. He understands Knecht's desire to be out of the public life and to teach children. They each play the role of psychotherapist to the other. It is from Designori that Knecht learns the details of life in the real world. Designori does not understand why Knecht spends so much time trying to help him, but figures that it is just Knecht's nature to try to help someone who is as miserable as he is.

In the course of their discussions, Knecht reveals his plan to resign as Magister Ludi and leave the Order. In some ways, Designori questions Knecht's intentions, but in other ways, he believes that Knecht needs him and relies on his advice and confidence. Designori benefits from the discussions. He returns to the practice of meditation and some of the Castalian practices. Designori is a happier man because of the time Knecht spends with him.

After eight years as a Magister, Knecht finally visits Designori at his home. He meets his wife and his son, Tito. Knecht comes to view Designori in a different light in his own home. He is not as calm and serene as he is when he visits Waldzell. After this visit, Knecht sends a meditation coach to Designori's home to try to help him. Knecht makes subsequent visits to the Designori home. He talks to them about educating Tito in the Castalia.

Alexander, the meditation teacher that Knecht had sent to the Designori home, becomes President of the Order. The two men are friends, even though they don't have many shared experiences of youth. This is another tie to the Castalia that prevents Knecht from his desire for experiences in the real world. He has his link to the outside world through Designori. He knows that Tegularius cannot go with him when he leaves



the Province. By the time he tells Tegularius of his plans, his decision to leave has been firmly made. He has discussed his views of the future of the Castalia with him and of the problems it faces. Surprisingly, Tegularius accepts Knecht's decision. Tegularius becomes Knecht's collaborator and works on the petition to the Board. The petition has to explain his reasons and views and document them.

Tegularius likes to see authority challenged, so he is excited by the assignment. Knecht does not derive any pleasure from it. He just wants to be free of the constraints of the Order so he can do what he wants to do. Knecht writes Designori that he is keeping Tegularius occupied while he is carrying out his plan. He suspects he will receive a mild reprimand from the Board, not a release and assignment to the outside world. He asks Designori to find him a place to live and a job, perhaps as a music teacher. Designori says he can live at his house as long as he likes, but Knecht declines the offer.

When Designori and Knecht meet, Designori tells him that he knows of the problems in his home, especially with his son Tito. He asks Knecht to come into their home and be the boy's tutor. Knecht agrees, but says Designori must have the consent of his wife and must place Tito completely in his hands. When Designori's wife agrees, Knecht talks with Tito. He spends some time explaining Designori to his son. Another time he plays the piano for the boy in a way that impresses the boy with the art form and the artist who is practicing the art form.

Knecht keeps performing his duties as Magister, even though he feels himself growing away from them. Waldzell seems to be in the past already to him. He knows he could resign his position using conscience as the reason. He could also resign from the Order. His loyalty makes this a difficult task for him. He does not believe that the Order would let him go.

Chapter 10, Preparations Analysis

This chapter reveals more of Knecht's plans to leave the Province. He confides in Tegularius and enlists his assistance with the petition and other papers that are required. Tegularius is excited by the assignment because he likes to see people confront the authority of the Order. To Knecht, it is just a necessary step to obtain his freedom from the constraints of the Order.

Knecht's plans to leave are still a secret. Designori invites him to work as his son's tutor. Tito has a lot of problems and he thinks that Knecht could help the boy. Knecht agrees, subject to certain conditions.

During this time, Knecht is still performing his functions in the Province. He knows he can resign using conscience as a reason, but his loyalty prevents him from doing this easily. He also doesn't believe that the Order will release him. "But he had no confidence in the success of this petition. He would receive soothing assurances, admonishments, would perhaps be offered a vacation in Mariafels, where Father Jacobus had recently died, or perhaps in Rome. But the authorities would not let him



go; that seemed more and more clear. To release him would violate all the traditions of the Order. If the Board were to do so, it would be admitting that his request was justified, admitting that life in Castalia, and what was more in such a high post, might in some circumstances not be satisfying to a man, might mean renunciation and imprisonment." (Chap. 10, pp. 342-343)



Chapter 11, The Circular Letter

Chapter 11, The Circular Letter Summary

Even though Knecht and Tegularius spend a considerable amount of time working on the document, Knecht does not have much faith in its success. After Tegularius becomes too involved in the assignment and spends so much time on a petition that Knecht no longer believes in, he cannot withdraw and just resign. He thanks Tegularius when he presents the manuscript to him and has him read it aloud to him every day for a half hour in the garden. Knecht writes his own letter to the Board, and the text is presented in the chapter along with the Board's response. "We are approaching the end of our tale. As we have already indicated, our knowledge of the end is fragmentary, rather more in the nature of a legend than of a historical narrative. We shall have to be content with that. We therefore take all the more pleasure in being able to fill out this next-to-last chapter of Knecht's life with an authentic document, namely with that voluminous memorandum in which the Glass Bead Game Master himself presents the authorities with the reasons for his decision and asks them to release him from his office" (Chap. 11, p. 344).

Knecht refers to his letter as a circular letter. He says he is required to report anything that imperils his functioning in his position and that that is the reason for his letter. The Castalian exist apart from the real world. They exist as a form of nobility supported by the real world. Most have contempt for men outside of their Order. The Order itself is filled with smugness. The teachers who they send into the world are the ones that repay society for the debt of Castalia. Members of the order do not regard the real world with the same respect that they regard their own little world inside the Province. The outside world isn't important to them. He is basically saying that the members inside the Province do not earn their own way or in any way repay society for their privileges.

The Castalia could not exist without the financial support of the nation and that could end at any time. This he sees as a danger to the Order. He criticizes the Order for their lack of attention to world history, mainly because they view it as a struggle for land and economic power. Their views cut off their potential for growth and change as they strive for intellectual perfection within themselves. Knecht discusses the various wars that have occurred, many of which were in a religious context, and religion is something that the Order ignores. He points out that the Castalia was formed due to the quest for truth and order and all of its institutions came from this. Now the Order doesn't want to know anything about these foundations upon which it was built. Knecht says he sees the Order on a downward progression that will lead to its end, and the reason is its relationship with the outside world. He sees a war coming that will result in a shift from spending on the Castalia to spending on war supplies. These changes may occur after their tenure in office, but Knecht feels they will occur. He says he would prefer not to perform the duties of his office given this situation, since his views imperil his performance. The Game will be eliminated in the future, especially as the nation prepares for war, and he describes the Glass Bead Game as the most vulnerable part of



the Castalia. To him, the Game is a lost cause that will just deteriorate with time. Teachers are more important and necessary than Glass Bead Game players in the world that is coming and it is teachers that the Order should be placing its emphasis on. He asks the Board to relieve him of his duties and assign him to a teaching position in the outside world.

Knecht sends the letter to the Board and awaits their response, which soon comes in the form of a letter from Hirsland. In the letter the Board says that they appreciate his views and concerns, but do not necessarily agree with or approve of them. They reiterate that the Order does not take part in politics and does not try to influence events in peace or war. Because of this, Knecht's calls for change are rejected. The Board feels that his warnings of impending doom are much too pessimistic and that Knecht can discuss his views with them in person, and he is criticized for not taking this approach. His requests for relief from his duties and reassignment to a school are refused.

Chapter 11, The Circular Letter Analysis

Knecht realizes that he started a process that he cannot withdraw from when he assigned Tegularius the task of doing the background work for the petition. He did it to make the break easier for Tegularius.

Most of the chapter concerns Knecht's letter to the order, which he calls the circular letter. In it, he basically criticizes the Order for their relationship with the outside world. The Order only exists because society supports it financially, and this support could end at any time due to war or severe economic conditions. He sees a war coming, and says that the Glass Bead Game will not survive. The emphasis should be on teaching, and with this in mind, he asks to be relieved of his duties and assigned to teach at a school in the outside world.

He receives the response he knew he would get. His request for relief from his duties is refused as is his request for assignment to a school. He is also requested to appear before the Board and discuss his situation in person.



Chapter 12, The Legend

Chapter 12, The Legend Summary

This chapter is concerned with the disappearance and death of the Magister Ludi. After receiving the letter from the Order refusing his request for reassignment, Knecht goes to meditate in his garden. There is an hour before classes begin, and he is remembering some of poetry. Knecht tells his deputy that he will be going away for an indefinite period of time and leaves him with brief instructions of what to do. Tegularius would not be informed of his plans.

Knecht visits Tegularius and finds out that the poetry that he has been reciting is his own from his student days. They discuss the poem and its relationship to music. Knecht spends the rest of the evening strolling through Waldzell and its grounds. When he goes home, he writes a letter to Designori, telling him that he would be arriving soon, and then he falls asleep. The next morning he departs very quietly, with very few people noticing. He goes to Hirsland, where he had been requested to appear in person. He brings along a box that contains the insignia to the office of Magister Ludi, the seal, and the keys. He is shown to a guest cell as the President of the Order has to clear a spot in his schedule in order to see him. Knecht studies the rules of the Order while he is waiting.

It is late after noon before he is admitted to the President's office. When asked if the response of the Board was disappointing, Knecht replies that it was what he had expected. He had not expected a favorable reply. The President, Alexander, says he understands that Knecht is tired of his office and the Castalia and wants to have a life in the outside world. Knecht replies that he came to Hirsland to discuss the situation with him, and presents the contents of the box. Alexander says he cannot accept a resignation alone, that it requires one third of the Board, even though Knecht told him he wanted to officially resign. He tells him they will talk again the next day.

Alexander decides not to use official channels. The next morning, the two meet again. Alexander offers to allow Knecht to try a trial separation from the Order. Knecht tells him if they had accepted his petition, he would have remained in the Order. Knecht does not accept Alexander's proposition that his position is the result of an awakening caused by God or demons. His position is the result of his association with Designori and Father Jacobus and goes back many years. "I am not here to salvage something for myself, or even to win the Board's approval of my action. I counted on being regarded by my colleagues henceforth as a dubious phenomenon, and am prepared for that. But I don't want to be regarded as a traitor or madman; that is a verdict I cannot accept. I have done something you must disapprove of, but I have done it because I had to, because it was incumbent upon me, because that is my destiny, which I believe in and which I assume with good will. If you cannot concede this much, then I have been defeated and have spoken with you in vain" (Chap. 12, p. 403).



The President accepts Knecht's withdrawal from the Order and says he will notify the Board. He also tells Knecht that he does not approve of the situation. Knecht leaves and does not take the car when he leaves Hirsland. He does not allow himself to think of this meeting with Alexander. That was a decision he made before coming to Hirsland. He left all of his writing and belongings at Waldzell. He walks to Designori's home, where he is warmly greeted. He is ready to assume his duties as Tito's tutor. Designori tells him that he and Tito can live at Belpunt, the family's cottage in the mountains.

While they are awaiting the arrival of Tito, Mrs. Designori arrives and tells them that he has disappeared. Knecht tells them not to worry, that the boy will appear. They find a note from Tito saying that he went ahead to Belpunt to await Knecht's arrival. Knecht says he will go to Belpunt in the morning. They spend the rest of the day talking, with Knecht telling Designori of his discussions with Alexander.

The next morning, Knecht travels to the cottage. He is greeted by Tito when he arrives. Knecht is very tired, and he notices his fatigue increases as the evening goes on. The fatigue continues and he attributes it to the altitude. If it doesn't abate, they will have to return to the city. He is thinking of this and his plans for his work with Tito as he tries to sleep. He arises early and finds Tito going to the lake for a swim. He joins Tito for a swim to the other shore. Tito loses sight of him and frantically searches for him. "Oh! He thought in grief and horror, now I am guilty of his death. And only now, when there was no longer need to save his pride or offer resistance, he felt, in shock and sorrow, how dear this man had already become to him. And since in spite of all rational objections he felt responsible for the Master's death, there came over him, with a premonitory shudder of awe, a sense that his guilt would utterly change him and his life, and would demand much greater things of him than he had ever demanded of himself" (Chap. 12, p. 425).

Chapter 12, The Legend Analysis

This chapter analyzes the Magister's mood and actions after he receives the letter refusing his request for reassignment. He travels to Hirsland to talk to Alexander and obtain his release from the Order. Both men talk and explain their position to the other. Knecht traces his position back to his associations with both Designori and his days at Mariafels. Alexander finally accepts Knecht's withdrawal from the Order and Knecht leaves Hirsland on foot. Knecht had spent many years waiting for this moment of being able to go into the real world. He had decided beforehand that he would not think of the events that had occurred.

Knecht goes to Designori's house and tells them of the events that have occurred. He leaves for Belpunt the next day, where he is to live with his pupil in the mountains. On the first morning there, he joins Tito for a swim in the lake and drowns.



Pgs. 430 - 558 , Joseph Knecht's Posthumous Writings

Pgs. 430 - 558 , Joseph Knecht's Posthumous Writings Summary

The last part of the book contains poems and essays written by Knecht during his student days. In the poem Lament, Knecht seems to be searching, since he begins by saying there is no permanence that things take on whatever the situation requires, and this changes from situation to situation even though man yearns for something of permanence. In the poem A Compromise, Knecht talks about the fact that man can't live life in two or more dimensions because that creates tension. He talks about the needs to strike one dimension to rid his life of tension. But Secretly We Thirst . . . is a poem about a dream life without tensions. But man isn't happy in this dream state and craves reality. Alphabets talks about the fantasy created by writing. The symbols on the page take on a different form and give man a different life, but it is temporary. On Reading an Old Philosopher is a poem about music. The musical symbols appear and disappear, just as man does. Stages also talks of the temporary nature of things, by using flowers as an example.

There are also poems about the Glass Bead Game. The Last Glass Bead Game Player talks about playing the Game with glass beads. When the player is in his prime, he is the center of attention and respect. Eventually, as he ages, his popularity also fades, and in the end he has only colored pieces of glass with no meaning. The Glass Bead Game poem is more concerned with the construction of the Game and what goes into it. He also talks about his experiences at Mariafels in A Dream. He writes of his experiences in the library and the books that he has read and how they held the key to knowledge. Books are a way of transmitting information from one generation to the next. Soap Bubbles also has this theme of getting lost in books.

The three Lives that Knecht wrote as a student are also reproduced. These were situations where the student had to place himself in another place in history and write about his life. The three Lives are The Rainmaker, The Father Confessor, and The Indian Life.

The Rainmaker discusses life in a tribe thousands of years ago. He describes the tribal traditions and way of life. Knecht is a boy in the tribe, and is with Ada, the daughter of the Rainmaker, Turu. They listen to the tribe's women telling stories. Turu knows that Knecht wants to learn the art of rainmaking. There is no written knowledge at this time, so everything has to be passed through the elders of the tribe. Knecht is always following Turu, hoping to be assigned some tasks. Turu finally takes the boy as his apprentice, which means that Knecht would become Rainmaker some day. The knowledge of the Rainmaker is passed on to the boy.



The Rainmaker teaches him the knowledge of the moon and tells him that Ada will become his wife when the old man dies. Knecht adjusts to the life as an apprentice and learns as much as he can from the old man. He becomes the Rainmaker's assistant when the man gives his daughter as Knecht's wife. During his tenure as Rainmaker, Knecht and the village survive the catastrophe of drought. Knecht, the Rainmaker, could not make rain, and many villages perish. After the drought, Knecht's luck changes and the rains come. Years go by, and Knecht finds he has a boy following him, just as he had followed Turu, and he reacts in the same way as Turu did. He trains two apprentices, one of whom is his son, Turu.

One night, while studying the stars, he decides that they are predicting doom. The falling stars are causing madness among the villagers. They think the end has come, even though the usual stars are in their usual places. Knecht finds there is no reasoning with them. The meteor shower eventually ends, but it is talked about for months. Knecht feels that they had averted disaster by prayers. The weather is bad again the next spring. Knecht tells his son to assume his office if he dies. Many people become ill and are dying of dysentery. Knecht offers himself as a sacrifice. He is killed and his son becomes Rainmaker.

The second life is The Father Confessor, and it takes place in the city of Gaza. He is a man named Josephus Famulus in this story, and one day he gives away his worldly goods and leaves to become a penitent. He has renounced the life of the pagan. People come to him with their problems and confessions. He always has them recite The Lord's Prayer at the end of their confession. He does not believe in ordering punishments. He decides that his work at redemption is not good enough and flees the area. He spends the night at a water hole. The people tell him about a holy man living in the area and they recommend that he goes to see the man.

They talk about holy men and he tells them about the one named Josephus. He listens to the way they talk about him and laugh. He decides to see the one named Dion. He introduces himself and finds that Dion knows of him. Josephus stays and helps Dion with his daily confessions and learns from him. After several years, Dion's health begins to fail. Dion shows him where he wants to be buried and has Josephus dig a little every day. Dion tells him that he knew who he was when he first met him. Dion says that he too was once like Josephus, and decided that taking Josephus in would help them both. Now he looks upon him as a son. The old man dies in his sleep that night. Josephus buries him and plants the palm tree as he requested. It grows and he eats its fruit.

The last essay is entitled The Indian Life, where Knecht is among the Indian gods. Ravenna, who was an avatar of Vishnu, has a son, Dasa, whose mother dies. He remarries and has another son, Nala, whose mother wants her son to inherit the throne. One day, Dasa wanders off with a group of shepherds. He is taken into the hills where he lives with them. Years later, they learn that Nala is assuming the throne because of his father's illness. Dasa is assigned to deliver supplies to the city for the festivities.

Dasa eventually marries Pravati, the daughter of a tenant farmer. One day, he comes home and finds her missing, and finds that she is living with the Rajah Nala. Dasa finds



their tent and slays Nala. He runs off and spends several years wandering, and he still dreams of his wife. Dasa avoids people. He comes to a peaceful region that reminds him of the years he spent with the shepherds, and meets a yogi as he had in his youth. He stays with the yogi. He wants to become a yogi so he imitates the old man. One day, the yogi speaks to him and Dasa tells him of his past history. The Yogi seems to laugh at him. Dasa decides to leave the next day.

When he tells the old man that he plans to leave, the yogi sends him for water. At the spring, he hears the voice of Pravati. He forgets about the water for the yogi and spends his time with his wife. Dasa had been proclaimed prince. He follows her back to her camp and a messenger is sent to the city to tell them that Dasa has been found. In the city, he is greeted as royalty and is shown to his home. He assumes his official duties.

One day, a hostile rajah raids Dasa's lands and Dasa sets off with a party to avenge the act. This begins a period of raids and reprisals by each side, which doesn't make sense to Dasa. Dasa's court is split into two camps, one favoring peace and the other favoring war. Dasa sometimes remembers the old yogi and thinks about him, wondering about consulting him. He finally realizes that Pravati likes leading the royal life and has helped to find him because she can't live in the palace any other way. He is far from the peaceful life he had wanted with the yogi. He left it behind when he followed Pravati to the camp. Dasa's enemy attacks and surrounds the palace when Dasa is absent. His son and wife are in the palace. Dasa is captured and taken inside and finds his wife holding the dead body of their son.

He wakes up from his dream with the water spilling on him at the spring. He fills the gourd with water and returns to the yogi. He has had his awakening. He is now accepted by the yogi. He remains in the forest for the rest of his life.

Pgs. 430 - 558 , Joseph Knecht's Posthumous Writings Analysis

Knecht's poems seem to reveal the tensions in his life and the fact that he is searching for something that will make him happy. His poems seem to reveal that so many things in life are temporary: they appear and disappear. He also expresses his views as books being a source of knowledge that the reader can get lost in. They are a way of transmitting knowledge from one generation to another.

The essays are the assignments Knecht had as a student to write of his existence in an earlier period of time. The Rainmaker is the longest essay and takes place in a tribal setting, before written history. He describes how he came to be the Rainmaker and what his functions were. When drought and dysentery struck the village and he couldn't solve the problem, he offered himself as a sacrifice and was killed, with his son assuming the role of Rainmaker. Knecht also resigned his position with the Order when he couldn't fulfill his obligations so his character comes through in this story.



In the second essay, *The Father Confessor*, Knecht plays the role of Josephus Farmulus, who renounces all of his worldly goods and becomes a penitent. He eventually hears the confessions of others. He meets and stays with Dion, who is considered to be a holy man. When Dion is dying, he tells Josephus that he knew who he was when he first appeared and decided that God had sent him. Josephus follows Dion's orders for burying him when he dies. This story is more or less representative of Knecht's years in the Order and his relationship with the old Music Master. He is learning from people in his stories just as he did in real life.

The Indian Life takes place during the days of the rajahs and gods. Knecht plays the role of Dasa, the firstborn son of the Rajah. Dasa seems to be given a choice when the yogi sends him to the spring for water. He can have the life of a Rajah with all of its trials and tribulations, or he can have a life with the yogi filled with peace and tranquility. He chooses the life of peace and tranquility and stays in the forest. Again, Knecht seems to be looking for something that he can't find in his own life.

In each of these stories, Knecht places himself in a different religious framework, first with the tribal worship, then Christianity, and finally Hinduism. The Order did not follow any religious beliefs, and this is something that Knecht seems to find lacking in his life in the Order and makes up for in his three lives. In each case, there is also a mentor of some kind, just as the Music Master was his mentor.



Characters

Joseph Knecht

Joseph Knecht is the main character and narrator of the book. He is also known as the Ludi Magister Josephus III, which is what he is known as in the Archives of the Glass Bead Game. Knecht is gifted in music and is summoned to meet the Music Master one day at his school. The meeting earns him a spot on the list of those deemed worthy of admission to an elite school. Knecht attends and graduates from Eschholz and then is sent to Waldzell. This is the school that he wanted because its students excel in the Glass Bead Game and it is located in the center of the Glass Bead district. Knecht passes through his years of study and arrives at the point where he has several years of free study. He can study anything he wants for however long he wants. When he settles on one area, then he can apply for admission to the Order. He spends his time studying first music, and then Chinese. Finally, he returns to the Glass Bead Game and becomes one of a small group of good players. When he is admitted to the Order, he is sent to a Benedictine monastery at Mariafels to teach the Glass Bead Game. He returns to Waldzell for a Game competition when the Magister Ludi dies. He is appointed to the office. He serves as Magister Ludi for several years, but makes his decision to leave the Order at the beginning of his tenure. He eventually resigns and is hired by Designori to tutor his son. He drowns on the first day at the mountain cabin with Designori's son.

Plinio Designori

Plinio Designori is a Waldzell student who becomes friends with Knecht. He is a hospitant, or one who attends the school as a guest with no intention of entering the Order. The school accepts them as favors to their families. He is a brilliant debater. He espouses a non-Castalian point of view, much to the chagrin of the headmaster. He looks forward to his return to the world after his days at Waldzell are finished, and he makes no secret of that fact. Because of his debates with Knecht, he comes to see that there is an order to the Castalia, just as there is to the outside world. He is so impressed with his debates with Knecht that he obtains permission from his father to stay at the Castalia if he chooses, but he tells Knecht that this would be a form of escape. He leaves the Castalia when he graduates, but returns periodically over the years to take classes and visit with Knecht. Designori becomes a powerful and influential man as a member of the Chamber of Deputies and a political writer. He is on the commission that provides the budget for the Castalia, called the directorate of the Order in Hirsland. Designori is the one who Knecht confides in about his plan to leave the Order. Designori hires him as a tutor for his son.



Fritz Tegularius

Fritz Tegularius is a fellow classmate of Knecht's at Waldzell. He later becomes Knecht's assistant and closest friend and remains his closest friend throughout his life. Tegularius is gifted but suffers from various health problems throughout his life. He is about the same age as Knecht. They first met in a Glass Bead Game course when they were in their mid-twenties. Knecht refers to him as "T" in his correspondence. After Knecht is appointed Magister Ludi, he relies on Tegularius to help formulate and develop the first annual Game competition that Knecht conducts. Tegularius is also one of the two people that know of Knecht's plans to leave the Order. He is assigned to do the research and paperwork for Knecht's petition.

Music Master

The Music Master is one of the twelve on the Board of Educators. He has heard about Knecht from the boy's music teacher at Berolfingen and comes to examine the student himself. He spends about an hour playing music and singing with the boy, and places his name on the list of those deemed worthy of admission to an elite school. He visits Knecht at Eschholz, and talks to him of the Glass Bead Game. Before Knecht is sent to study at Waldzell, he tells the boy to write him a yearly letter telling of his progress. Knecht keeps in touch with his mentor and visits him after his appointment as Magister Ludi. The old man is in failing health and Knecht is concerned about him. He dies peacefully.

Elder Brother

Elder Brother is the name given to a Chinese expert in the Order. When Knecht becomes interested in the I Ching, he wants to study it with Elder Brother, but does not find much support from the Order. Elder Brother lives at the Bamboo Grove in relative seclusion. When he was a student, he had teachers from China. He refused to call the teachers and other by their titles and referred to them all as My Elder Brother. This became his own nickname. Elder Brother traveled to the southern part of the country and established his own hermitage. He is consulted by Tegularius when Knecht is preparing his first annual Game competition.

Thomas von der Trave

Thomas von der Trave was the Magister Ludi during Knecht's years of free study. He would host international delegations and conduct the organized big games. One day he sends for Joseph Knecht and asks him to come to his home every day for one half of an hour. Von der Trave dies when Knecht is at Waldzell for an annual Game competition. Knecht becomes his successor as Magister Ludi.



Bastian Perrot of Calw

Bastian Perrot of Calw is credited with being the inventor of the Glass Bead Game. The game was invented in the Musical Academy of Cologne. Perrot was an eccentric who used glass beads instead of letters or notes. There were used as an exercise in memory. One person would give one piece as a clue and the other would have to respond with the musical piece. Perrot was a musician who played the violin. He strung glass beads on wires on an abacus-like contraption, where the wires corresponded to the musical staff and the beads corresponded to the musical notes.

Lusor Basiliensis

Lusor or Jocator Basiliensis is credited with having expanded the Glass Bead Game. He developed a new language for the game, as well as new symbols and formulas. Because of his work, it is possible to combine astronomy with music.

Carlo Ferromonte

Ferromonte is a fellow student of Knecht's at Waldzell. He becomes friends with Knecht and shares his interest in music. He remains a friend and confidant of Knecht as Knecht rises through the ranks of the Order. He rises to the second-highest rank of the Board in later years.

Otto Zbinden

Zbinden is the headmaster of Waldzell and is near sixty years old when Knecht enters his school.

Alexander

Alexander is the meditation instructor that Knecht sends to the Designori home to help the man. He becomes the President of the Order.

Tito

Tito is the son of Designori. It is Tito who Knecht is going to tutor when he leaves the order. Knecht follows Tito into the lake to swim and drowns at the mountain cottage.



Objects/Places

Castalia

Castalia is a region where the Glass Bead Game is played.

Order

The Order is the hierarchy of players of the Glass Bead Game.

Cologne, Germany

Cologne is where the Musical Academy of Cologne is located and is where the Glass Bead Game is supposed to have been invented.

Berolfingen

Berolfingen is a small town where Joseph Knecht attends the Latin School. It may have been the place of his birth.

Eschholz School

Eschholz is the elite school that Knecht is sent to after he graduates from the Latin school in Berolfingen. It is the largest school in Castalia.

Monteport

Monteport is the home of the Music Master where Knecht and one of his classmates spend a few days before Knecht leaves Eschholz.

Waldzell

Waldzell is the school that Knecht attends after Eschholz. It is the school that produces the best Glass Bead Game players, which is why Knecht wanted to go there. It is where Knecht lives as Magister Ludi.

Vicus Lusorum

The Vicus Lusorum is the area of Waldzell that is dedicated to the Glass Bead Game.



Hirsland

Hirsland is the headquarters of the Order.

Bamboo Grove

The Bamboo Grove is where Knecht studies Chinese and the I Ching. It is founded by Elder Brother.

Mariafels

Mariafels is the site of the Benedictine monastery where Joseph Knecht is assigned to teach the Glass Bead Game.

Belpunt

Belpunt is the Designori mountain cottage where Knecht lives with Tito while he tutors him. He dies swimming on his second day there.



Themes

Dedication

One of the most important themes of the book is dedication. In order to study at the Castalia, one has to be a dedicated scholar. Admission to the Order requires dedication to its way of life, its principles, and its rules. One basically has to give up a normal life in the outside world to belong to the Order. There is no involvement in religion or politics from any of the members of the Castalia.

Knecht's loyalty and dedication is what kept him in the Order for so long. He faithfully carried out the functions of his office until the end. He followed all of their rules and orders. He studied the Order and its rules and decided that he could not live within their parameters. As dedicated as he was, he still wanted contact with the outside world, a world that those in the Order were shielded from. Dedication and loyalty kept him from discussing the situation with his superiors earlier. He predicted the changes that he saw coming and that the end of the Glass Bead Game was coming as the nation prepared for war. He didn't want to be Magister when the Game deteriorated or was eliminated.

Knecht's dedication was also to learning and teaching and this why he wanted to tutor or teach in the real world when he left the Order. He wasn't interested in money or in worldly possessions.

Personal Fulfillment

The quest for personal fulfillment is also a major theme of the book. Allowing the mechanism for personal fulfillment, in most cases, is one of the reasons for the Order. Its members can study whatever they want. They are not forced into an occupation or an area of study. This is seen in the free study period that follows the end of curricula study. The student is free to study whatever area or areas he selects. He has to file a plan, but he chooses what is in it so he can study the subjects he is curious about or the areas that he finds the most rewarding.

The drive for self-fulfillment was also the reason for Knecht leaving the Order. He didn't find his work rewarding or fulfilling anymore. He did enough research to find out what was missing in his life and what he had to do to take steps toward self-fulfillment. This process took him several years, but he did it. He left the Order to find a more rewarding life in the outside world.

Whether or not Knecht would have found his position as a tutor and life in the outside world more rewarding will never be known because he died before he could find out. It is only conjecture that life in the outside world would have been more fulfilling for Knecht.



Pursuit of Knowledge

Another major theme of the book is the pursuit of knowledge. In many ways, this is what the Castalia is all about. Only the best students are admitted to its elite schools. They have the best academic advantages that the country has to offer. When they complete their curricula studies, they have an indeterminate number of years of free study. Students can study whatever they want, however broad or narrow the study, for as many years as they want. They can't be formally admitted to the Order until they specialize in an area.

Knecht fit in with this whole paradigm. He never stopped learning. When he was a student and confronted with Designori, he learned from him. When he was assigned to the monastery, he learned from Father Jacobus. Knecht was also active in the pursuit of knowledge. When he went as far as he thought he could go in the Order, he resigned. He was shielded by the body of knowledge available in the outside world, and he wanted a chance to learn about it. He took this chance when he resigned. He didn't want a trial separation because he didn't want the Order as a safety cushion to fall back on. He wanted to succeed on his own.



Style

Point of View

The book is written in the third person point of view. The narrator, for the most part, is Joseph Knecht, along with Hermann Hesse, the author. This approach is much better in telling the story than the first person approach. If the story is told in the first person, the reader only has knowledge of what happens in the narrator's presence. This situation is avoided with the use of the third person, so the reader is made aware of any action that takes place away from the main character.

The Glass Bead Game is the first novel of the German-born Hesse, who became a Swiss citizen during his life. This book wasn't his only novel, as he wrote many others. He wrote The Glass Bead Game as a way of showing how complex life can be. Hesse writes the book with a seriousness that emphasizes the parody of the situation, from the way of life of the Order to the seriousness with which the Glass Bead Game is taken.

The reader has to appreciate the parody that results from the serious manner in which the book is written. The way that Hesse achieved the parody was through his manner of writing. It is easy to laugh at some of the pomp of the Glass Bead Games that take place during the course of the novel.

Setting

There are several settings for the action of the book. Knecht spent his early school days at his village, Berolffingen Latin School. From there he went to study at Eschholz and then on to Waldzell. Waldzell is the place that forms the setting for most of the book. Not only is the elite school located there, but it is also the location of the Glass Bead Game village and Archives. It is the place where the yearly competitions are held. Waldzell is the place where Knecht lives when he is Magister Ludi.

Mariafels is the location of the monastery where Knecht is assigned to try to pave the way for an emissary of the Order to be present in the Holy See. There are also scenes at Hirlsand, which is where the Order headquarters are. In addition, there is the home of Designori in the capital, but they never name the city or the country, although the reader assumes it is Germany.

Castalia is the area of the country where the elite schools are located. It is supported totally by government appropriations, since the members of the Castalia are not self-supporting. Castalia is also a state of mind, in that the members of the Order exist in the shielded realm of Castalia with the other elite. They don't want or need any contact with the outside world since for most of the members, the world of Castalia fulfills all of their needs.



Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of the novel are both a little pompous. This style of writing contributes to the irony and parody of the situation: a dedicated monastic Order with an oath of poverty that is dedicated to the pursuit of learning. The members do not take part in religion or politics, and they eschew the study of world history. No one in the Order has any need or desire for money or possessions or contact with the outside world. They have an annual Game competition called the Glass Bead Game that is treated almost in the same respect as the Olympics. People come from all over to watch the games and players train for the Game. The whole infrastructure of the Order exists to protect its own existence.

Most of the language of the novel is straightforward, even if it is slightly flowery and pompous. The reader may require a dictionary to look up some of the words used in the book, but for the most part, the book is easy to follow and understand, especially if the reader picks up on the parody. In spite of the pompous, pretentious language and style of writing, the reader does not tire of it. There is still the anticipation of wanting to know what happens next in the story.

The author couldn't have chosen a better manner of writing to convey the irony and parody that he intended.

Structure

The novel is structured in the form of twelve chapters, which tell the story of the life of Joseph Knecht. There is a Foreword by Theodore Ziolkowski, which explains the intended irony and parody of the novel and also a little bit about the Glass Bead Game. The reader can also learn about Hesse's life by reading the Foreword. After the twelve chapters, there is a section called Joseph Knecht's Posthumous Writings. This section contains the poems and essays that Knecht wrote as a student.

As students engaging in free study, they were often required to write an essay about a Life. They would select a time in history and write a story about their place in it. Hesse has three of these lives: The Rainmaker, The Father Confessor, and The Indian Life. This section doesn't add anything to the action of the novel, but they are insights into the life and character of Joseph Knecht and to life within the Castalia.

The structure of the book works well for the kind of novel that it is. It would serve no purpose to put the poems and essays within the body of the novel. The structure of the book means that the reader can skip the last part if he so desires without detracting from the action of the novel.



Quotes

"For although in a certain sense and for light-minded persons non-existent things can be more easily and irresponsibly represented in words than existing things, for the serious and conscientious historian it is just the reverse. Nothing is harder, yet nothing is more necessary, than to speak of certain things whose existence is neither demonstrable nor probable. The very fact that serious and conscientious men treat them as existing things brings them a step closer to existence and to the possibility of being born." Introduction, p. 9

"The Glass Bead Game is thus a mode of playing with the total contents and values of our culture; it plays with them as, say, in the great age of the arts a painter might have played with the colors on his palette. All the insights, noble thoughts, and works of art that the human race has produced in its creative years, all that subsequent periods of scholarly study have reduced to concepts and converted into intellectual property - on all this immense body of intellectual values the Glass Bead Game players plays like the organist on an organ. And this organ has attained an almost unimaginable perfection; its manuals and pedals range over the entire intellectual cosmos; its stops are almost beyond number. Theoretically this entrustment is capable of reproducing in the Game the entire intellectual content of the universe." Introduction, p. 15

"Indeed, it is probably not so much this tragedy in itself that has tempted us to delve so deeply into the personality of Joseph Knecht; rather, it was the tranquil, cheerful, not to say radiant manner in which he brought his destiny and his talents to fruition. Like every man of importance he had his daimonion and his amor fati; but in him amor fati manifests itself to us free of somberness and fanaticism. Granted, there is always much that is hidden, and we must not forget that the writing of history - however dryly it is done and however sincere the desire for objectivity - remains literature. History's third dimension is always fiction." Chap. 1, pp. 47-48

"One can be a musician or Glass Bead Game player and at the same time wholly devoted to rule and order. The kind of person we want to develop, the kind of person we aim to become, would at any time be able to exchange his discipline or art for any other. He would infuse the Glass Bead Game with crystalline logic, and grammar with creative imagination. That is how we ought to be. We should be so constituted that we can at any time be placed in a different position without offering resistance or losing our heads." Chap. 1, p. 82

"Not that Waldzells brilliant reputation was entirely uncontested. Some thought that the Waldzellers were priggish aesthetes and pampered princes, useless for anything but the Glass Bead Game. At times there would be a vogue among the schools for making sardonic comments on the Waldzell students; but the very harshness of the jokes and criticisms proves that jealousy and envy underlay them. All in all, the transfer to Waldzell in itself implied a certain distinction. Joseph Knecht, too, realized that, and although he was not ambitious in the vulgar sense of the word, he accepted the distinction with a measure of joyous pride." Chap. 2, p. 87



"For example, he contends that the Glass Bead Game is a retrogression to the Age of the Feuilleton, sheer irresponsible playing around with an alphabet into which we have broken down the languages of the different arts and sciences. It's nothing but associations and toying with analogies, he says. Or again, he declares that our resigned sterility proves the worthlessness of our whole culture and our intellectual attitudes. We analyze the laws and techniques of all the styles and periods of music, he points out, but produce no new music ourselves. We read and exposit Pindar or Goethe and are ashamed to create verse ourselves. Those are accusations I cannot laugh at. And they are not the worst; they are not the ones that wound me most. It is bad enough when he says, for example, that we Castalians lead the life of artificially reared songbirds, do not earn our bread ourselves, never face necessity and the struggle for existence, neither know nor wish to know anything about the portion of humanity whose labor and poverty provide the base for our lives of luxury." Chap. 2, pp. 96-97

"Especially for young men with gifts like those of Joseph Knecht, who have not been driven by a single talent to concentrate on a specialty, but whose nature rather aims at integration, synthesis, and universality, this springtide of free study is often a period of intense happiness and very nearly of intoxication. Were it not preceded by the discipline of the elite schools, but the psychic hygiene of meditation exercises and the lenient supervision of the Board of Educators, this freedom would even be dangerous for such natures and might prove a nemesis to many, as it used to be to innumerable highly gifted men in the ages before our present educational pattern was set, in the pre-Castalian centuries." Chap. 3, pp. 110-111

"One of the positive results of his period of apprenticeship with Elder Brother was that he overcame his resistance against returning to Waldzell. Henceforth he participated in one of the advanced courses there every year, and without quite realizing how it had happened he became a personage regarded with interest and esteem in the Vicus Lusorum. He belonged to that central and most sensitive organ of the entire Game organization, that anonymous group of players of proven worth in whose hands lay the destinies of the game at any given time, or at least the type of play that happened to be in fashion." Chap. 3, p. 133

"But why was it that he realized it so late, and so reluctantly? Because he had not sought it at all, and did not want it. He had no need to dominate, took no pleasure in commanding; he desired the contemplative far more than the active life, and would have been content to spend many years more, if not his whole life, as an obscure student, an inquiring and reverent pilgrim through the sanctuaries of the past, the cathedrals of music, the gardens and forests of mythology, languages and ideas. Now that he saw himself being pushed inexorably into the vita active he was more than ever aware of the tensions of the aspirations, the rivalries, the ambitions among those around him. He felt his innocence threatened and no longer tenable." Chap. 4, p. 154



"Joseph took this criticism of the Castalia very calmly, repelling the attacks only when the old scholar seemed to him to have gone too far in his passion. But among the good Father's belittling remarks about Castalia were some whose partial truth Joseph had to admit, and on one point he changed his mind completely during his stay in Mariafels. This had to do with the relationship of Castalian thought to world history, any sense of which, Father Jacobus said, was totally lacking in Castalia." Chap. 4, p. 168

"For a long time the reverend Father continued to hold the whole Castalian mentality in distrust. Because he saw no real religious attitude in it, he doubted its capacity to rear the kind of human being he could take seriously, despite the fact that Knecht himself represented so fine a product of Castalian education. Even long after he had undergone a kind of conversion, insofar as that was possible, through Knecht's teaching and example, and was prepared to recommend the rapprochement of Castalia to Rome, this distrust never entirely died. Knecht's notes are full of striking examples of it, jotted down at the moment." Chap. 5, p. 188

"The majority of the inhabitants of Castalia lived in a state of political innocence and naiveté such as had been quite common among the professors of earlier ages; they had no political rights and duties, scarcely ever saw a newspaper. Such was the habit of the average Castalian, such his attitude. Repugnance for current events, politics, newspapers, was even greater among the Glass Bead Game players who liked to think of themselves as the real elite, the cream of the Province, and went to some lengths not to let anything cloud the rarefied atmosphere of their scholarly and artistic existences." Chap. 5, p. 193

"The barrier between Magister and deputy stands like a symbol for the barrier between the office and the individual. Thus, when a Castalian accepts the confidential post of deputy, he renounces the prospect of ever becoming a Magister himself, of ever really possessing the official robes and insignia that he wears so often in his representative role. At the same time he acquires the curiously ambiguous privilege of never incurring any blame for possible mistakes in his conduct of his office. The blame falls upon his Magister, who is answerable for his acts." Chap. 6, p. 209

"The members of the elite themselves, the tutors as a body, no longer received him in a comradely fashion. They displayed a mocking politeness toward him, or at best a temporizing coolness. They had already begun to drift away from him when he received his appointment to Mariafels, and that was only right and natural. Once a man had taken the step from freedom to service, from the life of student or tutor to member of the hierarchy, he was no longer a comrade, but on the way to becoming a superior or boss. He no longer belonged to the elite, and he had to realize that for the time being they would assume a critical attitude toward him." Chap. 6, pp. 216-217

"But we have run far ahead of our story, and now return to the period of Knecht's first years in office. After gaining the desired relationship with the elite, he had next to turn his attention to the bureaucracy of the Archives and show it that he intended to be a



friendly but alert master. There came the problem of studying the structure and procedures of the chancery, and learning how to run it. A constant flow of correspondence, and repeated meetings or circular letters of the Boards, summoned him to duties and tasks which were not altogether easy for a newcomer to grasp and classify properly. Quite often questions arose in which the various Faculties of the Province were mutually interested and inclined toward jealousy - questions of jurisdiction, for instance. Slowly, but with growing admiration, he became aware of the powerful secret functions of the Order, the living soul of the Castalian state, and the watchful guardian of its constitution." Chap. 7, pp. 240-241

"It had given him relaxation and a moment of happily heightened vitality, but it had also produced two inspired thoughts, both of which at once assumed the character of decisions. First, whenever he too became old and weary he would lay down his office the moment the composition of the annual Game became a troublesome duty and he found himself at a loss for ideas. Secondly, he would in fact start work on his first annual Game soon and he would call in Tegularius to be his foremost assistant in this work. That would gratify and gladden his friend, and for himself it would be a good trial step toward a new modus vivendi for their temporarily arrested friendship. For the initiative could not come from Fritz; it had to come from the Magister himself." Chap. 7, pp. 244-245

"We have reported this episode in some detail, since the Music Master held so important a place in Knecht's life and heart. We have also been drawn into prolixity by the chance circumstance that Knecht's talk with Ferromonte has come down to us in the latter's own record of it in a letter. This is certainly the earliest and most reliable account of the Music Master's 'transfiguration'; later, of course, there was a swarm of legends and embroideries." Chap. 7, p. 261

"To the eyes of the historian who holds solely to the documented facts, Magister Knecht's conduct in office appears as blameless and praiseworthy as that of any Glass Bead Game Master in history, not even excepting that of Magister Ludwig Wassermaler who reigned during the era of Waldzell's most exuberant passion for the Game. Nevertheless, Knecht's period in office came to a most unusual, sensational, and to the minds of many judges scandalous end, and this end was not mere chance or misfortune but a wholly logical outcome of what went before. It is part of our task to show that it by no means contradicts the reverend Master's brilliant and laudable achievements." Chap. 8, p. 265

"As time went on he realized that the type was one not yet existent except for Tegularius. For Tegularius was a portent of the Castalian as he might some day become unless the life of Castalia were rejuvenated and revitalized by new encounters, new forces. Like most solitary geniuses, Tegularius was a forerunner. He actually lived in a Castalia that did not yet exist, but might come into being in the future; in a Castalia still sequestered from the world, but inwardly degenerating from senility and from relaxation of the meditative morality of the Order; a Castalia in which the highest flights of the mind were still possible, as well as totally absorbed devotion to sublime values - but this



highly developed, freely roaming intellectual culture no longer had any goals beyond egotistic enjoyment of its own overbred faculties." Chap. 8, p. 271

"There were, however, other considerations, experiences, and insights which caused him to take a critical view of his own work, and of a good many of the conditions in Waldzell; or at the least to consider his office as a great hindrance to the development of his finest and most fruitful abilities. Some of these matters are known to all of us; some we only surmise." Chap. 9, p. 287

"Gently, austere, sparingly, sweetly, the lovely separate voices met and mingled; bravely and gaily they paced their tender rondo through the void of time and transitoriness, for a little while making the room and the night hour vast as the universe. And when the friends bade each other good night, the guest's face had changed and brightened, although his eyes have filled with tears." Chap. 9, pp. 317-318

"More and more he began to doubt whether old Designori with his class loyalty and his obduracy toward the tenant-farmers had really held the baser view. He became uncertain whether good and bad, right and wrong, had any absolute existence at all. Perhaps the view of one's own conscience was ultimately the only valid judge, and if that were so, the he, Plinio, was in the wrong. For he was not happy, calm and balanced; he was not confident and secure. On the contrary, he was plagued by uncertainly, doubts, and guilts." Chap. 10, p. 323

"We have now reached the end of our journey, and hope that we have reported all the essentials of Joseph Knecht's life. A later biographer will no doubt be in a position to ascertain and impart a good many additional details about that life." Chap. 11, p. 369

"When we listen to our fellow students talk about our Master's disappearance, about the reasons for it, the rightness or wrongness of his decisions and acts, the meaning or meaninglessness of his fate, it sounds to us like Diodorus Sinculus explaining the supposed causes for the flooding of the Nile. We would think it not only useless but wrong to add to such speculations. Instead, we wish to preserve in our hearts the memory of our Master, who so soon after his mysterious departure into the world passed over into a still more mysterious beyond. His memory is dear to us, and for this reason we wish to set down what we have learned about these events." Chap. 12, p. 370

"Master Alexander decided to trust his own powers of persuasion and leave the entire official apparatus out of the affair. Only now, after he had come to this decision, did he begin to reflect upon the details of the matter and to ask himself to what extent the Magister's action was right or wrong - for after all, Knecht seemed to have no doubt of the integrity and justness of his incredible step. Now that he tried to classify the Magister Ludi's audacious plan and determine where it stood legally - for no one knew the rules of the Order better than he - he came to the surprising conclusion that Joseph Knecht was not in fact violating the letter of the rules." Chap. 12, pp. 388-389



"The two terrible years, which had almost cost him his life, ended with his being more highly regarded and trusted than ever, not by the thoughtless crowd, of course, but by the few who bore responsibility and were able to judge a man of his type." Posthumous, p. 465



Topics for Discussion

What is the Glass Bead Game? What is the significance of the organ that Hesse compares it to?

What were the origins of the Glass Bead Game?

What is a Mandarin and how does one become a Mandarin?

What are the different forms or kinds of Glass Bead Games?

Why did Knecht begin to experience doubts about the Castalia?

What problems did Designori face after leaving Waldzell? Why is this important for Knecht?

What reasons did Knecht's circular letter give for his seeking relief from his duties and reassignment to a teaching position? How was it received by the Board?

What are the circumstances surrounding the death of the Magister Ludi?