

The Glass Room Study Guide

The Glass Room by Simon Mawer

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Contents

[The Glass Room Study Guide..... 1](#)

[Contents..... 2](#)

[Plot Summary..... 3](#)

[Part I, Chapters Honeymoon - Commitment, pp. 1-30..... 4](#)

[Part 1, Chapters Conception - Gestation, pp. 31-52..... 6](#)

[Part 1, Chapters Construction- Exterior, pp 52-77..... 8](#)

[Part 1, Chapters Completion- Day in the Life, pp 78-99..... 10](#)

[Part 1, Chapters Dinner- Ecstasy, pp 100-129..... 12](#)

[Part 1, Chapters Loss- Encounter, pp 130-165..... 14](#)

[Part 1, Chapters Robot- Last Year in Marienbad, pp 165-195..... 16](#)

[Part 1, Chapters Flight- Dispossession, pp 195 - 224..... 18](#)

[Part 2, Occupation 225 - 272..... 20](#)

[Part 2, Chapters Leaving- Departure, pp 273 - 302..... 22](#)

[Part 2, Chapter Ocean, pp 302-311..... 24](#)

[Part 3, Chapters Dissolution -Lanik, pp 311-334..... 25](#)

[Part 4, Chapters Tomas- Zdenka, pp 335 - 367..... 26](#)

[Part 4, Chapters Confession- Comfort, pp 368-383..... 28](#)

[Part 5, Chapters Contact-1990, pp 384-414..... 30](#)

[Characters..... 32](#)

[Objects/Places..... 36](#)

[Themes..... 38](#)

[Style..... 40](#)

[Quotes..... 42](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 44](#)

Plot Summary

The Glass Room by Simon Mawer takes place over the span of 60 years. Starting in the early 1920s before World War II and spanning into the Cold War that gripped Eastern Europe. The story follows the relationship of Liesel and Viktor Landauer and the house they build to share their lives together in. The House becomes the central character in the novel and through the House and experiences that happen there, the story unfolds.

The book begins with Liesel and Viktor meeting Rainer von Abt on their honeymoon. Rainer agrees to build the couple their dream home in Mesto, Czechoslovakia. Shortly after, Liesel gets pregnant. Her friend Hana tells her that her husband will not remain faithful to her because of her new condition. Unfortunately, Viktor does cheat on his wife with a call girl named Kata. Kata and Viktor's relationship grows as Viktor and Liesel's relationship cools. After the house is finished, Viktor and Liesel have a second baby, which leaves her sick and frail. Hana stays by her side through the sickness, proving how much she loves Liesel. In the background of the story, is the changing political climate in Europe. Hitler is getting more power. Kata disappears soon after, only to show up at a benefit that the Landauers throw for other Jews. Liesel, not knowing who Kata is and invites her to live with them. Soon Kata becomes the children's nanny and she has moved into the house. The Landauers decide to go to Switzerland.

While they are gone, Hana discovers that their house has been taken over by the Nazis. They are using the house as a lab where they try to measure the difference between Aryans and "sub races." Hana begins a relationship with the leader of the lab in order to get money for her and her Jewish husband, whose accounts have been frozen. The Nazi ends up betraying Hana. Both she and Oskar are sent to camps. The Landauers then try to go to Paris, but Kata and Marika are not allowed to continue on because they are Jewish. Finally Liesel, Viktor, and their children go to Cuba and then the United States.

Some time has passed and Hana returns to the House. She discovers it is used as a gym for physiotherapy. Zdenka, a former dancer, works there. She and Hana fall in love and begin to run a dance school and rehabilitation classes from the Glass Room. Many years later, after Viktor has died and Liesel has gone blind, the Russians invite Liesel to visit her old home. After returning to Mesto, Liesel is able to reconnect with Hana.



Part I, Chapters Honeymoon - Commitment, pp. 1-30

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Honeymoon begins with Liesel and Viktor Landauer arriving in Vienna. They have just gotten married and are thrilled to finally be alone together. Liesel feels overwhelmed with being alone with Viktor. Although they new each other before the engagement and she was in love with him, she feels as though she is with a stranger. She and Viktor have never been intimate with each other. After they arrive at their hotel and are settled into their rooms, Viktor begins to make love to Liesel. She is excited about consummating their relationship. The original plan was to spend two days in Vienna and then continue driving through Italy and Austria. The newly weds refuse to take anyone else with them and pursue the countryside alone. For the most part the couple has a wonderful time on their drive. Liesel is only saddened when she thinks about her dead older brother and how he will never get to experience all the things she will have in life.

In Venice, the couple is lucky enough to site see and take pictures of each other in front of the city's most beautiful landmarks. While visiting a local cafe, they meet an interesting Viennese architect named Rainer Von Abt. At first Liesel is taken aback by Rainer. He seems so strange, and Liesel can't understand the way that he looks at her. He discovers that they are Czech Jews and seems shocked. He loves the cars that Viktor's family makes and insists that they meet again during the Landauer's trip. The trio embark on a boat ride through Venice. Rainer describes himself as a sculptor of space. "He captures and encloses the space within." Rainer insists that he wants to build a glass space for man to inhabit. Viktor begins to think that this glass house should be for them.

As Commitment begins, the couple dines by candlelight on the balcony of their hotel room. They decide to ask Rainer to build their new house. Liesel's family gave the newlyweds a piece of land to build a new home. Viktor decides to approach Rainer about the home before they leave Venice. At first Rainer seems hesitant to build a house for the couple. He insists it is too much pressure to build a house for an individual. Eventually, Rainer agrees to draft drawings for the couple. Liesel can't help but be aware of the way that von Abt looks at her.



Part I, Chapters Honeymoon - Commitment, pp. 1-30 Analysis

The novel begins with a very young couple looking to start their lives together. After their marriage, they have their honeymoon followed by making a home to raise their family together. Liesel and Viktor are following the standard pattern prescribed for many young people. When they commit to building the house with Rainer, they discover that they are taking on a large project as well as an interesting personality.

This first section of the novel is important because the reader is able to meet two of the main characters. Viktor and Liesel start out as a young couple in love. They have their whole lives ahead of them. Viktor is a successful business man who has an eye for the future and wants everything to be ultramodern. Liesel, like other women of her class and breeding, is extremely sheltered. Her first visit to Vienna and Venice is exciting and new. She may appear to be the traditionalist at first. As the novel progresses, their attitudes and dispositions change.



Part 1, Chapters Conception - Gestation, pp. 31-52

Part 1, Chapters Conception - Gestation, pp. 31-52 Summary

After their honeymoon, the newlyweds move into a furnished villa in the Masaryk section of the city. Viktor is upset that he has to live in such an ostentatious place. He cannot wait for their new, streamlined, modern house to be built. Rainer comes to inspect the site on which the house will be built. Liesel is excited to see Rainer, but does not understand why she wants to see the architect. The trio now seems themselves as old friends. Rainer tells Liesel and Viktor that he wishes to not only design the outside of the house, he now wants to "create a whole world" on the inside of the house. He promises together that he and Liesel will build a work of art together. Liesel reveals to Rainer that she is pregnant, glad that she can share the intimate news with him. The trio goes out to see Liesel's family land and Rainer describes his thoughts for the new house. He says that he will build them a house that is upside down. Liesel stands back from the two men and begins to cry as she thinks of her brother. Rainer and not Viktor comforts her. That night, they have a dinner in their guest's honor. A local architect, and Liesel's family come over for dinner. Liesel upsets Viktor because she jokes with Rainer during the dinner and entertainment. Liesel calls Viktor a prig.

In Hana, the reader gets to know Liesel's best friend Hana Hanakova. The two women have been friends for a very long time. They meet together for lunch away from their husbands to discuss everything. Hana always tells Liesel of her exploits such as an affair with a famous pianist, Miroslav Nemeč and sex with her husband Oskar. Hana is very open and modern. She has been painted naked by several great artists and taken many of them as lovers. She also asks if Viktor is sexually frustrated because Liesel is pregnant, but Liesel refuses to answer. Hana insists that nothing is sacred and that Liesel's marriage is only a contract. Liesel shows Hana her pregnant stomach and the women share an intimate moment. Hana tries to guess the baby's gender. She professes that Liesel will have a girl.

As Gestation begins, Liesel has become increasingly more pregnant. The two expectant parents discuss Von Abt's plans for the new house. It seems as though the structure will look as though it is upside down. There will be no load bearing walls and a flat roof for the house. One room, the main room of the whole house will be made out of glass. Liesel is very excited about the prospect while Viktor grows concerned. Liesel implores him to take more risks as he does in business, but he remains uptight and weary. They change subjects and begin to talk about Hana's affair with Miroslav Nemeč. Viktor becomes extremely prudish and Liesel confesses that she hates this change in his personality. Due to her pregnancy, he treats her like the Virgin Mary.



Part 1, Chapters Conception - Gestation, pp. 31-52 Analysis

Viktor's character begins to change in this section. In Conception, the thought of living in a horribly crowded and decorated hotel appalls him. As the Rainer begins to build the house, Viktor becomes nervous about the true modernism that he is committing to himself. His view of Liesel also starts to change. The more pregnant she becomes, the more he treats her like some virginal being. Viktor cannot stand any of Liesel's descriptions of Hana. He thinks a pregnant woman who is his wife should conduct herself in a more appropriate way.

The reader is finally able to meet Hana, Liesel's best friend. These two women have known each other since they were girls. The reader begins to understand that their relationship is very strong, perhaps even stronger than is appropriate for two people to be just friends. The way Hana speaks to Liesel and thinks of her is not only friendly, it is one of a lover that grows stronger as the novel continues on.

Rainer von Abt embodies the unique and different. He makes Liesel feel different than Viktor. In this section, Rainer asks Liesel if she is free. She says of course she is free, but then ponders as to why Rainer questions her freedom. Now that Liesel is married to Viktor, she is not free. Viktor is not oppressive or forceful, but Liesel definitely lives under his decision making. The way that the local and political atmosphere is changing is also stifling. Others think that Socialism is controlling while Liesel insists that it builds things and progresses countries.



Part 1, Chapters Construction- Exterior, pp 52-77

Part 1, Chapters Construction- Exterior, pp 52-77 Summary

In Construction, Von Abt is back at the house, overseeing the foremen working on the site. He insists that they will not be building a house for stability. He wants to build a house that will float on air. Von Abt goes to visit the Liesel and Viktor. Liesel introduces him to Otilie, the new baby and they talk about furnishings for the house. When it comes time for Otilie to feed, Liesel insists that Von Abt stay and watch her. Liesel's body has changed with her pregnancy, making her fuller and more womanly. Von Abt notices. Although Liesel and Viktor are both nonreligious, they decide to have the baby baptized to make Liesel's mother happy. Liesel insists that Hana should be the godmother, while Viktor protests. He does not want "that woman" connected to their child.

As Onyx begins, the house and baby continue to grow. Finally, the house is finished. While Liesel is excited and can envision their whole family living there. Viktor, on the other hand, can only see the practical issues with the house. The new family tours the house and discuss with Von Abt the one wall that will be in the great room. He insists the wall must be Onyx. Von Abt says the wall will be the color of Otilie's hair. Viktor senses some sort of attraction between Von Abt and Liesel, but he feels no jealousy. Viktor seems angrier about the price of the Onyx wall. Later that night, the couple fights about the wall, Viktor feeling that Liesel has no idea about the recessions and political unrest that exists everywhere else. He thinks about Liesel and how her body has changed. She is a mother now, and he feels distant from this new body. Late at night, he thinks about Liesel and compares her to a woman he met recently on a business trip. The narration switches to Viktor's last business trip. On this trip, he decided to seek out company, because his sexual needs were not being met at home. The woman's name is Kata. Viktor is intrigued by her and he decides to sleep with her and offer her money afterwards. She refuses it and she gives him a way to contact her. The narration switches back to the present. Viktor tells Liesel she can have her Onyx wall.

In Interior, the couple goes to Marienbad for a holiday. They decide to take the baby with them. While on vacation, they are able to reconnect sexually. Laying in bed together, Liesel asks Viktor if he would ever be unfaithful to her. Hana is always saying that it is in a man's genes. He lies and says no.

As Exterior begins and introduces, Oskar, Hana's husband to the story. The two prominent Jewish men discuss the changes that are happening in Germany. They then discuss the house. Oskar thinks it is too progressive. Viktor says it is supposed to be an International house, not Czech or German. They both suppose that the house would crush everyone to death if it fell. In Vienna, Viktor and Liesel travel to Vienna to finalize



furnishings. Viktor thinks about Kata and whether or not she will run into him in the city. He does not feel guilty about thinking about her while he is with his wife. While they are in Vienna, unexpected business comes up. Viktor stays behind and Liesel decides to go home. Viktor uses this opportunity to call on Kata. They sleep together in a hotel. She reveals to him that she is a dressmaker. He reveals that he and his wife just had a baby. Kata stays the night with Viktor. He realizes that he wants to wake up to her the next morning.

Part 1, Chapters Construction- Exterior, pp 52-77 Analysis

When Liesel finally has a baby, her and Viktor's relationship changes. Instead of Viktor wishing to grow closer to the mother of his child, he distances himself from Liesel and the baby. When Rainer congratulates him on his new addition to the family, he minimizes his contribution, saying that he barely had anything to do with it. This comment almost seems flippant, although others might have taken it as humorous. Viktor distances himself from Liesel and seeks comfort in the arms of another. While he barely knows anything about Kata, he feels like he can do anything sexually with her.

Liesel cannot figure out why it is so important for Rainer von Abt to see her breast feed. In her own way she has always felt an attraction to Rainer. The power and control of motherhood is something that she wants to share. It seems as though Viktor does not want to be a part of it, so she turns to Rainer. In this section Liesel begs Viktor for an onyx wall for the house. It was believed that Venus' Fingernail clippings created onyx. The fingernails remind Viktor of Kata, who bites her fingernails all the time. This silent reminder is built into the Glass Room. They are forever a silent reminder of Kata - one that Liesel will never know about.



Part 1, Chapters Completion- Day in the Life, pp 78-99

Part 1, Chapters Completion- Day in the Life, pp 78-99 Summary

The house is finally finished in Completion. As the workers finish up, family and friends cannot help but give their opinions on the home. Liesel's mother thinks the house looks like a laboratory or a hospital, not a house. The family moves into the house in December.

In Housewarming, the couple hold a house-warming party. Von Abt has decided to be in attendance at the party. He completely basks in all the glory of the house. Viktor makes a speech to welcome all the guests (Czech and German). The speech also talks about how the glass house represents how he and Liesel live their lives, open so that others can see everything. Then the famous pianist Maestro Nemeč plays a piece.

Happy Families begins with Liesel reading a review of the house in an architectural journal. Some journalists say that the house is a lapse in political taste or that it shows the excess of a bourgeois lifestyle. Others enjoy the style and pure lines of the house. Liesel wants to draft a reply, but Viktor does not see the point. Liesel composes a letter saying that they can create as much privacy as they want in the home. It is also modern living at its best. Viktor asks Liesel to prove her point wrong, so he approaches her. When Liesel insists that someone might see, he says her thesis has been proved wrong. The two become intimate in the glass room while the curtains are drawn.

In Birth, Liesel is pregnant with baby number two. While Viktor constantly travels, Liesel is kept busy with Hana. Hana reveals that she has been trying to get pregnant with her husband and her lover. Liesel is shocked. She tells Viktor of Hana's predicament. Viktor assesses Liesel's new form in her second pregnancy. She no longer looks human, but instead is ethereal. He then quickly shifts to thinking about Kata and their last meeting. He reflects on what he knows about Kata. He does not know where she works or who she spends her time with and he is jealous. When they have sex, Viktor describes it as intense. He also feels that the things they do together are shameful. He would never ask Liesel to do it.

When the second child, Martin arrives, Liesel has a horrible time with the birth. She becomes horribly sick and everyone is afraid she will die. Out of everyone, Hana stays with Liesel and this forces Viktor to accept Hana. A sickly Liesel accuses Viktor of having an affair with Hana. He says Hana is nothing more than a sister. When Liesel finally comes home from the hospital, she is gaunt. She and Viktor take separate rooms so that she can recover more quickly. Viktor thinks that Liesel acts very strangely and she does sometimes act like a ghost, barely participating in life. In the spring, the couple



goes to Vienna where they try to rekindle their passion. It seems as though their relationship has matured into something like friendly contentment.

In a Day in the Life, the author takes the reader into a typical day with the Landauers. The family wakes and dresses and eats breakfast together. Viktor is constantly bombarded about thoughts of his own Jewishness (as he calls it) and what he can do to protect his children (now considered half-breeds) from being labeled inadequate. He leaves for work thinking of Kata,

Part 1, Chapters Completion- Day in the Life, pp 78-99 Analysis

In Completion, Liesel's mother comments that the house foreshadowing the house's future uses. Unbeknownst to any of the characters in the novel, the house will have many uses over the next 30 years. Unfortunately, with the turning political climate, it will not simply remain a residential house for families to use. Mawer throws in this piece of foreshadowing, but it also helps to describe the look of the finished house.

At the house-warming party, Viktor makes a speech to all the guests. His speech talks about the importance of being transparent and open. The Glass Room represents how he and Liesel choose to live their lives with one another and the rest of their children. This statement shows Viktor's true hypocritical nature. He tells his wife that he would never cheat on her, but insists on having an affair and lying. He even built a reminder of his affair in his own home.

Also at the house-warming Hana comments that nothing can stay the same forever. While she is speaking of ties to family and friends as well as the changes in ones own life, this statement also pertains to the changes that will be quickly invading Eastern Europe. Life as Germans, Jews, Slavs, etc. will be drastically changing. No one quite understands the change or shift that is occurring, but certain characters can feel it more clearly than others. Through his business and ties with the rest of the world, Viktor gets a very clear sense of how things are changing.



Part 1, Chapters Dinner- Ecstasy, pp 100-129

Part 1, Chapters Dinner- Ecstasy, pp 100-129 Summary

In Dinner, the Landauers host a dinner party and the reader begins to notice how the guests have changed. Herr Schreiber, a Nazi, has been invited to the party. He begins to talk about Liesel and her duty to her German blood. Viktor's patience boils over and he asks if the duty also falls on him. The Nazi seems confused and Viktor reveals he is Jewish.

As Memories begins, Hana reveals that her lover, Nemeč is leaving her. She is heart broken that Nemeč would choose his own wife over her. Hana also reveals that Oskar agreed to give her a divorce if she wanted to be with Nemeč. Liesel tries to calm Hana. They put the children to bed and the two friends comfort each other in the confines of the glass room.

In Recital, the Landauer's throw a party to raise money for the Human Rights League. The evening is a success for the organization. While the glass room hosts all these people, it remains indifferent. It has no opinion or affiliation. Outside the house and in the walls of Marienbad, there are swastikas and represent the changing political ties.

In Love, Viktor has met up again with Kata. The two tour Vienna and come across a group of children. Viktor comments that Kata is his love and this causes unrest between the two. Viktor will not say he loves her, he says he feels for her. Kata decides to take Viktor to her apartment. He is shocked by the conditions that she lives in: the apartment is small, dark, and smelly. As they get comfortable, Kata's daughter arrives. Her name is Marika. The little girl asks if Viktor is one of her mother's "friends." Kata quickly sends her away. Viktor and Kata still sleep together and after, he asks that Kata not have any more male friends. He gives her a check for 15 thousand schillings. He promises to come back.

As Ecstasy begins, Hana asks Viktor if Liesel is sleeping with Bohuslav Martinu, a composer. Viktor is doubtful and Hana presses him as to whether he has had an affair. Viktor will not reveal anything, but Hana tries to press for her name. At a dinner party Viktor, Liesel and Hana all meet Frau Mandl. Hana is sure she knows Frau Mandl and places her as an actor in pornographic films. She went by the name of Eva. Everyone becomes embarrassed by the revelation. Frau Mandl's husband is furious. The conversation then turns to the deteriorating condition for the Jews in Eastern Europe. Later that night, Hana shocks Liesel by talking to her about Eva. She wants to sleep with Eva and help her escape from her horrible husband.



Part 1, Chapters Dinner- Ecstasy, pp 100-129 Analysis

As this section of the novel begins, it is clear that the Landauers and others in Czechoslovakia that there has been a shift in the political culture of Eastern Europe. Hitler's influence is far reaching and felt in more and more places throughout Europe. While the author is not able to understand the impacts of Viktor's revelation of his Jewish ancestry to the young Nazi, it is easy to know that politics will be changing. In this same section, the author mentions that the glass room remains indifferent to the politics that surround it. Although everyone is changing, the House and the Glass Room remain a stage for people to play out their lives on. The Room will not take a side on a particular situation. This helps to again foreshadow the future uses of the Landauer House.

As the relationship between Kata and Viktor becomes more intense, Kata wants more of a proclamation of love from Viktor. She keeps all of his letters, although she knows she should not. She cannot get over the fact that in all of his letters, he signs them "ever yours" when he does not really mean it. Viktor cannot allow himself to commit to anything. He is still married to Liesel and he has two other children to think about. This section also marks a change in Kata and Viktor's relationship. Kata finally lets Viktor see her real life. He is able to see the poverty, ugliness, and reality that she lives in. He also better understands why she chooses to take the occasional lover. They help to pay her and her daughter's way when he dressmaking does not pay the bills.

Hana begins to show her interest in women. She lets Liesel know that she has always had feelings for her. Perhaps these feelings go deeper than being just friends, but Hana knows that Liesel is not shocking enough to be with her in any other capacity than friendship. Hana enjoys chasing Eva, as well as the excitement and sexual exploration that being intimate with Eva offers.



Part 1, Chapters Loss- Encounter, pp 130-165

Part 1, Chapters Loss- Encounter, pp 130-165 Summary

As Loss begins, Viktor is feeling very upset. He is back in Vienna, looking for Kata. When he calls her number and visits her apartment no one can tell him where Kata has gone. He decides to leave her a note, begging her to contact him. He signs the note "With Love, Viktor."

In Coda Hana visits Liesel to tell her about recent escapades. Apparently, Eva's husband was holding her hostage. She wanted to get away when with him so that she could start a new life as an actress in Hollywood movies. She goes to visit Eva and helps her escape her husband's home. They get on a train to Paris. In the compartment Hana and Eva talk. Eva confesses that she was seduced by a girl roommate at school. Hana then tells Liesel that she and Eva slept together. Liesel is embarrassed but Hana assures her that she could love no one more than Liesel. Hana calls Liesel her one big secret. Liesel says she loves Hana and Viktor, but will never tell Viktor.

As Anschluss starts, Viktor listens to the radio and discovers that Austria has been taken over by the Germans. Viktor also continues to think about Kata. Refugees are beginning to flood into Czechoslovakia as Hitler continues to change the landscape of Europe. He suggests to Liesel that they host a fundraiser for some of the refugees. Viktor wants to help his fellow Jews. He also brings up that he and other Jews might be deported or he and Liesel may be forced to get a divorce. At first she seems hesitant, but then agrees. Viktor reveals that he has been making plans in case their whole family needs to evacuate.

In Encounter, the fundraiser has been setup at the Glass House. They have planned for some of the refugees to come forward and explain their plight. There is a middle aged couple, a young girl and boy, as well as a single woman and her daughter. Viktor cannot hold his shock when he realizes it is Kata. She explains to the group that she was working at a Jewish owned seamstress shop. One day the Nazis raided the shop. She was able to get her daughter from school and get out of Vienna. After Kata gives her story, Liesel begins to talk to her. She would like to help the single mother out. She wants to offer them their small cottage that is on her family's land. Viktor is shocked and left alone to show Kata the cottage. She is upset that he is some rich business owner, he wishes he would have known she was Jewish. He confesses to her that he has thought about her everyday. While they talk, Liesel calls Viktor from the balcony of the house. When she spots Viktor and Kata and runs down towards them and lets them know that her mother will let Kata stay in the cottage.



Viktor cannot forget Kata. This becomes more clear in Chata. Viktor goes to Liesel's father to let him know that he will become the CEO of Landauer Motors. Viktor and his father will still make all the decisions, but they cannot risk having the company taken by the Nazis. Liesel's father agrees. Viktor then goes to visit Kata. She is wary to be alone with him because Liesel's mother is always watching her. Viktor seems hurt because Kata dropped him. She explains she did not want to but the reason she slept with men for money was to provide for her daughter. Viktor understands. He then tells Kata he is getting out of the country with his family to avoid an invasion. He could get papers for Kata and Marika to also leave.

Part 1, Chapters Loss- Encounter, pp 130-165 Analysis

In this section, Viktor cannot believe that he allowed himself to lose Kata. Not having her around is difficult for him. He spends his time with his wife and children, but cannot help but feel angry and annoyed with Liesel. Viktor is shocked that she does not read the news. Why doesn't she understand how quickly the situation for the Jews in deteriorating in Easter Europe. Viktor reveals he is trying to make plans for the entire family to escape to Switzerland. Viktor also becomes angry with Liesel for not wanting to hold a benefit party for the Human Rights League. When she finally agrees to help, his frustration and anger towards her start to recede.

Victor is elated and relieved when he sees Kata. He cannot believe his good luck when Liesel offers to give Kata and her daughter the use of the family's old cottage. Viktor pays no attention to his wife's good will or charity, instead he can only think how lucky he is. In a sense, he will be able to have his cake and eat it too. At this point the reader begins to feel exasperated with Viktor. He does nothing to come clean to his wife. As a main character and good-natured person, Liesel is very likeable to the reader. She has asked Viktor on multiple occasions if she is faithful to him and he has repeatedly lied. While that was an offense, bringing his mistress to live in such close proximity to his wife and children is a betrayal. This marks another change in Viktor and Liesel's relationship.



Part 1, Chapters Robot- Last Year in Marienbad, pp 165-195

Part 1, Chapters Robot- Last Year in Marienbad, pp 165-195 Summary

In Robots, Viktor thinks about how during the first World War, Benno, Liesel's brother, was preparing to go off and fight when he first learned Liesel was in love with him. He was shocked to discover someone could love him and that he could return love. Now Viktor sees the same preparation for war happening and he has two women in his life: Kata and Liesel. All the children are getting along very well on this day. Marika looks at Viktor and asks him if he is one of her mother's "friends." This quickly sends him away. The next day Viktor goes to the cottage to see Kata. Because she is not there, he writes her a note saying how much he misses her.

In Gossip, Liesel learns that her nanny will leave the family to get married. Because Kata is so amazing with the children, Liesel recommends that she become the new nanny. Viktor tries to hide his content with questions about Kata's background. Liesel is confused by Viktor's coldness. Viktor says he will go and propose the idea to Kata.

As Proposal begins, Viktor goes to Kata's cottage to speak to her about becoming the nanny. Kata and Markia would also be invited to come to Switzerland with them during the invasion. He begs her to come with them. She almost refuses because she thinks she will be trapped. She'll owe him and when his wife is not looking they will be together. Viktor tells her he could be in love with her. She insists that if this is love he would run away with her. He says he can't leave Liesel, but cannot live without Kata.

In Ship, Kata has moved into the house. Viktor goes to visit her in her room. Liesel and all the children are out of the house, so Viktor and Kata decide to rekindle their relationship. When they are done, Viktor leave Kata. He feels no shame. At the door, he finds Lanik, the family driver and handyman. Lanik knows Viktor was with Kata and does not hide it.

Last Year in Marienbad shows the family going to there summer vacation home one more time. There seems to be some kind of celebration while the Landauers are there. The next day, the entire town is covered in swastikas. The family can sense the feeling of change all around them. In Small Issue, Viktor decides that March is the latest the family can stay in Czechoslovakia. Finally in Storm in March, the Landauers are packing to leave. Hana comes to visit and Liesel can tell she has been drinking. Hana admits she is jealous of Kata and her place in the family. She is overcome with anger and sadness that Liesel is leaving.



Part 1, Chapters Robot- Last Year in Marienbad, pp 165-195 Analysis

In this section, the ultimate betrayal of Liesel takes place. Not only does Kata come to live with the family, but Viktor also resumes his intimate relationship with her. He further disrespects his marriage to Liesel by having sex in their house. The Glass Room is no longer a place for openness and honesty. It becomes a place of secrets and lies. This is ironic because a house made of glass should show everything and conceal nothing. Instead, the house can become a way to guard secrets for its inhabitants.



Part 1, Chapters Flight- Dispossession, pp 195 - 224

Part 1, Chapters Flight- Dispossession, pp 195 - 224 Summary

In Flight, the Landauers (along with Kata and Marika) are finally finished packing. They are saying their goodbyes to the house as well as their friends. Liesel wants to know when they will return, but Viktor has no answers. They begin their drive towards the airport, but notice that many of the roads are blocked. There is an intense worry that they will not be able to make it to the train on time. They finally get on a clear road and are then held up at the airport. There is a tense wait on the plane, but finally the plane takes off.

Lanik begins with Lanik and his sister surveying the Glass House. Lanik begins to touch things he would have never dared. As he drinks a glass of whiskey, he thinks about Frau Leisel. He reveals to his sister that he had watched Liesel undress one time. He also knew about the affair between Viktor and Kata.

As Exile begins, the family settles into a small villa in Switzerland. Liesel tries to imagine this stay is like vacation, but it feels like exile. Time seems suspended. Hana and Liesel keep in touch via letters. As their time in exile continues, Liesel begins to notice how attractive Kata is. Kata also mentions how grateful she is to Viktor. Liesel also notices how Viktor and Kata go out of their way not to notice each other. One night Liesel cannot sleep. She goes to find Viktor and he is not in his room. She waits outside of Kata's room and can hear them having sex. She is devastated. The next day she does not directly confront Viktor, only asks him to be honest with her. He is not because he denies any attraction to Kata. Later, she confronts Kata, who tells her everything and breaks down. Instead of being angry Liesel comforts her. At dinner, Liesel can tell that Viktor knows she knows about the affair. He is not calm. He is worried his whole perfect world will end. Liesel tells them she never wants to be embarrassed by their affair again.

In Dispossession, Lanik shows a Nazi official the Landauer house. The official says that the government has taken over the house. When Liesel receives this news, she breaks down.

Part 1, Chapters Flight- Dispossession, pp 195 - 224 Analysis

Of all the family members, Liesel suffers most by leaving Mesto. She was very connected to the community. Leaving Mesto means that she is forced to leave her family and her dearest, oldest friend, Hana. While she is grateful to be with her husband



and children, Liesel cannot take the confines of exile. Time passes slowly and something seems off. Finally Liesel sees what is going on between Kata and Viktor first hand. She gives Viktor a chance to come clean, but of course he keeps spinning more lies. Instead of confronting Viktor, she confronts Kata who seems to feel bad about conducting the affair in the same house as Liesel. While Liesel seems shocked and upset, her actions are confusing to the reader because she does not take out her anger on Viktor. The reader is waiting for an outburst from Liesel, but gets nothing. It is somewhat disappointing. Not until Liesel hears that the House has been taken away does she break down. The House represents all that Liesel and Viktor have built together: their family, their lives, and their business. It represents the end of a happy time in her life.



Part 2, Occupation 225 - 272

Part 2, Occupation 225 - 272 Summary

Stahl, a Nazi scientist pulls up to the Landauer House in "Occupation." He surveys it with some interest and wonders what happened to the Jewish family that lived there. At first Lanik refuses to let Stahl into the house, but slowly relents. After a week, Stahl brings his medical staff into the Landauer house. The house has been transformed into a laboratory. Slowly subjects begin to arrive. They fill out forms that detail their lives: birth date, place of birth, language, second language, religion, race, nation, and diseases suffered. For the actual exam, the scientists measure and record each participant. They are trying to find quantifiable differences between Jews and other races. They want to define a human and a subhuman.

In "Rainer," Liesel's friend and beloved architect comes to visit the family. Liesel is so excited to see von Abt, who is now building skyscrapers in America. He is also working for MIT. Liesel can't explain her happiness at seeing him. She wishes she could tell him about Viktor and Kata, but she does not. He jokes they should run away together. Liesel kisses Rainer von Abt goodbye and notices how she always forgets how short he is in her memories.

In "Encounter," Stahl sits in the cafe that Hana and Liesel would often visit. Hana notices him right away. He allows her to sit with her because there are no other available seats. Stahl thinks Hana is beautiful, but not in the Aryan way. He is intrigued by her Slav looks and invites her to the house. Swimming begins with a letter from Hana to Liesel. She describes the German scientist and the new use for the house. Liesel can sense the change in Switzerland and Mesto and thinks they will have to leave soon.

During "Examination," Hana decides to go visit Stahl. There, he takes her measurements and photographs her naked. He notices the differences between her and other German women and is still interested. They decide to meet again. Stahl reveals he used to play music with his wife, Hedda. He reveals that he and Hedda were first cousins and outcast in their village for marrying. Before he can tell more they sleep together. In "Hedy," Hana sends another letter to Liesel about the affair. Liesel writes back telling Hana that if she ever sees her again she will never let her go. In "Concert" Hana takes Stahl to the theatre. After the show, they go back to the Glass Room, where Hana shows him the onyx wall in evening sunlight. Stahl finally tells Hana about Hedda and how they had a baby named Erika. Erika was a beautiful child, until she developed Tay-Sachs disease. When the child could no longer function Hedda and Stahl sent her to a hospital to be killed. After the revelation, Hana and Stahl have sex in the Glass Room.



Part 2, Occupation 225 - 272 Analysis

As Part 2 begins, it becomes clear that the Landauer House will be used for another purpose. The Nazis have decided to move a laboratory into the House. This place will now be used to "measure" races. While the Nazis' motivations and reasons for measuring other human beings is completely invalid and wrong, the Glass Room has no say in what its space is used for. It is impassive and unchanging as the rest of the world completely shifts around it.

In this section, there is a lot of comparisons between Hana's beauty and that of real German women. Stahl cannot believe that he finds a Slav attractive. He feels like he should like women like Hedda and the laboratory assistants who are perfect female German specimens. Stahl is too indoctrinated into the Nazi party and their Aryan beliefs to see the error of his science and comparisons between races and people.

It is interesting to note after the Landauers leave the Glass Room, the people that come to inhabit the house wish to know about the owners they never met. Hana reveals some information about the Landauers to Stahl, but not enough to give him the specifics on their location. Many other characters both Nazi and not will be interested in the people who built this unique house. Some call them visionaries for building a house ahead of their time. Others call them opulent, bourgeois, money hungry Jews. The jealousy dripping from these people's voices as they renounce people they have never met is palpable.



Part 2, Chapters Leaving- Departure, pp 273 - 302

Part 2, Chapters Leaving- Departure, pp 273 - 302 Summary

"Leaving" begins with another letter from Hana. She continues to tell Liesel of her escapades with Stahl. Hana also reveals that she is sleeping with Stahl for money because all of Oskar's money and possessions have been seized. Her body is the only thing she has left to sell. As Liesel is writing a reply to Hana Viktor bursts into the room. The tickets to America have arrived. It is hard for Liesel to pull herself from the memories of their old home to actually leave. Viktor implies that her happiness there was all an illusion. He also says that no one truly understands someone else. For example, he does not understand what is between Liesel and Hana.

In "Protektor" there is panic in the Glass Room. A high ranking Nazi official has decided to visit. This puts the whole staff on edge including Stahl. The scientist calmly shows the official around. While the official is excited by the work, he implores Stahl to quickly find a measurable difference in the Jews. When the visit is complete everyone completely relaxes.

In "Leman," the Landauers have left Zurich and continue their journey westward. Liesel writes to Hana about not feeling angry with Kata, although she feels she should be furious. Instead, she feels increasingly lost because she is leaving everything she knows behind. While staying at a hotel, she receives a letter from Hana. Quickly in "Storm" the story switches back over to Hana. She has arrived at the Glass Room asking for Stahl. He is furious because she has not answered his calls for the past week. She seems drunk, but asks him about all of the Jews that are being forced into camps in Poland. Stahl tells her that he would like to isolate all the Jews. Stahl does not understand Hana's concern for them until she reveals her husband is Jewish. She laughs because he must find it disgusting to share her with a Jew. Finally, Hana tells Stahl that she is pregnant. He thinks that she is lying and hits her. He then rapes her and tells her that he wants her to get an abortion. She refuses. The only thing Hana has ever wanted was a baby. Finally when they both calm down, Stahl drives Hana home. She tells him she will need money and support for the baby.

"Departure" begins with Liesel finishing Hana's letter. She is frightened and worried for her friend. She tries to write a letter back, but the family must leave Geneva to catch their next train. Just as the train is about to leave, French border guards enter the train, forcing everyone to show all over their documents approving them for travel. This is when Liesel remembers she forgot to send her last letter to Hana. She is worried Hana will never know where she went. In "Decision," Stahl has the opportunity to meet Oskar when he and other Jews are brought in to be measured. After the session, he continues



to compare Hana to German woman of worth. To get rid of her and his baby, he decides to report Hana as a Jewish sympathizer. She will be sent to a woman's work camp.

Part 2, Chapters Leaving- Departure, pp 273 - 302 Analysis

There are questions about the Landauers and how they were able to flee the country. But luckily, no one was able to answer. The Landauers are able to safely make their way from country to country trying to find themselves completely out of Europe soon.

Hana and Stahl's relationship has been very difficult from the beginning. Right away, Hana shows her sexual power over Stahl. He is enthralled by her ethnic, Slavic beauty and how it differs from the typical Aryan female. She also forces him to reveal his secrets to her. After Stahl tells Hana of his relationship with Hedda and his sick daughter, he feels weak. He begins to hate her for all the power she holds over him. When Stahl learns that Hana is pregnant, he feels fear and disgust. In his eyes, his child Erica contracted Tay Sachs because of his and Hedda's common Jewish ancestor. By mixing his genes with another inferior subhuman like Hana, he is frightened that his offspring will again be inferior or subhuman. This leads Stahl to send Hana away.



Part 2, Chapter Ocean, pp 302-311

Part 2, Chapter Ocean, pp 302-311 Summary

In "Ocean," the Landauer's train ride to the west continues on. Finally and unexpectedly, the entire train comes to a stop at a station. There are German soldiers surrounding the station. The Germans push people onto the platforms. They yell at everyone to be quiet and line up with all of their identification papers. At the front of the line, they can see that some people are being let back on board while others are being taken away to a hut. When they reach the front of the line, Viktor gives all the papers for everyone. The official questions Kata and Marika's temporary passports. Viktor tries to speak for her, but is commanded to stay quiet. The official decides Kata will have to go to the hut. Marika cries out and the officers force the girl to go with her mother. Viktor is about to cause a scene but the official warns him he will be detained. The family goes back to their train compartment. After waiting a while, Viktor goes outside to speak with an official. The talking turns violent and he is beaten with the butt of a gun. He makes his way back to the car and collapses into the seats that hold his wife and children. Liesel begins to yell horrible things at Viktor: How could he risk his life for Kata? She and the children are his responsibility. They are his family, while Kata is his whore. Finally the train takes off. Viktor is crushed. Liesel is dejected because she realizes that her husband never loved her. He weeps for another woman when he would have never wept for her had she been detained.

Part 2, Chapter Ocean, pp 302-311 Analysis

In Ocean, the reader finally gets the reaction they have yearned for from Liesel. Finally she shows some emotion towards Viktor and Kata's relationship. She is overwhelmed by that fact that Viktor thought he could keep his mistress and his family. When she realizes that Viktor is willingly to not only sacrifice himself for Kata, but also her and their children, she has absolutely had enough of Viktor. She feels betrayed, dejected, and outraged. How could Viktor sacrifice everything for Kata? After Liesel questions his ability to quickly give up on his family, she then begins to take his betrayal personally. Did Viktor ever love her? Was he ever faithful? When did he stop loving her for another? Why wasn't she good enough for his love?



Part 3, Chapters Dissolution -Lanik, pp 311-334

Part 3, Chapters Dissolution -Lanik, pp 311-334 Summary

Unfortunately for Stahl, the Biometric Center and the old Landauer House is shut down in Dissolution. The narration switches over to Liesel who dreams of Hana all the time. She also dreams of Kata and of the house she was forced to leave behind. One day, she receives a disturbing letter from her mother. Who calls the Nazis "her people." She also mentions that both Hana and Oskar were sent away. While Liesel stay at home, Viktor is rarely home. He spends most of his time working on business or trying to find Kata. When Viktor asks to sleep with Liesel, she agrees, but knows he thinks of Kata.

In "Lanik," the author switches over to the land keeper that has always refused to leave the Landauer House. Since the beginning of the war, he has hoarded food and other items in the House's basement. The war stretches on and Lanik spends most of it with his sister at Landauer House. On a cold November day, the bomb sirens begin to sound. Lanik and his sister go to the basement. The bomb falls right into the garden outside of the house. In "Soviets" Mesto is taken over by the Russian army. Germans leave the city. Lanik sells off his hoarded items for sex or trade and he and his sister continue to survive. One night while brother and sister sleep, they hear people invading the house. Russian soldiers have entered. The war is over!

Part 3, Chapters Dissolution -Lanik, pp 311-334 Analysis

Through Liesel's letters with her mother, she gets a glimpse of how non-Jewish and Slav people in Eastern Europe are acting. While Liesel's mother has never really been accepting towards Viktor and other Jews, she now feels she has the power to come forward and be open about her true feelings. She tells Liesel that she and Liesel's father have moved to be closer to "their people." Because "their people" is never really explained and Liesel is a mix of Czech-German descent, the reader assumes that Liesel's mother is describing her people as Germans. The subtle hint that Jews are now the "other" while Germans and Aryans account for the mainstream population is felt in her letter.



Part 4, Chapters Tomas- Zdenka, pp 335 - 367

Part 4, Chapters Tomas- Zdenka, pp 335 - 367 Summary

Tomas is a doctor who works at a rehabilitation hospital for children. This hospital has a lovely gymnasium surrounded in glass. As "Tomas" begins, he and Zdenka aid the children in their workout. He first met Zdenka in the gymnasium that he calls the Glass Room. She is extremely lovely, a dancer's whose career ended too soon. She became a physiotherapist to help others with their own injuries. In "Ondine" the reader learns about a child patient who stops breathing when she sleeps. Ondine was a water nymph who fell in love with a human. He wanted to leave his wife for Ondine. But if Ondine ever had a child by a mortal she would lose her immortal status. The human promised to love her forever, so Ondine becomes pregnant. After the child is born, her lover cheats on her because she has lost her eternal youth. Ondine goes to the river to die in grief, but casts a curse for her lover. For as long as he stays awake he can breathe, but if he falls asleep he will stop breathing. In the Glass Room Zdenka dances to Ravel's piece "Ondine." Tomas is overtaken by Zdenka's beauty and youth. They sleep together in the Glass Room.

Unfortunately for Zdenka, she is not the only woman in Tomas' life. In "Berta" The author is introduced to Eve, a woman that Tomas has slept with for many years. He tells Eve about Zdenka and her innocence. Eve feels no jealousy towards Zdenka, but Zdenka would certainly be jealous of Eve. To Tomas, Zdenka is the innocent, beautiful Ondine. He does not wish to inherit the curse of Ondine.

In "Paris," Tomas is scheduled to attend a medical conference. He also arranges for Zdenka to attend. The trip is Zdenka's first out of the country. She is extremely excited. The time away brings her closer to Tomas. Everyone can see that she is completely in love with Tomas. After Paris, she questions their future, but Tomas is unwilling to agree to anything. In "History and Zdenka" Eve and Zdenka meet each other when Eve is sent to the Glass Room with a woman from the Committee for Cultural Heritage. On the day of the interview, Zdenka notices that Eve and Tomas know each other. Through body language, she figures out that they sleep together. Later on, she finds herself speaking to a woman from the Committee for Cultural Heritage. The woman reveals she knew the family who built the house. She also says she was sent away to a work camp after her Jewish husband was deported. Zdenka and this woman connect and Zdenka tells her about her boyfriend problems.



Part 4, Chapters Tomas- Zdenka, pp 335 - 367 Analysis

The story of Ondine becomes a metaphor for Tomas' relationship with Zdenka and Eve. Zdenka, the beautiful ballerina seems ethereal and otherworldly, while Eve seems to be very human. Zdenka's relationship with Tomas seems extremely idealistic yet serious, while his time with Eve is fun and light. Tomas can tell that if he plays with Zdenka's heart she will break. As of now, he is not sure whether or not she will be able to curse him the way that Ondine cursed her lover.

Tomas is the stereotypical male. He is very successful, good looking, and smart. Since he is such a catch, he believes he can have Eva and Zdenka. Just as Viktor thinks that it is appropriate for him to have both Kata and Liesel. These men do not question their duties to the women that they are with, they just want to ensure that they can still have their "extra" on the side. They are selfish and unwillingly to give all of themselves to one person.



Part 4, Chapters Confession- Comfort, pp 368-383

Part 4, Chapters Confession- Comfort, pp 368-383 Summary

In Confession, Zdenka receives a call from Comrade Hanakova. Hanakova would like to meet Zdenka at a cafe to talk. Zdenka agrees and they begin a relationship similar to how old friends might act around each other. Zdenka reveals that she and Tomas are back together. Hana warns her to be wary. A man she met in this cafe destroyed her. She only slept with him to help her husband. Hana ended up in Ravensbruck, Germany. Later that evening, Zdenka dances for Hana in the glass room. Hana and Zdenka are overcome with emotion. Hana then shows Zdenka pictures of the Landauers. Hana gives Zdenka more pictures. Some of them are older and some more recent. One captures Tomas and Eve tightly holding hands in an intimate way. Hana apologizes for the picture but says she cannot stand Tomas' deceit. She also admits to being in love with Zdenka. Zdenka is surprised because she is not repelled by the idea of another woman loving her.

In "Comfort," Hana and Zdenka meet again. Both are nervous and confused to meet. Hana breaks the ice by insisting she must tell Zdenka that she had a baby in the concentration camp. She was allowed to keep the baby girl for a while, but then after a couple of months the Germans took the child away.

Part 4, Chapters Confession- Comfort, pp 368-383 Analysis

Zdenka becomes the second character that Hana has actually become close to. While Hana believes she has fallen in love many times in her life, she knows that her main loves were Liesel and now Zdenka. While she was never able to physically share her love with Liesel, she may be able to have a physical relationship with Zdenka. This transferring of emotions and secrets causes Zdenka to completely trust Hana and want to pursue a deeper relationship with Hana.

Through Hana's character, the author is able to examine sexual exploration. Hana has had many sexual partners including men and women. From Hana's experiences, the reader can see that she is searching for a deeper emotional and sexual connections with someone, no matter who the person is. She is able to explore her own sexual nature without the fear and judgement that other characters feels. On the other hand, it may be shocking to the reader that Zdenka is able to fall in love with Hana. She is supposed to be a pure, naive, proper young lady. Instead, it is revealed that she has

had other experiences with women. She is not as innocent as others (Tomas) might have thought.



Part 5, Chapters Contact-1990, pp 384-414

Part 5, Chapters Contact-1990, pp 384-414 Summary

As Contact begins, a man Czechoslovakian man named Vesley makes his way to see the Landauer's in America. He is under strict orders to report back to his seniors at regular intervals. Some thirty years have passed and the Landauers are now the Landors. They changed their names to more easily assimilate into American culture. At the Landor house, Liesel (now Elizabeth), Martin, and Otilie greet Vesley. The visitor informs the Landors that the Czech government wishes them to attend a ceremony for the House. Apparently some people think it should not be used for a physiotherapy gymnasium. It should be opened to the public. They would like Liesel to attend the ceremony to smooth things over. Martin is very mad and points out that the house was stolen from his family. He thinks thinks the Czechs are using his mother for social gain. The man then mentions that he has a letter for Liesel; a letter from Hana. Apparently Hana is alive. Immediately, Liesel decides to go to Mesto with Otilie.

Hana storms into the Glass Room during one of the ballet classes Zdenka teaches. She tries to get Zdenka to read the letter, but Zdenka does not know German. Liesel reveals that she has gone blind. Viktor died in 1958 in a boating accident. After coming to America she could never really forgive Viktor for the lies so they almost led separate lives. Liesel even took a lover when she was in her early 50s. Now Liesel lives with Otilie, her son in law and grandson. Martin is a lawyer. She is very proud of both of her children. At the end of the letter Liesel says that although it is hard for her to travel, she will do anything to see Hana. She has never known love like Hana's (one intense and so deep).

In Return, Hana, Liesel, Otilie are reunited at the Glass Room/House. Liesel is shocked by the change in the country, the change in the people. She is able to meet Hana's Zdenka and can tell that they are involved with each other without seeing anything. She also reconnects with Lanik and reveals that he always gave her the creeps. Lanik is now a Soviet spy. Hana asks what ever happened to Kata. Liesel lies and says that Kata and Marika decided to stay in France. She does not elaborate.

1990 begins with a woman named Marie Delmas taking a trip to Mesto. Once she arrives to the Landauer house, the gates are closed. There is an American woman there who says the house has been closed for the public, but Marie could join in on their tour if she would like. There is a tour guide in the house who leads the two women and the American's son around the home. Marie is overcome with memories of her life in this home. Her time spent with Otilie and Martin. She starts to think about her mother and becomes faint. She sits and the American comforts her. Finally, the American asks her if she is Marika. Marie confirms this information. The American then reveals that she is Otilie.



Part 5, Chapters Contact-1990, pp 384-414 Analysis

This section is all about reunions. Liesel is reunited with Hana, but also reunited with the House. Otilie and Marika are also reunited at the very end of the novel. As this section begins, Liesel and Hana are finally reunited. After so many years of wondering where the other is, they are able to hold one another in their arms. Liesel can immediately sense that Hana, her love, has found someone to share the rest of her life with. Liesel is beyond happy for her old friend and just wishes that they could have spent more time together.

While Otilie and Marika are excited about their reunion, the reader was not sure how close the two women were to each other as children. They seem to remember each other and are excited about the chance to reconnect. For so long war and suffering has separated so many people in Eastern Europe. Finally, so many people are able to reunite and connect.



Characters

Viktor Landauer

While Viktor Landauer is not the main character in the novel, his life and experiences are what help to shape the outline of the entire story. Viktor Landauer is a rich and successful business man. His family owns Landauer Motors, a Czech and German automobile company. In his business he is cool, calculating, and smart. As the novel begins, Viktor has just married his sweetheart, Liesel. He seems to be a responsible man who is in love. He cannot wait to show his new wife the world and build her a new home for them to create a family for. Slowly the reader starts to notice that Viktor likes to think about things in a modern sense. He likes the idea of a minimalistic house. This is why, at first her goes along with Rainer von Abt's plans.

After Liesel becomes pregnant with their first child. Viktor seems to shift. Instead of being forward thinking, he begins to act like a prude and thus becomes increasingly conservative. When he decides to have an affair outside of his marriage, he feels like he can be a different person. His mistress Kata is the only person he feels her can be completely himself. In finding himself, Viktor betrays Liesel and their children.

As the book continues on, Viktor's tendency for perfection is clearly revealed. He has always has a plan. When plans do not happen, he loses touch with everyone around him. The most clear example of this happens when Kata and Marika are separated from Viktor in France.

Liesel

Liesel Landauer's life shapes helps to shape the structure and context of the novel. When the story begins, Liesel is a young girl who has just married her childhood crush. She is completely excited to begin her life. Marriage liberates Liesel and makes her become a woman. As her marriage to Viktor progresses on, she becomes more forward and expressive with her opinions. She also begins to realize the nativity of her youth and her upbringing. With her pregnancies she becomes a more powerful and more mature woman. Liesel often asks Viktor if he would ever cheat on her and if he loves her, for a long time adamant refusal is taken at face value. As Liesel matures she knows she must not believe everything or everyone.

While the book seems like it will describe Viktor and Liesel's love story, it ends up being more about Liesel's love of the Landauer House and Hana. Liesel and Hana have known each other since they were young girls. At first Liesel does not understand Hana's grown up feelings for Liesel. Slowly she understands that Hana is the only person that loved her completely and fully. The second love story of Liesel's life was the Landauer House. Even after finding out about her husband's betrayal, she cries over everything that was lost from the Landauer House.



Hana

While it seems like she is simply the sidekick, Hana becomes the novel's last connection to the Landauers. Hana is Liesel's childhood friend and greatest admirer. From the beginning the reader can tell that Hana is full of life, excitement and adventure. She expresses her interest in men and women, although she is already married to Oskar. Hana is able to show she is a wonderful friend. When Liesel becomes deathly ill, Hana is right by her side the entire time. The reader also discovers she is loyal. When all of her husband's money is taken because he is Jewish, she sells herself to a Nazi for money and protection. While it is unclear as to what she feels for the official, it becomes clear that she wants to save herself and her husband. She will do what she must to survive.

Mauer uses Hana's character to show how a woman could explore their own sexuality and eventually find true love. While Hana has always been outlandish, it seems like she is so for attention. This is not the case. Perhaps she is just ahead of her time. Hana does not wish to conform to anyone's standards to find true love. Hana does find love. The first is Liesel, her dearest friend and the second is Zdenka her lovely dancer.

Kata

Kata is a Jewish dressmaker and occasional prostitute. She meets Viktor in Vienna and begins an affair with him. Slowly she realizes that she does not want to only sleep with Viktor, she wants him to run away with her. He refuses. Kata flees Vienna when the Germans invade. She and Viktor are reunited when she gets to Mesto. She quickly becomes the Landauer children's nanny and Viktor's mistress again. Once the family flees to Switzerland and then Paris, Kata and her daughter Marika are separated from the Landauers. It is unclear as to whether or not Kata dies in a concentration camp.

Marika

Marika is Kata's daughter. She seems to be a very smart and inquisitive child. She is taken to a concentration camp with Kata. After the war, she ends up in France. As the novel ends, she makes her way back to Mesto and is able to see the Landauer House again. She reunites with Otilie at the end of the novel.

Stahl

Stahl is a German Nazi scientist. He runs a laboratory in the old Landauer home. Stahl is very pragmatic and strongly believes in his work. He meets Hana at a cafe and begins a sexual relationship with her that he does not like. Stahl hates himself for being with Hana and so he sends her off to a work camp.



Tomas

Tomas is a doctor at a children's rehabilitation center that is being run out of the Glass Room. He is in a relationship with Zdenka and Eve but cannot choose between the two women. Tomas is described as handsome and smart.

Zdenka

Zdenka was a ballerina until she fell off of a stage dancing and broke her ankle. After her career abruptly ends, she becomes a physiotherapist in the Glass Room. It is here that she meets and falls in love with Tomas. Zdenka is very gentle, fragile, and seems naive. She hopes that Tomas will commit to her, but he will not. Zdenka meets Hana in the Glass Room and begins a relationship with her.

Otilie

Otilie is Viktor and Liesel's daughter. She is born before the House is completed. Otilie spends most of her childhood traveling with her parents during the war. When they settle in America, Otilie flourishes and creates a family. She also takes care of her mother when she goes blind.

Martin

Martin is the son of Viktor and Liesel. Martin is young when the family tries to flee Europe. He mostly grows up in America. He becomes a lawyer when he grows up.

Rainer von Abt

Rainer is the eccentric architect and designer who builds the Glass Room. People love his design so much that he begins to get new commissions for new work. The Germans wish for Rainer to work for them, but he is luckily asked to immigrate to the United States to design buildings there.

Lanik

Lanik was the groundskeeper at the Landauer House. Lanik is sneaky and self-serving. All he cares about is himself and the different ways for him to get ahead in life.

Oskar

Oskar is Hana's much older husband. He is a successful Jewish business man whose money is taken away when the Germans take over Czechoslovakia. He is sent to a concentration camp where Hana assumes he died.



Objects/Places

The Landauer House/Glass Room

In a way the Landauer House is actually a character instead of a setting. The house is located in Mesto, Czechoslovakia and was built by Rainer Von Abt. The House is Liesel's dream home. Originally Viktor saw it as his family's move towards the future. Where he and Liesel could live their lives openly and freely. Instead the house becomes a stage and a place for many different people's secrets. Viktor trusts the House to hold his secret affair with Kata, Hana betrays her people and her husband with Stahl, and Zdenka falls in love in this building. The House is first used as a residence, then a laboratory, and finally a gym for children who are rehabilitating from injuries. After the Landauers leave, people always want to know about the elusive family.

Mesto, Czechoslovakia

Mesto is where Liesel, Viktor, and Hana all grew up. They have also all decided to make a home for themselves here.

Vienna.

Liesel and Viktor go to Vienna on the first leg of their honeymoon. After, Viktor begins going there for business. When he gets lonely, he takes a lover named Kata. He frequently visits her here.

Marienbad

This is where the Landauers would spend much of their holidays.

Cuba

During World War II, many Europeans had to go through Cuba to get to the United States.

Switzerland

The Landauers first escape to Switzerland when it seems like they will have to immediately get out of Mesto.



The cafe in Mesto

Hana and Liesel used to visit a small cafe in Mesto to spend time together and talk. This is also where Hana meets Stahl.

The cottage

On Liesel's family property there was a small cottage. When Liesel contracts the pox as a child, she is sent there to recover. When Kata and Marika need someplace to stay, Liesel offers up the cottage.

Grand Piano

This is the only item left by the Landauers when they flee to Switzerland.

The Onyx Wall

The onyx wall is in the Glass Room. Liesel had to beg Viktor for it. She was taken with the wall because it reminded her of the myth of Venus.



Themes

Sexual Exploration

Sexual exploration is one of the main themes of the novel. As it begins, Liesel, Viktor, and Hana are all relatively young. As the novel ends, they are in their 60's. This allows for the reader to follow the main character's physical, emotional, and sexual growth. This is especially seen through Hana's character. When Hana is introduced, she is shown to be Liesel's outrageous, close friend. Quickly it becomes clear that Hana is very different from Liesel. She is not afraid to express any of her feelings. At first it seems as though Hana is just looking for fun outside of her relationship with her husband. Soon it becomes clear that while she loves Oskar, she is looking for more. So Hana decides to explore (what would be considered) other nontraditional relationships. At first, the reader assumes that Hana's experiences with Eva, Liesel, and Zdenka are meant to shock others in her social circle. As the story progresses it becomes clearer that through exploration, Hana is trying to discover who she is and who she can love. She also wants to know who will love her for being herself.

Viktor and Liesel's relationship changes throughout the novel. As it begins, the reader can tell that they are very much infatuated with each other. They are thrilled by the thought of spending their lives together. Moving through their time together, it becomes clear that Viktor might have never fallen in love with Liesel. He felt a connection with her that turned into a deeper friendship and partnership. In his mistress, Kata, Viktor feels as though he can explore a completely different side of himself. With Liesel he is bound by marriage and their place in society to act a certain way in the bedroom. With Kata, he is another person, he frees himself to explore himself sexually.

Since Liesel has always striven to be perfect and is put back in her place by Viktor and other men for acting out of turn, it is surprising that she feels she cannot explore her own sexuality.

Cross Cultural Issues

Throughout the novel, the author tries to emphasize how ethnically diverse Eastern Europe is. He also wishes to convey that many different types of people were negatively affected by World War II. Because of the Nazis eagerness to rid their new kingdom of "subraces" many were displaced from their homelands because they fled or were put into camps by the Nazis. In the novel, he introduces the Jews, Russians, Germans, and Slavs as all being people moving freely in and out of Mesto, Czechoslovakia prior to the war. This blending of different races and ethnicity allows the reader to see how people treat one another based on their differences.

Prior to the Nazi occupation of most of Eastern Europe, many of these groups lived with each other in relative peace. Although there may have been some harsh feelings after



World War I, these groups interacted with one another. This can be seen through the characters. Although Liesel is a German Czech, she marries a Jewish Czech. Her best friend, Hana, is a Slav and Hana's husband, Oskar is Jewish.

During the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, soon anyone who is not German and of Aryan descent became the "other." Groups that had gotten along were now aligning themselves with the Germans. This can be seen through the characters of Liesel's parents. In a letter to Liesel, she tells her daughter that she and her father are moving to be closer to their German people. Although she allowed her daughter to marry a Jewish man, she now tries to separate her family from being an other.

Finally, as the book continues on, it follows how the Germans wished to measure the otherness of the sub races. This pseudo science would allow them to justify the differences between themselves and anyone else they viewed as inferior. As seen with Stahl's character, he cannot find a measurable difference between Germans and other races. Because he cannot prove how people like Hana are lesser than him, he subjects her to a horrible fate.

Deceit and secrets

Throughout the novel, many characters are deceitful or hold huge secrets from one another. Often, Hana and others joke that without secrets there would be no artists. There would be no creativity. While this might be true, secrets and deceit also create problems and complicated situations. The first type of secret that accosts the reader, is Viktor's deceit concerning his affair with Kata. Although he is constantly asked if he would be faithful to Liesel, and once directly asked if they are involved, he attempts to maintain his secret and live a life of deceit. When Liesel finally learned of Viktor's long held secrets, she is shocked and confused. His secrets have ruined their marriage.

Another example occurs in the Glass Room, the German scientist Stahl deceives his lover, Hana. While their relationship was never perfect, Stahl is quick to dispose of Hana once his alliance to her becomes worrisome for his position. He allows her to be shipped off to a work or concentration camp, not caring about the mother of his

It is interesting to note that much of the deceit takes place in the Glass Room or the House. While the Glass Room was supposed to remain transparent, it is also useful in hiding people's secrets. Viktor often states that he wanted the Glass Room to be a metaphor for how he and Liesel live their lives: open and freely for everyone else to see. This is not true because Viktor has secrets he wishes to hide.

Style

Point of View

The point of view used throughout the novel is the third-person omniscient. Not any single character tells the story from his or her point of view. Instead, the author is omniscient and can therefore tell each and every character's story. The author is able to describe to the reader the emotions of each of the characters. For instance, the author learns that Stahl will be sending Hana away to a work camp. The readers know what is going to happen a long time before Hana discovers her fate. The point of view is also a trust worthy source. The narration is not attempting to confuse the reader or mislead them. Through the narration and point of view, the reader learns the truth behind many of the secrets that so many characters keep throughout the novel.

Setting

The novel begins with the two young newlyweds vacationing in Vienna. From Vienna, they travel to Venice where they meet Rainer von Abt. They ask von Abt to build them their house. Then the couple returns to Mesto, Czechoslovakia. In Mesto, they decide to rent a house while their new home is being built. Quickly, Liesel gets pregnant. While she is nesting and designing the house with Rainer, Viktor continues to run his company and travel for business. On one trip to Vienna, he becomes lonely and decides to seek the company of a "working girl." Back in Mesto the house continues to be built and the baby is born. Viktor continues to make trips to see Kata. When the house is complete, the family hosts a house-warming party inside of the Glass Room. Liesel becomes pregnant with Martin. She has a hard time delivering the baby and becomes very ill. She stays in the hospital for a long time. Viktor continues to travel to Vienna to see Kata. Shortly after his last visit to her apartment, Kata disappears.

After Martin is born, Viktor and Liesel go to Marienbad to rekindle their relationship. Shortly after Viktor gets involved with raising money for other Jewish people who are being displaced by the German government. He and Liesel throw a party for Jewish refugees and Kata is there. Liesel (having no idea of the affair) invites Kata to stay in the cottage on her parent's land. When the situation in Czechoslovakia gets too rough, the whole family and Kata and her daughter flee to Switzerland. After Switzerland, they make their way to Paris where Kata and Markia are separated from the Landauers. The Landauers then go to Cuba and then America. Finally the family ends up in Boston, Massachusetts.

The rest of the characters that are introduced in the novel stay near Mesto and the Landauer House. The House becomes the link for all the characters in the novel.



Language and Meaning

The language in the novel is extremely complicated. The tone of the novel is open and informal. The author easily switches between many different languages as he weaves this tale. This leads the reader to become comfortable with the relaxed, constantly shifting tone. The author successfully uses this style in order to tell the more individual and personal stories of WWII. If he had used a more stiff, or informal tone, the reader would not have been able to read about such things as Hana's sexual liberation and exploration.

The author borrows his words from many different languages. These include: English, Czech, German, French, Hebrew, and Russian. By using different words from different languages throughout the novel, the reader becomes the aware of the many ethnic groups and cultures that were affected during the war. The author slips freely between different languages and it gives the novel an extremely fluid feel. He is able to represent many people and create an elaborate, interwoven, and rich story by using the words. It is also interesting to see how his characters sometimes struggle with the barrier of language throughout the story. Usually, if a character is able to overcome a language barrier, the character is able to keep moving forward and escape whatever might be a problem.

Structure

The novel is separated into five parts. In each part of the novel, the book is separated into smaller chapters that is anywhere from 3 to 30 pages in length. While the chapters are descriptive, they do not drag on for any long amount of time. There seems to be an equal amount of dialogue to keep the story moving.

The plot of the novel is somewhat involved. At first the story seems to be focused on the Landauers. While other characters are introduced, these characters directly know the Landauers. After the Landauers flee Mesto, the story somewhat shifts to tell the stories of the people that were left behind (Hana, Lanik, Oskar) and introduces new characters who find their stories also told in the Glass Room (Zdenka, Tomas, Eve, and Stahl). In this way, the plot does become more complicated. Their are many characters shifting in and out of the Glass Room and keeping track of them can become time consuming. The reader is constantly trying to figure out who is still connected to the Landauers or how a character might be connected to them. Eventually, towards the end of the novel the Landauers find their way back to their House, just as many others who were also displaced were able to find their way back to their home land.



Quotes

"The war seems to stretch backwards into memory and forwards into the unknown future. Maybe it will go on for ever. The inhabitants of Mesto scratch an existence as best they can, living off potatoes and turnips and beets, things grubbed out of the earth and tasting of the earth." (Part 3, Lanik, p. 319).

"Hana leans forward and presses her lips against the warm swelling. The contact evokes in Liesel a vague and unnerving sense of sexual desire, focused not on Hana but on her own body, which is so foreign and so strange, so heavy with the future." (Part 1, Hana, p. 45).

"He smiles and she feels iridescently happy, as though lights have been turned on, multicolored lights that shimmer and wobble and reflect off moving mirrors. This man has a vision that he is realizing for her alone, for her and Viktor and their baby. It seems fantastic." (Part 1, Construction, p. 54).

"The whole essence of the Glass Room is reason. That is what Viktor thinks, anyway. For him it embodies the pure rationality of Greek classical temple, the austere beauty of a perfect composition, the grace and balance of a painting by Mondrian [...] Here everything can be understood as a matter of proportion and dimension. Yet there, standing mere feet away from him, is Kata." (Part 1, Encounter, p. 146).

"It was only at the suggestion that the house might actually be demolished that Liesel finally broke down and wept, not only for the beautiful house on the hillside of Mesto, but for her lost life and her lost love and because of the whole world of exile in which reality is elsewhere and the life you live seems to be something happening to someone else." (Part 1, Dispossession, p. 223).

"You see Eva Kiesler naked in that film and you think, that's me. My spirit made flesh, perfected. A man might think, 'that's lovely' [...] But if you're a woman you think, 'that's an aspect of me and I want to love her just as much as I love myself.'" (Part 1, Ecstasy, p. 127).

"He examines her closely, almost as though consigning her features to memory, the cast of her eyes and lips, the way her skin creases at the corners of her mouth, the set of her cheekbones and the dome of her forehead." (Part 1, Love, p. 118).

"And then he leaves, thinking, as he goes down the stairs, of what might have been and what might still be, thinking of the pure caprice of life." (Part 1, Love, p. 118).

"This is not love, it is the very antithesis of love: it is hatred made manifest." (Part 2, Protektor, p. 282).

"Your responsibility is to us! Your duty is to your family! What the hell happens to us if you get taken away?" (Part 2, Oceans, p. 308).



"Would you weep for me?' she asked." (Part 2, Oceans, p. 310).

"If Tomas had never quite believed in her being a nymph, at that moment he was convinced. Zdenka moved, flowed like weed in the stream, like reflections of sunlight on the surface of a pool. And the room in which she moved, the Glass Room with its transparent walls, its chromium pillars, its onyx wall, its pools of light, seemed a kind of tank in which the nymph was trapped." (Part 4, Ondine, p. 339).



Topics for Discussion

Compare Liesel's relationship with Viktor to her relationship with Hana.

1. Who does she seem to have a deepens connection with?
2. How do these relationship matures and change overtime?
1. Why does Viktor believe he should be allowed to keep his wife and his mistress?
2. How does he risk his family's life to save his mistress?

Viktor believed the Glass House/Room represented two things:

1. Modernism
2. How he and Liesel lead transparent lives?

How were these beliefs deceitful?

Through Hana's character Mawer is able to explore the situation for people who were not considered Jews or Germans. How is Hana's experience shaped throughout the novel?

Do you think Viktor connected deeply with Kata as a way to embrace his Jewish heritage that becomes increasingly important to him in the novel?

Explain why or why not.

How does the house become its own character in the novel?

-Analyze the house's character changes throughout Parts 1-5 of the novel.

- How does the statement "Architecture has no political opinion" go along with the house's inhabitants?

Compare Viktor's relationship with Liesel to his relationship with Kata.

One might call The Glass Room a novel of love stories. How is Hana and Liesel's love story the most important one of the novel?

Through Hana the reader is able to examine the following themes?

- Sexual exploration/taboo
- Friendship and Love

How does Hana's character allow these themes to be explored?