

The Golden Goblet Study Guide

The Golden Goblet by Eloise McGraw

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Plot Summary

The Golden Goblet is a novel by Newberry Award runner-up Eloise Jarvis McGraw. This novel follows the life of Ranofer, a young Egyptian boy whose only dream is to become a goldsmith. Unfortunately, after the death of his father, Ranofer has been left in the care of a half-brother who is more concerned with his own future than Ranofer's. At first, Ranofer is allowed to work in a goldsmith shop, but when his usefulness to his brother's gold stealing plan runs out, Ranofer is forced to apprentice in his brother's stonecutter shop. Ranofer is determined to find a way to live on his own and to become a student to Zau the Master Goldsmith, even if it means turning his own brother in for the thief that he is. The Golden Goblet is a young adult novel that not only teaches a lesson about morals, but offers a history lesson that is unmatched by other novels of its kind.

Ranofer is working as a porter in Rekh's goldsmith shop, making ingots and running errands. Ranofer would rather be an apprentice, learning the art of gold, but his half-brother and guardian did not see fit to pay the apprentice fee. However, Ranofer is content to learn by watching and listening to the lessons taught the apprentices in the shop. One day, Ranofer learns that someone working in the shop has been stealing gold. Ranofer's first thought is of Ibni, a man who works in the shop and who is a friend of Ranofer's half-brother, Gebu. Ranofer realizes that the wineskins Ibni often gives him to take home to Gebu would be the perfect way to transport small pieces of gold. Gebu refuses to bring home any more wineskins, but when Gebu learns this, he beats Ranofer. Gebu also threatens to throw Ranofer out of his house if he continues to refuse.

Ranofer brings home another wineskin, but he also tells his suspicious to Heqet, an apprentice in Rekh's shop. Ranofer asks Heqet to tell Rekh that Ibni is the thief. Heqet does and nine days later Ibni is fired. Ranofer is happy, because he believes his problems are over. However, that night he learns that Gebu has decided to take him out of the goldsmith shop and make him an apprentice in his own stonecutter shop. Stonecutting is an ugly, hard job and Ranofer is saddened that he will not be able to fulfill his dream of becoming a goldsmith like his father.

Ranofer works hard and keeps to himself most days. However, Ranofer likes to wander the city on his lunch breaks because he has no food and nothing else to do. One day Ranofer runs into Heqet. Heqet suggests that they begin meeting at lunch and after work each day. Ranofer agrees. The two boys eat their lunch by the Nile among the reeds. They are joined by the Ancient, an old man who cuts reed for the shipbuilders. The three of them become good friends and often spend their time talking about their dreams of the future.

Heqet is told by Rekh to go to the shop of Zau the Master one day to retrieve a tool. Heqet asks Ranofer to go along with him. Once there, Ranofer reminds Zau that he once suggested he would like to take Ranofer on as a student. Zau remembers and agrees to take Ranofer on without charging the same fee he charges all his other students. However, Ranofer knows he will never be able to convince Gebu to allow him



to leave the stonecutter's shop. Ranofer becomes determined to find a way to live on his own so that he can leave the home of Gebu.

Soon after this, Ranofer becomes aware that Gebu suddenly has more money. Ranofer convinces his friends to help him spy on Gebu and his friends to find out where they are stealing from now. A short time later, Ranofer finds a golden goblet in Gebu's room while he is searching for food. Ranofer soon begins to suspect that Gebu is stealing from tombs. Ranofer follows Gebu and one of his friends into the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings. There, Ranofer follows Gebu into the tomb of the parents of Queen Tiy through a back tunnel Gebu designed for just that purpose. Ranofer traps them into the tomb, leaves his friends to guard the tunnel, and rushes into town for help.

It is the day of the Festival, so Ranofer has trouble finding anyone in town. Ranofer sneaks onto the palace grounds and almost makes his way to the palace before he is caught. Ranofer is able to convince a friend of the queen's of his story. Ranofer is taken to the queen and is able to convince her his story is true. Ranofer is later rewarded with new clothes and a new donkey to help him earn the money he will need to live on his own and become a student of Zau the Master.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

Ranofer is a young Egyptian boy who has been orphaned and forced to live with his half-brother, Gebu. Due to his young age and precarious situation, Ranofer is forced to live and work at Gebu's whim or face living on the streets, begging for his food.

In chapter one, Ranofer is working as a porter in Rekh, the goldsmith's, shop. Ranofer would rather be an apprentice, but his half-brother, Gebu, will not pay the required fees. In fact, Ranofer is forced to hand over all his pay to Gebu. Ibni, another worker in the shop, approaches Ranofer and tells him he will have a wineskin the next night that he wants Ranofer to take home to Gebu. Ranofer is polite and agrees. However, when he later learns that someone has been stealing gold from the shop, he begins to wonder if Ibni is stealing the gold and giving it to Gebu in the wineskins. By the end of the work day, Ranofer is pretty much convinced that this is the truth, that he has been a party to theft by bringing the wineskins to Gebu. Ranofer wants to tell Rekh who the thief is, but is afraid that by telling the whole story, he will reveal himself a thief, causing Rekh to look down on him. Instead, Ranofer decides to stop bringing the wineskins home and to confront Gebu with what he knows. At the same time, Ranofer helps a new apprentice, Heqet, clean gold scrapings. As they work, Heqet asks Ranofer a lot of questions about his past, bringing up hurt feelings Ranofer still has regarding his father's death and his inability to be a goldsmith apprentice. Ranofer becomes angry and ends the conversation.

In chapter two, Ranofer is slow to return home because he does not want to spend more time than necessary with Gebu. Rather than go straight home, Ranofer goes to the river. There Ranofer meets an old man and his donkey. The old man lives in a brick house near the river he built himself and he cuts reeds to sell to the shipbuilders. The Ancient encourages Ranofer to go home where it is safer. Ranofer arrives at his half-brother's house where he immediately begins to search for food. However, there is no food left out and all the containers are locked with a clay seal. Gebu comes downstairs and asks Ranofer if he spoke to Ibni that day. Ranofer tells the truth, that he did, but then he announces that he knows about the theft and that he does not intend to help. Gebu reminds Ranofer that if he tells anyone that he too will be implicated in the crime because he carried the gold home. Satisfied he has Ranofer trapped, Gebu offers the boy half a loaf of bread and sends him to his corner in the yard. Ranofer day dreams about finding a great deal of gold hidden away by some long ago person and of all the things he would do with that gold, including paying his fee to become a student to Zau the Master. Zau was once a friend of Ranofer's father and said he would teach Ranofer one day. Ranofer's father was once a great goldsmith and he fully believes that one day he will be too.



Chapters 1-2 Analysis

In these early chapters the reader is introduced to Ranofer, the protagonist of the story, and his half-brother Gebu, the antagonist. Ranofer is an orphan whose father was a successful goldsmith, a wealthy man who had a servant in his household. Ranofer was well loved and well cared for in his early childhood, but then his father died. Gebu, a half-brother Ranofer knew nothing about, swooped in, took all their father's money and goods, then took Ranofer into his home. Ranofer, who once was a loved and well pampered child, is now the proverbial orphan who is often physically and emotionally abused by his half-brother.

Gebu is a professional man who has his own stonecutter shop. However, this is the only thing about Gebu that seems moral and responsible. Gebu is involved in a scheme to steal gold from Rekh's goldsmith shop. When Ranofer confronts Gebu about this, revealing Ranofer's strong morals and his courage, Gebu laughs and suggests that Ranofer could never tell anyone because he has been the one bringing the gold home. Where Ranofer is strong and moral, Gebu is weak and immoral, preying on Ranofer's good qualities to force him to be quiet about Gebu's own illegal schemes. It is clear to the reader at this point that Ranofer's situation is a dangerous one and that he will have to fight Gebu in order to make his dreams come true.



Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

In chapter three, Ranofer wakes happy, believing that he has a plan that will end his involvement in the theft. Ranofer walks slowly to work, stopping in the street to draw some of the hieroglyphics he remembers learning in his childhood in the dirt of the road. Outside the apprentice's quarters, Ranofer runs into Heqet. Heqet is eating, reminding Ranofer he has little to eat in the past few days. Heqet offers Ranofer a fig and he takes it, despite the pride that makes him want to refuse. At Rekh's shop, Ranofer is embarrassed when Rekh makes a comment about the marks Gebu left on his shoulders during a beating. Later, Ranofer is asked to help Heqet learn how to make charcoal. As they work, Ranofer becomes aware of another apprentice struggling to make a bowl. Ranofer offers the older boy some advice and is overheard by Rekh. Rekh asks Ranofer to show him how he might make ornamental leaves. When Ranofer is finished, Rekh asks him to make fifty more for a necklace he is making for a woman. Ranofer is excited, aware that this is a task that only an apprentice might be asked to do. That evening, when Ranofer leaves the shop, he refuses to take the wineskin Ibni attempts to give him. However, when he returns home, Ranofer is beaten for his courage and told if he does not bring the wineskin home the following day he will no longer have a home.

In chapter four, Ranofer wakes, convinced that noises he heard in the night were the sounds of his father's spirit come to guide him. Ranofer gathers the small breakfast Gebu has left for him and visits his father's tomb, leaving half the meal as a gift. At Rekh's shop, Ranofer helps Heqet make solder for one of the craftsmen. As they work, Ranofer tells Heqet about Ibni, Gebu, and the stolen gold. Ranofer asks Heqet if he would tell Rekh the story, leaving out the part about Ranofer taking the wineskins to Gebu. Heqet quickly agrees, but they both decide it might be better to wait a few days until Ibni is able to fill a new wineskin with gold. That night Ranofer takes home the wineskin and is rewarded with money to buy himself some bread. Ranofer also overhears Gebu tell his friend that soon these wineskins will be insignificant to him.

Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Ranofer continues to show the reader how deep his morals go. Ranofer refuses to take home the wineskin and suffers a terrible beating as a result. The beatings do not frighten Ranofer, but the idea of living on the streets and not having the few, small meals Gebu offers him does frighten him. Ranofer does not want to be homeless, so he agrees to continue bringing home the wineskins. However, at the same time, Ranofer continues to search for a way to tell on Ibni and Gebu without getting caught himself. Finally Ranofer asks his friend, Heqet, to tell the story to Rekh, leaving out Ranofer's connection. This seems to be a good plan, but the reader cannot help but wonder what will happen to Ranofer when Ibni is caught. Surely Gebu will realize what Ranofer has done.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

In chapter five, Heqet tells Rekh about Ibni's theft, but Ibni remains at his post for more than eight days. On the eighth night, Ranofer is walking home, thinking about the situation, when he stumbles on the hanging of two men accused of stealing from the tombs in the Valley of Tombs of the Kings. The Ancient comes across Ranofer and keeps him from seeing the actually hanging, suggesting it is not appropriate for one as young as him. The following day, Ranofer goes to work to find Ibni gone. Ranofer is relieved and his day is made even better when Rekh promises to let him make more leaves the following day. However, when Ranofer gets home he finds Ibni arguing with Gebu. Gebu brushes Ibni off and finally has his friend, Wenamon, push him out the gate. Gebu then informs Ranofer that he will no longer be a porter at the goldsmith's shop, but an apprentice for him in his own stonecutter shop. Ranofer begs Gebu to change his mind, but Gebu is determined.

In chapter six, Ranofer reports to the stonecutter shop where he begins by putting cutting sand in holes another worker is drilling. The work is boring and uses muscles that Ranofer has never had to use before. By the end of the day, Ranofer is very tired, but too sore to sleep. Ranofer is often tempted to daydream, but the foreman, Pai, is as cruel as Gebu and will beat Ranofer for even the appearance of idleness. Gebu comes to the shop once a day, often going into the scroll room where the plans for the tombs are kept, and leaving without paying much attention to the work going on in the shop itself. Sometimes Gebu brings his friend, Wenamon, with him. About a week after beginning his work in the stonecutting shop, Ranofer becomes aware that Gebu sneaks out of the house in the middle of the night. However, Ranofer has no idea what Gebu could be up to.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

The scene in which Ranofer comes across the hanging of two tomb robbers seems to have little to do with the overall plot, but the savvy reader might see it as a warning. Gebu is known to the reader as a thief, but his scheme to take gold from Rekh has been discovered and stopped. Gebu is bound to find a new way to get the gold or other merchandise he wants; therefore, it is reasonable to assume he will begin robbing another goldsmith or other merchant. When Ranofer becomes aware that Gebu is sneaking out of the house at night, it seems that his new scheme has begun and it requires him to be out in the dark of night.

When Ibni is caught at Rekh's, Ranofer is informed that he will no longer be working there as well. Ranofer is deeply disappointed, afraid that this change will keep him from becoming a goldsmith as he has always wanted. At the same time, Ranofer is apprenticed to a job he finds boring and difficult. Ranofer is as unhappy as he has ever

been in the novel, but he works hard at his job because he is strong willed and has a good moral fiber, showing the reader once again what a good person he is.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

In chapter seven, the days pass slowly for Ranofer as he becomes adjusted to his work in the stonecutting shop. Ranofer decides the only way to get away from Gebu would be to somehow get a donkey and cut reeds to sell to the shipbuilders. Ranofer hopes this will allow him to build a home of his own and give him the means to become a student under Zau the Master. One afternoon, Ranofer wanders through the city on his lunch hour, as he often does, and finds himself on the Street of the Goldsmiths. Ranofer runs into Heqet. Heqet suggests that they have lunch together every day. Ranofer leads him to a place near the river that is hidden from view among the reeds. Ranofer and Heqet talk about Gebu and his friends, speculating on whom they are robbing now. The next day, Ranofer and Heqet argue when Heqet tries to get Ranofer to take some of his food. They are joined by the Ancient, who convinces Ranofer that taking Heqet's food would be doing him a favor. The boys then share their stories with the Ancient and include him in their growing circle of friendship.

In chapter eight, through the end of winter and into the spring, the three friends continue to meet. When Ranofer complains about his apprenticeship, the Ancient tells him he is lucky to be learning a skill and that he never learned one, forcing him to work menial jobs his entire life. Later, Heqet arrives and tells Ranofer that Rekh wants him to go to Zau's shop after work. Heqet invites Ranofer to go along. Zau, as a master goldsmith, lives near the wall of the palace. When they arrive, Ranofer goes to Zau and reminds him of a time when Zau told Ranofer's father that he would like to make him a student someday. Zau admits that he remembers and tells Ranofer that he will take him on as a student and will not ask for his regular fee as long as Ranofer keeps that information from his other students. Ranofer tells Zau that he cannot quit his apprenticeship with Gebu. Zau informs Ranofer that he has his priorities messed up and he should come back when he gets his life in order. When Ranofer finally returns home that night, late and without his pay, he is beaten by Gebu.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Ranofer begins seeing his friend Heqet again. Ranofer is starving, despite his brother's apparent new robbery scheme, so his meetings with Heqet are more than just friends talking but a way for Ranofer to get the nourishment a young, growing boy desperately needs. Ranofer is stuck in a situation where he is constantly afraid for his own wellbeing and doing a job he finds desperately boring and exhausting. Heqet and the Ancient have become the only people that Ranofer can trust and rely on. It is a friendship that will hopefully help Ranofer survive Gebu's cruelty.

Ranofer visits Zau the Master. Ranofer knew Zau when he was a child because his father was friends with Zau. Ranofer desperately wants to become Zau's student, but he



knows he cannot as long as he is apprenticed to Gebu. Ranofer tries to convince Zau to help him anyway and Zau does promise that he will take Ranofer on as a student without charging him a fee, but he will not work around Ranofer's commitment to Gebu. Therefore, Ranofer is stuck in the same place where he started unless he can find a way to get away from Gebu. Ranofer believes he can make himself a home and take care of himself if he can get a donkey to help him harvest reed for the shipbuilders, but the chances of him getting this donkey while Gebu is taking all his money is slim.



Chapters 9-10

Chapters 9-10 Summary

In chapter nine, Ranofer goes to the stonecutting shop sore from his latest beating. Gebu arrives behind him, taking his coppers for the day before and that day from Pai. Ranofer watches and comes to realize that Gebu is wearing new sandals. This makes Ranofer realize that Gebu has had many new things lately. Ranofer tells this to his friends at lunch and they discuss the situation. It is decided that they will begin spying on Gebu and his friends, with Ranofer following Gebu while Heqet would follow Wenamon and the Ancient Setma. The Ancient warns the boys to be very careful. Ranofer intends to follow Gebu that night when he sneaks out during the night, but accidentally falls asleep.

In chapter ten, the three friends compare notes, but they really have nothing to share. That night, Ranofer follows Gebu to Wenamon's house where he and Heqet join together and follow the two men to Gebu's stonecutting shop. When nothing happens, they decide the two men are discussing business. The friends continue to watch Gebu and his acquaintances, but it does not seem to get them anywhere. Then one night, Gebu once again sneaks out of the house in the middle of the night. Ranofer attempts to follow, but is frightened back to the house by a cat. Gebu does not go out in the night again. At the shop, Ranofer has taken an interest in the plans for the tombs Gebu is helping to build. Ranofer notices a strange chamber on the plans for a judge's tomb. Ranofer asks Gebu about it, but instead of answering the question, Gebu becomes angry and tells Ranofer to keep out of his business. Later Ranofer sees Gebu give the plans to Wenamon. That night, Gebu questions Ranofer again about his questions before leaving Ranofer with no dinner. Ranofer, angry and frustrated, sneaks up the stairs and breaks into Gebu's room to search for food. In a chest at the foot of Gebu's bed, Ranofer finds a golden goblet hidden among Gebu's many shentis. On the goblet is the name of a king buried in the Valley of Tombs more than a hundred years ago. Ranofer quickly returns the goblet to the chest and leaves the room only to discover that Gebu put a clay seal over the door lock and now the lock is broken.

Chapters 9-10 Analysis

Ranofer knows that Gebu is stealing again because he can see the evidence in the new things Gebu has bought and the money he often gives to Ranofer. Ranofer talks about this with his friends and they decide to begin spying on Gebu and his friends. The spying does not prove anything, just that Gebu and Wenamon spend a lot of time drinking, and they often go to Gebu's shop to look at the plans for the tombs they are working on together. This seems to prove nothing, except perhaps the innocence of these two men. However, when Ranofer asks about the plans of one of these tombs, Gebu becomes very angry, suggesting to the reader that the plans have something to do with the money Gebu has suddenly come into. The savvy reader might even jump to



the idea that Gebu is robbing tombs even though this is a terrible crime and is punishable by death. When Ranofer finds a golden goblet with the name of a king buried more than a hundred years ago, this only seem to prove that something is not right about this situation and that Gebu might in fact be robbing tombs.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

In chapter eleven, Ranofer carefully repairs the clay seal on the lock to Gebu's room and then waits in fear for Gebu to return. Gebu is so drunk when he does arrive, however, that Ranofer doubts he even looked at the seal. The next day, Ranofer spends the entire morning thinking about the golden goblet. Ranofer returns home at lunchtime to take the golden goblet, but discovers it is missing. On the way back to the shop, Ranofer runs into the Ancient. The Ancient tells Ranofer that he overheard Gebu arguing with Setma. The Ancient says that Setma was attempting to get more money for his part in a scheme to sell the merchandise Gebu was stealing, but Gebu refused, cutting Setma out of the deal. Ranofer believes this means that Gebu will return home with the goblet that night, giving him another chance to take it. However, once again, the goblet is gone in the morning. That day, Ranofer sees Gebu bring the goblet into the scroll room of the shop but not leave with it. Ranofer attempts to find the goblet in the scroll room, but cannot.

In chapter twelve, Ranofer begins avoiding his friends because he feels he cannot tell them about the goblet. However, Heqet finds him and convinces him to return. Soon they fall into their comfortable companionship and Ranofer feels secure in their friendship again, despite the secret he hides. The Festival to celebrate the rising of the Nile is approaching and the three friends agree to meet on that morning to celebrate together. After a time, Heqet comes to Ranofer and tells him that he overheard Gebu and Wenamon discuss meeting on the day of Festival beside the broken tree. Ranofer, who has come to suspect Gebu is robbing tombs, knows that the broken tree is a well known place on the path to the Valley of Tombs of the Kings. Later, when Ranofer runs into the Ancient, he asks how the two men they saw hung for tomb robbing were caught. The Ancient tells Ranofer that the thieves were followed. Ranofer rushes home, filled with fear, because he knows he will have to follow Gebu into the Valley of Tombs the following morning.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Ranofer manages to escape punishment from Gebu when Gebu comes home too drunk to notice that Ranofer has broken into his room. This is a stroke of good luck for Ranofer, because Gebu would surely kill Ranofer if he knew that Ranofer has seen the goblet. Ranofer decides to go back and steal the goblet in order to take it to someone in authority, but when he returns to Gebu's room he finds the goblet gone. Gebu has taken it to be sold by Setma, but Setma is demanding more money, leaving Gebu without a sailor to sell his stolen goods. Gebu hides the goblet in the scroll room and Ranofer tries to find it, but has no luck.



Ranofer knows that he must find a way to prove that Gebu is a thief in order to find a way out of Gebu's house so he can be Zau's student, however, he cannot find a way. The more Ranofer thinks about it, though, the more he realizes that a tomb is the only place Gebu could have gotten a goblet such as the one he has. Ranofer is frightened because he knows the punishment is death, but he also knows that Gebu must be punished. This is a moral dilemma that Ranofer must handle alone because he does not want to cause trouble for his friends, further showing the reader how honest and morally strong Ranofer really is.



Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Ranofer sneaks out of the house behind Gebu and follows him outside of town. Gebu follows a narrow path that leads down into the Valley of Tombs. Ranofer stays out of sight as Gebu meets with Wenamon, and they continue down the path. When Ranofer reaches a large boulder in the path along with a pile of rocks, he discovers that Gebu and Wenamon have disappeared. Ranofer looks around the boulder and finds an opening in the path that appears to drop straight into the earth. Ranofer looks closer and sees that there are steps in the hole. Ranofer has no intention of going into the hole, but a sound on the other side of the boulder frightens him and he jumps inside, falling down the steps. In town, Heqet and the Ancient meet and wait until the final barge is ready to leave for Ranofer to join them. When Heqet tells the Ancient about his last meeting with Ranofer, the Ancient realizes where Ranofer has gone. Heqet and the Ancient decide to follow Ranofer to the Valley of Tombs to save him from possible danger.

In chapter fourteen, Ranofer makes his way slowly to the bottom of the steps and through a tunnel that at times is so small that he can barely crawl through it. Eventually Ranofer comes to a place where a hole has been broken into plaster. Ranofer looks inside and thinks he sees someone staring at him and at the same time he hears Wenamon speak, frightening him and convincing him that he has been caught. At the same time, Heqet and the Ancient are exploring the Valley of Tombs in search of Ranofer, but they are having no luck. In the tomb, Ranofer realizes the eyes he saw were a statue and that Wenamon and Gebu are in another chamber of the tomb. Ranofer goes into the tomb and looks around. When Ranofer sees the coffins, he realizes this is the tomb of the Honorable Huaa and Tuaa, the parents of Queen Tiy. Ranofer is so shocked that he accidentally knocks over a vase, alerting Gebu and Wenamon to his presence. Ranofer runs out of the tomb and rushes up through the tunnel. Ranofer can hear Gebu and Wenamon close behind him. Ranofer gets out of the tunnel and pushes a rock in front of the hole, trapping the two men inside.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Ranofer begins following Gebu to the Valley of Tombs of the Kings. Soon they come to a tunnel that someone clearly built beside a tomb for the purpose of robbing the tomb of its treasures, possibly Gebu himself. This shows the reader what the extra chamber on the judge's tomb plans might be, a tunnel especially created to help thieves. Now Ranofer knows that everything he has suspected about Gebu is true and he should return to town to get help, but he is frightened by a bird and he jumps into the tunnel. Ranofer discovers that not only is Gebu robbing a tomb, but he is robbing the tomb of Queen Tiy's parents.



While Ranofer is trying to catch Gebu and Wenamon in the process of stealing, Heqet and the Ancient come in search of Ranofer. Ranofer finally has people in his life who care about him enough to follow him to the Valley of Tombs. The reader is happy to see this because Ranofer deserves friends like this, but their actions could place them in danger as well. At the same time, Ranofer alerts Gebu and Wenamon to his presence and they chase him out the tunnel. Ranofer manages to trap them inside, but the rock he has placed over the opening most likely will not hold them for long. This injects tension into the plot as Ranofer is left with a time problem while he decides what to do next.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

In chapter fifteen, Heqet and the Ancient turn back to see Ranofer jumping onto the path. They rush to his side and Ranofer quickly tells them what has happened. It is decided that Heqet and the Ancient will stay at the entrance to the tunnel to guard it while Ranofer goes into town to find someone to help them. Ranofer goes to Zau's shop, hoping he will be there despite the Festival, but he is not. No one seems to be around. Ranofer remembers then, however, that the royals are not to appear until later in the day, so someone must be in the palace. Ranofer sneaks onto the palace grounds and begins to race across the grounds toward the palace. Ranofer is stopped by the cooks and a couple of guards. Before the guards can take him away, however, a midget who is a friend of the queen's takes him into the palace.

In chapter sixteen, the midget makes Ranofer tell him his story again and tells him if he is lying there will be trouble. Ranofer is then taken to see the queen. The queen does not believe Ranofer's story until she questions him about the layout of the tomb and he is able to tell her what she wants to know. While guards are rushing to the tomb, a nobleman takes Ranofer to another room and asks him about the goblet he mentioned. Ranofer describes the goblet and tells the man that he believes it is in the scroll room at Gebu's shop. The man sends guards there to find the goblet. Ranofer is then sent to a room where he is fed and allowed a nap. Later, the queen asks Ranofer into her chamber. The queen tells Ranofer that the thieves were arrested and the goblet was recovered. The queen asks Ranofer if there is anything he wants and he asks only for a donkey to help him earn his independence and his freedom to be a student under Zau. The queen not only gives him the donkey, but she gives him new clothes and gifts for his friends.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Ranofer needs to find someone to tell about the robbery, but the same thing that made this a good day to commit the robbery impedes Ranofer's attempt to find help. Ranofer decides his only chance is to go to the palace. Ranofer is nearly imprisoned for his bravery, but his story convinces a man close to the queen to take him to her and Ranofer is able to tell his story directly to the queen, proving it by describing the layout of the tomb. Ranofer has proven himself a hero to the queen, something the reader has known about him all along. Ranofer is free of Gebu now that Gebu has been arrested. Ranofer also gets his donkey to help him make the money he needs to be independent, giving him the right to be a student under Zau as he has always wanted. The story has come to a good ending, fulfilling the moral that being honest is the only way to get everything that a person might want.



Characters

Ranofer

Ranofer is the young, orphaned son of a goldsmith. Ranofer has never wanted anything more than he wants to be a goldsmith like his father. However, upon his father's death, Ranofer has been forced to live with a half-brother he did not know he had and to do as the half-brother desires. At first, Ranofer's half-brother wants him to work as a porter at a goldsmith shop. Ranofer is disappointed not to be an apprentice, but is satisfied to be near a goldsmith and to learn from observing others. Unfortunately, Ranofer comes to realize that his half-brother has sent him to work in this shop to help steal gold from the goldsmith. Ranofer does not want to be a thief and refuses to help, but he suffers a beating and is told his help will be required unless he wants to live on the streets, finding his meals like a dog in the gutter.

Ranofer is an honest person who does not want to ruin his or his father's reputation by being accused of stealing. Therefore, Ranofer continues to bring home the stolen gold to his half-brother, but at the same time he manages to come up with a plan to reveal the true thief without implicating himself. When Ibni, his half-brother's associate, is finally caught and fired, Ranofer believes his troubles are over. However, Gebu then forces Ranofer to stop working at the goldsmith shop and begin working for him as an apprentice in his stonecutting shop. Ranofer is heartbroken and convinced he will never be able to learn the skills he needs to be a goldsmith.

Ranofer begins to notice that his half half-brother has more money than before. Ranofer becomes curious and enlists the help of his friends to discover where Gebu is getting his money. Ranofer follows Gebu while his friends follow two of Gebu's associates. Eventually Ranofer discovers that Gebu is not robbing another goldsmith's shop as he originally thought, but is stealing from tombs. Afraid to tell anyone his suspicions, Ranofer follows Gebu into the Valley of Tombs and catches him in the tomb of the Honorable Huaa and Tuaa, the parents of Queen Tiy. Ranofer traps Gebu and his friend in the tomb and rushes to tell someone, but the Festival makes it impossible for Ranofer to tell anyone but the queen herself.

Gebu

Gebu is Ranofer's half-brother. Ranofer did not know Gebu existed; therefore, the reader is left to assume that Ranofer's father disowned Gebu because of his, or his mother's, lack of morals. Gebu is a cruel man who often beats Ranofer and keeps the food locked up so that Ranofer is at his mercy for meals. Ranofer often goes hungry because Gebu either purposely or thoughtlessly has not left Ranofer any food to eat. Gebu also refuses to allow Ranofer to keep the money he earns in the work he does both at Rekh's and in his own stonecutting shop.



Gebu is a thief. Ranofer does not know this until he is told gold has gone missing from Rekh's shop. When Ranofer learns about this, he begins to suspect Ibni, a friend of his half-brother. Ranofer quickly realizes that the wineskins Ibni has him take home to his half-brother is the method of transport for the stolen gold. Ranofer manages to get Ibni fired without letting anyone know he is involved in the thefts, but this leaves Gebu with no motivation to allow Ranofer to remain at Rekh's. Gebu then makes Ranofer an apprentice in his stonecutting shop, effectively taking Ranofer out of his business. However, Ranofer quickly realizes that Gebu has more money than usual and begins to suspect Gebu is stealing from somewhere else. It is not until Gebu finds the golden goblet that Ranofer realizes Gebu is a tomb raider, stealing the precious treasures of the dead.

Heqet

Heqet is an apprentice in Rekh's goldsmith shop. Heqet knows less about goldsmithing than Ranofer, but is eager to learn. Ranofer teaches him some of the basic skills that he has been taught. Through their work together, Ranofer and Heqet become friends, despite a rocky start. When Ranofer is forced to leave Rekh's shop, he and Heqet are no longer able to see one another. However, Ranofer runs into Heqet in the street one afternoon and the two boys decide to start meeting one another during lunch and in the evenings before Ranofer is expected home.

Heqet is a kind young man who is somewhat innocent, but adventuresome. Heqet is everything Ranofer should be, bright, eager, and an apprentice to a goldsmith. Heqet is well cared for and loved by his large family. Heqet represents what Ranofer is struggling to find for himself. Heqet is also a good friend, willing to do just about anything for Ranofer, even risking his life when he realizes that Ranofer might be in trouble. Heqet is a good boy and a good friend.

The Ancient

The Ancient is an old man who lives in a brick house he built himself beside the river. The Ancient spends his days cutting reeds to sell to the shipbuilders. The Ancient is the son of a cattle driver who died and left his son without a skill to survive on. The Ancient went to work on the docks, loading the ships, but it left him old before his time and without the means to care for himself in old age. The Ancient tries to explain this to Ranofer, stressing to the young man that he should be grateful for a skill, any skill, that will provide for him as he grows old.

The Ancient meets Ranofer by the river and they quickly become good friends. The Ancient has lunch with Ranofer and Heqet every day, listening to their dreams and their stories, offering advice wherever he feels it is needed. It is the Ancient who tells Ranofer how a couple of tomb raiders were caught and what it would take to catch any others. Ranofer uses this advice to decide to follow Gebu into the Valley of the Tombs. The



Ancient feels guilty about his advice to Ranofer and he follows him into the valley, afraid Ranofer might be harmed if he is caught by Gebu.

Rekh

Rekh is a goldsmith with a shop on the Street of Goldsmiths in Thebes. Rekh limps because he lost part of his foot when gold was accidentally spilled on his foot. Rekh is a kind man who takes Ranofer into his shop as a porter and allows him to make gold leaves for a woman's necklace. Rekh appears willing to teach Ranofer much more, but Gebu forces Ranofer to stop work at the goldsmith shop. Rekh is one of only two adults who shows concern for Ranofer while he lives with Gebu, but there is little Rekh can do to change Ranofer's situation.

Zau

Zau is a master goldsmith who lives in Thebes near the palace. Zau was a friend of Ranofer's father and once told Ranofer and his father that he might consider taking Ranofer on as a student. Ranofer has remembered that comment for many years, and when he gets the chance to see Zau again, reminds him of it. Zau recalls the comment and tells Ranofer that he will take him on as a student for free if he promises not to tell the other students. Ranofer agrees, but realizes it is impossible for him to get out of his apprenticeship with Gebu. Zau has no sympathy for a boy who claims to have no control over his own life and refuses to do anymore to help Ranofer. In the end, Ranofer receives a donkey from Queen Tiy to help him support himself while he is a student under Zau.

Setma and Wenamon

Setma is a boat captain who is also a friend of Gebu's. Ranofer has the Ancient follow Setma and they eventually learn that Gebu has had Setma take stolen gold and other items to nearby towns in order to sell them. However, Setma decides he would like more money, causing Gebu to sever their agreement. Wenamon is another friend of Gebu's. Wenamon is a mason who works with Gebu in the Valley of the Tombs. Wenamon also is a partner in crime with Gebu, helping him to rob the tombs in the valley. Wenamon is with Gebu the day Ranofer follows them to the Valley of the Tombs and traps them inside the tomb of the Honorable Huaa and Tuaa.

Pai

Pai is Gebu's foreman in the stonecutter's shop. Pai is a cruel man who would sooner beat a worker than watch them sit idle. Pai is cruel to Ranofer, often beating him when he catches him day dreaming during work. Pai also refuses to show Ranofer how to do something, but expects him to learn simply by watching and doing. Pai is an unhappy



man made more unhappy by Gebu's cruelty. Ranofer spends his days watching out for Pai's stick.

Queen Tiy

Queen Tiy is queen of Egypt and wife of the Pharaoh. It is the tomb of Queen Tiy's parents that Gebu and Wenamon break into the day of the festival. Ranofer attempts to tell Zau about the theft, but when he cannot find Zau, Ranofer sneaks onto the palace grounds and attempts to reach the queen before the guards stop him. Ranofer is not successful, but manages to convince the midget, a friend to the queen, of his story. Queen Tiy questions Ranofer and realizes his story is true when he is able to describe the layout of the tomb. Queen Tiy later rewards Ranofer by giving him new clothes, new shoes, and a new donkey with which he might earn his own keep while acting as a student under Zau the Master.

Honored Huaa and Tuaa

Honored Huaa and Tuaa are the parents of Queen Tiy. This couple has died and is buried in a tomb in the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings. Gebu has created a tunnel into the tomb of Huaa and Tuaa to be used by thieves. Ranofer follows Gebu and Wenamon as they enter this tunnel and begin to plunder the tomb. Ranofer is shocked by their audacity and disregard for burial tradition and beliefs. Ranofer quickly attempts to find someone to tell and ends up telling Queen Tiy herself, leaving Gebu and Wenamon to sure death for their crime.



Objects/Places

Golden Goblet

While searching for food in Gebu's bedroom, Ranofer discovers a golden goblet with the name of an ancient king written in hieroglyphics on it. Ranofer attempts to return and steal back the goblet, convinced his half-brother has stolen it, but when he does he finds the goblet is gone.

Wineskin

Gebu and Ibni use wineskins to steal gold from Rekh's goldsmith shop.

Clay Seals

Gebu uses clay seals marked with his own ring to lock cupboards, food containers, and his bedroom door. These are used to reveal if anyone has attempted to open these locks. Ranofer accidentally breaks one of these seals the night he searches Gebu's room for food and instead finds the Golden Goblet. However, Ranofer is able to put the seal back in place sufficiently enough to hide his search from Gebu.

Reeds

The Ancient makes his living by cutting reeds beside the river and selling it to the boat makers. Ranofer wants to have a donkey so that he might cut reeds and sell them in order to pay his way while learning goldsmithing under the great master, Zau.

Nest in the Reeds

Ranofer begins meeting his friends, Heqet and the Ancient, in a small nest in the reeds beside the river that was created by the rolling of the Ancient's donkey.

Rekh's Goldsmith Shop

At the beginning of the novel, Ranofer works as a porter in Rekh's goldsmith shop, making ingots and running errands. Later, Ranofer realizes the only reason his half-brother has allowed him to work here is to help steal gold from Rekh.



Gebu's Stonecutting Shop

Ranofer is forced to become an apprentice to his half-brother. Ranofer works for several months in Gebu's stonecutter shop as an apprentice stonecutter when he would really like to be a gold master.

The Scroll Room

Ranofer sees Gebu go into the scroll room with the golden goblet, but does not see him come out with it. Ranofer believes the goblet is hidden in the scroll room, but he cannot find it. Later, a royal in Queen Tiy's court asks about the goblet and suggests it is hidden behind a false wall in a cabinet.

Apprentice Quarters

Heqet lives in the apprentice quarters while he is an apprentice for Rekh. Heqet receives all the food he can eat in these quarters and often shares this food with Ranofer, whose half-brother often withholds food as punishment or due to neglect.

Gebu's House

Ranofer has come to live with his half-brother, Gebu, in the house Gebu owns on Street of the Crooked Dog.

Tomb of Honored Huaa and Tuaa

Ranofer follows Gebu and Wenamon into the Valley of Tombs and discovers they have broken into the tomb of the Honored Huaa and Tuaa, the parents of Queen Tiy, through a specially designed tunnel, in order to steal its treasures.

Valley of Tombs of the Kings

The Valley of Tombs of the Kings lies below the city of Thebes where Ranofer lives with his half-brother, Gebu.

Thebes

Thebes, the City of the Dead, is a town in Egypt where the story takes place.



Themes

Neglect and Abuse

Ranofer's father, a great goldsmith, has died. Ranofer's mother died when he was a small child; therefore, the death of his father has left him an orphan. Ranofer's life with his father was filled with days of working with gold and nights in cool splendor, sharing meals with his father and a trusted servant. However, the death of his father has left Ranofer at the mercy of a half-brother he did not know he had. Gebu is a cruel, selfish man who takes on the care of his little half-brother not out of love and desire to be a good brother, but out of greed. Gebu immediately sells all of their father's belongings and pockets the profit, claiming the cost of their father's funeral and debts used all the money, even though Ranofer suspects this is not completely true.

Gebu immediately sends Ranofer to work as a porter at Rekh's goldsmith shop, rather than spend the money to make him a student or to make him an apprentice. Ranofer does not complain, however, because goldsmith is what he wants to do. Even though Ranofer is nothing more than a paid slave, he enjoys being around the work he loves and learning what he can from observation. As time goes on, Rekh begins to recognize Ranofer's desire and skill, offering to allow the young man to do more gold work than his job originally allowed. The only blight on Ranofer's life at this point is the beatings he often suffers at Gebu's hands for any small offense Gebu feels or imagines Ranofer has committed, as well as Gebu often forgetting, or refusing, to give Ranofer food. All this changes, however, when Ranofer realizes that Gebu is using him to steal from Rekh. Ranofer refuses to help with the theft, but Gebu beats him terribly and threatens to throw him out to live like a dog on the streets.

Ranofer continues to help Gebu and his friend, Ibni, steal from Rekh, but also manages to find a way to tell Rekh who is stealing without implicating himself. Ibni is fired. However, because Ranofer's presence in Rekh's shop is no longer a benefit to Gebu, Gebu forces him to quit his job and become an apprentice in his own stonecutting shop. Ranofer is heartbroken at losing his one connection to the career he so loves. Gebu does not care for Ranofer's feelings, but only worries about his own needs. Ranofer, therefore, continues to suffer physical and mental abuse at Gebu's hand as well as a lack of food to help support the growing boy.

Honesty versus Unlawfulness

Gebu is a selfish man who does not see why he should not simply take what he thinks he should have. Gebu takes all of Ranofer's wages, including the money Ranofer is paid from Gebu's own stonecutting shop. Gebu steals gold from Rekh's goldsmith shop. Gebu steals from anyone and everyone, unconcerned with who he might be hurting. To Gebu, stealing is a form of work; therefore, he should be allowed to take whatever he wants. This includes robbing tombs of dead nobility, including the mother and father of



the Queen. It does not matter to Gebu that the souls of the dead are said to return to their resting place often to watch over their treasures, a belief that causes a great deal of concern to Gebu's little half-brother, Ranofer.

Ranofer, on the other hand, is a young man tortured by his conscience. When Ranofer discovers that he has been unknowingly removing stolen gold from Rekh's goldsmith shop, he vows to never do it again. Only after a severe beating and the threat of living on the streets like a dog does Ranofer again bring home this stolen gold. At the same time, however, Ranofer comes up with scheme to alert Rekh to the true thief. Ranofer's honesty is unmatched and continuously gets him into trouble. Ranofer discovers that his half-brother, Gebu, is stealing again and enlists the help of his friends to discover where he is stealing from and how. When Ranofer stumbles on the truth, he immediately attempts to turn Gebu in even though he knows that there is little chance that anyone will believe him. Ranofer even risks possible jail or death by breaking into the palace grounds and attempting to tell his story to the Queen. Ranofer's bravery and honesty pay out for him, however, and he not only sees his half-brother punished for his crimes, but receives in return the only thing he truly desires: the means to become independent and learn his beloved craft under the master goldsmith, Zau.

Friendship

Ranofer has been secluded since coming to live with his half-brother, Gebu, because he is ashamed of his circumstances and because Gebu beats him, leaving him to feel as though he cannot trust anyone. Despite this, Heqet befriends Gebu while they both work in Rekh's goldsmith shop. After Ranofer leaves the goldsmith shop, he realizes he will most likely never see Heqet again. Fortunately, Heqet seeks him out and insists that they remain friends. The two boys begin meeting twice a day in the reeds beside the river where no one might see them. They are joined there by the Ancient, an old man who cuts reeds to sell to the boatmakers.

Ranofer begins to trust Heqet and the Ancient with his secrets, telling them of the abuse he suffers at Gebu's hands and the illegal things he believes Gebu does. In time, the three friends begin working together to spy on Gebu and his friends in order to prove their illegal activities. Heqet and the Ancient are the first people in Ranofer's life he can trust since the death of his father. It is through these friendships that Ranofer begins to have hope for his own future and to believe that his dreams might eventually come true. It is for this reason that friendship is a major theme of the novel.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person. While the point of view is not truly omniscient, it does allow the reader to see and feel Ranofer's thoughts and emotions. At the same time, however, the point of view is somewhat objective and does not give the reader the full amount of intimacy between main character and reader that might be achieved with a fuller, omniscient point of view. The point of view in this novel remains with Ranofer throughout the beginning and middle of the novel. However, toward the end, the point of view shifts to include an authorial point of view that tells the reader that Ranofer's two friends, Heqet and the Ancient, have grown concerned about their friend and have gone to look for him in the Valley of the Tombs.

The point of view of this novel is more of an authorial voice than a third person omniscient point of view, but it does allow some insight into Ranofer's mind and feelings. An authorial voice is normally distant from the characters, offering only information on their actions, but this point of view does give the reader some intimacy with Ranofer as his internal dialogue allows the reader to see what he is thinking, and by doing so implies how he feels. The connection gained by offering the reader this information allows for more intimacy, causing the reader to care about what happens to young Ranofer as the plot continues to develop. However, it is still something of an impartial narration; therefore, it does not shock the reader too much when the narration finally switches in the final chapters of the novel from Ranofer to Heqet and the Ancient.

Setting

The novel is set in Ancient Egypt during the time in which many of the pyramids admired and toured often now were built. This setting is well researched and allows the reader a snapshot of what life might have been like for the ancient people who built these pyramids and who lived in their shadows. The book also discusses a crime that was as prevalent then as it is now, the theft of the treasures often buried with nobility during this time period. The setting of Thebes, the City of the Dead, allows entry into the narration the idea of these thefts because the tombs were such an important part of the daily lives of the people living in Thebes during this time, from the goldsmiths to the stonecutters to the masons.

The setting of this novel is unique in that it take history and melts it into a fictional story. The setting is well researched and gives rich detail of the area and the lives of the people who lived in Ancient Egypt. The writer has even included festivals that were common during this time and which centered around the flooding of the Nile River. The history in this book is wonderful for readers who are interested in this time period. Not only that, but the book deals with crimes of this time period and this introduces the reader to a wonderful lesson on the laws and social lives of the people who lived in



Ancient Egypt. All in all, the plot and the setting are interlaced in a wonderful way that allows readers to explore history while still finding entertainment within the pages of a fictional story.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is typical of English usage in the time period of the 1960s when this novel was written. Some of the words might seem a little formal to modern readers, but there is no slang that will not be completely clear to readers of all ages. The novel also contains many Egyptian words because of the setting of Ancient Egypt, but many of these words are explained within the text. The novel also includes reference to many Egyptian gods and myths. These words as well are explained within the text and should not cause the reader any confusion.

The language of the novel includes many words that are associated with the setting of the novel. These words include the names of Egyptian gods as well as spirits, material objects, and words of worship that would have been in common use during the time in which the novel is set. These words may be unfamiliar to many readers, but most of the words are presented in the text in such a way that their meaning is made clear to the reader. In cases where the words are not explained, they tend to be common enough in history that the reader might have already heard of them or could look them up without too much difficulty. This novel was written for young adults, so many of the words used are self explanatory and simple to understand. Therefore, the language, whether it be fitting to the plot or simple for the reader, works well for the intended purpose of the novel.

Structure

The novel is divided into sixteen chapters. The chapters are all of a moderate length, some just a few pages long while others are ten to twenty pages long. The novel was intended for young readers, therefore the language and the structure is simple, allowing even the youngest reader to comprehend the plot easily. The novel is written in exposition that is peppered with dialogue as well as a great deal of internal dialogue as the young protagonist attempts to work out the problems that plague his life.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is about Ranofer, a young orphan who is forced to live with his cruel half-brother. This half-brother often beats and starves young Ranofer, refusing to allow him to pursue the career he loves. In one of the subplots, Ranofer conspires to approach a master goldsmith in order to secure for himself a place as his student, but learns that this will be near impossible while he lives with his half-brother. In another subplot, Ranofer befriends Heqet and the Ancient, two people he comes to trust and share his dreams with, no matter how impossible they might seem. The main plot and the subplots interweave with one another closely throughout the novel and come to a satisfying end in one climactic scene.



Quotes

"No matter—it was useless to try to fathom the ways of that Accursed One. His reasons were his own, and to protest brought only beatings, as Ranofer had found out long ago. Here he was and here he would stay until Gebu ordered otherwise." Chap. 1, p. 9

"Heavy as a yoke, responsibility settled over Ranofer's mind. He was convinced Ibni was the thief, though he could not say why. Ladling water into his bowl of sweepings from the big water jar, he wondered how he could prove it. The slimy creature might carry gold anywhere—in his mouth, under sandal strap, in a loaf of bread. Imagine, gold in a loaf of bread!" Chap. 1, p. 17

"Now Heqet would again decide that he was a surly type, and would no longer care to be friends. Too often it happened so. If only they would not ask me questions, though Ranofer. Why must they make me talk of these things that I wish to forget?" Chap. 1, p. 24

"All will be different now. I shall defy Gebu, I shall leave the Street of the Crooked Dog forever. Ah, then anything will be possible! The golden ingots, those ingots in that hidden cave I shall discover, I can use those to pay my pupil's fee. Then Pharaoh will buy my necklaces for Queen Tiy, who is beautiful and kind, and she will smile on me, Ranofer the son of Thutra—and I will not be a thief!" Chap. 2, p. 43

"He turned and limped away, leaving Ranofer staring after him in a ferment of joy. Fifty leaves! He, he was to make the ornaments for a grand lady's necklace! Perhaps she would wear it to a dinner party at the villa of some great lord or count, perhaps to the palace itself. Aye, to the palace. And Queen Tiy, Beloved of the Two Lands, would notice it, and ask whence it came, and who, who had fashioned those delicate leaves, each one a work of art, and Pharaoh himself would lean from his throne to see the necklace better, and..." Chap. 3, p. 55

"Ranofer approached cautiously, handed the wineskin to him and jumped back out of range. He did not trust Gebu's rewards. This time, however, Gebu paid no attention to him." Chap. 4, p. 73

"The cool days of winter passed, and the face of Egypt changed in accordance with the rhythm of the Nile, that miraculous river which brought new life and wealth each year to the long valley it watered." Chap. 7, p. 102

"The hinge of the door at the top of the stairs creaked loudly, the door banged back against the wall, and Gebu came violently down the stairs. There was to be no miracle that night." Chap. 8, p. 134



"There was something hard and curving in a corner, wrapped in a scrap of cotton rag. It might be a jug of honey. He tugged it out, jerked the cloth away impatiently and went numb all over with the shock of what he saw.

There in his hand lay a gold goblet more beautiful than the sun." Chap. 10, p. 166

"Only after he was well beyond the thicket and emerging into the duty lane did he call down Amon's protection on the old man, and on himself, who need it far more; for when Gebu set out tomorrow for the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, he knew he must follow."

Chapter 12, pg. 197

"Shocked to his very toes, Ranofer scrambled up and retreated a few respectful steps, involuntarily stretching out his hands toward the coffins in a gesture of homage. Here lay Haaa and his cherished wife Tuaa, the parents of the queen of Egypt. And here he stood, an insignificant nobody, daring to gaze into their faces." Chap. 14, pp. 218-219

"His head still rang with the music of the queen's praises, and his heart swelled with the knowledge that he could go tomorrow to Zau the Master and say, 'I have done as you told me. I have reshaped my life into another form.'" Chap. 16, p. 248



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Ranofer. Who is Ranofer? What career does he want to pursue? Why? Why can he not pursue this career? What does Ranofer hope to do to change his circumstances? What are the chances Ranofer will be able to get what he wants? What stands in his way? How does Ranofer plan to deal with this obstacle? Does Ranofer eventually deal with this obstacle? How?

Discuss Gebu. Who is Gebu? How is he related to Ranofer? Why does he take Ranofer into his home? How does Gebu use Ranofer? Why? What does Gebu do for a living? How does this job help Gebu with his evil plots? How does Gebu keep from getting caught in his wrongdoings? How does Ranofer learn of his illegal gains? What does Ranofer plan to do about it? What is implied that happens to Gebu at the end of the novel?

Discuss Heqet. Who is Heqet? Compare and contrast Heqet to Ranofer. How are they the same? How are they different? Why do you think the writer introduced Heqet into the plot? How do Heqet and Ranofer become friends? What does Ranofer get from this friendship? What does Heqet get from this friendship?

Discuss the Ancient. Who is the Ancient? How does he come to meet Ranofer? Why does Ranofer befriend the Ancient? What does the Ancient try to teach Ranofer about being a stonecutter's apprentice? Why does Ranofer dislike this apprenticeship? Why does the Ancient urge him to respect the apprenticeship? What does the Ancient do for a living? What would he rather do?

Discuss Zau. Who is Zau? How does Ranofer know him? What does Ranofer want Zau to teach him? Why Zau? Why does Ranofer not want to apprentice under Rekh? Who was Ranofer's father? What was Ranofer's father's connection to Zau? Is this why Ranofer admires Zau as he does? What other reasons does Ranofer have to admire Zau? Will Ranofer eventually get what he wants? How?

What is goldsmithing? How does one goldsmith? How many things from Ancient Egypt were made with gold? Why was gold used in so many things? Where did the gold come from? Why was stonecutting important in Ancient Egypt? What were the stones used for? Why does Ranofer not enjoy his job as stonecutter's apprentice? What job with stones does Ranofer say he might have enjoyed? Why?

Discuss Thebes. Where is Thebes? By which river does it lie? Does Thebes exist today? What is the main economy in Thebes? What exists below Thebes? Why is Thebes called the City of the Dead? Why are there many masons, stonecutters, and goldsmiths in Thebes? What is their main trade?