

How Green Was My Valley Study Guide

How Green Was My Valley by Richard Llewellyn

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

How Green Was My Valley Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Chapter One.....	5
Chapter Two.....	6
Chapters Three and Four.....	7
Chapter Five.....	8
Chapters Six and Seven.....	9
Chapters Eight and Nine.....	10
Chapter Ten.....	11
Chapters Eleven and Twelve.....	12
Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen.....	13
Chapter Fifteen.....	15
Chapter Sixteen.....	17
Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen.....	18
Chapters Nineteen, Twenty and Twenty-One.....	20
Chapters Twenty-Two and Twenty-Three.....	22
Chapter Twenty-Four.....	24
Chapters Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six.....	25
Chapter Twenty-Seven.....	26
Chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine.....	27
Chapters Thirty and Thirty-One.....	28
Chapter Thirty-Two.....	29
Chapters Thirty-Four and Thirty-Five.....	30
Chapters Thirty-Six and Thirty-Seven.....	31



[Chapters Thirty-Eight and Thirty-Nine.....](#) 32

[Chapters Forty and Forty-One.....](#) 33

[Chapter Forty-Two.....](#) 35

[Characters.....](#) 36

[Objects/Places.....](#) 42

[Themes.....](#) 46

[Style.....](#) 49

[Quotes.....](#) 51

[Topics for Discussion.....](#) 55



Plot Summary

Richard Llewellyn transports us to a small village in Wales where simple, humble people are dependent upon the coal that runs in seams in the earth that cut through the valleys. Based partially on his own childhood, Llewellyn manages to portray a sublime way of life that, over the years, turns dark and sad as the coal industry changes, and its mining residue destroys the beautiful natural setting of the village.

The story is narrated by Huw Morgan, the youngest son of seven children, with only one younger sister, Olwen. Gwilym Morgan, a stern and powerful Christian, is their wise, loving, gentle father. Huw's mother, Beth, is the stereotype of a strong nurturer whose family unity is her primary goal in life. Huw begins his narration as far back as he can remember, when he was a small child and his older brothers were already working in the town's colliery alongside his father, a respected "checker." The family kept their savings box of gold sovereigns on the mantle, and enjoyed community, wholesome food, the natural beauty of the valleys and hills surrounding them, and their traditions and customs. However, as displaced workers from outside Huw's Valley begin to pour in, looking for work at any wage, and the owners of the coal mines begin to squeeze the workers, the Morgan family's livelihood is threatened. The community that once sang and worshiped together eventually becomes bleak and broken, due to labor strikes, dissension and a rapidly declining standard of living. In addition, the Morgan family itself suffers divisions that change them forever.

Huw 's love for his sister-in-law, Bronwen, and the precious memories of his family weave consistent threads throughout the story. Written in simple English with charming Welsh dialect, the book is a delight to read, and the authenticity of the story, through its rich detail, is palpable. Llewellyn leaves his reader feeling bittersweet about the Morgan family and its small segment of history. We grown to love Huw and his family, as well as his mentor, Mr. Gruffydd, in addition to other well-developed characters.



Chapter One

Chapter One Summary

The adult narrator, Huw, is preparing now to leave his valley, using his mother's familiar old blue cloth to wrap around his clothing. He has not told Olwen he is leaving. His parents meet when she is 16 and he twenty, and fall in love at first sight during a terrible winter. Housing and money are scarce, but his father earns real gold, and rents this home for twenty years before buying it.

The family has always lived on this steep hill that looks down into the valley, where dusty miners walk home each day to their houses, hand-made of stone, while their women wait on their porches. Huw recalls Saturdays when the workers bring home their pay in gold and families eat abundant feasts.

His mother and his father, Gwilym, decide on how to use the family box that is filled with gold. They go to rugby matches, and choir competitions. Ivor, Huw's brother, is gifted with a beautiful voice. The Three Bells is a tavern at the bottom of the hill the men occasionally frequent.

Huw has loved Bronwen, his brother Ivor's wife, since childhood. He recalls Bronwen's father coming to meet them, and Ivor walking miles to visit her at her home.

Chapter One Analysis

This first chapter portrays an idyllic village, where the men work hard, the women work hard to serve them, the children are healthy and the courting is refined and polite. A sense of robust health, from the good food and exercise to the family attitudes about money, permeates this chapter.

The Welsh dialect takes some getting used to, but it is charming. This little village, in the present description, seems to have been thriving in every way, thanks to the colliery and the sense of community when Huw was a young boy. His description is idyllic, and we get the sense that he may have romanticized in his mind how perfect it all was.

Gwilym's sense of humor comes through in his joking about what a bad cook his wife is.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

At Ivor's wedding Huw is impressed with how beautifully everyone is dressed, and with Bronwen's lace gown.

The bride and groom leave in her father, Dai Ellis's trap, and a party ensues under tents with food and drink, flowers and shade. Bronwen's father, a baker, brings pies and wedding cake, and everyone contributes food. Huw and his friend crawl through a hole in a tent and take sweets, hiding under the table. Huw wins the running race but is sick from all the food. In the evening, the guests gather on the lawn and sing songs. Huw is chosen as the best young voice, and his father, for whom music is integral, is proud of him.

Ianto marries and works for his wife's father, and they hear nothing from him for years. His mother feels Ianto has gotten in with some bad people. Davy is upset because the workers' wages are being cut, even though more coal is coming up. New men from neighboring ironworks are coming here for work in the mines. Davy anticipates the new ones will work for less, and that older ones with more pay will be let go, which becomes a reality. The men look to Gwilym for leadership.

Determined to strike and not lose his job, Ivor is forced to do "strike work," just as Davey predicted. A dozen men are let go after the five week strike, including Ivor, and another strike lasts twenty-two weeks. Food becomes scarce and savings are used. Gwilym gets his job back, and leads the workers down the hill, all of them singing a hymn, and there is "peace" again.

Chapter Two Analysis

Even as a little child, Huw is aware of the troubles that are beginning at the colliery. As the youngest, he remembers things that made him feel good and those that did not. He describes his childhood in such a way that we can assume he was quite a precocious and adorable child. Primarily, we see his innocence. He remembers subtleties like the orange patches of light from peoples' windows on the snow, and his father's gestures when he was worried. He is aware when the blissful shine of his childhood begins to dull.

Huw continues to talk in the past tense as he reminisces. The author has easily drawn us into Huw's cheery and wholesome world, where people sing and celebrate together.



Chapters Three and Four

Chapters Three and Four Summary

Ch. 3: Mrs. Tom Jenkins, whose husband is severely disabled, lets on that she does not exactly believe in God, but teaches the children to be of help to mankind. This is when Huw begins to think for himself, which does not bring him happiness or respect.

Huw sees his father on the first day of the strike, his protective hut taken from him, standing in the rain doing his job. Davey wants to fight for socialism and union protection. Ivor, being married, cannot agree. Davy and Gwilym are expected to make trouble, and little Huw agrees he will join them if it means getting his father out of the cold.

Bronwen and Ivor live close by, and Huw goes to visit her, sharing family information. Huw and Bronwen agree they are both born rebels.

Ch. 4: Huw learns Davey is meeting with the workers, and sneaks out of the house at night to watch. His escape is cold and dangerous. Hundreds of men are listening to Davey. Huw goes back home fast, but slips into the rain barrel trying to climb the side of the house. When he gets through his bedroom window, his father is waiting, and orders him to clean himself up. Surprised not to be physically punished, Huw says he wants to help Davey, but his father tells him to stay out of it and consider the well being of his mother. After Dada leaves the room, brother Gwilym also returns through the window.

Chapters Three and Four Analysis

It seems Mrs. Jenkins helps Huw permanently set his moral compass. He has mentioned honesty never gave his father much in the way of wealth, so we hear a slightly bitter tone, although he claims not to be bitter. With Bronwen's support, Huw's course is set. Seeing his father in abusive working conditions had a strong effect on Huw.

An interesting note in Chapter three is that the girls bring the boys their slates and chalk, and the boys arrange the stools for the girls, mimicking the everyday lives of the people in this culture.

Little Huw is a brave child and willing to undergo punishment in order to learn about what is happening in his family. There is trouble brewing in this lovely family, typical of a generation gap. The father is conservative and the children are passionate for justice.



Chapter Five

Chapter Five Summary

After a heated discussion, Davey leaves home. Owen speaks up without permission, and defiantly vows to always speak up when there is injustice. Owen and Gwilym both announce they are leaving home, and Gwilym renounces all three as no longer being his sons. Beth cries, but Gwilym is the supreme authority of the household, and he knows that tears are a woman's last refuge. Huw's sister, Angharad wants to join the boys, but is threatened by her mother with physical punishment.

Huw and his father walk together regularly in nature; Huw feels it would have helped if his father had walked with the other boys. Huw learns to catch trout with his hands, and remembers the green, fragrant beauty of his world back then. He notes that the birds have gone now from the valley.

Gwilym speaks to a throng, and tells them they should be patient and use reason and be civilized in their dealings. Huw is raised into the air by some of the men as an example of those who would go without. Huw's father tells him we can all have what we want from God if we ask the right way. That day Huw notices the colliery sump along the river banks, the valley turning black and the growing slag heap.

Angharad leaves home to care for her brothers. Huw promises to never leave home. Ivor brings Angharad home with his apology, but she says the woman who runs the boardinghouse where her brothers are staying is a drunk and is not taking care of them. Angharad says her father's stance about praying for what they want does not work. Beth is so distraught about the conditions her sons are living in, the boys are summoned home.

Gwilym announces that, since he has no authority, he will not be a real father, but they will all live together as lodgers in a boardinghouse, run by Beth. Beth is finally happy, and the boys are back at home and being cared for.

Chapter Five Analysis

Young Huw is starting to understand very adult concepts, such as his father's beliefs about women, and how much communication helps relationships. He basks in the innocence of his youth, his position as the youngest in the family, and the beautiful valley where he lives. The growing unrest is fascinating and palpable to Huw, but his relationship with his father, although guarded because of Gwilym's sternness, is very warm and close.



Chapters Six and Seven

Chapters Six and Seven Summary

There is tension in the household as Davy works to form a union. Dada does not believe in making demands, but Davy warns him he may have to change his mind some day. Gwilym's anti-union stance helps him get the superintendent's job, with more pay and status, but causes the workers to distrust him. Davy warns that the men may strike.

Beth asks Huw to secretly take her to where the men are meeting at night. She speaks to the group harshly, and threatens them if any harm comes to Gwilym. Huw and Beth try to hike home in treacherous snowy conditions, but Beth falls unconscious, perhaps with a heart attack, and Huw rolls her into the river to keep her from falling. Davy finds them on his way home.

Chapter Seven finds the family back at home. Huw wakes up with no memory or voice, wrapped in goose grease and bandages with a broken leg and jaw. Beautiful Bronwen cares for Huw until her baby, Gareth, is born. Huw spends five years in his kitchen bed, with pain and disability. He undertakes reading difficult books, including the Bible, and learns about the union by helping Davy write letters. Huw wins a handwriting contest, making his family proud. He is in love with Bronwen all his life, and at the present she is 72 years old.

Marged joins their household to help Beth out, and Owen asks her to marry him. After being bedridden with illness and a new baby girl named Olwen, Beth goes to stay at Bronwen's while the house is painted. When she returns, she is surprised by a great party and newly decorated house. Hundreds of people, singing and cheering, are gathered to welcome Beth into her newly furnished house. Huw is only able to hear the celebration and the bustle of the women preparing the food. They all meet the new pastor, Reverend Gruffydd, who is something of a revivalist.

Marged's father makes a ruckus when he finds her in the barn with Owen, but their marriage is announced and all is well.

Chapters Six and Seven Analysis

The emotional tension in the story has reached a level of near panic. Little Huw tries desperately to be a man for his mother, but he is still small and physically incapable transporting her, but staying right with her. This is a new look at Beth's strength, as well as Huw's. The residual effects of that harrowing night are harsh and lengthy. Huw clings to his time with Bronwen, his personality upbeat and positive. He makes good use of his time while disabled and seems to be everyone's sweetheart and hero.

The author occasionally reminds us that he is old now, and preparing to leave the family house, and that the story he is telling is just from memory.



Chapters Eight and Nine

Chapters Eight and Nine Summary

Owen no longer loves Marged, now that the whole town knows about their kiss in the barn. Marged is heartbroken and her father becomes estranged from Mr. Morgan. Owen's brother Gwilym marries Marged, and they move to another valley without any financial support from her family.

This Christmas is quiet, and people gather the day after Christmas to listen to Mr. Gruffydd at the Morgans' home, where there is music, singing, dancing, eating and socializing. Elias the shop keeper bursts into the party and condemns them all, including Mr. Gruffydd, for having a party on a holy day. A seemingly unimportant event later becomes a "cause of misery" to all of them, according to Huw.

In Chapter Nine, Huw is in the present again for a time, observing the movement of the slag heap as it envelops the sturdy little house, which Huw has now inherited.

Mr. Gruffydd promises Huw he will be well when the daffodils bloom. He takes Huw outside on his back. Huw notices the growing slag heap and the absence of salmon in the river, but is thrilled to be among the daffodils, able to walk again. He vows to finish his education and go into the pits with his father, but his mother wants him to be a doctor. Mr. Gruffydd wants Huw to sing a solo at church, and promises to take him out every day.

Chapters Eight and Nine Analysis

It is interesting how Owen's "love" for Marged simply dissolves when he is shamed publicly by her father. Even more interesting is his brother's stepping in and marrying her. In this culture, to be attracted to someone requires a promise or possibility of marriage to make it valid. It seems to be a custom for someone to interrupt a jolly celebration with an explosion of anger. Elias's outburst is forebodes something bad.

Mr. Gruffydd takes Huw under his wing and treats him as a special project. After five years, Huw is old enough to really notice the changes in his neighborhood.



Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten Summary

Initially forgetting the words to his song, Huw completes his solo performance in church. After the sermon, the deacons condemn and shame a young girl for becoming pregnant. Huw is angry, and spews Bible verses at Mr. Parry, calling him a hypocrite. Huw and his father leave the church, but Huw is in trouble with everyone in the neighborhood for crossing Mr. Parry, an upstanding local employer. Hearing of the incident, Beth is tearful but proud of her son, and Gwilym's anger subsides into kindness for his family.

Huw knows more about the pregnancy of Meilyn Lewis and tells his father. Huw questions why sleeping with a man she is not married to makes a woman a "slut" and why it is not the man who is shamed. Gwilym admonishes Hugh for speaking out at the wrong time and lectures him about decency and what could happen without it.

Mr. Gruffydd and Huw hike up the mountain, Huw now using only one stick. It is a beautiful spring day, and Mr. Gruffydd explains how people of the valley have raised their families with no government involvement, strictly by the tenets of the Bible, good conduct and strictness. Change can only be brought about slowly and carefully, but Mr. Gruffydd still thinks it was brave of Huw to speak out, although he must never do so again.

Chapter Ten Analysis

This is a fascinating look at a society that has managed to govern itself through principles and moral consensus. It has apparently worked until now, but the younger generation seems to be questioning the community's methods of punishment. Huw is well-loved in the community, and his outspoken honesty is shocking, and disturbs the status quo. However, his parents are secretly proud that he is brave enough to speak up. They have raised him to be honest under this moral code, and he responds accordingly.



Chapters Eleven and Twelve

Chapters Eleven and Twelve Summary

Huw knows about the affair between Chris Phillips and Meilyn Lewis. His father explains the strict code of decency that exists in their society, and why Meilyn Lewis is bad. He warns Huw to mind his studies and not talk about things.

Gwilym insists that Beth go to chapel with him. Mr. Gruffyd takes Huw up on the mountain and discusses Huw's outburst in church. Huw questions why Gruffydd allowed the men to be cruel, and he answers that he will change them in time, but they have lived in the valley without help from others and are only human. Gruffyd must serve the chapel and deacons.

In Chapter Twelve, the eldest brother, Ianto returns home from London to a joyous family and freshly washed house. A band plays and the locals gather at the Morgans' to welcome him with a procession. Huw's older brothers bring presents for his twelfth birthday. Ianto's wife and baby have died.

From a quiet loft, Huw sees Marged come in the house and meet secretly with Owen, who still loves her. When he asks to take her away, Marged says that the real Owen has left, and will not return. Owen finally realizes what he did to her. Gwilym enters the house and gently offers to take her home.

The family is filled with people eating dinner together while Ianto talks of working in London. During the conversation Ianto insults one of the preachers, calling him a "limpet on society." He goes on to say that preachers are doing useless work because they allow their flock to live in filth and poverty. The preacher leaves and Ianto agrees to meet with Mr. Gruffyd in the morning for further discussion.

Chapters Eleven and Twelve Analysis

Religion in the little village seems to be taking a beating from the Morgan household. Huw's outburst in church over the treatment of the young girl, and now Ianto's rude outburst toward the preachers has caused severe upset in the community, as well as in the Morgan household. However, these boys are aware and honest and their upbringing has opened their eyes to the real injustices of the world. They refuse to buy into the preachers' pacification and, instead, question and challenge the way things are.

Gwilym Morgan makes clear his relationship with Beth when he orders her to go to Chapel with him, supporting the inferences made by the shaming of Meilyn by the men. Women definitely know their place in this culture.



Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen

Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen Summary

After two years of studying at home, Huw finds he has outlearned his teacher, Mrs. Jenkins. The family must now decide where he will get his education. Ianto's meeting with Mr. Gruffyd results in Ianto's considering the ministry, a possibility that is thrilling to Beth.

Huw spends time helping Owen as he tries to build an engine that will someday take the place of the "traps" they use for transportation.

Angarad has taken clothing, bedding and kitchen things to Mrs. Beynon, a poor mother of seven who is about to give birth to another child in an old shed. Beth, who becomes upset about not being consulted, gathers even more supplies. She and the neighbors deliver a huge collection of food, furniture and household goods to the poverty-stricken Beynon family. The men fix the leaks and make the place tidy.

Huw thinks babies come in the doctor's bag. Tegwen Beynon invites him to hide to watch the delivery through a crack. Watching the birth fills Huw with shame and shakes him deeply. He stops at Bronwyn's and shares his experience with her. Bronwyn promptly goes to his home to tell his mother. When Huw's father comes home, instead of meting out punishment, he advises Huw to take this experience as a lesson about what women go through to bring men into the world. He reminds him about taking care of his mother, and how everyone comes in equally to the world, so there is no room for pride or unkindness.

In Chapter Fourteen, Huw tells of their beautiful white turkeys that are stolen one night from the Morgans' hutch. Since he is not in school, Huw is loitering downtown and notices Elias the Shop carrying home his own buckets of slop, which is unusual, since the men say Elias will not touch the buckets. Huw goes to the back of Elias's shop and sees a white turkey feather. Elias will not sell him licorice because he knows Huw has already had candy that morning. That evening, Gwilym walks with his sons over to the shop and, restraining Elias by putting him in an apple barrel, goes out and finds his turkeys. Elias claims he took the turkeys to punish the Morgans for their pride, and that now there will be a reckoning. Gwilym tells him he must leave the valley tonight or his shop will be burned, and Elias threatens to bring English law onto Gwilym. When the Morgans return home, they have a session of deep laughter with Mr. Gruffydd over the incident.

However, when it is time for the Saturday chapel meeting, the gates are closed by the landlord, the banished Elias. Gruffydd admonishes that wickedness is creeping into the valley and will require a police force some day. He tells them to pray and become stronger than the coal that brings them gold. He suggests that they become politically involved to fight by organizing and being represented in government. Finally, everyone



is in agreement about fighting the corrupt powers that are cheating these workers, and they agree to gather for meetings.

Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen Analysis

This chapter is a strong piece of the "coming of age" aspect of Llewelyn's story. Huw, an innocent child, is shocked and almost sickened at the sight of the baby's birth. His wise parents know that this will only expand Huw's understanding of life and humanity, and choose to be gentle with him.

The level of poverty of the Beynon family is extreme, and is in stark contrast with the Morgan family. They have been evicted from their home by the "landlord," whose name we do not know, however, we might guess it is Elias, who also locks up the baptism property when he leaves.

In Fourteen, we can see changes taking place in the valley. People are not as well off as they once were and, even the local deacon feels the need to steal turkeys. The Morgans are comfortable because so many of them work in the colliery, but as Huw forewarns us, times were good then for them.

The community's system of justice is called into question by Elias, who threatens to bring English law to the situation. Apparently Wales is not necessarily subject to England's legal system at that time. The community so believes in honesty and good behavior that it is not unacceptable for the Morgans to shut down Elias's business, strike him, or burst into his yard.

Huw continues to be the hero of the story, if not its darling. He is a smart, mischievous and sympathetic character who feels loved as a child.



Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Fifteen Summary

Huw reminds us that he is writing this narrative fifty years later, long after the family was happy, safe and prosperous. When gas light came, people began to read less, and electric light made people go to bed earlier to save on power. The wonderful house that his family grew up in is about to be buried by slag.

Huw recalls Ceridwen going to town to meet with her future husband, and Davy admitting he has a girlfriend, Wyn, whom he marries. Women carry the total burden of household chores, including washing and drying hundreds of dishes when company is present.

Angharad takes Huw up the mountain with her so that she can meet Iestyn Evans, the son of the local colliery owner. Huw is outraged and concerned that she will end up like Meilyn Lewis, and immediately turns for home. The men are discussing politics and the idea of forming a union to do away with the sliding pay scales imposed by the owners, such as Evans, who disagrees with them.

The entire Morgan family walks to Chapel on Sunday, singing together. Huw remembers the smell of Bronwyn's lavender. People from different villages and communities gather outside to visit after the sermon. As he had promised, Iestyn Evans is there and greets Angharad, but Ianto flies into a rage and punches Iestyn in the jaw for not asking permission to talk to her. When the families understand what is happening, they make peace.

Huw begins to notice the destruction taking over his valley, including the drying of the black dirty river and dying vegetation. He walks to Gwilym's and Marged's house and finds it in disarray, so he cleans and straightens it and fixes some dinner for his brother. He finds Marged in a room that replicates the back room of the Morgans' home. She has lost her mind, and thinks Huw is Owen. She chases Huw in a rage with some kind of tool and they both end up, exhausted, on the mountaintop where she finally falls to sleep. Huw builds a fire and goes to find Gwil who is looking for her with a group of men. They hear Marged screaming again and when they find her she is sizzling in the fire. Huw is devastated and returns home, unable to tell Owen, who is busy getting his engine to start. Owen and Gwil, clearly grief-stricken, go away together.

It is determined that Huw will go over the mountain to the National School which is located in the thriving "town" over the mountain.

Chapter Fifteen Analysis

An exceptionally long chapter, this part of the story marks the beginning of Huw's real maturity. It starts with the happiness of his family as the children find mates and the

family grows exponentially. His values are set and he is becoming aware of the world around him, including the devastation of the land by the coal industry.

The experience with Marged destroys any remaining innocence, and Huw will now cross the line into "town," which represents the world outside of his small community. The "national" school will be his introduction into the wider arena of life, and the beginning of his greater appreciation of his childhood.



Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Sixteen Summary

Bronwen is upset that Huw will have to speak English in his new school. Mr. Gruffydd gives him a beautiful pencil box. Mrs. Jenkins helps him refresh his math skills, and his mother is disturbed by her own lack of knowledge of the decimal point.

Mr. Tyser tests Huw's skills. The students are mischievous and unkind. When Huw returns to the room he finds his pencil box broken to pieces, as well as his pencils and pens. His rage turns to tears and then shame, as he mourns the loss of the valuable, hand-made box. He vows to fight each of them. His new teacher, Mr. Jonas, is cruel and sarcastic. Outside, Huw is challenged by Mervyn Phillips, and the small gang of boys takes him down and kicks him.

Ellis the Post meets Huw to take him home, and saves him from further harm. Gwilym tells Huw he must learn to take punishment and give back more. He promises Huw money in reward for his future wounds, and the Morgan men take him outside to teach him to fight. Angharad gets her head stuck in the window peeking at them.

Mr. Gruffydd, upset to see the broken pencil box, goes with Huw to fix it, and releases Angharad from the window. Huw repairs the box, Gruffydd repairs the window. There is a sense of romance between Gruffydd and Angharad, and she asks Huw if Gruffydd has ever said anything about her.

The next day, Mr. Jonas is hateful toward Huw again, his seeming prejudice toward Huw's heritage used as a way to cover his shame over being partly Welsh himself. His teaching of history is biased due to his own shame, and Huw is aware of what he leaves out.

Chapter Sixteen Analysis

Life has become personally difficult for Huw, who is encountering cruelty and unfairness that he has never been exposed to. His great intelligence is scoffed at instead of applauded by his teacher, and his fellow students are vicious and offensive. Huw, in some ways, is far more mature than the people he is now around each day — he is not as worldly, but has an understanding of human beings that is far beyond his years.



Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen

Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen Summary

Young Delys Pritchard has been murdered and three hundred men began a search to find the satanic "beast" who committed the crime. Bars are banned from serving liquor for a week. In the poor end of town, houses are searched and men brought outside for questioning to determine who was on the mountain during the day. Idris Atkinson's story does not hold up, and he has scratch marks and blood on him. The mob decides to turn him over to the girl's father, who takes him up to the scene of the crime and kills him. A policeman is snubbed by the townsfolk the next day, and leaves with no answers. After the funeral, the long procession of mourners gathers at the Pritchard home, where Mr. Gruffydd tries to comfort the grieving.

At home, the older Morgan boys discuss their preference for cremation and distaste for funerals. They are busily planning a meeting to form a committee to oppose the sliding wage scale at the colliery. Isaac Wynn objects to the Morgans' ideas about labor.

Dai Bando and Cyfartha Lewis, both professional boxers, begin training Huw and Merddyn Jones at four in the morning, starting with a run over the mountain. Beth is upset, and promises that if Huw comes home with a broken nose she will have nothing to do with him.

In Eighteen, after a violent and successful boxing match with Mervyn Phillips, Mr. Jonas blames Huw, again, for fighting. He makes Huw bend over Phillips' back for a violent and brutal whipping. Shani Hughes, a pretty student, brings him water and promises to bring him a robin if he will bring her a nightingale egg. Huw is also kissed by Mervyn's sister, Ceinwen, and Mervyn tries to make amends.

In terrible pain, Huw escapes to the mountain and dreams of the diasters to come in the valley, realizing he is inseparable from the valley and is part of it. He makes his way down the mountain to the chapel where Mr. Gruffydd is holding a huge revival, but Huw goes home with Bronwyn for brandy broth and sleep.

Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen Analysis

Another sign that "wickedness" has entered the valley is the murder of an innocent child. Huw, a gentle and peaceful child, is now progressively growing stronger and more imbued with the same fighting spirit as his brothers', seeing now the necessity of it for survival. This chapter is full of dissent and sadness, and Mr. Gruffydd's sermon is weak in the face of the community's grief and passion. Again, the Morgan boys question tradition and refuse to attend the funeral.

In school, Huw willingly takes the blame for fighting, even though he is not the perpetrator. He is suffering physically and is delirious from it. In this state, he has the



epiphany of his true roots and his place in life. Huw is a great naturalist who appreciates everything about the valley, and sees its loveliness. He tells us early on that not being able to walk for five years caused him to appreciate everything about being alive, and that gratitude stays with him, even through this dark time when he is being separated from the warm safety and comfort of his home. His pride will not allow him to be nursed or nurtured, but the brandy broth is a good substitute. As he reviews the recipe for brandy broth, he temporarily cares nothing for "Englished Welshmen" like Mr. Jonas.

Huw senses a difference in Bronwen when she leaves the revival. She also has teary eyes, and we can assume she has been moved in some way by the sermon.



Chapters Nineteen, Twenty and Twenty-One

Chapters Nineteen, Twenty and Twenty-One Summary

Dai and Cyfartha know that Mr. Jonas is actually Mr. Jonas-Sessions, and they plan to punish him for what he has done to Huw. Huw's father, although outraged, puts five shillings in the box for Huw's fighting and plans to take the boys to town to see the Ireland game. His schoolmates are more respectful now, and Shani is giving him looks of love. Ceinwen brings him a ruler and also wants a nightingale egg. Mr. Jonas is called to Mr. Motshill's office, and soon is being beaten by Dai and Cyfartha, who slap and whip him, and throw him in the coal locker. The girls in the school are screaming through it all.

In Chapter Twenty, Huw returns to the village to find that the men in Three Valleys, as well as his own valley, are on strike and his father is grief-stricken, worried about the future. The family cuts back on food and the people of the village are listless and hungry. Fewer children attend school for lack of shoes and food. Huw shares his dinner with the starving Shani every day for two weeks, but she finally stops coming to school. Everyone suffers from lack of money, warmth and food, and children begin to die. Finally, in November, Gwilym receives a letter that the owners are ready to offer a minimum wage. The strike ends, and a wagon shows up with food for the people in the valley, perhaps provided by the Morgans. The people celebrate and the Morgans, with lots of good humor, eat brandy broth for dinner.

In Chapter Twenty-One, Motshill speaks with Huw about his sloppy in-class work, and Huw asks to be taught by Mr. Tyser. When he is about to be abused again by Jonas, Huw finally hits him five times and is sent home from school. He goes to see Mr. Gruffydd and, instead, overhears a conversation between Gruffydd and Angharad about their hopeless potential relationship. He sneaks out and goes to Bronwen's and then home, where his mother seems delighted over his actions. However, Mr. Gruffydd is angry and ashamed of him.

Huw spends the week staying busy. Mr. Gruffydd asks him to help him build furniture, but they are interrupted by the news of the death of Iestyn's father, Mr. Evans. Iestyn will be a rich man, and Angharad needs to choose between him and Gruffydd. Huw learns how poor and dependent Gruffydd is on the community. Angharad receives a letter every day from Iestyn while he is in London with his uncles.

When he returns to school, Huw finds that Mr. Jonas has been reassigned to the infants' class, and his new teacher is Mr. Tyser, as he had requested. He vows to do only his best work for Mr. Motshill from now on. Huw is sad for the infants, but happy to be rid of the abusive Jonas.



Chapters Nineteen, Twenty and Twenty-One Analysis

It is satisfying that Mr. Jonas has gotten what was coming to him. His evil fascination with Huw is disturbing, and Llewellyn makes his readers despise Jonas through intricate descriptions of his mannerisms. Dai and Cyfartha are fearless brutes who are loyal and loving when it comes to their own. We learn that Ceinwen is responsible for breaking Huw's ruler, but she is interested in his friendship.

The downfall of the valley is stark and quick, and the severe shortages turn the story dark and negative. The Morgans are sensible and thrifty, but even they are suffering. The Morgan men remain a force in the labor negotiations, as well as holding a leadership position among their peers.

Huw's careless attitude about school reflects his hatred of Mr. Jonas, while his well-done work at home reflects his high level of intelligence and learning. The romance between Angharad and Gruffyd, which is foreshadowed earlier, comes to light, and Angharad's choice between Gruffydd and the wealthier Iestyn Evans will be an interesting one, since she is also a Morgan with ethics and principles.

Although school improves for Huw, it is unfortunate that Mr. Jonas is assigned to teach infants.



Chapters Twenty-Two and Twenty-Three

Chapters Twenty-Two and Twenty-Three Summary

Narrating in the present tense, Huw discusses the beautiful old glass in the kitchen windows which is now falling out, and remembers his mother cleaning them. The slag heap will cover the house. Reflecting on his own poverty, he remembers his first new suit.

After buying bolts of cloth from the mill, Huw and his father go to Hwfa Williams to have clothing made, and Huw finally gets long pants, like the men. An offhanded remark about a local woman piques Huw's interest in some knowledge he has been denied.

Ceridwen and Blethyn are happy together, but Huw notices that Iestyn and Angharad are not happy when they are together. From London, Owen sends a newspaper article announcing Iestyn's marriage to Angharad, which has been done without the Morgans' permission. Huw tells Angharad before they come in. She is angry at Iestyn's presumption, and sends him away. Iestyn curses all women, as well as the Morgan family. He tries to bribe Huw to tell him if Angharad is seeing Gruffydd, but Huw tells him to use the money for sugar for his mare. The next day, Angharad speaks privately with Gruffydd, then runs from the house, leaving Gruffydd upset.

Chapter Twenty-three: Angharad and Iestyn are off to a stormy start as they plan their future. Each wanting different things. Huw makes it clear that having a rich brother-in-law will not change his plan to work alongside his brothers in the colliery. Angharad is obviously still in love with Gruffydd.

Huw escapes to Bronwen's, where he asks questions about things he has heard that refer to sex. He kisses her on the mouth and runs. In his narrative, Huw waxes on about the wonders of the mouth. He goes to Mr. Gruffydd with his questions and is given a long, abstract dissertation about how we reproduce. The thrust of Gruffydd's lecture is that he will understand more thoroughly when he is old enough and ready.

The family receives letters from all over Europe from Angharad and, as Gwilym predicted, she has settled down a bit now that she has been married for a while.

Chapters Twenty-Two and Twenty-Three Analysis

As Huw grows up, he sees that not every relationship is solid like his parents'. Interested in sexual matters, he is putting together clues he has gathered over time and trying to figure it out. With his quiet demeanor, he seems to overhear a lot of things he is not intended to hear.

Huw's relationship with Bronwen only goes so far. She loves him in a maternal, sisterly way but he loves her more deeply. She refrains from intimate talk with him as best she



can with , and tells on him when it is appropriate, but the bond between them feels more special to Huw. His burning curiosity about sex, and why women settle down after they are married, is humorous, and the ideas are certainly dated. The remark about how it would do old Nan Mardy good to see a shirt-tail is the trigger that sets off Huw's curiosity. His innocence, in every way, is dissolving, just as the house and the town are continuing to be compromised by the coal.



Chapter Twenty-Four

Chapter Twenty-Four Summary

Huw graduates to long pants in his new tweed suit, made specially for his sister's and brother's weddings. Surprising the family, Gwilym and Owen return to the valley wanting to work at the colliery again.

Huw and Bronwen have an awkward moment of sexual tension, and Huw privately experiences his new manhood, much to his glory and shame, as well as new-found dignity, courage and understanding.

Owen and Gwilym have been working on an underground railway in London, where Owen had success, and Gwilym got fired for starting a union. The boys want to sing in Ivor's thirteen-hundred voice choir. The larger family and neighbors gather in the evening for singing before the next day's Eisteddfod.

During the next afternoon of rugby and weddings, Ceinwen shows up and tries to force herself on Huw, inviting herself to the family festivities. Afterward, she kisses him forcefully, biting his lip. Huw rejects her for fear of gossip. Davy and his wife have a son and Ceridwen has twins, and then Anghard comes home.

Chapter Twenty-Four Analysis

Huw's curiosity has been somewhat quieted by his personal experience of his sexuality. He thinks he knows a bit about women now and, even though he does not particularly like Ceinwen, he would probably have given in to her were it not for the possibility of shame and gossip.

This chapter again illustrates the interwoven quality of the family. When one marries, the spouse becomes part of the Morgan family. When Owen and Gwilym come home, they are immediately accepted back into the home, but are always part of the clan.



Chapters Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six

Chapters Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six Summary

Despite Gwilym Morgan's and Mr. Gruffyd's ideas, the workers go on strike again. Iestyn's role as owner of the colliery reflects on the Morgans, and his actions lead to four hundred more men out of work.

A letter from the Queen asks Ivor and his choir to perform at Windsor Castle, a cause for a huge open-house celebration at the Morgans'. The community sings God Save the Queen together, led by Ivor. Mr. Clydatch will frame the letter. In full decor, the horses proudly leave for London, without Mr. Gruffyd, who was the originator of the choir.

Ceinwen is pressing Huw to show her the nightingales on the mountain, without her father's knowledge of her being there, and Huw senses trouble coming.

In Twenty-Six, Mr. Gruffyd seems depressed. Ceinwen and Huw go to the mountain to listen to nightingales. Huw falls to sleep on the mountain, but wakes to build a fire and eat Ceinwen's pie. After some kissing, Huw finds her mare tied up with another person's horse. He burns the other horse's hock to make him bolt, and gets the trap and mare to Ceinwen so she can hurry home. It is late, and everyone in Huw's village is up and worrying about him. Ianto warns him he could have caused their village to be burned, since Ceinwen's family was searching for her.

Chapters Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six Analysis

The Morgans stay cheerful, even though things are not improving in the coal industry. The Queen's invitation creates a sense of bliss within the family. Mr. Gruffyd's poverty and lack of support from a strained community seem to be taking their toll on him. Huw feels he and Ceinwen are going to get into trouble, and this is clearly foreshadowed in his narrative. She is less worried about gossip and very much in puberty, and is finding reasons to be in Huw's valley.

Chapter Twenty-Six illustrates that Huw has a daring aspect to his spirit and, even though he has done nothing particularly "wrong" with Ceinwen, he is careless about the time they are spending, knowing people will be looking for them both. He is enthralled with his newly discovered masculinity, and is almost challenging his family to try to control him, but he feels awful when he realizes the risk he has caused to his village.



Chapter Twenty-Seven

Chapter Twenty-Seven Summary

No one else knows who the neighboring village was searching for. The sound of a traveling band heralds the return of Ivor, to whom the Queen has given an ivory baton and a signed picture, bringing tears of pride and full drunkenness to Gwilym. Gwilym gets drunk again when Davy scores against Scotland in a game, and his jersey is placed on display with the other family treasures.

When Huw sees an infant girl being abused by Elijah Jonas-Sessions for speaking Welsh, he fills with rage and blacks out as he attacks Jonas. He is expelled from school and, although his family hates the school, it is seen as a disgrace. Huw's father wants him to be a doctor or lawyer, but Huw announces he wants to work in the colliery. Huw apologizes to Jonas, who insults him for being Welsh and calls him a humbug. Huw makes him remember that he is Welsh himself, and reminds Jonas' wife that she was originally a Morgan. He tells Jonas to live in hell.

Mr. Gruffyd explains that when a light goes out in your life, "your life becomes a prayer, till you are strong enough to stand under the weight of your own thought again."

Chapter Twenty-Seven Analysis

This is a turning point in Huw's life that forces him to consider his future and whether he will use the talent and intelligence he has been given, or whether his loyalty to family will make him another Morgan coal worker. The blackout and fiery temper are a result of all of his pent-up fury toward people like Jonas and the unjustness of life. Jonas is a horrible man; without his fists, Huw is impotent in his relationship with Jonas.



Chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine

Chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine Summary

Angharad is unhappy, and Iestyn is a drunk. Blodwyn, Iestyn's sister, offers a home for Huw at the lovely Tyn-y-Coed, but he declines. She is interested in Owen and he in her; Huw works on her furniture for her. Owen's engine patent may be bought by an American.

Mr. Gruffydd's feels his congregation only attends chapel out of fear, and their hearts are far from him. He feels he is old and has accomplished nothing. He thinks his sins are greater than those of his congregation. Huw likens life to a hiding that we can never win in the end.

In Chapter Twenty-Nine, Huw rides down in the cage to work in the coal pit with his brothers. He feels like a real, hard-working man now, and appreciates a bath and home. Ceinwein makes an appearance and is still tracking Huw. Owen leaves for London in response to a telegram about his engine. A letter to Blodwyn from Owen asks her to go to London with him. Iestyn will go to Africa on coal business related to the Boer war, and Angharad will come home while he is gone.

Chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine Analysis

Huw finds Gruffydd's depression upsetting, since he cares deeply for him. It also makes him ponder his own life, but there is definitely a wedge between them now. We can assume that Gruffydd is still mourning for Angharad.

It is interesting that Iestyn's sister, Blodwyn, has appeared in the story, since we have heard nothing of her until now. Like her father, she opposes the Morgan boys' ideas about a labor union. She has a long-time servant, and lives a life quite different from the Morgans'. She has a definite interest in Owen Morgan and seems to be a woman who is in control of her life and her affairs.



Chapters Thirty and Thirty-One

Chapters Thirty and Thirty-One Summary

Ceinwen appears wanting Huw to escort her to a play, and is willing to suffer a break from her family if they find out. Huw finally loses his virginity with Ceinwen, and notes then how green his valley is. Huw does take Ceinwen to see Hamlet performed in the Town Hall, but the community comes in a mob, upset that the Town Hall is being used for a play. Huw bravely goes out with Dai and Cyfartha on either side, ready to fight with the angry mob.

Gwilym scolds Huw for polluting himself at a play, and sends him for a bath.

Owen and Gwilym leave London for America. Owen has married Blodwen Evans at a registrar's office, much to Beth's sad dismay.

In Thirty-One, Anghard is living at Tyn-y-Coed, but does not come to visit. Huw finds her looking ill and old. He tells her first, and then Gruffydd, that they are both heartsick, and Angharad later thanks him. The servant she has inherited, Nicholas, is not likeable but has been with the Evans family for years. Angharad and Huw agree she is a bitch.

Bronwen gives birth to a baby, Taliesin. Within the month, Ivor is crushed to death by a collapsed roof in the coal pit.

Chapters Thirty and Thirty-One Analysis

Huw once again risks his reputation and even his life to spend forbidden time with Ceinwen. He has noted that she is large and a big eater, but his lust and her willingness keeps him interested in her. This time he is prepared for fighting but his loyalty to his valley and the danger he brings on makes him cry. We see his powerful emotions and hormones working against his better judgment and deepest principles.

Beth is heartsick that, not only did the two boys not tell her goodbye before leaving for America, but that Owen is married outside of the chapel.

Angharad is feeling better because Gruffydd knows of her grief. Ivor's sudden death puts Bronwen in a stupor of grief—again, a happy event is followed by a tragedy.



Chapter Thirty-Two

Chapter Thirty-Two Summary

Huw goes to work in the underground blacksmithing operation, and lonely Bron continues to languish from her loss. Beth decides Huw should live with Bronwen until she finds another husband, an idea to which Huw is absolutely opposed with his entire being. Huw moves in, but there is a strained distance between the two, after the impassioned moment they spent months earlier.

In Chapter Thirty-Three, Davy and Ianto are working to end the sliding scale, to which the older workers cling in order to make a living. Ianto is fired from the colliery and finds work in the ironworks at the furnaces. As a blacksmith, Huw notes that he finds steel to be spiritless compared with wood.

Huw discovers Mrs. Nicholas gossiping that Angharad is riding every day with Gruffydd. Huw tries to determine if it is wrong for a preacher to be seeing his married sister; he and Bronwen have a discussion about what Huw has been feeling for her sexually. The two tell Angharad and Gruffydd about the gossip. Angharad will return to London, but Gruffydd, although unashamed, needs time to think. Bron laughingly tells Huw that people will eventually talk about the two of them, and how it is not right to judge either Gruffydd or Angharad.

Chapter Thirty-Two Analysis

Huw is living with Bronwen comfortably, but there is a strain between them that he describes beautifully and delicately. Huw feels he now understands the magnitude of the curse that sent Adam and Eve from Eden. Huw's maturity is obvious, but he still uses Bronwen as a parent-figure to understand the world. There is foreshadowing of some break in their routine at the end of this chapter.

In Chapter Thirty-Three, the political tension is worse due to the high royalties imposed by the government and paid to landowners for the coal on their properties. Ianto and Davy want equality for the workers, and desire some form of socialism.

The tension is finally broken between Bronwen and Huw by their discussion of the forbidden relationship between Angharad and Gruffydd. Bronwen is a wise woman and handles Huw's affections gently.

Mrs. Nicholas proves to be nastier than earlier portrayed. She has no loyalty to Angharad, who dislikes her, too. Her coy hinting and cloaking of gossip makes her quite a disagreeable character.



Chapters Thirty-Four and Thirty-Five

Chapters Thirty-Four and Thirty-Five Summary

When Beth goes to visit Ceridwen and Angharad in London, Gwilym is lost without her, and writes long letters.

Huw breaks the ribs of Evan John, who denegrates Angharad for her relationship with Gruffydd. Huw is fired from the colliery and charges of assault and battery are pressed against him by Abishai Elias. He is summoned to court. Mr. Gruffydd decides to leave the valley and go to Patagonia. Beth returns from London with a hat for Huw, and the news that Angharad is going to Cape Town in Africa.

In chapter Thirty-Five, as he leaves for court, Huw suddenly understand Bron's grief and strength and is ashamed of his earlier feelings for her. At the courthouse, the case is dismissed due to unwillingness of witnesses to testify. The deacons vote Mr. Gruffydd from the chapel and he packs to leave for Patagonia. Gwilym injures Isaac Wynn for his comment that Gruffydd is unclean.

Chapters Thirty-Four and Thirty-Five Analysis

Huw's temper works against him again, as he is unable to tolerate the remark about his sister. A nice analogy is Huw's choosing a mignonette for his buttonhole on his way to court, and likening it to a bowman at Agincourt choosing a shaft, or arrow. For the first time, we learn that the growing slag heaps are due to "laziness, bad workmanship and cheapness," and that they were not allowed in the past.

The author offers a hilarious description of the attorney, Esdras Daniels. The wanderings in his mind about Shani and Ceinwein are tools to calm Huw's nerves and keep him from considering the possibility of prison. Llewlynn writes about Huw's thinking in such a way that the reader is able to relate exactly to Huw's mind-set, including the language seeming foreign and muffled in his ears.

It is not surprising that Gwilym also turns on the deacon whose remark about Gruffydd is offensive. This is a family of fighters who do not have the best control of their tempers.

It is interesting that the far-away destinations of Patagonia and Cape Town do not surprise the Morgans, but earlier in their lives, a trip to London was a huge event.



Chapters Thirty-Six and Thirty-Seven

Chapters Thirty-Six and Thirty-Seven Summary

Huw and Gruffydd share a very sad goodbye, Gruffydd giving Huw his watch. Mr. Gruffydd asks Huw to promise that the beautiful furniture they have made will go to Tyn-y-Coed. Gruffydd is defeated by the meanness and "poverty of mind." Gwilym and the Morgans whitewash a stable for a new chapel for ten people who have split from the original chapel, and who keep Mr. Gruffydd's words in their hearts and minds. The new congregation grows, and a nicer place is built with the help of Dai and Cyfartha. Huw is invited by Dai and Cyfartha to a boxing match over the mountain at Three Bells to help in Dai's corner, which Huw accepts.

In Chapter Thirty-Seven, Huw and Bron have settled into a happy life together as a family with her two boys, the two adults like brother and sister.

Dai is going to box in a big match and wants Huw to help in his corner. Huw goes along, but is disgusted with everything about the prizefight, including the spectators. He feels it is wrong for Dai to prostitute himself for this bloodthirsty drunken audience whom he sees as cattle. The fight is extremely brutal and Dai wins, but his vision is permanently damaged. Dai and Cyfartha buy the Three Bells together, and Dai quits working in the mine to tend the tavern during the day. Some feel that God punishes Dai for his actions, and some leave the new church.

Chapters Thirty-Six and Thirty-Seven Analysis

Mr. Gruffydd is a broken man, not only because of his love for Angharad, but also because his idealism has been shattered with respect to what he hoped to accomplish in the valley. People do not rise in their spirituality during his years there, but become more vicious and grasping, thus he feels a failure. The fact that the Morgans start a new church is testament to their love for Guffydd.

The gruesome boxing match brings out the anger in Huw with regard to how people treat one another. He loves these two giant men who taught him to fight, and he is loyal to them, but he rejects the entire concept of the prizefight. Huw is strong-minded and his own man at this age. He is a good man, but does not hold back his opinion. He values his life and sees this brutality for sport as wrong.

Dai and Cyfartha are fast friends for life, and their relationship is sweet and somewhat comical.



Chapters Thirty-Eight and Thirty-Nine

Chapters Thirty-Eight and Thirty-Nine Summary

Huw and Bron spend happy years together as her boys grow up. Huw is a successful woodworker. Bron has marriage offers, and Huw knows it is right for her to move on, but feels pain at the thought. Bron tells him that she has loved being with him partly because he is so much like Ivor. She and Huw discuss the barriers, including the law, which have kept them from marrying. He knows he would be wrong to ever have pursued anything with Bron because Ivor is all around her. He tells her he is not jealous of Mr. Harries, but she seems hurt that he is not still besotted with her, goes to bed vowing she will never marry, and locks her door. Matt Harries tells Huw that people are gossiping that he is the reason Bronwen is refusing to marry. Huw is angry and goes to the mountaintop where he hopes for some peace and wisdom from God.

Chapter Thirty-Nine has Huw watching a tip being constructed that will direct the slag down upon the houses and eventually cover them. Huw sees that the rights of hungry children trump the rights of man. Davy takes the colliery to court for underpaying him, and they accuse him of incompetence. The Morgans produce Davy's pay dockets from the time he was twelve, and the judge awards him the verdict plus costs.

Gwilym announces he will work a couple more years and they will then leave the valley. Davy and Wynn will go to New Zealand, and Ianto to Germany. Gwilym is devastated that his family will separate.

Chapters Thirty-Eight and Thirty-Nine Analysis

Bron's decision to remain single brings some foreshadowing that Bron and Huw may marry, but it is not clear. Regardless, Huw is experiencing the true respect he feels for her and for her marriage to Ivor, and no longer lusts after her, but just loves her purely.

Chapter Thirty-Nine represents the beginning of the final changes that are coming to the Morgans. The men will go their separate ways, the colliery fight about unions and wages is hardly worth it any longer when there are better places to go, and even Gwilym plans to leave the valley. The slag tip is the symbol of doom for the houses on the hill, including the Morgans'. All innocence is being dissolved away, as Huw has grown up, the slag has gotten worse, the Morgans are getting older and even Olwen is grown up.

A comical moment is when Huw describes Mr. Vaughan as swallowing "a small town," rather than tell us he was scared.



Chapters Forty and Forty-One

Chapters Forty and Forty-One Summary

Ianto and Davy leave the country and their devastated mother. Huw is making money with his carpentry, and takes Olwen and Bron to town for Bron's birthday. Bronwen is uncomfortable about the looks from men, and Huw feels she plays the game of woman. Huw reflects on the lifestyle of townspeople, who are too busy and stressed to enjoy what is around them. Huw buys Treasure Island and Ivanhoe for the boys, and Bron and Olwen buy gifts and clothing.

On the way home, Huw realizes the men are talking about Marxism and stirring up about revolution. Olwen and Bron are threatened by striking workers because of their relationship to Iestyn. Gwilym is resolved that it would be a waste of time to try to reason with the the striking workers, since they are "drunk with unreason."

In Chapter Forty-One, there is talk that the striking men will flood the pits. Winston Churchill 's English soldiers arrive and there is peace, but trouble soon erupts with the police. The workers themselves are split and fighting among themselves. A worker, Iorweth, is trapped in the winding-house, afraid to come out and be beaten by the mob, so Dai, Cyfartha and Huw free him with their fists, and take care of a trouble-maker who has been speaking to the crowd, as well.

They go to the boiler room and free up the manager and clerks who have been there for days. Bronwen brings them breakfast and Huw warns her to stay inside. Another tender moment between the two, and she walks home.

Chapters Forty and Forty-One Analysis

The Game of Woman is an interesting concept in a society that will not even allow a couple to touch without parental permission. Bron likes that men are attracted to her, but she is expected to be irritated and aloof, and so she is. Huw sees this as a game, but he knows she cannot behave any other way and still be respected.

Gwilym has an acute insight into the social psychology that has the workers wound up and ready to be violent. Although town is chaotic and hectic, the mood in the valley is even worse. Working from his home, Huw and Bron have been protected from the tension, and this day represents their re-introduction into the real world and what is happening around them.

Chapter Forty-One is a bit confusing, just as the scenes in the valleys have become. Huw and his friends remain on the side of justice, freeing the man who worked in spite of the strike, taking down the trouble maker, and helping out management. Huw's love for Bronwen only grows stronger, but the restrictions he has imposed on himself keep

him from expressing it to her. The reference to red flags may imply that there is a communist insurrection building.



Chapter Forty-Two

Chapter Forty-Two Summary

The pumps are successfully keeping the water under control in the mines, while crowds of angry men remain outside. Olwen comes to tell Huw that the horses are going untended; a few sympathetic helpers from the crowd take them to pasture. Gwilym goes underground to be sure the water is not flooding the pits. Later, Cyfartha goes down to check things out and to find Gwilym.

Huw goes to Beth, who is sitting in the darkness waiting. She says Ivor has been there, and that he smiled and nodded to her.

The girls have brought food for Gwilym, but some of the roof has fallen into the pit. After hours of digging, there a tapping in the stall road area. Dai finally pulls Cyfartha out. Huw goes back and finds his father, buried in coal, but still alive and smiling. The roof threatens to fall at any second, and with Huw snuggled next to his head, Gwilym dies. Beth is bitter in her grief, and swears she will not set foot in the chapel until she is in her coffin.

Huw now back in the present, discusses whether there is true death, or whether those who have passed live on in memories, words and love. He feels if they are dead, then we are dead, and all sense is a mockery.

Chapter Forty-Two Analysis

His father's death is the end of the chronological story told by Huw. He returns to the present to discuss his memories of everyone he loved so much, and to contemplate the truth of death. We do not know how the others died, but he is clearly the only one left. Perhaps overly-sentimental, this is a poignant story written by a person whose insight into life is stark, sensitive and loving.



Characters

Huw Morgan

The narrator of this story, Huw Morgan is an intelligent, well-spoken Welsh man who remembers with clarity the beauty, simplicity and warmth of his childhood passages and events. He relives special moments throughout the book, and through Huw, we learn of Welsh traditions and culture, as well as their peculiar and lovely form of English. Huw's deep and abiding appreciation for the nature around him makes the destruction of his valley even more disturbing.

Huw is impressed throughout his childhood with the images and feelings of the warmth of community and the bonds of family. Although he is a talented and gifted academic, his loyalty to his family's work in the valley's coal mine takes precedence over any high-paying career he might have pursued. He is a boy who was a late baby, and was adored by many family members as he grew up.

As a young man, Huw has become almost obsessive about right and wrong, and has developed a fiery temper. Although he shows a guarded interest in other women, Huw is unashamedly in love with his sister-in-law, Bronwen, for all of his life.

Huw is very protective of his family members and their reputations, and is quick to become violent if he hears negative words about them. He looks up to his brothers, and serves as writer for their union papers for many years. His feelings for his mother are deep and sweet, but his greatest love, besides Bronwen, is for his father and Mr. Gruffydd, his mentor. Huw's life story gives the reader a peek into a culture that has passed, as well as a stormy period of history in south Wales.

Gwilym and Beth Morgan

Gwilym Morgan is a stern and sometimes gruff Christian man, who loves his family and God above all else. His rough exterior masks his tender nature, but he is principled and bound by old traditions and by his faith. He does not want confrontation with the mine-owners, but wants the men to pray and seek answers without demanding them. He believes so strongly in right and wrong, that when he finds a shop keeper has stolen his three turkeys, he demands the shop close and threatens to burn it. Gwilym has worked at the colliery for many years and provided nicely for his family prior to the strikes and labor troubles. His demand for respect from his sons forces him to treat them as boarders when they dare to disagree with him. However, he takes little Huw to the mountain frequently and speaks his heart to him.

Beth Morgan, although she knows her place as a woman, is a forthright, capable, strong and deeply caring person whose devotion to her family is her primary focus. She loves her children unconditionally, and is a devoted mate and partner to her husband Gwilym. Beth is brave enough to address a group of hostile men, threatening them not to harm



her husband. Her household work is hard and tedious, but she provides a fine home for her family, insisting on cleanliness and order.

Bronwen Morgan

Bronwen Morgan, wife of Ivor Morgan and mother to Gareth and Taliesin, is a beautiful and kind person, who always smells of lavender. She helps with Huw from the time he is little, teaching him, pampering him, mothering him and treating him like a small prince. When Ivor, her husband, is killed in the mines, Huw becomes her support and protector. She is ten years older than Huw, but there is intense attraction between them. When Bronwen refuses to remarry, she and Huw live on together, always in a platonic relationship, with the knowledge that Huw has been in love with her for many years. Bronwen is a devoted wife and later becomes a devoted widow, unable to leave the memory of Ivor behind and carrying his essence with her always.

Merddyn Gruffydd

Pastor Gruffydd's appearance in the valley represents a spiritual anchor for people who are troubled with the uncertainty of the mining industry and their future. Gruffydd takes a particular liking to young Huw who, when he meets him, is bedridden. Gruffydd encourages Huw to walk again and serves as Huw's mentor and counselor throughout his young life. Mr. Gruffydd helps Ivor form a choir that eventually visits the Queen, a trip that Gruffydd himself, cannot afford.

Gruffydd believes, idealistically, that he can bring the people of the valley to God and that through his teaching, they will learn to be better people. He spends a lot of time in the Morgan household, a welcome dinner guest and friend. Gruffydd's downfall is that he falls in love with Angharad Morgan, who is destined to marry someone wealthier and better able to care for her. He knows Angharad would rather marry him, but he cannot face seeing her suffer in his simple pastor's lifestyle. Later, his secret meetings with the married Angharad lead to his departure from the valley in shame.

Ianto, Ivor, Davy, Owen and Gwilym Morgan

These are Huw Morgan's older brothers.

Ianto, the eldest Morgan son, returns home from London with tales of terrible working conditions. Ianto feels the coal should belong to the people and not to just a few wealthy men. He eventually is discharged from the colliery over his union connections and goes to work for the neighboring ironworks.

Ivor, married to Bronwen, has a gift for music and forms his own huge choir, with the help of Mr. Gruffydd. The choir performs for Queen Victoria, and Ivor is the pride of his family. He is later killed in a mining accident.



Davy is the family's best athlete, and brings pride to the Morgans by winning a national rugby game. He is an avid union advocate.

Owen is an inventor who creates an engine that gets noticed in London and then in America. Owen rejects Marged and, at the end of the story, marries Iestyn's sister, Blodwyn.

Gwilym, who does not get a lot of attention in this story, marries Marged when Owen rejects her. After her death, he and Owen leave the valley together for a while to mend their grief and heal their relationship.

Angharad, Ceridwen and Olwen Morgan

Of Huw Morgan's sisters, Angharad is the eldest. Angharad is a troubled sister who is in love with the local pastor, but ends up marrying Iestyn Evans, a wealthy man whom she does not love. She suffers considerably from the situation and ends up leaving the area for good.

Ceridwen, also older than Huw, marries happily and except for her marriage to Blethyn, and her role in the Morgan household, is not given a lot of attention in the story.

Olwen Morgan is Huw's younger sister who was born while Huw and his mother were both bed-ridden. At the end of Huw's story, Olwen is still alive. Olwen comes to live with Huw and Bronwen when she is young, and forms part of their unusual small family.

Dai Bando and Cyfartha Lewis

Devoted to their friendship with one another, Dai and Cyfartha are huge, burly coal miners who are also both prize fighters. They teach Huw at a young age how to box, and beat Huw's teacher for hurting Huw. They are good men and hard workers who enjoy their drink. At a traveling stage play they fight back the self-righteous protestors, as well as protecting Huw from trouble. After Dai is blinded by a mining accident, the two buy the Three Bells public house, which Dai tends while Cyfartha continues to work in the colliery.

Marged Evans

Marged comes to the Morgan house to help out and learn household skills, but she falls in love with Owen, and he with her. Caught kissing in a shed outside of chapel, a scene takes place between her father and the Morgans. Owen is so embarrassed and distraught over their romance being made public, that he rejects Marged, who is devastated. Marged goes on to marry Gwilym, Owen's brother, but she becomes mentally ill over her loss of Owen. Huw finds her in a state of disorientation, thinking Huw is his brother, Owen. She chases Huw with the intent to harm him. He finally calms



her and builds a fire, but when he returns she has put herself in the fire and committed suicide.

Elijah Jonas-Sessions

An evil, bigoted man, Mr. Jonas is Huw's first schoolmaster at the National School. Mr. Jonas hates the Welsh and demands that his students speak English. Huw sustains a severe whipping at Mr. Jonas' hand as punishment for fighting. When Huw learns more about fighting, and tries to fight the same boy, Jonas puts Huw over the boy's back and brutally whips him. Dai and Cyfartha beat Jonas, seriously injuring him. Jonas is demoted to teaching the infant class, but when Huw sees a small child crying with a board chained around her neck, he attacks Jonas again. Jonas was, himself, born in Wales, a fact that he is loathe to admit or have others know.

Shani Hughs and Ceinwen Phillips

Young Huw's first love interest is Shani Hughs, whom he meets in the National School. She is very kind and nurturing, and he brings her a nightingale egg. When the miners are on strike and the people of the valleys begin to suffer from poverty, Huw shares his food with Shani. Shani's family moves away from the area.

Ceinwen Phillips, whose brother Mervyn starts fights with Huw, is aggressively in love with Huw and finds reasons to visit his neighborhood to see him. She eventually is able to seduce him and he loses his virginity with her on the mountain. Ceinwen will be Huw's only sexual partner.

Beynon Family

When the town learns that Mrs. Beynon is about to give birth, they gather together linens, food, and household goods to deliver to this poverty-stricken family who has lost their home. Young Tegwen Beynon and Huw secretly watch the birth of Mrs. Beynon's child, an experience that changes Huw.

Iestyn Evans

A "purse-proud ninny," Iestyn is the son of the owner of the local colliery. Iestyn is wealthy, and flaunts his "London" ways. He marries the unhappy Angharad, who would rather have married Mr. Gruffydd. He is a businessman and eventually becomes involved in matters in Africa during the Boer war.



Elias the Shop, Thomas the Carrier, Ellis the Post

These men are identified by what they do to earn a living. Elias, whose shop is forcibly closed, turns out to be a thief. Thomas the Carrier drives a brake and trap, and Ellis the Post delivers mail and gives Huw a ride from National School.

Mrs. Tom Jenkins

Mrs. Jenkins is Huw's first teacher, who teaches him and her daughters in her home. Her husband, who is severely burned from a mining accident, is incapacitated and unable to care for himself in any way. Mrs. Jenkins teaches Huw basic lessons but, after he teaches himself from books while bedridden, he outgrows anything Mrs. Jenkins can teach him and goes to National School instead.

Queen Victoria

A beloved and revered Queen, the people of Wales see her as their esteemed heroine and are in awe of her because of her power, wealth and beauty. When the Queen invites Ivor and his choir to perform, she bestows upon the Morgans, as well as the town, an honor which is beyond their wildest dreams.

Meilyn Lewis

A young girl who gets pregnant and gives birth to an illegitimate child, Meilyn Lewis is scorned and rebuked by the deacons of the church and subjected to shame. Huw, still in church because he cannot walk alone, hears the chastisement and becomes upset. He vocalizes his beliefs and challenges the deacons, much to the chagrin of his father and Mr. Gruffydd.

Hwfa and Old Twm

The two tailors who create Huw's first suit with long pants, these two have a love-hate relationship. They constantly criticize one another regarding their work.

Idris Atkinson and Cynlais Pritchard

Idris Atkinson is the murderer of Cynlais Pritchard's young daughter. When the gruesome evidence is presented, Pritchard is allowed to do away with Atkinson as he sees fit. Atkinson is taken to the mountain and killed. No one in the valley speaks of the event again, and it is hidden from neighboring police who come asking questions.



Clydach Howell

A local woodworker, Clydach Howell carves the crowned frame for the signed picture of Queen Victoria. He also fashions the coffin for the little Pritchard girl who is murdered.

Mr. Motshill

The head of the National School, Mr. Motshill seems to come to some understanding of Mr. Jonas' cruelty when he removes him from Huw's class and replaces him with Mr. Tyser. However, he places Jonas in a class with "infants," and after Jonas is seriously injured, Motshill puts him back in the same class from which Huw is expelled. He has faith in Huw and hopes that he will become a scholar and college student, but seems to give up on him after his troubles.



Objects/Places

Valley

The region of South Wales where the Morgans reside consists of hills and valleys, with seams of coal that run between. The particular neighborhood where the Morgans live has a street of homes that go up a hill, with the coal operation, or colliery, at the top. Each valley has its own flavor and customs, but Huw's valley has a neighborhood where people are bound together by the stability, as well as the danger, that comes with making a living as a coal miner. Huw's valley is beautiful and green with a river running through it and mountains above it and, throughout his story, we see the valley become more polluted from the colliery, as well as the community becoming more fragmented and negative as their jobs and their standard of living diminish.

Family Treasures

The Morgan family has three treasures that grace the front room of their home. They are an ivory conductor's wand, engraved and embellished, a signed picture of Queen Victoria in a frame, and a framed rugby shirt. The royal artifacts are given to Ivor when he and his choir perform before the Queen, and the shirt is one Davy wears in a winning rugby game.

Blue Cloth

The elderly Huw Morgan has the blue cloth that his mother wore on her head for many years. He plans to use it to wrap a few things to take with him as he leaves the little house for the last time. The cloth is all he has left of his mother and his old life in the valley.

Colliery

The colliery is the coal plant up the hill from the Morgans' home, which is owned by the Evans family. It is a series of unnamed buildings and structures; we learn about the lift and the boiler room, as well as the treacherous underground tunnels. For much of Huw's childhood, his father is a checker who monitors the coal as it is brought up from the mines.

Chapel

When Chapel is held, almost everyone attends. Chapel, for the most part, is held by Mr. Gruffydd, the community's pastor. When Mr. Gruffydd leaves town, Gwilym Morgan and his family and friends form a "split" from the Chapel and create their own.



Brake and Trap

Both brakes and traps are carriages drawn by a single horse, and the only means of transportation throughout the valleys and hills of South Wales.

London

London is the big city which represents wealth, law and strange customs to the Welsh. It is almost a mystical place in the minds of these coal families and, when one is heading to London, it creates a sense of awe and respect.

Tyne-y-Coed

The large, lovely farmhouse that has been Ietsyn Evans' family home for generations. Angharad becomes the lady of the house. All of Gruffydd's handmade furniture is given to the house when he leaves. This is where Angharad is living when she begins to secretly see Mr. Gruffydd, which leads to his departure from the valley.

Slag Heap

The slag heap is a growing mound of residue from coal mining that is piling up and threatening to smother the small neighborhood of the Morgans' valley.

Family Box

On the Morgans' mantelpiece is a wooden box that contains the gold sovereigns earned by Mr. Morgan and his sons from their work at the colliery. When Mrs. Morgan pays the expenses, the decisions about what to do with the money are discussed.

Labor Unions

The Morgan boys, especially Davy and Ianto, want to unionize the labor force in an effort to equalize the ownership of the mines. They do not believe that one person, like Mr. Evans, should own the mines and take all the profits, but that the mines belong to the earth and to the people.

Sliding Scale

The owners of the mines go to a sliding pay scale for the workers. Some of the workers and many women in the valley are satisfied with this, because it means, at least, that there will be pay. However, the more activist workers, like Davy Morgan, do not believe in it because it is the mine owners' method of underpaying the workers.



Gryffudd's Pencil Box

Given to Huw on the night before his first day of National School, this three-layer pencil box is hand made and polished, with pivoting tray; the box was a gift to Gruffydd from his own father. Huw is thrilled with it and appreciates its craftsmanship, in addition to all of the tools Mr. Gruffydd has filled it with. On his first day of school, the box is destroyed by mean students, particularly Ceinwen Phillips.

Decimal Point

In a comical scene, the decimal point is the source of an argument between Gwilym and Beth Morgan. Beth does not understand the meaning of the decimal point, but more importantly, does not understand why Huw understands it, and she does not. She wants to know who owns it, what can be done with it and who found it. She wonders if the Queen knows about it, but finally is able to blame it on the French.

Chapel Field

A field near the river where the congregation gathers for baptisms, the chapel field is owned by Abashai Elias, who closes the field when he is banished from the community for stealing turkeys.

Three Bells

The Three Bells is a "public house" located on the other side of the river next to Elias's shop. The public house primarily serves ale to tired workers. After Dai is blinded, he and Cyfartha buy the Three Bells, and Dai runs the public house while Cyfartha continues to work in the colliery.

White Turkeys

A special breed, the Morgans are given three white turkeys by Huw's uncle. The three turkeys are stolen by Abishai Elias who is a shopkeeper. When the Morgan men confront him and give him a beating, he is warned to close his shop and move on, or see it burned to the ground.

Strikes

The workers in the coal mines go out on strike more than once in this story, protesting the changing wage structure imposed on them by the owners and management. The strikes create severe hardship in the valley and, when they are over, the citizens celebrate with music and good cheer.

Brandy Broth

Brandy broth is a meal made for special occasions, and contains several varieties of spices, meats and vegetables stewed in brandy. It is Huw's favorite meal.

Eisteddfod

A large community celebration in Wales, such as a wedding celebration or other large party.



Themes

Coming of Age

Although the story is narrated by an elderly Huw Morgan, his tale begins when he is a small boy and still being held in his mother's arm. After a tragic accident wherein little Huw tries to save his mother, he becomes bed-bound for years, and grows up with books and listening to the people around him. Being confined to his bed forces Huw to become very observant and he develops into a very knowledgeable young man, grateful and appreciative of everything in his life.

We follow Huw as he learns the basics of life through watching a child be born and through his many questions to his mentor, Mr. Gruffydd. Huw finally experiences his own sexuality and has one sexual experience as a young man. However, his love for his brother's wife sustains him and prevents this aspect of his life from fully developing. As a man, Huw becomes an accomplished carpenter and provider for Bronwen and his younger sister, Olwen.

However, this is not just a story of growing up. This is a story of growing wise. Although Huw's memories are bittersweet, and he is deeply sad that his valley is destroyed and his family is gone, as an old man, he seems to accept, with hesitation, that everything in life comes and goes. His values and principles remain the same as when he was young, but his wisdom about life and its tragedies grows exponentially.

Environmental Carelessness

It is only fifty years from the time Huw remembers his valley being pristine and green to the time when his little house is finally covered in slag. Due to the extra expense as well as the blatant carelessness of the mine industry, the valley becomes clogged with slag, forcing the people from their homes, the wildlife and fish from their habitats and killing all that once made up the ecology of this beautiful place.

Llewellyn wrote this book in 1940 before environmental issues had come to the forefront, and long before we thought of things like Earth Day. It is an insightful and sad look at the potential for industry to destroy environment, a scenario which proceeded to repeat itself thousands of times before people became more conscious about taking care of the earth.

Family Traditions and Customs

One of the underlying themes in this story involves the steadfast clinging to old customs and traditions that often go unquestioned in generations of families.



The Morgans have structured their family life based on the traditions they have always known. The children are not allowed to speak out in a conversation without permission from their father.

The women of the house are responsible for preparing meals, heating bath water, keeping the clothing and linens fresh and cleaning up messes. Young women are expected to learn household work either in their own home, or in the home of another family. A young woman is not to be seen alone in the presence of a young man, or the assumption is made that they will be married. If she persists, she can be branded as a "slut" and banished from the community.

The father and husband is master of the house and to question his authority takes courage and a willingness to face the consequences, which can be physical violence.

The community has an agreement that they will obey God's law and they will govern themselves. Their tradition of singing together as a huge choir is inspiring, and they create spontaneous harmony among themselves.

An interesting consideration is that, one by one, many of these traditions are broken during the time period of this story. Huw's father relinquishes his authority when his sons challenge him. Huw speaks up when a young woman is chastised in church. Angharad sees the man she loves, defying the community's moral code. A gruesome crime occurs that rocks the community's stability and faith.

Although traditions and customs play a strong role in their lives, over time and with each generation, they change and become modified.

The Meaning of Happiness

Huw Morgan is able to experience deep happiness as a child for several reasons. Being bedridden for five years makes him appreciate the sky, the flowers and all the rich nature surrounding his valley. Walks with his father from an early age expose him to natural occurrences, such as nightingales, the seasons and the beauty of love between a boy and his father.

The Morgans' valley is riddled with trouble from the beginning of the story due to the unrest among the mine workers. However, Huw's experience of all of the talk and debate is one of fascination and fondness. As a young boy, Huw has a deep appreciation for craftsmanship, as is demonstrated in his love for his new pencil box. He loves learning, or at least that is how he remembers it, and thinks of each of his family members with love and kindness.

These mining families know that they live in relative obscurity and at a lower standard of living than city people, generally. However, they find happiness in celebrating the events in others' families, such as births, recoveries from illness, returning family members and holidays. Their communal singing is pure happiness to them, and celebrates the simple lives they choose to lead. They share in one another's sorrow and celebrate each

other's joys. Thus, Huw Morgan's portrait of a happy life shines through in the face of the real problems encountered by the citizens of the valley.



Style

Point of View

The story is narrated by Huw Morgan, the youngest member of the large Morgan family who lives in a small coal-mining village built along a seam of coal. Huw, now an elderly man, narrates the story vividly as though he were reliving it. It is written in first person and is all from Huw's memory of his life as a bright, observant and sensitive person.

Huw's view is omniscient and, although he is a reliable narrator of his own life, we are limited to his view of others' feelings and his own perspective. He speaks with such sentimentality that we get the impression Huw could have embellished much of his storytelling. Since he is narrating the story as an older man, his childhood may not have been as ideal as he remembers it. Once Huw begins telling us about a memory, it becomes part of the novel, and we are allowed to experience the event through his eyes as though it were taking place in the present tense.

Setting

The pristine valley in the southern part of Wales where this story takes place is not named, but is apparently one of many in that area. The tall mountains are divided by deep valleys, and are riddled with seams of coal underground. The community is a blue-collar, hard-working population and their homes, although simple, are clean and tidy. The mountain provides an overview of the valley and, for a longer time maintains its beauty, as the river and valley are clogged with slag.

With the street is narrow and the valley rather small, the communal singing lends an atmosphere to the story that is sweet and harmonious.

Language and Meaning

Richard Llewellyn manages to help us learn the Welsh dialect while presenting a story written in perfect modern English. We are permitted to look in on the dialogue between people that contains affectionate terms of endearment, such as "my little one." Many fascinating word groups and unfamiliar expressions are used smoothly and in contexts that make them totally understandable by the reader.

Llewellyn tends to philosophize as he tells his story, which reminds us that he is looking back. Thus, although Huw Morgan is telling the story from memory, we are occasionally reminded that he is now an old man, but once his narrative starts up again, the reader is seamlessly lost in his story as though it were occurring in the present. Llewellyn's writing flows easily and beautifully, and is interspersed with description, dialogue, and a point of view that comes from Huw Morgan's vivid memories. The story's main characters are

well-developed, and Llewellyn does not let us forget the innocence of their period of history.

Structure

This densely written book contains forty-two chapters and four hundred and four pages. The chapters vary somewhat in length. There is not a specific story plot, but only a linear accounting of life events in a small village in Wales, mainly focused on the Morgan family.

The story is "narrated" by the fictional character, Huw Morgan, who is now an elderly man, looking back on his life in a coal mining valley in South Wales. Many chapters begin with Huw speaking in the present tense, reminding us that, as he writes, he is preparing to leave the old family house, which will soon be smothered in slag from the mines. As he slips back into remembering, the story picks up and moves chronologically through his life. In a sense, we "flash back" into the present, since the story is all about the past.

We learn about this charming culture through the eyes of Huw, who has unabashedly romanticized his youth, making even the most negative events seem like sentimental journeys into the past. Although the ending of the story, which we learn at the beginning, is not uplifting, the story is bittersweet. Llewellyn's love for his characters is contagious and, although his narrator is somewhat idealistic, one finishes the book having learned about a different culture, a different period of history and an industry with a rough and rocky history.



Quotes

All the women used to dress up specially in their second best with starched stiff aprons on a Saturday morning, for then the men were paid when they came off the midday shift.

As soon as the whistle went they put chairs outside their front doors and sat there waiting til the men came up the Hill and home. Then as the men came up to their front doors they threw their wages, sovereign by sovereign, into the shining laps, fathers first and sons or lodgers in a line behind. My mother often had forty of them, with my father and five brothers working. And up and down the street you would hear them singing and laughing and in among it all the pelting jingle of gold. A good day was Saturday, then, indeed. Pp. 2-3.

"We will see, now," said Davy. "When those ironworkers gather round the pit for work, you will have some of them offering to work for less, and the manager will agree. You will see, now, and the older men and them with more pay will be put outside, too. And you will be one if you are not careful."

"There is silly you are, boy," my father said and laughing. P. 13

There is first of all surprise that a grown-up can cry properly, and then curiosity to see how they cry, and that causes a cold scrutiny in which all feeling is lost, even when it is realised that this is your own mother who is crying. You are intent upon the details. The shaking hands, swollen blue veins, smeared cheeks, hair coming loose under the stress of an almost rhythmic sobbing, of points of light flicking from brimming lashes, and you are amazed at the growing wetness of the handkerchief and the never-ending flow of big tears.

This is your mother, you think.

This poor, huddled woman over there, is your mother, who has told you so many times not to cry. After that, her red face and swollen, wet eyes, so miserable and helpless, come as a shock to make you laugh, and although you know it is wrong, you feel you must laugh outright, or go under the table

And when that is past, you will want to cry because your mother is still crying to herself, and cannot find comfort.

P. 31.

She did smell always of thyme and lavender because she made little bags of it for the sheets, and I suppose she put a couple in with her own wash. So that smell was always with her, and lovelier than that you will never have. P. 55.

But the fingers of Miss Jenkins on the strings of the harp took all feeling from you, excepting the joy of song and the desire to sing. Songs and part-songs, cantatas, arias and dance melodies, hymns and psalms, all followed as fast as one would stop. Now the men singing, now the women. My mother started cradle songs she had taught us years before and taught the strangers, and the strangers sang their songs and taught us. P. 81.



The first thing I saw was the slag heap. Big it had grown, and long, and black, without life or sign, lying along the bottom of the Valley on both sides of the river. The green grass, and the reeds and the flowers, all had gone, crushed beneath it. And every minute the burden grew, as cage after cage screeched along the cables from the pit, bumped to a stop at the tipping pier, and emptied dusty loads on the ridged, black, dirty back.

On our side of the Valley the heap reached to the front garden walls of the bottom row of houses, and children from them were playing up and down the black slopes, screaming and shouting, laughing in fun. On the other side of the river the chimney pots of the first row of houses could only just be seen above the sharp curving back of the far heap, and all the time I was watching, the cable screeched and the cages tipped. From the Britannia pit came a call on the hooter as the cages came up, as though to remind the Valley to be ready for more filth as the work went on and on, year in and year out. "Is the pit allowed to do this to us Mr, Gruffydd?" I asked him.

"Do what, my son?" Mr. Gruffydd asked.

"Put slag by here," I said.

"Nowhere else to put it, my son," he said.

P. 85.

"There is no room for pride in any man. There is no room for unkindness. There is no room for wit at the expense of others. All men are born the same, and equal. As you saw to-day, so come the Captains and the Kings and the Tinkers and the Tailors. Let the memory direct your dealings with men and women. And be sure to take good care of Mama. Is it?" P. 117.

All the way up the Hill people looked and wished my father good night, but nobody asked questions. It was enough for them to know that the turkeys were home again. They could find out where they had been later.

Mr. Gruffydd was in the house when we got in, so that was more shock to us. My father went round the back to hutch the turkeys, so he came in after, to a silence.

"Good evening, Mr. Gruffydd," he said, and went to the mantle for his pipe.

"Good evening to you, Mr. Morgan," Mr. Gruffydd said. "I hear you have had trouble with Mr. Elias?"

"Bad news has good legs," said my father. P. 125.

And as I looked at my little box, I tried hard to hold the tears, I prayed to hold the tears, but the dear little box with scratches on the patterned lid and ink and grit all over it, and all its riches in ruins, one by one I saw them bleeding their own blood with unjust wounds, and I cried for them. P. 154.

"Come you, then," my father said, and got up and went to the box, and brought it to the table. "From to-night you shall have a penny for every mark on your face, a shilling for a black eye, sixpence for a nose bleed, two shillings for a broken nose, and a penny for every mark on your knuckles or on your fore-arms and body. Your money-box is richer this night by three shillings and sixpence. Now come you out in the back." P. 159.



"Evidently its mother took my message to heart," he said. "Let me see your nose-rag." I took out my handkerchief.

"Surprise on surprise," he said, while I looked at him. "Perhaps that hammering will teach you that your ways are not ours. There is no wonder that civilized men look down upon Welshmen as savages. I shudder to think of your kind growing up. However, I shall endeavour to do my utmost with you, helped by a stick. Remember that. And keep your eyes off me, you insolent little blackguard." P. 165.

A policeman with a silver spike in his helmet, and a silver chain hanging on it, came to the Valley next day, but nobody knew what he wanted and nobody could be found to answer his questions, so he went off again. P. 172.

O, Brandy Broth is the King of Broth and royal in the rooms of the mouth. A good chicken and a noble piece of ham, with a little shoulder of lamb, small to have the least of grease, and then a paste of the roes of trout with cream, a bit of butter and the yolk of egg, whipped tight and poured in when the chicken, proud with a stuffing of sage and thyme, has been elbowing the lamb and the ham in the earthenware pot until all three are tender as the heart of a mother. In with the carrots and turnips and goodness of marrow bones, and in with a mixing of milk and potatoes. Now watch the clock and every fifteen minutes pour in a noggin of brandy, and with the first a pint of home-brewed ale. Two noggins in and with the third, throw in the chopped bottoms of leeks, but save the green leaves until ten minutes from the time you sit to eat, for then you should still find them a lovely green. Drink down the liquor and raise your eyes to give praise for a mouth and a belly, and then start upon the chicken. Pp. 193-194.

Mr. Jonas was torn and in pieces, collarless, with a piece of his tie hanging like a rag, his coat ripped, his trousers torn all the way down, and his face white, and watery in the eyes, and purple in the cheeks from flathers that Dai gave him whenever his head came up, slap, slap, one, two, almost as quick as you can count, not with the knuckles, but with the palm. P. 197.

"No," said Mr. Gruffydd, "I am sure it is wrong."

"You are afraid what people will say," Angharad said, standing now, and collecting the pots. "Afraid of people's tongues."

"Nothing of the kind," said Mr. Gruffydd. "I am afraid that you will go threadbare all your life. That you and me will have to depend upon the chairity of others for most of our good meals, and on my living for enough to exist." P. 212.

It took us a long time to get that old crate up the Hill, for there was a thickness of people going up and coming down, and stopping to talk, and asking the choir what Windsor was like, and if the Queen was in gold, and if they had their food from diamond plates, and those who stayed home trying to look as though they would give a fig to go to Windsor to see the Queen...P. 282.

"O, Mama, my little one," she said, in a voice that should have been eased with many tears, "I am lonely without him. I put his boots and clothes ready every night. But they are there, still, in the morning. O, Mama, there is lonely I am."



My mother stood for a few minutes after Bron had gone.

"Huw," she said, "I will have Bron to live here, if she will come."

"She will never come, Mama," I said. "One mistress in a house."

"Then you shall go down there and live then," my mother said, and sharp to move and off with her apron. P. 328.

We were gently afraid of each other, though without fear, and with nothing of fright. We were afraid only in the spirit and delicacy of being afraid, of the same nature of afraidness that blood horses feel when a hand is placed upon them, and they shake under the skin from tail to muzzle.

A fear of the touch, whether from speech, eyes or body.

And only because we knew of another world, that could be reached in a moment, and felt for a moment, and gone in only a momentary moment. P. 331.

The Split, we were.

Ten of us.

And for three-quarters of an hour we sat in silence and the voice of Mr. Gruffydd, wherever he was, filled us again with courage, and with hope of a better world. P. 352.

So I closed his eyes and shut his jaw, and held him tight to me, and his bristles were sharp in my cuts and I was heavy with love for him, as he had been, and with sadness to know him gone. P. 402.



Topics for Discussion

How would you describe Huw Morgan's life, as a whole? Huw is sentimental about his life, but was it a good life, relatively speaking? If so, in what ways?

Why does Huw, who is academically gifted, decide not to be a physician? Is his thinking rational? Why or why not?

Discuss the form of justice practiced in this small valley. How is it different from England?

What does Chapel signify for the people of this valley?

What eco-disasters can you think of that can compare with the one that took place in Huw Morgan's valley? How do they compare? Can they be repaired?

Discuss Mr. Jonas. Why was he so hateful toward Huw, in particular? What was his biggest problem with his students? What job might he hold today?

When Huw goes to Marged and Gwilym's home, what does he find? What does he do? Discuss Marged's mental health issues. Do you blame Owen? Why or why not?

Discuss the reasons for the students' cruelty toward Huw on his first day of National School.

Although the valley is generally peaceful and harmonious, there are at least a couple of incidents that break the serene picture Huw Morgan paints. Discuss those incidents and their meaning in the story.

Discuss your opinion of Bronwen Morgan. Does she lead Huw on in any way? What do you think her feelings are toward Huw?