Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit Study Guide

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit by Daniel Quinn

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit shows an enormous educated, telepathic gorilla, Ishmael, mentoring an idealistic but somewhat dense middle-aged writer. Ishmael helps him understand how the majority of humankind is enacting a story that will destroy the world, while a tiny minority lives in communion with the community of life and can point to a brighter future.

Ishmael, an enormous, educated, telepathic gorilla, agrees to mentor the unnamed narrator in saving the world. He begins with the familiar and clearly perverse story of the Nazis, sweeping all Germans, regardless of politics or economic situation, along in their propaganda and education program. He then states boldly, "Mother Culture," the voice of "Taker" culture, uses the same techniques to inculcate her own themes into every member of "civilized" peoples from birth. Ishmael maintains, however, there is another story of humankind, but "Leaver" can be appreciated only once the narrator understands how the Takers have brought the world to where it is. Mother Culture tells man's scientific analysis of creation and evolution in mythical terms. Takers believe they must rule nature and to rule it must first conquer it, for nature will not surrender passively. Their morality is artificially truncated by the belief one cannot know how to live and a too-facile reliance on prophets to instruct them.

When the narrator fails to see humans do not need prophets to tell them how to live - fails to see an immutable law in nature that shows how they should live, Ishmael uses the undisputed laws of gravity and flight to show how Taker culture is in freefall and few are truly worried about the inevitable impact. Ishmael follows with a shocking picture of happy cannibals legally dining on one another to help the narrator understand why the Takers' views on the food chain are fundamentally wrong and destructive. This theme will be developed at length going forward as the alternative - agriculture - is critiqued. Ishmael cites Peter Farb's thesis that food supply and population size rise and fall in direct relation to one another and that this balancing occurs in a global perspective. The problem can be corrected by dropping the Taker party line, but if they refuse, human extinction is inevitable.

By contrast, the Leavers' story is far older and still successful, whenever Takers do not stamp it out. Genesis 1-4 preserves an ancient story the Hebrews - a Taker people -adopt without fully understanding and incorporate into their mythology, changing only "the gods" to "God." The Hebrew narrative shows signs of a nonagricultural people striving to understand why aggressive neighbors are successfully invading, killing, and displacing them to open new farmlands. Only positing a Leaver polemic makes full sense: in seeking Life, they do whatever they want, regardless of consequences for others.

Ishmael is evicted and disappears, but the narrator finds him, ailing, in a freak show. Only reluctantly does Ishmael resume the training, taking up how as Takers lose touch with ancient culture and wisdom they need to be told how to live, while contemporary Leavers have no doubts, being firmly grounded in well-tested, localized traditions.

Leavers, Ishmael holds, are "the original affluent society," rather than, as Leavers insist, always teetering on the brink of starvation. The narrator comes to appreciate how humanity might be remembered a billion years hence as the species that first evolves self-awareness and intelligence - and has the grace to allow other species to do the same. Ishmael seeks an optimistic way for his pupil to present his message to others, but the narrator has learned to be defeatist. About to be cut loose by his ailing mentor, the narrator sees the task as daunting as that faced by St. Paul, but realizes that everything must start small, and doing nothing only plays into the onrushing destruction. Before the narrator can rescue Ishmael from the carnival, the great ape dies of pneumonia and is unceremoniously cremated by the county, along with roadkill.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit shows an enormous educated, telepathic gorilla, Ishmael, mentoring an idealistic but somewhat dense middle-aged writer. Ishmael helps him understand how the majority of humankind is enacting a story that will destroy the world, while a tiny minority lives in communion with the community of life and can point to a brighter future.

The narrator is furious, reading an ad for a teacher seeking a pupil earnestly desirous of saving the world. He is indignant because since the 1970s, he has wanted such a teacher. In his mid-teens, he sees the "children's revolt" fade away, grows disillusioned and bewildered, but unable to be merely cynical. He longs for a Leo in *The Journey to the East,* whose wisdom author Hermann Hesse cannot reveal because he does not know it. The narrator stops his foolish quest when something dies inside and scars over. This unknown teacher could have contacted him directly but, if he is a charlatan, why would he want him to? He accepts that irrationality occurs.

Needing to determine this is a scam, the narrator heads to the address, a faceless office building. Room 105 opens into a massive, unlit space, marked by an unmistakable but not unpleasant odor of beast. Except for a bookcase and overstuffed chair, it is empty. Behind an internal window sits a strange, large body and, approaching the glass, the narrator is startled to see staring back at him the eyes of a full-grown gorilla. Its sheer mass is alarming, its behavior placid, and its face hideous yet humanlike and noble. The narrator's first impulse is to apologize for his effrontery, but he cannot move. Noticing a poster reading, "WITH MAN GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR GORILLA?" the narrator is angry this magnificent creature is being held captive to illustrate a koan. He tells himself he must do something, but must first sit still so he can hear. Looking the gorilla in the eyes, he realizes the eyes are speaking to him and he slumps. The inner voice says it is unimportant how they are communicating, identifies the gorilla as the teacher, and offers to tell his story. He will not reveal his name.

The gorilla is born somewhere in equatorial West Africa, captured young, and sold to a small zoo in a northeastern city. There he is penned up for several years and finds he is capable of logical, methodical thought. He recalls a former, pleasant life and contrasts it to the present, boring one, and recalls being part of a family in Africa, like a finger is part of a hand, little aware of his individuality. Here in the zoo, however, five fingers do not make a hand. In Africa, wonderful food is everywhere at all times, but here they are fed tasteless fodder twice a day. Almost unnoticed, such small puzzles make the gorilla's interior life grow.

As the Great Depression forces zoos to downsize, the adolescent gorilla is sold to a traveling menagerie, and the psychological difference is profound. Humans watch the animals in both venues, but in the menagerie, it is clear they come for no other purpose.

Groups talk to him rather than to one another. He does not feel he has changed and the visitors look and sound like those at the zoo. The zoo has many gorillas but here he is alone, so he assumes humans behave differently around single and multiple gorillas. He pays closer attention to human speech, which constantly differs, and notices a recurring sound he cannot interpret. To his right is a caged chimpanzee mother and infant to whom the humans call out, "Zsa-Zsa!" to get her attention, while to get his they say, "Goliath!" Realizing he has an individual name is a revolutionary perception for the gorilla. He feels born at that moment as a person.

Soon, from listening to parents explaining things to their children, the gorilla realizes *everything* has a name. Within years he can follow conversations but remains puzzled: why do human visitors distinguish themselves from the animal inhabitants in the menagerie? Why are humans not animals? Hundreds of parental explanations have cleared up for him that there is a place called "The Wild" from which people have taken animals they find interesting - especially the "wild" and "dangerous" ones - and put them here. At any rate, life in the menagerie is better than at the zoo because it is not so oppressively boring.

One rainy day, three or four years later, a visitor appears, shriveled and ancient, stares into the gorilla's eyes, declares, "You are *not* Goliath." The visitor then marches away, leaving the gorilla thunderstruck and depressed over long being deluded. He drifts into a fugue state, not eating, sleeping, or responding to visitors. After a few days, the keepers sedate him and he awakens in a strange open-air gazebo set in an attractive park near a large white house, and he hears the menagerie owner of has gotten rid of him for ceasing to be the Goliath he advertises. The gazebo is even more boring than the zoo until this same man steps up, makes eye contact, and tells him, "You are Ishmael." Ishmael is both thunderstruck and relieved to be redeemed from oblivion. He feels whole for the first time and is curious about his uncanny, godlike savior but lacks the logical tools or insight into humans to deduce he is the reason he is in the gazebo.

The benefactor is a wealthy Jewish merchant, Walter Sokolow. Sokolow is depressed, realizing his family is perishing in the Nazi Holocaust. Ishmael is not, as advertised, a monster like the Nazi giant crushing the race of David, so Sokolow rescues him as a substitute for his family. He learns to care for him and speaks to him from the soul. When Ishmael strokes his hand in sympathy, Sokolow suspects intelligence, and tries to teach him to talk, something gorillas physically cannot do. Finally, Ishmael makes mental contact and over the next decade, learns all Sokolow can teach about the universe. As Ishmael wants more, they study, first side-by-side and later with Sokolow as a research assistant. Educating Ishmael relieves Sokolow's remorse and gloom.

In the early 1960s, Sokolow marries a woman who straight off wants the gorilla gone, but Sokolow will not cast Ishmael off as Abraham did his first son at wife Sarah's behest. A daughter, Rachel, is born and Ishmael becomes her brother and mentor. They bond closely to the mother's dismay; Rachel skips grades, earns a master's degree in biology by age 20, and in 1985, succeeds her father as Ishmael's benefactor. Rachel moves Ishmael into a comfortable "retreat" rather than to the very center of human culture for

which he yearns, but by 1989, Ishmael devises a way to live in the city and realize his vocation of teaching.

Overwhelmed by such detail, the narrator asks how many pupils he has had. Four, all failures, Ishmael replies, because he did not appreciate the difficulty of the task or the minds of his pupils. He tells the narrator his specialty is "Captivity," and posits there are humans captive to a civilization that destroys the world in order to live. The narrator cannot see this because he is captive in a personal way, but Ishmael reminds him of when young people years ago tried to escape but failed, unable to find the bars to the cage. The narrator confesses to feeling this way, and Ishmael continues: the world will not survive much longer as humanity's captive. The narrator must next tell how he has come to be here.

The narrator tells of writing a college paper, which claims the Nazis win World War II; and create a happy world free of Jews, Gypsies, Blacks, Indians, Slavs, and Asians. Textbooks are edited and within generations, no one knows anything else. One day, however, a student, Kurt, describes to his friend, Hans, a feeling they are being lied to that troubles him. The narrator's teacher asks him if he has this same crazy feeling, and he still does, but less desperately now, because it makes little practical difference if one is lied to or not. Ishmael suggests it would make a great difference if *everyone* discovered they are being lied to and what the lie is. That is what they must hope for and it will form the topic of tomorrow's meeting.

That evening, the narrator, who normally avoids leaving his apartment, needs to walk and talk, to be reassured, and to confess impure thoughts about saving the world. He wants to avoid dreaming. It is hard to find people willing to accept the burdens and risks of friendship as he conceives it. People say he is sour and misanthropic and may, in fact, be right. In the morning, he believes Ishmael may be a dream, pretends not to be terrified, but drives downtown and finds Ishmael, who gauges the seriousness of his mind, and then begins abruptly upon his topic.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 introduces the protagonist, Ishmael, an enormous, educated, telepathic gorilla, who has advertised for a student who wants to save the world. The unnamed narrator reveals himself as a save-the-world holdover from the 1960s and 1970s, frustrated and skeptical. Several themes are begun: 1) the Nazi Holocaust not only as historical event but as a pretext for considering how falsehood leads to captivity, 2) humans considering themselves superior to animals and animal sentience emerging in unnatural captivity; this will be drawn out into a philosophy of how *homo sapiens* can fit into nature without upsetting balances - but does not. Ishmael's academic specialty is also his plight, Captivity, and he will show a perverse portion of humanity holding the world in thrall.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The narrator confirms he has read enough about the era to see Hitler holds the *entire* German nation captive, from those who detest what he is doing to his most enthusiastic supporters. Ishmael attributes this to Hitler's story - about bursting the bonds holding them back from their rightful place in the world - rather than to terror or charisma. Post-World War I degradation leaves the masses open to propaganda and an intensive education, and those who know they are being fed rank mythology must either join the herd or escape. People in the narrator's culture are in this same situation; they are captives of a story that need not be named or discussed because all know it by heart from childhood. Race, sex, religion, wealth, and nationality are irrelevant. All hear it incessantly. Once Ishmael tells him the story, the narrator will hear it everywhere and be astonished no one else hears it but passively takes it in.

Society puts pressure on members to take a place in the story chiefly by refusing to feed those who do not. Anti-Hitler Germans could emigrate. Today, one story is inescapably being enacted everywhere, as "Mother Culture" teaches how things should be. If the narrator takes this journey with Ishmael, he will discern Mother Culture's voice humming in the background and be tempted to enlighten those around him, but they will only be alienated and confused. The narrator is willing.

Ishmael's one unattainable fantasy is to travel freely and unobtrusively in the human world, and he has imagined what to pack and what to leave behind. Either too much or too little is tiresome. Today, they will prepare, looking at some things and stowing them in the bag for later use. First, they must establish humans are divided into Takers and Leavers, neutral terms for what Takers normally call "civilized" and "primitive." Second, the narrator need not memorize the route they will take, as it is the journey that will change him. Mother Culture has been explaining to every Taker from birth how things come to be this way, but never all at once - from 10-15 billion years ago to the present. Rather, it has come as a mosaic from multiple sources to be assembled. Ishmael proposes to reexamine the key pieces, take them out and fit them into a different mosaic to provide a different explanation of how things come to be this way.

Third, there are special words they must define. "Story" means a scenario interrelating man, the world, and the gods," "Enacting" means making stories a reality, and "Culture" is a people enacting a story. Humans have enacted two fundamentally different stories. One begins 2-3 million years ago by Leavers and is still being successfully enacted today. The other is 10,000-12,000 years old, enacted by the Takers and is threatening catastrophe. Mother Culture considers these two chapters of a single story, but Ishmael proposes two separate, contradictory stories.

Ishmael asks the narrator to spend the rest of the day groping for the Takers' story over the last 10,000 years, but he objects he knows stories but not any one story. Ishmael

says it is an explaining story, like "How the Elephant Got Its Trunk," and relates how he tells a former student people are not excited about ozone depletion, rain forest destruction, pollution, species disappearances because they believe the explaining story they have been told. It covers everything satisfyingly, stills their alarm, and pacifies them so they do not think about the mess they are leaving their children. Ishmael wants him to grapple with why *he* is left unsatisfied. It is a mythological question, not fanciful Greek or Norse tales, but the things people of his culture are enacting around the world. The narrator finds nothing, leaving Ishmael amused and exasperated. Every story has a beginning, middle, and end. Before tomorrow, he must find the beginning, his culture's creation myth. The narrator is certain they have none.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 develops the Nazi theme to show all Germans, regardless of politics or economics, are swept up in the propaganda and education Blitzkrieg that appeals to the mass of the people. Those who want out can emigrate. This is not possible in the case of the story Mother Culture inculcates into every Taker from birth. Ishmael and the narrator agree on the basics needed for a voyage of discovery into the two stories of humankind. Note Ishmael's irritation with the narrator's inability to catch on, which he dubs "playing dumb." This will continue.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Next morning, there is a tape recorder beside the narrator's chair, to record for posterity whatever he has discovered about his doomed culture. The narrator can think of no creation myth other than Genesis but, challenged, talks about the not fully established but certainly non-mythical story of the Big Bang, 10-15 billion years ago, followed by the establishment of the solar system, 6-7 billion years ago, and life beginning in the chemical broth of earth's oceans 3.5 billion years ago. Bacteria and microorganisms evolve into more complex forms, which gradually spread to land; amphibians evolve into reptiles, reptiles into small mammals from which one branch, 10-15 million years ago, becomes the primates. Finally, man appears 3 million years ago. Ishmael asks how can the narrator expect him to believe this is not a myth, and plays the tape back. The narrator insists this is not a myth but basic eight-grade science acceptable anywhere (Creationists excepted).

Ishmael agrees - this is ambient story of his culture, full of facts, arranged mythically. The narrator fails to understand because Mother Culture has crooned him to sleep. The narrator is annoyed to be teased by a gorilla. Ishmael notes the use of *appeared* relative to man, but this clarifies nothing, so Ishmael tells a story of his own: Half a billion years ago, earth is unrecognizable, the land lifeless, and the seas eerily still. One day, an anthropologist looking for someone to interview, finds a living creature in the shallows offshore, makes friends with the squishy blob, and asks to tape its customs and creation myth. The creature is indignant; they have no fanciful tales, just a factual account of the formation of the universe and solar system, and the appearance of life on earth. The anthropologist questions the word "*appear*," asking where this happens. The creature cannot conceive of life on land, but tells of microorganisms evolving into more complex forms until eventually jellyfish "*appear*."

The narrator is silently furious until Ishmael explains that for the jellyfish the story ends here. Everything before is lead-up and there is nothing beyond. The narrator titters, knowing there are all the higher forms and finally man. Ishmael says everyone in the narrator's culture knows man is the climax of creation, a religion states openly: man is the creature for whom everything else was made. Ishmael asks sardonically how this cannot be myth. Facts are, indeed, facts, but they are embodied in mythology. If astrophysicists could show the fundamental creative processes of the universe halted 5 billion years ago, or if biologists and paleontologists could report speculation ended 3 million years ago, that would be support the Takers' version, but the universe has gone on as before, and man's appearance causes no more stir than the jellyfish's. The narrator grins and admits, incredibly, his story is a myth.

Ishmael reminds the narrator the story the people of his culture are enacting is about the meaning of the world, divine intentions for the world, and human destiny. He asks, based on the first part of the story, what the world's *meaning* is. When the narrator is

unclear, Ishmael asks why at mid-story he shifts from the universe to the single planet earth? Because it is destined to be the birthplace of man, the narrator responds. Ishmael agrees that if the Taker's view of the world as a human life-support system is valid, that is a correct view. He notes the narrator has omitted mention of the gods, doubtless to avoid tainting the story with mythology, but they can now drop that facade. Assuming a divine agency behind creation, what do the gods intend? The narrator says: Everything was set up for man. Ishmael assumes the gods must place enormous importance in man to have done so, and wonders why at this point in the story they give no hint of man's special destiny.

Every story, Ishmael reminds the narrator, is the working out of the premise on which it is based. The Leavers' story has a premise the narrator cannot possibly discover at this point, but he should be able to discover the premise of his own story, because it is simple, powerful, not necessarily beneficial, and history is its working out. Ishmael offers a hint: is the world not made for jellyfish, frogs, lizards, or rabbits? Even atheists know the premise: *the world was made for man*. If the world is for man, then the world belongs to men, and men can do whatever they please with it. That is what Takers have been doing for 10,000 years. Realizing he hears this 50 times a day - *our* environment, *our* seas, *our* solar system, *our* wildlife - the narrator apologizes for having denied mythology in his culture.

Next day, they move on to examine what the first part of the story contributes to the explanation of how things came to be the way they are right now. Ishmael asks: would things be this way if the world were made for jellyfish? Of course not: so the gods are to blame. Ishmael says the narrator is starting to get the idea and gives him his next assignment; discover the story's middle.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 examines socratically how the world comes to be what it is, with the narrator's dimness allowing Ishmael to tell the story of creation from the jellyfish's point of view. Mother Culture tells the story of man's scientific analysis of creation and evolution in mythical terms. The gods are behind the mess, Ishmael first hints - a theme to be drawn out later in the novel - and the Takers' story is not the only one. The Leavers' will be told later in the book.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Ishmael starts the recorder when the narrator says he has written a *Nova*-like treatment for the middle and end of the story. It takes man 3 million years to figure out the world is made for him, not jellyfish, and he lives at the mercy of the world. He is unable to become distinctively human while remaining a hunter-gatherer, because of inevitable food-exhaustion. Only when he learns to produce more food, by becoming an agriculturalist, do things change. That is some 10,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent. It marks the biggest moment in human history to that point and man's rise thereafter is meteoric. Settlement gives rise to division of labor, which gives rise to technology, which produces trade and commerce, and then mathematics, literacy, science, etc. That is the middle of the story.

Ishmael is impressed the narrator has identified the birth of his culture, albeit in an outmoded single-point of origin, legendary version. The narrator states man's destiny is to achieve and accomplish great things, which Ishmael agrees is the Taker's view. Challenging the narrator unsuccessfully to think mythologically about building civilization, Ishmael asks if the world and the universe *need* man. The narrator thinks about a humanless world, viewing it from outer space rather than the ground or from the jungle. Ishmael asks if the gods mean to leave the earth a primeval, chaotic jungle, which it is without man to straighten things out. He asks what sort of person does this and agrees, a ruler or king. He revises the premise: *The world was made for man, and man was made to rule it*, and reminds the narrator this is myth not stated in his culture. Ishmael is sorry the narrator is not excited by these unbelievable discoveries.

Ishmael recaps: some 10,000 years ago man realizes he does not belong as part of the anarchy and lifts himself out of the slime to straighten things out, but the world does not meekly submit. Wind, rain, forest, birds, insects, mice, wolves, foxes, mountains, rivers, oceans, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, blizzards, and drought refuse man's command. To rule the world, man must *conquer* the world. That is on radio and television 50 times a day, the narrator says, amazed, and Ishmael smiles.

How does the second part contribute to the explanation of how things came to be this way? Ishmael asks, urging him to think deeply, and prompting: of what are man's triumph, tragedies, marvels and miseries a direct result? Things turn out the way they are because man fulfills his destiny to conquer and rule the world. The Takers see this as the price of becoming human. The gods give man the choice they give Achilles: a brief life of glory or a long, uneventful life in obscurity. Takers chose glory. The narrator agrees indoor plumbing, central heat and air condition, automobiles, etc., are all the price of enacting a story that casts mankind as the enemy of the world.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Chapter 4 pushes to show how Takers believe they must rule nature and to rule it must first conquer it, for nature will not surrender passively. The narrator is catching on faster and appreciating his new perceptions more. Ishmael quotes a snippet from Alfred Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam," knowing the narrator, a writer, will catch the illusion to raw nature.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Next day, Ishmael and the narrator take up the story's end. Man has not completely ruled the world and this may be his undoing. He has devastated the world and does not know how to stop devastating it or repair what he has done. It is hard to imagine how the world can survive another century of man's abuse, unless man can increase his mastery and make his rule absolute. Then pollution-free fusion, the ability to turn rain on and off, farm the oceans, control the weather will come about, as man manipulates them programmatically. Going forward will either destroy the world or turn it into the paradise it is meant to be. Then man will be unstoppable and will move into the *Star Trek* era, conquering and ruling the entire universe.

The narrator is amazed Ishmael approves, offering only that 50 or 100 years ago no one would even have considered the conquest of the world could be anything but beneficial. Only recently has his culture doubted things must inevitably get better forever. Ishmael also suggests there must be a *but* in the revised premise, because Takers have always perceived the world as short of being paradise: subject to war, brutality, poverty, injustice, corruption, and tyranny. It explains World War II and may yet explain World War III. The narrator cannot see the obvious: being human, they are bound to screw paradise up. Because there is something fundamentally wrong with humans, which makes them stupid, destructive, greedy, and shortsighted.

Ishmael asks what evidence the Takers have to their conclusion there is something fundamentally wrong with humans. Human history traces back but a few thousand years and forgets the millions of years that precede it. Based on 1% of the evidence, from a single culture, they reach a sweeping conclusion. Ishmael states that with a story puts humans in accord with the world, humans will live in accord with the world. With a story that puts them at odds with the world, humans will act like lords of the world, conquer the world, and leave it bleeding at its feet. Ishmael believes this is the world as we know it now.

Ishmael moves to examine the most striking feature of Taker culture: its passionate and unwavering dependence on prophets - Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad - to straighten out their lives and give new sets of laws or principles to live by. The narrator is vaguely aware Leavers do not do this, and figures this is because God takes little interest in mankind before nice, white Neolithic farmers come along. Why do millions of Takers back prophets with their lives? Why are they needed? Why do civil matters like abortion or legalizing drugs quickly change into religious questions? It seems to be an automatic Taker response. The narrator believes that in such complex questions people need someone who knows the truth. Ishmael is amazed man can split atoms, explore the moon, and splice genes, but not know how to live. He asks what Mother Culture says on the subject. The narrator replies one can have certain knowledge about such phenomena, but nothing is available on how people should act.

Ishmael asks, must people deduce what is reasonable and act without knowing they are doing the right thing? The narrator is sure this is so, uncertain why he thinks so, and doubtful anyone has tried to find out. Ishmael decries such unscientific procedure by scientific people.

Ishmael states that, according to Taker mythology, 1) there is something fundamentally wrong with people, and 2) they have no certain knowledge on how to live or any hope of gaining it. Does the narrator see a connection - that if one knows how to live, one can control the flaw and stop screwing up the world? The narrator does. Ishmael announces the major elements are in place to see the Takers' story as one of hopelessness and futility, the headlong rush to catastrophe a spectacle to be watched. No wonder Takers turn to drugs, booze, and television, go mad and are suicidal. The narrator asks if there is another story. There is, Ishmael replies, but the Takers are doing their best to destroy it along with everything else.

Ishmael asks if the narrator has done much sightseeing in his travels - seen the local sights? If so, he has surely noticed only tourists look at local landmarks; they are invisible to the natives because they are always in plain sight. Thus far in their wanderings, Ishmael declares, they have looked only at the Taker landmarks, but a visitor from another planet would find this extraordinary. Mother Culture has not proven her basic axiom that no certain knowledge is available about how to live, and Takers believe if they venture beyond the border of the map of their world of thought, they will fall off the edge of the world. Tomorrow, therefore, they will cross the border courageously into territory never explored by anyone in the narrator's culture, because the maps say it is not there - and cannot be there.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter 5 examines Taker morality, which is artificially truncated by the belief one cannot know how to live and a too-facile reliance on prophets to instruct them. This is remarkably unscientific and, in fact, not the only way to look at things. The Takers' anti-scientism is underlined by Ishmael's use of the hoary myth of a flat world off which the willfully ignorant are afraid of falling. It is as old as the Columbus myth in the late 15th century, when few still doubted the earth is a sphere. It made - and makes - for a good story. He and the narrator will, like the voyagers in *Star Trek,* mentioned earlier in the chapter, venture where no one has dared go.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Ishmael is uncharacteristically playful next morning, and the narrator is tempted to remind him he is a gorilla but refrains. The Takers' false axiom that certain knowledge about how to live is unobtainable is a wall that must be scaled. Prophets are unnecessary, as one can consult what is *actually there*. A century ago, people are assured they cannot fly and told there is no reason to look for a way; not one piece of knowledge about flying cold be considered certain. Everyone has a theory (flapping wings, fixed wings, etc.) and proceeds, inefficiently, to test it by trial and error. All they need is the knowledge that air flowing over an airfoil inevitably creates lift. Early aeronauts simply do not know there are laws of aerodynamics. The narrator begins to see the parallel to the Takers' position on how to live, but maintains there are no such absolute moral laws, only made-up laws that can be changed by voting. Aerodynamics cannot be changed by a vote. Ishmael accepts that the narrator goes along with Mother Culture's teaching, but says he wants to examine another law not subject to change by any vote: the law of gravity.

The narrator is startled by this shift in subject, but provides the definition of gravity: every particle is attracted to every other particle, with the attraction varying by the distance between them. Ishmael asks how this law is derived, and chides that it is derived from looking at matter. One must know where to look to understand particular phenomena. Isaac Newton finds gravity in studying the universe of matter, not reading a law in some book of physics. Where, then, might one look to find a law pertaining to life, Ishmael wonders, and hints man is not alone on this planet. He is part of a community on which he depends absolutely. Ishmael applauds the narrator's realization man is part of the community of life, even though Mother Culture holds man is exempt from its laws, since he is so far above the rest of the community. Ishmael asks what other laws man is exempt from - gravity, aerodynamics, genetics, or thermodynamics? The narrator can think of none but, Mother Culture aside, he cannot see how laws for turtles or butterflies would be relevant to humans. Ishmael points out humans found the laws of aerodynamics relevant only when they wanted to fly; facing extinction, might they see relevance in laws governing life? The narrator admits they might.

Ishmael asks, what is gravity good for? He approves of the narrator's answer: it organizes things and keeps them together - solar system, galaxy, and universe. The law they are seeking holds the living community together. Biologists are no more astounded to hear behavior in the natural world follows certain patterns than physicists were when Newton articulated the law of gravity. Everyone over the age of two knows unsupported objects fall toward the center of the earth. Newton's achievement is formulating a law to describe the phenomenon. Similarly, they will formulate an unsurprising law about life in the community of life.

Ishmael asks if the law of gravity is about flight. Thoughtfully, the narrator answers it is relevant to flight but not about it. Gravity makes no distinction between aircraft and rocks. Ishmael approves and states the law they are seeking is not about civilizations but applies to civilizations, making no distinction between species. That is why it has remained undiscovered by Taker culture, for Taker myth insists man is a biological exception - the unique *end product* for which the world has been made. After a long silence, Ishmael delivers a mini-lecture on the three dirty tricks the gods have played on the Takers. 1) They have placed the world not in the center of the universe, but in the boondocks; man has gotten over this and continues believing he is the central figure in the drama of creation. 2) They have arranged for man to evolve rather than result from a special act of creation; man really hates this idea but is beginning to get used to it, while continuing to believe he is divinely appointed to rule the world and maybe the universe. 3) They have not exempted man from the law that governs the lives of all creatures; man has not yet learned about this bitterest blow, to which no adjustment is possible. Ishmael pauses to let this pronouncement sink in and then proceeds: Every law has effects or it would not be discernable as a law. The effect they are looking for is that species - mankind included - living in compliance with this law will live forever, environmental conditions permitting. Those not living in compliance will become extinct. This needs explaining just as the falling of objects needed explaining by Newton. Survival or extinction is the effect of an operative law. Ishmael proposes to explain the operation in terms the narrator already knows: gravity and aerodynamics.

Because they are sitting on a solid surface, they are not aware they are defying the law of gravity. Man in an airplane is subject to the inescapable law of gravity, but defies it by using air as a support. The early Taker fliers do not seek to understand aerodynamics; they build contraptions and push them off cliffs, hoping for the best. Imagine one would-be airman, pedaling away and flapping his mechanical wings, ecstatic over the freedom of the air. He does not realize his craft is not in compliance with the laws that make flight possible (laws he has never heard of and would scoff at). His disillusionment is slow in coming because he has a long way to freefall, congratulating himself as he does on his triumph. He is puzzled that the valley floor beneath him is dotted with abandoned craft like his; why do they not enjoy the freedom of the air? He wonders why he is not maintaining his altitude but is not worried, because his flight has been a success to this point. Why should it not continue so? He simply pedals harder and scoffs at those who predicted disaster, broken bones, and death. The law of gravity seems disturbingly to be catching up with him, so he pedals harder. The craft is doomed and so is he, unless he abandons it. The narrator sees this, but not any connection to what they have been talking about.

Ishmael clarifies: 10,000 years ago, Takers set out on a "civilizational flight" in a craft, the "Taker Thunderbolt," based on no theory and complying with no condition required for flight. They do not wonder about it, but exult in the thrill of being unbound by restraints that limit the rest of the biological community. They do not realize they are in freefall rather than flight. Below they see the destroyed societies and wonder why they are not in the air. As they pedal on, the law they know nothing about, as unforgiving as gravity, is catching up with them at an accelerating rate. Some gloomy 19th-century thinkers look down with alarm at the prospect of trouble in the not-too-distant future.

Other Takers shrug this off, pointing to how far they have come safely. They pedal harder but famine becomes routine. Peter Farb declares "Intensification of production to feed an increased population leads to a still greater increase in population," but the Takers turn to birth control and are sure the Thunderbolt will fly forever.

Today, everyone is looking down and seeing the ground rushing upwards, faster every year as basic ecological and planetary systems are impacted, irreplaceable resources are devoured, and species disappear through human encroachment. Pessimists (i.e., realists) point to an unpredictable crash, 20-50 years off, while optimists naively maintain faith in their craft and their ability to pedal over the little hump in their path. The narrator adds: Survivors (if any) will begin doing it all over again in exactly the same way. Ishmael agrees. Trial and error may not be a bad way to learn to build an airplane, but it can be disastrous way to learn how to build a civilization.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Chapter 6 brings to mind humorous newsreels of early aviators, flapping and pedaling their unflyable aircraft designs before the Wright brothers discover their viable aerodynamic approach to heavier than air flight. Ishmael uses the undisputed laws of gravity and flight to show how Taker culture is in freefall and few are truly worried about the impact. Ishmael uses another literary allusion (to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*), certain the narrator will catch it. Several extinct civilizations are mentioned in passing, which will be dealt with at greater length later, and the views of Malthus, a 19th-century English political economist concerned about population growth, and Farb, a 20th-century American ecologist and writer, are mentioned. Their thought will be developed ahead, as teacher and pupil wrestle with questions of population and food.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Ishmael has the narrator imagine himself in an isolated city amidst good people, who claim things have always been peaceful and happy. He stays with them and enjoys their food until he learns it is "B meat" - the flesh of their neighbors. He is horrified but is assured the B's eat their neighbors, the C's, and the C's the A's, and all is democratic and friendly. Baffled, he calls this lawless, but they insist they have a law, follow it invariably, and it has ensured their way of life from the beginning. How can one discover the law without asking them? The narrator proposes observing them over a long period, watching for what 1) makes society work and 2) what the people *never* do that helps make it work. Encouraged, Ishmael allows a hypothetical execution as a penalty for breaking the law, and puts the whole story, including the offender's biography, on public record to provide a third clue: what he did that no one ever has before.

These same three guides can reveal how the community of life on earth could work for 3 billion years yet inspire the Takers to see horror chaos and savagery in a natural food chain. Naturalists know lions do not massacre herds of gazelles as enemies would, but kill only enough to satisfy their hunger and leave the rest in peace. This is the inviolable law that has made it possible for man to come into existence and survive. Its effects are to protect the community as a whole and species and individuals within the community. It is a peacekeeping law that prevents the howling chaos the Takers imagine, fostering life throughout the food chain. The law is followed by those club-finned fish that evolve into amphibians, those amphibians that evolve into reptiles, those reptiles that evolve into birds and mammals, those mammals that evolve into primates, the one branch of primates that evolves into *Australopithicus*, then *Homo habilis*, then *Homo erectus*, then *Homo sapiens*, and finally *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Then, 10,000 years ago, one branch of the latter exempts itself and builds a civilization that flouts the law in every point, and within 500 generations, the world is at the point of death. They claim there is something fundamentally wrong with human nature, rather than with what they are doing.

When Takers blunder into the New World, Leavers are unconsciously living by the ancient law, wise enough to know there is no rush to figure out how to achieve settlement in accordance with that law. They do not commit themselves to one civilizational craft that is clearly headed for disaster. Ishmael stops, smiles, and assigns the narrator to figure out what law or set of laws has been at work in the community of life since the beginning. He should use the same three guides as in analyzing the A's, B's, and C's: what law has been invariably obeyed for 3 billion years that has allowed countless life forms to come into existence, including man and what law, when the Takers defy it, will demand payment the penalty any species would pay for living contrary to the law.

The narrator's mind is a blank. He feels depressed and rejected, is behind in all his work, and Ishmael's assignment does not enthuse him. He goes for a drink and

contemplates how childish it is to resent having to work out an answer on his own. Clearly, Ishmael has a curriculum for his pupils, and the narrator wonders how far along he is and how soon he will finish and be out of Ishmael's life. He feels selfish, possessive, and stingy. He wants a teacher for life.

Chapter 7 Analysis

In Chapter 7, Ishmael shockingly pictures happy cannibals legally dining on one another to show the narrator how to understand why the Takers' views on the food chain are fundamentally wrong and destructive. This theme will be developed at length going forward as the alternative, agriculture, is critiqued. Note the narrator's growing attachment to Ishmael, which forebodes the inevitable, that they will be separated later in the novel.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

In four days the narrator comes up with four fundamental things only Takers do vis-a-vis their competitors: 1) exterminate them, 2) systematically destroy their food to make room for their own, 3) deny them access to food, and 4) store food externally for later use. Ishmael, acting oddly, suggests refinements on the first three, finds the fourth dubious, and says this describes the "limits on competition" that guarantee *diversity* reigns rather than a single victor at each level. The narrator sees Takers are waging war on the earth, destroying dozens of species a day.

Were hyenas to exterminate competing lions, the axiom that population and food supply rise and fall in relation to one another ultimately dictates less competition for grass, which leads to more births among prey, which leads to more births among hyenas, which then overkill the game and have either to learn animal husbandry or starve. Takers kill anything they cannot eat or that does not feed something they eat and view this as holy work, allowing more room for humans.

When the narrator wonders if agriculture itself is contrary to the law, Ishmael says settlement need not mean *unlimited growth,* as in the Taker system, and is not uniquely human. Most species are territorial, having hives, nests, dens, etc., and most hunter-gatherers live somewhere on a continuum between nomadic and settled life. Any new species competes for food with existing species. Human settlement is not against the laws of competition, but subject to them, meaning humans are not destroyers of the earth through innate wickedness. Any species strong enough to exempt itself would cause the same trouble.

Ishmael agrees Mother Culture resists linking increases in food production and population and insists food production is intended to feed the starving. Unless she extracts from those fed a promise not to reproduce, the 10,000-year pattern will continue. Mother Culture advocating birth control is like an alcoholic swearing off drinking - always something for the future. Humans have grown from 3 billion in 1960 to 5 billion, and nothing will change until the story being enacted changes. Note there are ads for sending food to the starving but not contraceptives. Takers are uninterested in global population control because the gods made the world for man.

All species suffer famine whenever their population outstrips food resources, and it brings the population back into balance, but Mother Culture will not allow this for humans and instead rushes in food from outside, ensuring famine will be chronic. Ecologists understand this, but dare not talk about it. When the narrator says it is hard to sit by and watch people starve, Ishmael says the gods, not men, *let* starvation, drought, and floods occur. The narrator concedes, but wonders why the U.S., with small population growth, increases food production every year, while areas of poor agricultural production show the steepest population growth. Ishmael points out that the rule says

nothing about *where* increases occur and First World farmers are fueling the Third World population explosion. There are 5.5 billion humans, of whom millions are starving, and enough food to feed 6 billion. This guarantees there will be 6 billion in 3-4 years, by which time food for 6.5 billion will be produced, so in 3-4 years there will be 6.5 billion and food enough for 7 billion. At each point, millions will still starve, for increased food production does not feed the hungry; it merely fuels population explosion. Should humans decide to address the problem a method will be found (as they will for ozone depletion and deforestation).

Ishmael suggests a tribal map in *The American Heritage Book of Indians* can help understand population control. Indians do not immigrate into open spaces when it gets crowded; Navahos cannot become Hopi in the way New Yorkers become Arizonans. Territorial invasions lead to war, a powerful incentive to limit growth, and some tribes build a reputation for ferocity to warn against encroachment. Uncrossable cultural barriers prove diversity better than homogeneity.

The narrator now believes the laws of competition are as absolute as those of aerodynamics. Ishmael points out an improperly-build plane can stay aloft a while if pushed off a cliff and the same is true for a civilization not built on the law of limited competition: eventually it will crash. Still, the narrator cannot see how to apply this to other issues. Ishmael observes it applies only to species' survival, not to legalizing drugs, premarital sex, or capital punishment. Avoiding extinction is fundamental knowledge.

The narrator fears people in his culture will not accept what he has learned, and Ishmael confirms they will not. Admitting the law is absolute and applies to mankind would finish Mother Culture off - which is precisely what needs to happen for mankind to survive. Mother Culture exists only in people's minds, so if they stop listening to her, she ceases to exist. If people refuse to live under the law they will not live, for those who threaten the stability of the community by defying the law eliminate themselves. Acceptance has no more to do with this than it does with the outcome of stepping off a cliff. Ishmael believes many are ready to work to restore the damage, and the narrator hopes he is right.

Takers cling fanatically to the "specialness of man," the gap that separates him from the rest of creation, a mythology that justifies his doing whatever he pleases with the world - even as Hitler's mythology justifies his doing what he pleases with Europe. This mythology leaves the Takers profoundly lonely, surrounded in enemy territory like an army of occupation. Leavers, by comparison, rarely suffer crime, mental illness, suicide, or drug addiction, a fact the narrator sees as the price of cultural advancement. Ishmael reminds him of the "Noble Savage" theory, popular a century before, and says the Leavers are enacting (not telling) this story for 10,000 years. All Takers - Chinese, Japanese, Russian, English, Indian - enact a single basic story while giving a different account of their nationalities, and all Leavers - Bushmen, Alawa, Kreen-Akrore, and Navaho - enact a single story. The Takers' is an unhealthy, unsatisfying, megalomaniac fantasy that results in a culture riddled with greed, cruelty, mental illness, crime, and addition. The Leavers for 3 million years have enacted satisfying, meaningful lives, free

of discontent, rebellion, wrangling about what is right and wrong, terror, insanity, stupefaction, and the invention of new religions to make life worth living. This is not because they live close to nature, have no formal government, or are innately noble. It is because they continue enacting a story that has worked for 3 million years and the Takers have not yet managed to stamp it out.

The narrator wonders why *Mother* Culture? Ishmael replies culture is always a mother because it is nurturing. Among Leavers, Mother Culture explains and preserves a healthy life-style, while among Takers, she explains and preserves one proven unhealthy and self-destructive.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Long Chapter 8 develops Peter Farb's thesis that food supply and population size rise and fall in direct relation to one another and that this balancing occurs in a global perspective. Like all the Taker maladies, it can be corrected by dropping the Taker party line. If not, human extinction is inevitable. Ishmael equates the Takers' approach to the rest of creation with Hitler's doing as he wishes in Europe. Chapter 8 also begins examining the alternative to the tragic Taker story, the Leavers', which is far older and still successful, whenever it survives the Takers. It will be examined in the following chapters.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Next day, Ishmael moves out from behind the glass, making both briefly uncomfortable. Ishmael displays a timeline from before 3 million B.C. to beyond 2,000 A.D. labeled "Leavers," and at the 8,000 B.C. point draws an offshoot, labeled "Takers." The point is not a remote event like the Trojan War, but a process begun in the Neolithic Near East that is still ongoing in New Zealand, Africa, and South America. The agricultural revolution is the foundation of the vast Taker civilization today exactly as in their first farming village. The divine intention for mankind is the revolutionary manifesto that says why the revolution was necessary and why it must go forward at any cost. The narrator is impressed by this thought.

Ironically, Ishmael continues, a large segment of Takers adopt as their own a centuries-old Leaver story of the Takers' origins. When the narrator cannot see the irony, Ishmael offers a story about how the gods acquire the knowledge needed to rule the world. One day, one of the gods suggests sending locusts to a savannah as the "fire of life" to feed the birds and lizards. Another god objects this is unfair to deer, gazelles, goats, and rabbits, because the locusts will strip the land bare, and to the lions, wolves, and foxes who rely on these for food. All will curse the gods as criminals. The gods think about this and one proposes leaving the status quo, lest they be cursed. One holds out for giving the locusts, birds, and lizards a chance to flourish. During the debate, one god suggests sending a quail to a hunting fox, and they switch to debating the morality of this. Seeing the quail stalk a grasshopper, they debate if the latter has an equal right to survive, which means the fox must kill the quail. The gods groan with indecision until spring, when flooding begins, and they are torn over whether to allow flooding or not; either way some creatures will die. While they bicker, the gods hear all creatures cursing them as they die in this garden of terror they have created, for action or inaction. They know the whole world blames them as criminals who send good and evil by turns, not knowing what to do.

As the gods become despondent, one remembers they have created a tree whose fruit is the knowledge of good and evil. Eating it, the gods' eyes are opened and they know how to tend the garden without being cursed criminals. They decide a lion must go hungry today so a deer can live, but next day give it the deer for food. Dying, the deer is ready to curse the gods until they convince it they know their job and today is its day to die. Knowledge absolves the gods from evil in both opposite instances, so it is good. One of the gods returns from an errand and points out the logical fallacy until he eats the fruit of knowledge and also sees it is proper for them to know who will live and who will die.

When the gods see Adam awakening, they decide he is fitting company and one proposes giving him an unlimited lifespan; they will care for him in childhood and lead him to the Tree of Life when, in adolescence, he grows restless. Another god believes

Adam should first have the opportunity to prove himself in a quest for the Tree of Life. Another worries Adam will grow restless and eat the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil instead. The others contend only the gods are nourished by that tree; it will pass harmlessly through Adam if he tries it. The one god says the danger is in Adam's imagining he has gained knowledge from eating the fruit and take over ruling the world. Others believe this is absurd; only the gods will ever know who lives and who dies. The one god persists: Adam may convince himself that anything he can justify doing as good will be good and all else evil. The gods scoff that this is not how it works, but the one maintains Adam will not know that. Most are sure that, with maturity, Adam's arrogant foolishness will pass, but the holdout suggests Adam might be too arrogant to survive to maturity; he might decide not to take the chance of sharing the fire of life with other creatures and kill them all. If this were to happen, the gods see, Adam would devour the world in a single day and then himself. If he were to escape the world, he would devour the universe.

One god questions if Adam might suffer the same horrible fate without eating the fruit. Could he be tempted to take the fire of life into his hands without the delusion he is doing good? Others believe he would grow weary of being an outlaw. Sharing the gods' knowledge, however, Adam could shrug off weariness, exempt himself from the law, destroys all that does not serve his growth, wrest the garden away, destroy it, and leave it full of progeny that pollute it further. Adam does so because limitations are evil and growth good. He kills any progeny who want to return to the godly life and tells the rest sufferings are good for them. The gods forbid Adam to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for on the day he does, he will die.

The narrator sits dazed, fetches a Bible, and finds no explanation of why this tree is forbidden to Adam. Ishmael says the Takers have never understood the mystery of why the gods forbid them the one thing they need to fulfill their destiny of ruling the world. That within a few thousand years the world is at the point of death, as predicted in the story, proves the story is written from a Leaver point of view. A Taker author would have thrust the knowledge of good and evil on Adam, demanded he stop living naked and lazy in the garden and go out to live by the sweat of his brow. Takers would not call this The Fall. It would be The Ascent or The Liberation.

Takers will never give up their tyranny because they believe they are doing right - no matter the cost. Like the gods, they *know* they are doing right, and that it is the *only* right way. Some Leavers have practiced agriculture but never believed everyone must do it their way or that every square foot of the planet must be devoted to it. They never forbid hunting and gathering as wrong. They simply live as they prefer, and if they ever tire of being agriculturalists, they can give it up. Once upon a time in Arizona an advanced civilization arises that irrigates the desert for farming but, after 3,000 years, find the lifestyle unsatisfying and walk away from it. The Pima Indians call them Hohokam - "those who vanished." What they called themselves is unknown. No taker could do this, for it would mean relinquishing the pretension to godhood.

The narrator has consulted a stack of Bibles and Ishmael asks why the authors might think the people of the Fertile Crescent have eaten from the gods' tree and doubts they

would have told the story this way, had they been present at the start of the agricultural revolution. The authors are Hebrews, taking up an already ancient and mysterious story. Hebrews are Takers, wanting what their neighbors want - which is why their prophets are always bawling them out. They preserve a story they do not fully understand. Ishmael draws a map of the Fertile Crescent ca. 8000 B.C., when the agricultural revolution is well under way. An insignificant enclave of Taker farmers is surrounded by a vast area of nonagricultural Leavers. Four thousand years later, they have vastly expanded in all directions, but in the south are blocked, at the entrance of the Arabian peninsula, by Semites. These ancestors of the Hebrews tell of events known as "The Fall" that occur 300 miles north of them among the Caucasians. The Semites are Leavers, evolved from hunter-gatherers into "pastoralists" - herders. Ishmael suggests the narrator read about Cain and Abel.

Cain, a tiller of the soil, kills Abel, a Semitic herder, an action typical of Taker-Leaver confrontations. Takers always need more land to cultivate. Ishmael draws a map. The narrator is surprised biblical scholars fail to understand this, preferring to treat the story like one of Aesop's fables. In fact, it is a piece of Semitic war propaganda. Nothing else explains why God is on the herders' side, and it makes no sense unless one realizes the story originates on the side of the Takers' cultural enemies. The narrator speculates the "mark of Cain" is his own fair skin, a warning to others Caucasians are dangerous and vengeful.

The countless Leaver peoples overrun or assimilated by the Takers doubtless have stories of how they came to be, but only what the Semites have to say about the Fall of Adam and the slaughter of Abel survives. It does so because their descendants, the Hebrews, refuse to adopt the peasant lifestyle about which they are unenthusiastic. They preserve the story without understanding it fully, and with the spread of Christianity and the Old Testament, the Takers adopt as their own a story once told by enemies to denounce them.

The narrator asks how the Semites get the idea about eating the god's own tree of knowledge, and Ishmael suggests it is a sort of reconstruction, as they ask why their neighbors from the north are acting as they are. The narrator figures the Semites realize they are facing extermination rather than raiding parties or violent posturing. What could turn them into murderers? No one has ever lived they way they do, killing not only people but lions, wolves, and anything that cannot pass as food for them. They are acting like the gods themselves, deciding what lives and what dies. If so, they must have found the gods' tree of wisdom and stolen its fruit. When the gods find out, they disown these accursed people, banish them from the garden, and condemn them to live by the sweat of their brows. And these people, now tillers of the soil, hunt down the Semites and water their fields with their blood. Ishmael applauds quietly and the narrator is proud.

Ishmael points out depicting agriculture as a curse is a clear indication the authors are not the narrator's cultural ancestors. Agriculture is the lot of the fallen, but also the prelude to ascent. The narrator asks why Cain is described as Adam's firstborn and Abel his second. Ishmael replies this is a common mythological or folkloric motif - the first is

always worthy and cherished, while the second is the unworthy underdog. That the Semites know better than to think of Adam as a biological ancestor is shown in the very name; *Adam* in Hebrew means *man* - the human race. The Fall divides the human race into bad guys and good guys. The narrator apologetically asks how Eve fits in. Ishmael says her name means *Life* rather than *Woman*, and this shows Adam's temptation is for life not sex. A hundred men and one woman do not spell 100 babies, but one man and 100 women do. Nonagricultural people are acutely conscious of population size and sexual balance, so the Semites assume the northerners are encroaching to gain more land because their population is out of control. Genesis shows subtly that saying yes to Life and accepting the knowledge of good and evil are different aspects of the same act. Ever after, Taker couples with many children are reenacting the scene beside the tree, claiming the right to do with the planet as they wish. They can always plough under more acres of rain forest and care nothing about any species that disappear as a result. Ishmael points out the Semites at this time are surrounded by agriculturalists, isolated, and have no idea people still live around the world as Adam did before the Fall.

Ishmael is certain the story of Adam's Fall is the best-known story in the world, having been carried everywhere by Christian missionaries. It appeals to Takers everywhere. The narrator has never heard a satisfactory explanation of why Adam is forbidden to eat this fruit. If the gods want only to test his obedience, why specify a tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Some people see it as a symbol of a fall from innocence (i.e., blissful ignorance), but this is unsatisfying. Look at the story another way: man cannot have the gods' wisdom and if they preempt it, it will bring death rather than enlightenment. Adam is the progenitor not of the human race but of the Taker culture.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 takes an unorthodox look at Genesis 1-4, the Hebrew story of Creation, Fall, and the first murder. Ishmael's thesis is that the Hebrews - a Taker people (and later the Christians) -adopt an ancient story they do not fully understand and incorporate it into their mythology, changing only "the gods" to "God." The Hebrew narrative shows signs of a nonagricultural people striving to understand why aggressive neighbors are successfully invading, killing, and displacing them to open new farmlands. The narrator serves as a sounding board for whether the usual interpretations are satisfying. Ishmael argues only positing a Leaver polemic makes full sense: in seeking Life, they do whatever they want, regardless of consequences for others.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The narrator's uncle arrives unannounced, an aching molar has to be extracted, and a backlog of work must be caught up with before he can return to see Ishmael. Arriving with a presentiment of trouble, he finds the space being cleaned out for a new tenant. A worker assumes the tenant was evicted when *she* failed to meet rent. The narrator is surprised by the pronoun and lack of a note for him. He talks to a receptionist, who refuses to divulge anything and denies a gorilla has occupied the space. The narrator calls the dozen Sokolows in the phone book, but none is Rachel. He drives to the address for a Grace and finds a gazebo on the grounds. An officious butler, Partridge, informs him Mrs. Sokolow has died three months earlier, is unwilling to discuss Mr. Sokolow, but narrows his eyes at the mention of Ishmael. The narrator says he is worried Ishmael is missing from his usual place and must have been moved by someone. When it is clear the narrator had not known Rachel, Partridge refuses to cooperate.

The narrator considers a private investigator, calls the local zoo, and learns if one had to dispose of a gorilla, there are several laboratories that might take one. The narrator realizes Ishmael must have friends he is unaware of, and takes out an ad in the personals. No one responds for two weeks. He calls city hall to see if any traveling shows were licensed recently in town and learns the Darryl Hicks Carnival passed through weeks before. Whether it has animals and where it might have gone next are unavailable. A dozen calls reveals they performed 40 miles north. Assuming they will continue northward, the narrator heads to Plymouth, where Hicks, a throwback to his boyhood, is advertising "Gargantua, the world's most famous gorilla."

The narrator sees Ishmael in a dim corner, being teased by two ten-year-olds. When they leave, the narrator asks why Ishmael had not asked for help to avoid eviction, but Ishmael ignores him. Eventually he communicates, asking not to be patronized. He is happy where he is and the tutoring is finished. Sullenly, Ishmael relents and agrees to continue here, but that is hardly feasible, given the visitors. The narrator leaves Ishmael alone as he wishes, checks into a cheap motel, eats, and at 9 PM returns. It is raining, so the merrymakers have gone home. The narrator offers an 80-year-old roustabout $20 to let him visit Gargantua. He drags a folding chair up to the cage and in a few minutes Ishmael asks where they left off. At the murder of Abel as the story of the agricultural revolution as told by its victims, the narrator recalls. Ishmael asks for a few minutes to figure out what remains to make everything clear to the narrator.

Responding to Ishmael's odd question, the narrator says the common meaning of culture is "the sum total of everything that makes a people a people." Prompted, he corrects this to include an accumulation passed generation-to-generation, each adding a mite. Ishmael observes wild chimpanzees pass along tool-making and tool-using behaviors. (He deliberately avoids all studies of gorilla life.) Paleontologists agree

human culture begins with *Homo habilis,* pass the cumulative whole to *Homo erectus,* whose heirs are *Homo sapiens* and finally *Homo sapiens sapiens.* The Leavers have taken this culture over without break, while the Takers have broken with it via the agricultural revolution. The stories the two peoples enact are clearly different. The Leavers pass the accumulation along in whatever form it comes to them, but the Takers redact it on the founding principle, "This is all shit. This is not the way people should live." Leavers are always aware of having a tradition that goes back into antiquity, while Takers feel themselves a "new" people, with each generation being more thoroughly cut off from the past that its predecessor. Mother Culture supports the idea there is nothing useful in the past. Ishmael confirms this is how Takers have become cultural amnesiacs; before Darwin and paleontologists, Takers assume the birth of man and the birth of culture are the same event and farming is as instinctive to man as honey production is to bees. When they encounter Leavers in Africa and America, they assume they have degenerated to that state and lost arts with which they were born. The memory loss of the Takers' pre-Revolutionary period is total. Mother Culture has been teaching the past is "dreck" (inferior) from the very start. Now Takers have no sense of a people before 1963.

Ishmael qualifies:Takers use ancientness as a cultural validator, like the pageantry-loving English-noble-ancestor-esteeming Japanese, who enjoy ancient customs for institutions, ceremonies, and holidays, but not for everyday life. Still, Mother Culture has not discarded everything from the past. Takers preserve information about production, while Leavers are not concerned with weekly quotas of pots, arrowheads, or hand-axes. Each Leaver people - Zusi, Navajo, etc. - saves what works well for *them* and teach that to their children. Takers teach theirs how to make more and better things, but each generation comes up with a new version of what works well for all people. Everything earlier seems useless.

Ishmael is upset he has let the conversation stray. The point is this: Leavers know that what they receive is tested and refined over thousands of generations. The narrator responds thoughtfully about having earlier said it is impossible to have certain knowledge about how people ought to live, he should have specified that Takers' need to have a single right way. That is what drives them to prophets and lawgivers. After 5,000-8,000 years of amnesia, Takers do not know how to live and Hammurabi appears saying, "These, my children, are *laws!"* and defines laws as the *one right way to live*. Ishmael is unconvinced and the narrator admits some exaggeration. He notes the Leavers remember how to live when Takers need a Hammurabi, a Draco, a Solon, a Moses, a Jesus, and a Muhammad. No Leaver culture is an invention or intended for anyone but its own people. In Washington, DC, they put laws on the books to tell everyone how to live. No one cares whether laws on abortion, alcohol, and marijuana work - that is beside the point.

Ishmael asks the narrator to focus; they have only 20 minutes. Ishmael realizes the narrator now knows Takers and Leavers accumulate entirely different kinds of knowledge, and each Leaver people has evolved a system that fits its terrain, climate, biological community, and particular tastes, preferences, and vision of the world. They call this *wisdom*. Every time Takers stamp out a Leaver culture, wisdom tested since the

birth of mankind disappears beyond recall - just as species are destroyed. The narrator says this is ugly. Too tired and cold to think, Ishmael sends the narrator away for the night.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Chapter 10 introduces a surprising twist: Ishmael's finances have fallen apart, he has been evicted, and he disappears. The narrator valiantly searches for him and finds him in an old-style freak show, displayed as "Gargantua," a giant in the 16th-century author Franzois Rabelais' popular stories. There are signs Ishmael is not feeling well, and he only reluctantly resumes the training, taking up the theme of lawgiving, mentioned early on in the novel. After the Takers lose touch with ancient culture and wisdom they need to be told how to live, while contemporary Leavers have no doubts, being firmly grounded in well-tested, localized traditions. The narrator rattles off a series of names: Hammurabi, the 18th century B.C.E. King of Babylon who creates one of the world's first written codes; Draco, the 7th century B.C.E. Greek lawgiver whose name continues to be used as a synonym for harshness; Solon, one of the "Seven Sages of Greece," who discards Draco's laws; Moses, who grants the Hebrews the Ten Commandments and a detailed body of law preserved in the Torah; Jesus, the Jew whom Christians accept as Messiah, who implants a "new law" in his followers' hearts freed of legalism; and Muhammad, the Muslims' "final prophet," who claims to speak in full accord with Moses and Jesus in setting down a simple, practical approach to achieving a just society for all the world.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

The narrator returns next day with blankets, and a testy Ishmael proposes returning to the deferred question of the story enacted by the Leavers - but not on the basis of mere curiosity. The narrator resents charges he is not using his brain and demands why learning a story all but extinguished is not a waste of time. Why, Ishmael demands, is it worth studying the Takers' story? The narrator says everyone should know it so they can stop blundering, destroying, and inventing insane Thousand-Year Reichs. Knowing the Leavers' story is worthwhile because one cannot give up a story, as kids in the 1960s-70s try to do. They fail because one cannot stop being in one story until another story is there to be in. The narrator doubts people will want to hear the Leavers' story, because they do not know it exists. Ishmael agrees.

The narrator has no idea what the Leaver story is about and denies he is thinking in terms of some noble paean to the mysteries of the Great Hunt. Ishmael reminds him it must be about the meaning of the world, divine intentions in the world, and the destiny of man. He must remember: man *became* man enacting this story. When the narrator suspects a trick in the question, "How *did* man become man?" and then is sincerely stumped, Ishmael suggests an oblique approach. While Mother Culture portrays the agricultural revolution as a technological event and the first farmers as Neolithic technocrats, Genesis 3-4 show there is much she does not mention. The revolution is still in progress, with Adam still crewing the forbidden fruit and Abel hunting down Cain wherever possible. She also teaches - and most Takers accept - that pre-Revolutionary life was ugly, detestable, and miserable. (Anthropologists know better.) Frankly, the narrator cannot imagine trading his life for that sort of life. Leavers would, Ishmael declares, and must be torn away from the life whenever Takers confront them. Usually they are just exterminated.

The narrator counters the Leavers do not know what they are missing; they do not understand the benefits of the agricultural life and, therefore, cling tenaciously to the hunting-gathering life. Smiling sneakily, Ishmael asks which North American Indians are the fiercest and most resolute opponents of the Takers. He agrees with the assessment, the Plains Indians, but observes that is only after the Spanish introduce horses to their culture; before that, for centuries, they are agriculturalists. Horses allow them to resume the hunting-gathering life. The Plains Indians must, therefore, have understood the benefits of the agricultural life. Mother Culture's objections that they could not have truly understood it and gone back to a detestable life show how thorough her teachings are on this issue. Ishmael says he wants to uncover the root of the narrator's fear and loathing of the Leaver life and his determination to carry forward the revolution, even if it destroys the world. They must discover what the revolution is revolting against. Then the narrator will be able to tell what story the Leavers are still enacting after 3 million years.

Ishmael shudders and sinks down into his blankets for a moment, then clears his throat, and continues. Why was the revolution necessary? He is disappointed with the narrator's reply, that it makes getting ahead possible. Hundreds of millions live without the central heating, universities, opera houses, and spaceships a minority enjoys, while millions are homeless, live in squalor, in prisons, and in horrid public institutions. They would find the narrator's facile answer meaningless. Most of those denied the fruits of the Taker revolution would not trade their misery and despair believed to have existed in pre-Revolutionary times. Even the have-nots believe in the benefits of the revolution and so do not grumble, dissent, or foment counterrevolution. Getting to the root of this extraordinary belief will give the narrator a whole new understanding of the revolution and the Leaver life. He must listen to Mother Culture whispering to him since birth - as she did to his parents, grandparents, and people all over the world daily - and unearth what she has buried in his mind about the horror of the life they have left behind.

The narrator admits to having this horror but it does not seem particularly mysterious to him. He pictures a dreamlike (or nightmarish) image of his ancestors scrabbling along a ridge, desperate to find food before nightfall. He runs daily on a treadmill in terror of unseen enemies - lions, wolves, and tigers. The ridge represents the knife-edge of survival. Ishmael asks the narrator to realize hunter-gatherers no more live on the knife-edge than wolves, lions, sparrows, or rabbits. As an intelligent and dexterous omnivore, man is better adapted to life on earth than many other species, and hunter-gatherers are among the best-fed people on earth, "working" only 2-3 hours a day. Marshall Sahlins calls them "the original affluent society." Few predators seek him. That the horrific vision of his ancestors' life is nonsense makes it only slightly less repulsive.

Ishmael asks the narrator to consider himself as homeless, unemployed, unskilled, married with children, hopeless, futureless. If he could push a button and be whisked into pre-Revolutionary times, possessed of all the skills everyone else has, knowing he will have it made in the original affluent society - would he press it? The narrator doubts it, but cannot explain why. Ishmael repeats the arguments Takers have always used to convert Leavers: your life is not only wretched but wrong; man is meant to live in the paradise we are making, so join us. They role-play cultural missionary (Bwana) and hunter-gatherer. The latter is puzzled, his people having lived well for thousands of years, but if Bwana, who rides to the stars and sends words around the world at the speed of thought, says it is wretched, wrong, and shameful, it is only prudent for them to listen. They await enlightenment. They live like everyone else, taking from the world what they need and leaving the rest alone. Do lions and deer lead shameful lives? Bwana clarifies they are merely animals; humans may not live like that, without control over their lives.

Ishmael asks in what sense they have no control over their lives, and Bwana responds they cannot control their food supply, the most basic necessity. Ishmael says when hungry they find something to eat. What more control is needed? If one plants food, one knows positively it will be there. Ishmael cackles delightedly: the whole world of life is food. Things grow in abundance without their effort, and even those who grow yams can find none ready in their fields. Bwana responds, they buy a can in the store. Ishmael asks how many people labor to put a can of yams on the shelf. Hundreds, Bwana

supposes, growing, packing, distributing, and unpacking. Ishmael declares this crazy; if his people cannot find a yam they eat something just as good - and hundreds need not labor to satisfy them. Bwana grows frustrated: humans cannot live at the whim of the gods; what if they go hunting and one day catch no deer because they have no control over its being where they look? Ishmael responds, they snare some rabbits or eat something else. Bwana says angrily there is no guarantee the world will always be full of food. What happens during a drought? Eventually, Ishmael says, the game, predators, and even humans "dwindle" - die.

Grasping at straws, Bwana says it is shameful for humans to accept such a death at the hands of the gods; they know better than the animals. One ought not to trust the gods with their lives, but themselves. Ishmael is saddened, for they have lived long allowing the gods to sow and grow for them. Bwana notes they are naked, homeless, and lacking security, comfort, or opportunity. They are no more important to the gods than are lions, lizards, or fleas. People must provide for themselves what they need beyond animal survival. Ishmael acts stunned that the gods, who shape the universe, lack the wisdom to give humans what they need to be human. Bwana declares the gods incompetent and the first step in freeing oneself from this is to begin planting one's own food in quantities greater than one needs. Angered, the narrator realizes the point: Takers thus thumb their noses at the gods, laying up food for a time the gods send drought. Abandoning the roles, Ishmael says the expression "it is in my own hands" refers both to living and to going extinct. The narrator objects humans cannot control or survive a total ecological collapse. They will be safe and free only when they have wrested from the gods the whole world.

The narrator believes they are making progress in finding the root of his revulsion to Leaver life. He says Christ's most futile admonition is to give no care for tomorrow. Even dedicated monks sow, reap, and gather, and even fundamentalists know Jesus is just "yarning" about birds and lilies of the field. Ishmael asks if this desire to have their lives in their own hands is the root of the Takers' revolution, and the narrator cannot conceive of living with unending anxiety over tomorrow's food. Ishmael says any anthropologist will tell him hunter-gatherers are less anxiety-ridden than he; they have no jobs to lose, no money to be demanded for food, clothes, or shelter. Rationally, the narrator believes Ishmael, but he cannot shake Mother Culture's conditioning.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Chapter 11, taking up the Leavers' story, mentions the Hitler-theme, drops the name of American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins and uses his catchy phrase, "the original affluent society" to help debunk the myth of Leavers always teetering on the brink of starvation. The Socratic dialogue used throughout the novel is reinvented as Ishmael takes the role of a hunter-gatherer, happy to please the cultural missionary whom he addresses as Bwana. The narrator is painted into a corner, having to admit Taker agriculture must overproduce. He says the passage in Matthew 6.26 is foolish.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The narrator tracks down Ishmael's new owner, a hard-eyed black man named Art Owens. Owens wants $3,000 for Ishmael, and the narrator, arguing Ishmael is a very old animal, cannot move him below $1,800. After midnight the Friday-night crowd thins and the narrator is allowed to see Ishmael. He is sleeping, sitting upright, wrapped in his blankets. He does not want to talk, but Saturday will offer no opportunity, so he agrees to continue talking about "those who know good and evil" (Takers) and "those who live in the hands of the gods" (Leavers). Ishmael asks what happens to the latter kind of people that does not happen to the former. The narrator's first answer turns the question around: they do not force others to live the way they live. Ishmael wants to focus on the effects of the Leaver lifestyle, and the narrator groans, frustrated at having to examine again the general question of how man becomes man. Man just does it, as birds become birds and horses become horses. Ishmael is pleased.

Australopithecus becomes *Homo* not by discerning good and evil as well as the gods do, but by evolving - living in the hands of the gods, just as the Bushmen and Kreen-Akrore do now, but not like Chicagoans or Londoners. Pre-man evolves into early man by natural selection, as part of the general community of life. The Takers then opt out and that is that. Ishmael reminds the narrator that to enact a story is to live to make it come true. The Taker story claims creation ends with man; how would this be lived out? The narrator understands: it will be lived out in a way that puts an end to creation. No species will have a successor once the Takers have succeeded.

Ishmael invites the narrator now to articulate the premise of the Leaver story. He comes up with something almost too neat: if the Taker story is that the world belongs to man, the Leaver story is *man belongs to the world*. Everything that has ever lived has come to be this way. Man eventually came into being because pre-man, primates, mammals, amphibians, club-finned fish, and single-cell creatures in the ancient seas all belonged to the world. Man belongs to the world for 3 million years, growing, developing, becoming bright and dexterous, before becoming *us*. Ishmael asks what happens if one takes the Leaver premise, that man belongs to the world, and is pleased when the narrator says, "Then creation goes on forever."

Although skeptical about the gods having any part in things, the narrator finds the Genesis 3 story wholesome and encouraging. The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is for the gods and the Tree of Life is for man, but man can find it only by staying in the garden, and that requires keeping their hands off the gods' tree. Ishmael encourages him, and the narrator talks of divine intentions lying in the tendency in evolution towards upward complexity, towards self-awareness and intelligence. Ishmael agrees. Many creatures are on the verge of attaining this, so it is obvious the gods are not concerned only with humans. Apparently the gods want the planet to be filled with self-aware, intelligent creatures. Man is but the trailblazer, the pathfinder, first to learn one can

thwart the gods and perish or make room for the rest. Man can thus have a grander destiny than the Takers dreamed up: as progenitor of sentient whales, dolphins, chimps, and raccoons. In a billion years, whoever is around will bless man for seeing the light and drawing back before it is too late to save the world so others can have their chance. He shows all how it has to be done to keep the world a garden forever.

This suggests the world is a very fine place and not a mess at all. It does not need to be conquered and ruled. It need not belong to man, but it does need man to belong to it. Some creature had to see the two trees and determine which was good for creatures. The gods take care of ruling the world. Man is to be the first without being the last. Man can serve as the kindergarten teacher for other species becoming what he has become. The narrator sees this is what he and the world need: something positive to work for. Ishmael agrees: people need more than to be scolded, made to feel stupid, and guilty. They need more than a vision of doom. The narrator finds stopping pollution, sorting ones trash, and cutting down on fluorocarbons uninspiring, but this new way of thinking about the world leaves him speechless.

Ishmael hopes the narrator can now see the Takers' story is not chapter two of the 3 million-year old story of human life. The Leaver story has its own chapter two. What the Leavers of Europe and Asia were doing when the Takers plowed them under cannot be determined, but in North America, it is known they were looking for ways to achieve settlement in accord with the way they had always lived, leaving room for those around them. They do so not out of any high-mindedness, but because it never occurs to them to declare war on the rest of the community of life. Had they had 5,000-10,000 years, they might have produced a dozen sophisticated civilizations, each with its own values and objectives. According to Taker mythology, however, every civilization anywhere must be a *Taker* civilization, even those encountered by the U.S.S. *Enterprise* in *Star Trek.* Intelligent creatures insist on taking their life out of the gods' hands, believing the world belongs to them, not vice versa.

Ishmael cannot see how Bushmen in Africa or Kalapalo in Brazil can do anything more beneficial for them and the world than live as they have for the next 10 million years. When the narrator asks about how "civilized" people can belong to the world, Ishmael grows impatient and exasperated. Civilization, he declares, has nothing to do with it; how do tarantulas, sharks, and rattlesnakes belong to the world? Some creatures act as though the world belongs to them and others vice versa, and they can be easily told apart. Does being civilized make one incapable of giving other creatures room to live and grow, require one to destroy the world, or make it impossible to follow a law so simple even snails and earthworms follow it? As human settlement is not against the law, but subject to it, so too is civilization subject to the law. Humans should be leaders of the club of the community of life rather than criminals and destroyers.

Ishmael notes that when his previous pupils reached this point, he had nothing hopeful to point to that might suggest people would relinquish their hold on the world, but the fall of Marxism from the top down and almost overnight in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe now provides it. Five years ago this would have seemed unthinkable, improbable, but not unimaginable.

The narrator asks why Ishmael's ad said, "Must earnestly desire to save the world." Ishmael's program is: 1) Cain stops murdering Abel; i.e., the endangered Leavers must be saved not because they are humans but because they alone can show the destroyers of the earth there is no one correct way to live; and 2) the fruit of the forbidden tree must be spit out; mankind must absolutely and forever relinquish the idea he can know who should live and die. The narrator must teach 100 pupils what Ishmael has taught him and inspire each to teach 100 more. That is how it has always been done. This, of course, is not enough, but if one does not start somewhere, there is truly no hope. As long as Takers are convinced the world belongs to them and it is their divine destiny to conquer and rule it, they will continue acting as they have for 10,000 years. Laws can change nothing. People's minds must be changed - and filled with something as meaningful as what they are required to abandon. When the narrator says this is like expecting someone today to do what St. Paul did in the Roman Empire, Ishmael supposes it might be daunting, but doubts it can be too hard when a stand-up comic on television reaches more people in 10 minutes than St. Paul did in a lifetime.

The narrator objects he is no stand-up comic, but Ishmael reminds him he is a writer. He will now either respond or be no different than those he claims to despise - wanting something to make himself feel better as the end approaches. Ishmael has no incantation or magic word to sweep the nastiness away. The narrator objects he always says things are impossible and then does them. Barely mollified, Ishmael says to not suggest going back to being hunter-gatherers. He must reach not backward but forward, for the Leaver life is not antiquated. It is a new paradigm for human history. Humans cannot walk away from their civilization as the Hohokam did, but they can be led to something inventive and worthwhile - if they care to survive. If humans pride themselves on being inventive, they must invent.

Groaning and wheezing, Ishmael recalls a detail he has forgotten. One former student is an ex-convict, an armed robber. From him Ishmael learns prison populations are differentiated between the rich and powerful, who get all the drugs, food, sex, and service they want, and the poor and weak. The Taker world, Ishmael states, is one vast prison in which everyone but a handful of Leavers is locked. In the 19th century, the last Leavers in North America are given a choice to be exterminated or enter the prison. Few are capable of adjusting to prison life, but the prison runs an industry to take inmates minds off the boredom and futility of their lives. That industry is "Consuming the World." In the cultural prison, white male inmates unjustly wield power, but this does not make them warders. They cannot lord it over anyone and no one will give them the key. Justice demands power and wealth be redistributed to others beside white males. This rather than the destruction of the prison is crucial to the survival of the human race, and among the politically active the redistribution of wealth and power is consider the Holy Grail. Nevertheless, all humanity can unite behind breaking out of the Taker prison. The narrator objects no one will subscribe to this; all want whatever they can get inside the prison.

Within an hour of talking, Ishmael is exhausted but will not let the narrator leave. He announces, "You understand that I'm finished with you." It feels like a knife is plunged into the narrator's stomach. Ishmael clarifies: they have finished what he set out to do

and he has nothing more to teach him. He would, however be happy to be friends. The narrator can only nod. Red-eyed and disoriented, Ishmael sneezes, and grunts when the narrator says he will return tomorrow.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Chapter 12 completes Ishmael's course of teaching, helping the narrator appreciate how humanity can be remembered a billion years hence as the species that first evolves self-awareness and intelligence - and has the grace to allow other species to do the same. Ishmael seeks an optimistic way for his most successful pupil to present his message to others, but the narrator has learned to be defeatist. The then-recent fall of the Soviet empire suggests things can change. The narrator, now to be cut loose by his ailing mentor, faces a task as daunting as that faced by the greatest first-century Christian missionary, St. Paul, but everything must start small, and doing nothing only plays into the onrushing destruction. The narrator is angry at having to let go and will, in the final chapter, try to rescue Ishmael from the carnival.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The narrator falls asleep finalizing a bad plan to rescue Ishmael. In the morning, his car overheats and he leaves it over the weekend for repair. He plunders all his cash resources and gets together $2,500. The next problem is getting a half-ton unwilling gorilla out of a cage and into a car. If this works, presumably, he will bring Ishmael home to his apartment. On Monday, they call to tell him repairs will cost $600 and the car will be ready at 2 PM. The narrator finally thinks to rent a van and drives to the carnival lot, only to find it has moved on. He pokes around and finds Ishmael's blankets, books, drawing paper, and poster. The man who had cared for Ishmael tells him pneumonia claimed Ishmael Sunday morning. Only now does the narrator realize Ishmael had been looking wan. After wandering about the empty lot, the narrator asks what they have done with Ishmael's body. The man figures the county will cremate him along with the road kill. Leaving the blankets behind, the narrator claims the rest of Ishmael's belongings.

The narrator drives home, turns in the van, picks up his car, and returns to his apartment, now emptier than ever. He phones the Sokolow residence and tells Partridge about Ishmael's death. Both doubt Ishmael would have let them save him. Having Ishmael's poster framed, the narrator discovers there are messages on both sides, the one Ishmael had displayed on the wall of his den and on the reverse: "WITH GORILLA GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR MAN?"

Chapter 13 Analysis

Chapter 13 shows Ishmael dead and mourned only by the narrator and the Sokolows' butler. The narrator lacks the nobility to pay his respect to the remains, which go unceremoniously up a chimney along with the county road kill. The original "WITH MAN GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR GORILLA?" which so angered the narrator - that so magnificent a creature would be held captive to illustrate a koan, has an enigmatic variant on the other side. Having studiously avoided talking about gorillas, Ishmael must have had himself in mind. Only if this human spreads the message of the departed gorilla can man - and the world - have hope. It is hard to say, as the novel ends, whether the narrator is up to the task on his own.

Characters

Ishmael

The protagonist of this novel, Ishmael is a lowlands gorilla born free in the 1920s in equatorial West Africa, captured as a baby by famed animal hunters, and deposited in a zoo, where he, like other formerly wild animals, senses this life is unnatural. He has memories of belonging to a family in Africa and enjoying a life of abundant food. Sold as an adolescent, early in the Great Depression, to the owner of a traveling menagerie and given the stage name, "Goliath," Ishmael is advertised as a bloodthirsty giant slaying Africans. In truth, he is developing logical, methodical thought and learning to follow human conversations. Walter Sokolow purchases Ishmael, to whom he gives his definitive name, to redeem him in a way he cannot redeem his Jewish family, perishing in Nazi-occupied Europe. Ishmael convinces Sokolow of his ability to think but lacks speech organs to communicate with him verbally. Frustrated, Ishmael tries mental communication, which, to the amazement of both, works, and they enter into years of educating Ishmael, who in time takes the lead role.

Funded by Sokolow and provided for financially in his will, Ishmael moves into the city and occupies a large loft apartment, where he takes on a series of students dedicated to saving the world. He fails with four before attracting the anonymous narrator through a newspaper ad and begins convincing him that mankind is divided into two camps, the vast majority, whom Ishmael labels "Takers" (and others refer to as "civilized") are dedicated to conquering and ruling the world and ultimately the universe. Their ongoing agricultural revolution has, over 10,000 years, brought the earth to the point of destruction. The other group, whom Ishmael labels "Leavers" and others call "primitives" (or worse) continue to live in continuity with the way *Homo sapiens sapiens* have since evolving some 5 million years ago; Leavers live as part of nature, taking only what they need to survive and leaving everything and everyone else space to live. Using the Socratic method, Ishmael teaches the narrator to think for himself and to discover why the Leaver approach is the only hope for mankind and the world. Ishmael is by no means an understanding or sympathetic teacher, and as he feels his health slipping, becomes more easily annoyed. Losing his funding, Ishmael is evicted and sold to a carnival, where he is exploited as "Gargantua." By the time the narrator finds him, Ishmael, already quite old, and is in declining health. He completes the narrator's education before dying of pneumonia, even as the narrator is planning his rescue. His body is disposed of with road kill.

The Jewish name Ishmael comes from the story of Abraham's firstborn son, born to his concubine, Hagar. When Abraham's wife, Sarah, grows jealous, Abraham sends them out into the desert. Years later, Sarah bears a son, Isaac, whom God demands Abraham offer in bloody sacrifice to prove his loyalty. Sokolow's wife insists on Ishmael's exile, but Sokolow refuses, and names the daughter whom he assigns to Ishmael to tutor Rachel. Rachel Sokolow's death brings about Ishmael's eviction and sale.

The Narrator

Unnamed in the text - an odd detail, considering most of the novel is a dialogue between him and Ishmael - the narrator is the novel's only other major character. A Baby Boomer who comes of age in the revolutionary 1960s, he remains in the 1990s more idealistic than many of his contemporaries. He apparently is broadly educated in the humanities, betraying some knowledge of history, literature, and the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, although he appears to have no firm faith commitment. He can recite the outlines of popular science, including the Big Bang and evolution, but apparently knows little biology, sociology, or anthropology. He depicts himself as a starving writer, held back not for lack of talent but by being poorly organized and perennially behind on his assignments. He lives in a small apartment and drives a poorly maintained sedan. In it, he keeps a set of "good" clothes into which he can change, should he need to impress an interviewer. When he taps all of his financial accounts to purchase Ishmael at the end of the novel, his net worth appears to be $2,500. He confesses he is a linear thinker, never planning more than one or two steps ahead, to allow for the unexpected.

Throughout the novel, the narrator shows himself to be a shallow, lazy thinker who rankles at being prodded and challenged. He sees the wisdom of Ishmael's Socratic method, forcing him to discover things on his own, but grows easily frustrated and belligerent. He admits that his first reaction is always to think new things impossible, but he generally is able later to make them work. He never gets over being taught by a gorilla and finds Ishmael's sheer size intimidating. Still, he becomes deeply attached to his mentor and is pained to have the lessons end. He doubts he has the fortitude to carry out Ishmael's program of teaching ten pupils what he has learned and inspiring each of them to teach another ten, but sees one must start small in this way. Doing nothing makes him no better than the "Takers" he has learned to despise for bringing the earth to the point of destruction. "Mother Culture" has won the narrator over firmly by whispering in his ear for decades and even when he understands intellectually the impossibility of the Taker position, he is hard-pressed to overcome the ingrained propaganda.

Adam and Eve

Ishmael and the narrator discuss the ostensible progenitors of the human race, Adam and Eve, at length. "Adam" in Hebrew means *man* - the human race - and "Eve" means *Life*. Eve's name proves the Fall is not about sex, a failed disciplinary test, or any of the other usual interpretations, but rather about mankind seeking to control life on his own terms vis-a-vis the gods. This is the classic "Taker" approach, and Ishmael states Adam is the progenitor not of humankind but of the Taker branch.

Cain and Abel

Cain and Abel are Adam and Eve's children in Genesis 4. Cain, an agriculturalist, slays Abel, a pastoralist. Ishmael says only by understanding this as a Semitic-Leaver

polemic against the advancing Caucasian-Taker hordes can sense be made of the story, satisfactorily tying it into to the story of the Fall. At the end of the novel, the narrator agrees with Ishmael that the world can only be saved if the Cains of the world stop murdering the Abels and relinquish the idea they must conquer and rule the earth.

Riane Eisler

A 20th-century American archeologist whose *The Chalice and the Blade* examines the overrunning of a European Leaver agricultural society based on goddess worship by Takers some 5,000-6,000 years ago. Eisler, of course, does not use Ishmael's Leaver/Taker terminology.

Peter Farb

A 20th-century American ecologist and writer, Farb is several times mentioned by the narrator Ishmael for the paradox in his book *Mankind* that "Intensification of production to feed an increased population leads to a still greater increase in population" - a premise Mother Culture insists does not apply to humankind.

Adolf Hitler

The charismatic but pathological German F'hrer who, from the mid-1930s through mid-1940s, controls not just his enthusiastic Nazi followers, but the whole German people by selling the story of needing to liberate themselves from the control of the Jews and the Allied powers that have humiliated them following World War I. The gorilla Ishmael uses Hitler to help his pupil, the narrator, appreciate that a story can pervade a society to the point no one realizes it is just a story. Hitler's Germany is thus a symbol for the whole of "civilization" as envisioned by "The Takers."

Martin and Osa Johnson

Famed animal hunters in Africa in the 1930s, the Johnsons kill females to grab their helpless infants. They capture the gorilla Ishmael, in an event he does not recall, and sell him to an unnamed zoo.

The Menagerie Owner

An unnamed man who buys the novel's protagonist, the gorilla Ishmael, as an adolescent from an unnamed northeastern zoo during the Depression. The Menagerie Owner advertises Ishmael as "Goliath," complete with lurid paintings. The man is happy to sell the gorilla to Walter Sokolow, for he realizes the U.S. will enter World War II and traveling shows like his will be out of business for the duration.

Sir Isaac Newton

Sir Isaac Newton is the brilliant English mathematician and scientist who in the 17th century sets down the law of gravitation. Ishmael uses Newton as a familiar focus for helping the narrator understand that humanity must adhere to a law, invariable as gravitation, which regulates the entire circle of life. Humanity must do this to survive. Newton does not discover gravity, but describes its effects.

Art Owens

A hard-eyed, medium-height, weightlifting black man, who owns the aged gorilla Ishmael at the Darryl Hicks Carnival, Owens is blank-faced when the narrator tracks him down and asks to buy the aged animal. Owens, who is having a "Gargantua" signed specially painted in New Mexico, starts at $3,000 and cannot be talked down below $1,800.

Partridge

The Sokolows' officious butler, Partridge informs the narrator Rachel Sokolow has died three months before rent checks on Ishmael's quarters stop and he has been evicted. Partridge is unwilling to discuss the late Mr. Sokolow, states he knows everything before Mrs. Sokolow does, and when it becomes clear the narrator has not known Rachel. Partridge refuses to cooperate in determining Ishmael's whereabouts. After Ishmael's death by pneumonia, the narrator can think of no one to share the sad news with except Partridge. They agree Ishmael would probably not have allowed them to rescue him.

Marshall Sahlins

A 20th-century American anthropologist, who comes of age with the narrator during the protests of the 1960s and 1970s, Sahlins is responsible for a catchy phrase, "the original affluent society," which helps debunk the myth of Leavers always teetering on the brink of starvation.

Rachel Sokolow

The gorilla Ishmael's second benefactor, Rachel Sokolow is Walter's daughter, a precocious girl who grows up with Ishmael as brother, pet, tutor, and nurse. Her mother campaigns relentlessly to have Ishmael put away, lest he slow Rachel's social development. Rachel skips three grades in elementary school and one in high school, earns a master's degree in biology by age 20, and still Mrs. Sokolow wants Ishmael gone. When Ishmael's benefactor dies in 1985, Rachel takes over and uses funds from her father's estate to move him into quarters better than the gazebo. This "retreat" does not make Ishmael happy, however; he longs to advance into the very center of human

culture. Rachel's patience is tried and her mother persuades a court to cut Ishmael's support funds in half. Rachel dies while Ishmael and the narrator are engaged in their studies, and as rent checks end, Ishmael is evicted.

Walter Sokolow

The gorilla Ishmael's first benefactor, Walter Sokolow is a wealthy Jewish merchant who, one rainy day, comes to the menagerie where Ishmael lives. Sokolow is deeply depressed over the realization his family has perished in the Nazi Holocaust. Unable to redeem them, Sokolow purchases Ishmael, who is not at all like the "Goliath" he is advertised as, but rather dangerous only by virtue of his great size. Sokolow modifies a gazebo on his estate to serve as a cage, names the gorilla Ishmael, discovers Ishmael's ability to think and understand, and for years through the 1960s helps him learn everything he can. Ishmael's interests are broader than Sokolow's, and Sokolow becomes Ishmael's willing research assistant, finding materials the gorilla cannot in person. The process heals Sokolow's once-suicidal depression and he marries, late in life, to a woman determined to be rid of Ishmael. Instead, Sokolow makes the gorilla their daughter Rachel's mentor, pet, and friend. Sokolow dies in 1985, leaving Rachel as Ishmael's protector and providing funding for his life-long upkeep.

Zsa-Zsa

A female chimpanzee, Zsa-Zsa and her baby occupy the wagon next to the protagonist, Ishmael, an adolescent gorilla advertised by the owner of the traveling menagerie as the fearsome "Goliath." Hearing human visitors call Zsa-Zsa's name to attract her attention, Ishmael figures out everything has a name and that his is Goliath.

Objects/Places

Culture

According to protagonist Ishmael's definition, "culture" is a people enacting (making real) a story ("a scenario interrelating man, the world, and the gods").

The Darryl Hicks Carnival

An old-fashioned freak show, the Darryl Hicks Carnival acquires the protagonist, Ishmael, after he is evicted from his apartment. The narrator tracks the carnival northward to Plymouth, where he finds Ishmael being verbally tormented by children and reticent to talk. Eventually Ishmael agrees to finish the lessons from his barred cage, but is in bad physical shape by the time they finish. As the narrator schemes how to rescue his gorilla mentor, Ishmael dies of pneumonia. The Carnival packs up and moves on to its next venue and the narrator finds a few mementos in the trash the Carnival leaves behind.

Enacting

According to protagonist Ishmael's definition, "enacting" is the way whereby a story ("a scenario interrelating man, the world, and the gods ") is made a reality. An example is the German people as a whole trying to make Adolf Hitler's story of a 1,000-year Reich come true.

The Great Depression

The worldwide financial collapse that begins in 1929, the Great Depression occurs while the protagonist, the gorilla Ishmael, is an adolescent living in an unnamed American zoo. Zoos are forced to downsize their operations to save money, so Ishmael is sold to a traveling menagerie, where he finds life much less boring. The Depression only ends with the U.S. entry into World War II, at which point the menagerie is happy to sell Ishmael, knowing such traveling acts will be out of business for the interim.

Hohokam

A Leaver people, the Hohokam irrigate the Arizona desert for farming and for 3,000 years enjoy an advanced civilization. When they find the lifestyle unsatisfying, however, they walk away from it, leaving even their name unknown to history. "Hohokam" is the Pima Indian name for "those who vanished."

Koans

A koan is a literary device particularly popular in Zen Buddhism, which is paradoxical and purposefully inexplicable, like the poster behind Ishmael in the room where the narrator first sees him: "WITH MAN GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR GORILLA?" The reverse side of the poster, the narrator discovers after Ishmael's death, reads, "WITH GORILLA GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR MAN?" which is less easily understood in multiple ways. Ishmael's constant goading the narrator to look at situations in an unfamiliar way to see his point - rather than leading him logically - continues the motif throughout the book.

The Law of Limited Competition

The inviolable principle that all individuals are entitled to consume what they need, but may not 1) exterminate competitors, 2) systematically destroy competitors' food to make room for themselves, or 3) deny competitors access to food. This fundamental law guarantees over millions of years that *diversity* reigns rather than having one victorious form at each level (one insect "winner," one reptile, etc.). When "Taker" humans exempt themselves from it, the earth is, within 10,000 years, rendered ecologically fragile and vulnerable to change. It is, quite literally, a war deliberately waged on the earth.

The Leavers

Members of all human cultures who are not "Takers," Leavers are any Stone Age people anywhere in the world called "primitive" by Takers. The Leavers have been successfully enacting one version of the human story for 2-3 million and are doing it still, in isolated pockets. Each Leaver people develop their own adaptations to the environment and traditions, and none of them considers its solution should be the norm for anyone else. Whenever Leavers and Takers make contact, Leavers either adopt the Takers' ways or face extermination. Only the Leavers can prove another story is possible for humans, so their survival is critical to the survival of the planet Earth.

Mother Culture

The embodiment of the spirit and voice whereby "Takers" enact their story, Mother Culture is ubiquitous throughout "civilization," relentlessly selling a story that all Takers swallow by age six or seven and which constitutes the buzzing background of Taker lives. Mother Culture holds that the first chapter of human history consists of the long period in which "Leavers" (primitives) reign and a second, glorious chapter beginning when mankind in the Near East discovers agriculture and the Takers emerge, leaving only anachronistic vestiges of Leavers scattered about. Whenever Taker cultural missionaries - often Christian missionaries - encounter Leavers, they demand convertion or exterminate them.

The Nazi Holocaust

The systematic deportation by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi henchmen of millions of European Jews to extermination camps during World War II. The Holocaust changes the life of the novel's protagonist, the gorilla Ishmael, when a wealthy Jewish merchant, Walter Sokolow, visits the menagerie one dreary day in a suicidal depression, certain all his relatives are perishing. He purchases Ishmael and sets him up in a modified gazebo on his estate. The narrator is familiar with the literature on Nazism and the Holocaust, so Ishmael uses Hitler and his diabolical plan as an example of the effect of "Mother Culture" on society at large.

Story

According to protagonist Ishmael's definition, a "story" is a scenario interrelating man, the world, and the gods. Humans have enacted two fundamentally different stories in history. One begins 2-3 million years ago by Leavers and is still being successfully enacted today. The other is 10,000-12,000 years old, enacted catastrophically by the Takers.

The Takers

Members of the narrator's culture who, according to Ishmael's analysis, form the vast majority of the human race. The Takers contrast with the "Leavers," whom Takers usually deride as "primitive" or non-civilized. The Takers have been enacting their version of the human story for some 10,000-12,000 years, catastrophically so since the agricultural revolution, whereas the Leavers have been successfully enacting theirs for 2-3 million years and continue today. Ishmael likens the world to a great prison filled with all Takers, who form an unjust hierarchy ruled by white males, which must be overthrown. Takers believe the gods (or God) have ordained them to rule the world, which requires they first conquer it. Anything that does not support the expansion of the human population is systematically destroyed.

Themes

Religion

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit incorporates much religious material. Ishmael's focus is on the very different stories Taker and Leaver peoples are enacting about the meaning of the world, divine intentions for the world, and human destiny. Thus, he takes for granted a spiritual force, which he generally expresses polytheistically as "the gods." Using the biblical stories in Genesis 1-4, Ishmael suggests Adam is a cultural progenitor rather than a biological one, for by reaching for Life and trying to control his environment rather than live by the gods' graces, he brings down the inevitable curse of death on his endeavors. He strives to exalt himself to be lord of creation and to exempt himself from the laws of nature. As he becomes a Taker agriculturalist, he murders the Leavers whose territory he covets to put under crops. Ishmael's approach has no need for higher criticism, which would explain the multiple stories of creation and fall. Surely, in his extensive self-education, Ishmael has encountered this field but finds it serves no purpose and only complicates the narrative.

The novel dismisses Christian fundamentalism, chiding the Takers on having to swallow the bitter pills of not inhabiting the center of the universe and the reality of evolution rather than some "special creation." It says this in the context of insisting Takers will never relinquish their third error: that they alone are exempt from the laws of nature. Ishmael insists this attitude is what constitutes the "curse" God places on Adam for eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; ignoring the laws of nature inevitably leads to the death of the species and perhaps the entire world.

The novel also emphasizes that Takers require prophets and lawgivers in order to be told how to live correctly. This is contrasted with Leavers, who have never ceased to live in harmony with the life for which humankind evolved. Ishmael mentions Hammurabi, several Greeks, and three religious figures: Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed. Only Jesus is discussed at any length, primarily to rate his dictum about considering the birds of the fields as stupid and universally ignored even by saints and fundamentalists. St. Paul, the first-century Apostle to the Gentiles is set up at the end of the novel as the paradigm of effort and sacrifice needed to spread Ishmael's planet-saving message. Ishmael seems not hostile towards the Western monotheisms, but appears to wish they would not serve Mother Culture's purpose in spreading the destructive message that humans are unique and specially loved by God.

Nazism

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit makes use in several ways of the charismatic but pathological Adolf Hitler. Much literature about his era emerged in the time the narrator was coming of age and as he is conveniently acquainted with some of the major titles. Ishmael can use him as an example. Ishmael examines how the F'hrer

controls not just his enthusiastic Nazi followers, but the entire German people. He convinces them to enact his story of liberating themselves from the control of the Jews and the Allied powers that have humiliated them since World War I. Ishmael does not enter into how extensive the Germans' knowledge is of the systematic deportation of millions of European Jews and other Nazi-detested minorities to extermination camps, but makes the point that pulling out the stops on educating the people to think as one wants works. Thus, Ishmael has, in Hitler's Germany, a useful symbol of how the whole of "civilization" as envisioned by "The Takers" is being taught to enact a particular story. That story is one of how human beings are called by the gods (or God) to conquer and control the Earth (and perhaps the greater universe). The process is less dramatic and overt than the Nuremberg party rallies but as intoxicating. "Mother Culture" implants the story everywhere, so that everyone past age five or six knows human beings are above any laws of nature and need to limit their treatment of the environment.

The second way in which Nazism and the Holocaust are used is in bringing the gorilla Ishmael together with his benefactor, a wealthy Jewish merchant, Walter Sokolow, depressed and suicidal because he cannot redeem his European relatives. Sokolow purchases Ishmael, sets him up in a modified gazebo on his estate, realizes Ishmael can communicate telepathically, and does all he can to provide him a thorough education.

Science and Technology

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit is ambivalent on the subject of science and technology. A tiny fraction of the human race enjoys indoor plumbing, central heat and air conditioning, automobiles, spaceships, universities, etc., while the vast majority are homeless, live in squalor, in prisons, and in horrid public institutions. The price of enacting the "Taker" story appears to be mankind becoming the enemy of the wider natural world from which it exempts itself.

Still, the universe runs by inviolable laws that scientists have managed to understand and explain. Not by reading physics books but by examining natural phenomena experienced by everyone, Isaac Newton "discovers" - or rather, describes - the laws of gravity. This law suggests to most of mankind that man cannot fly. Centuries later, when people are determined to fly, they discover by trial-and-error the laws of aerodynamics, which have always existed and always been as operative as gravity. Now, facing extinction, humans should see relevance in laws governing life, from which they are no more exempt than from gravity, aerodynamics, genetics, or thermodynamics.

So far, however, science (that is, scientists and technologists) has not been willing to risk standing up to the myth Mother Culture whispers into every Taker's ear since birth. They perpetuate the story that humans are not part of a community of life on which their continued existence on this planet depends absolutely. Even at the end of their tutoring sessions, Ishmael finds it hard to break through the narrator's cultural conditioning. Biologists and anthropologists know the truth but dare not declare it openly. If the narrator chooses, technology will make it possible for him to spread his message in

ways the greatest early preacher of Christianity, St. Paul, could not imagine. In order to do so, however, he must find ways not just of painting a picture of apocalyptic gloom, but ways in which Leaver peoples have been able to enjoy life without destroying their surroundings. Ishmael suggests many North American Indian peoples might have found ways to build extraordinary non-destructive societies - had they not encountered Takers who either assimilated or annihilated them. It will not come by perfecting technology to the point mankind completely controls weather, disease, etc.; mankind's track record suggests this will lead only to greater evil.

Style

Point of View

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit is told in the first person, past tense by a participant in the action, an unnamed Baby Boomer brought up in the troubled 1960s who has continued to long for a mentor who can show him how to save the world. Finally, in the 1990s, he finds a someone advertising for a student for the express purpose of saving the world and finds, surprisingly, the teacher is an enormous, captive gorilla, Ishmael. Ishmael has, over a sixty-odd year long lifetime, perfected the ability to communicate mentally with humans, undertaken a broad liberal education, and four times already tried but failed to teach a human how to save the world. On occasion, perhaps in recognition of the unlikeliness of this scenario, the narrator addresses asides to his reader, asking his/her reaction to what he has just written and/or confessing that something he has said or done is peculiar.

Ishmael is author Daniel Quinn's mouthpiece for an impassioned plea to Western man to reconsider the story that he, the "civilized" portion of the *homo sapiens sapiens* species has been enacting for some 10,000 years. Takes have been turning the earth, not into the paradise which religion promises it will be once man has established his rule over it, but a planet dying at an increasingly rapid rate. Ishmael uses the Socratic method - directed dialogue - to help the narrator understand how, why, and inevitably, this is happening. He explains why no one in the narrator's culture is even aware it is embedded in the culture, and that it is not the only story humankind has enacted and is still successfully enacting. By the end, the frustrated student has mastered the story and been challenged to take on 100 pupils to hear Ishmael's message and inspire them to taken on 100 apiece. The novel appears to be part of a grassroots effort to see mankind cannot effectively rule the world but can belong to the world as a most important part of the great community of life.

Setting

The bulk of *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit* is set in Room 105 of a faceless office building in an undisclosed northeaster city some time in the early 1990s. The interior walls have recently been demolished, leaving a cavernous space furnished only with a bookcase and an overstuffed chair. The outward facing windows provide no light, but an internal window opens on a smaller room in which Ishmael, the protagonist gorilla, sits or reclines with a pile of tender shoots on which to nibble. The whole of Room 105 is filled with the unmistakable but not unpleasant odor of beast. Through Chapter 8, the unnamed narrator and Ishmael converse mentally through this pane of glass.

Ishmael flashes back to faint memories of his life in equatorial West Africa in the late 1920s and years in captivity, first in a zoo and next, circa 1929 with the advent of the

Great Depression, in a traveling menagerie in this city. He next lives in a modified gazebo on the estate of his benefactor, Walter Sokolow, through the late 1980s, during which period he perfects his ability to communicate by mind and pursues a broad education. From 1989 onward, Ishmael lives in Room 105 on funds set aside for him for life by Sokolow.

There, he has accepted four students to teach how the world might be saved, all unsuccessfully, and now he is attempting it a fifth time with the narrator. In Chapter 9, teacher and student sit together in one room, uncomfortably at first, as they begin examining Leaver culture. Thereafter, during a hiatus, Ishmaels' finances dry up, and he is evicted and bought by a traveling carnival. The narrator tracks the carnival down, finds his mentor resigned to his fate, resistant to trying to change things, and reluctant to finish the lessons. Finally, he is convinced to indeed finish them, but the narrator does not see signs of declining health. The narrator learns after the fact that Ishmael has died in his cage of pneumonia and his body cremated by the County with the common road kill.

Language and Meaning

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit is told in the first person, past tense by an unnamed narrator whom the protagonist, a lowlands gorilla named Ishmael has taken on as a student. Ishmael briefly tells his life's story as a prelude to beginning lessons on how to save the world.

The lion's share of the book consists of Socratic dialog between master and pupil, set off in quotation marks and on separate lines. Often the lack of narrative markers makes the conversations confusing, except that the narrator is generally confused and Ishmael confident, prodding, and often sarcastic. Neither addresses the other by name and only during a short passage, in which they are role playing the encounter of "Taker" and "Leaver" peoples, does Ishmael refer to the narrator as "Bwana."

Ishmael uses the narrator's familiarity with the history of the Third Reich to help him appreciate how people can be brought under psychological control by constant repetition of key themes. Association with Nazism and the Holocaust gives Take culture the sinister cast Ishmael desires, and he paints modern "Taker" culture as locally nuanced (U.S., England, Russia, Japan), but universally dedicated to the idea it is divinely called to conquer and rule the world (if not the greater universe). It is exempt from any laws of nature that would limit its freedom to treat the world as it wishes. The result, in 10,000 years, is near oblivion for all life on earth. The biblical stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel are interpreted to show how this theory is developed and how the more ancient and non-destructive "Leaver" culture is denigrated to the point where no one would consider reverting to such primitivism.

Author Daniel Quinn drops the names of several prominent 20th-century social scientists to suggest the validity of Ishmael's argument, but never develops their points of view. Ishmael several times resorts to citing popular culture (e.g., *Star Trek)* to help

the rather slow-witted narrator understand where he is leading him, but in the end the narrator can describe the situation and suggest solutions, should he decide to take on pupils and inspire them to spread Ishmael's message.

Structure

Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit is a simple narrative consisting of thirteen chapters of varying lengths, each subdivided into brief numbered sections, which in most books would be at most leaded out to set them apart. They have been summarized and analyzed without reference to the subdivisions.

The first chapter describes how the former flower child narrator is, thirty years after the collapse of the overly idealistic "children's revolt" of the 1960s, angered to see that what he has most desired - a teacher seeking a student dedicated to saving the world - is advertising in the newspaper. He goes to the address, expecting to find a fraud and is amazed to find an enormous lowlands gorilla lounging peacefully behind glass. More amazing, the gorilla, Ishmael, establishes mind-to-mind communication with him. While the narrator sits recovering from the shock, Ishmael tells him his life's story.

These preliminaries complete, Ishmael leads the narrator on a voyage of discovery about how the narrator's culture has subtly inculcated in its members a story no one knows he or she is being propagandized. They accept and act upon myths as established and indisputable facts. Using the Socratic method of questioning and allowing the pupil to discover truths on his own, Ishmael works with the often-dense human, helping him overcome prejudices about the possibility of there being more than one human story that can be enacted in history. Slowly, the narrator sees the crimes his dominant "Taker" culture has committed against nature, bringing the earth, in a mere 10,000 years, to the bring of disaster. Another story, that of the "Leavers," millions of years old, non-destructive, and enduring, exists, but it has been so thoroughly vilified by the Takers the narrator is hard-pressed to see how it can be a solution for the world.

Ishmael is evicted from his apartment during a brief hiatus, but the narrator finds the elderly, ailing gorilla in a carnival miles away. Ishmael finishes the course of instruction in several sessions, growing weaker. After announcing the narrator knows all he can teach him and commissioning him to instruct pupils to begin a grassroots counterrevolution against the Taker ideology, Ishmael dies overnight. The County disposes of his body like common road kill, leaving the narrator to contemplate what man can do after gorilla is gone.

Quotes

"And now, years after I'd given up the search, here comes some charlatan advertising in the newspaper for the very same young dreamer that I'd been fifteen years ago. "But this still doesn't explain my outrage, does it?" Chapter 1, p. 6.

"Neither one of us understood that the difficulty was insurmountable, owing to a lack of basic phonic equipment on my part. In the absence of that understanding, we both labored on under the impression that the knack would someday magically manifest itself in me if we persevered. But at last there came a day when I couldn't go on, and in my anguish at not being able to *tell* him this, I *thought* him this, with all the mental power I possessed. He was stunned - as was I when I saw that he'd heard my mental cry." Chapter 1, p. 21.

"For the moment all you have to know is that two fundamentally different stories have been enacted here during the lifetime of man. One began to be enacted here some two or three million years ago by the people we've agreed to call Leavers and is still being enacted by them today, as successfully as ever. The other began to be enacted here some ten or twelve thousand years ago by the people we've agreed to call Takers, and is apparently about to end in catastrophe." Chapter 2, p. 41.

"'It *is* holy work, in Taker culture. The more competitors you destroy, the more humans you can bring into the world, and that makes it just about the holiest work there is. Once you exempt yourself from the law of limited competition, everything in the world except your food and the food of your food becomes an enemy to be exterminated." Chapter 8, p. 132.

"'So what are you saying? That it's hopeless?' "'Not at all. Obviously Mother Culture *must* be finished off if you're going to survive, and that's something the people of your culture can do. She has no existence outside your minds. Once you stop listening to her, she ceases to exist.'" Chapter 8, p. 144.

"'But when it's read another way, the explanation makes perfectly good sense: Man can never have the wisdom the gods use to rule the world, and if he tries to preempt that wisdom, the result won't be enlightenment, it will be death.' " 'Yes,' I said. 'I have no doubt about that - that's what the story means. Adam wasn't the progenitor of our race, he was the progenitor of our culture.' "'This is why he's always been a figure of such importance to you. Even though the story makes no real sense to you, you could identify with Adam as its protagonist. From the beginning you recognized him as one of your own.'" Chapter 9, pp. 183-184.

"The gambler who puts his last hundred on off and watches the ball hop decisively into slot 18 will tell you he *knew* it was a losing bet the instant the chip left his hand. He knew it, *felt* it. But of course if it had taken one more hop and landed on 19, he would cheerfully admit that such presentiments often prove to be wrong. "Mine was not." Chapter 10, p. 189.

"'Let me think about this. ... After five or eight thousand years of amnesia, the Takers really didn't know how to live. They really *must* have turned their backs on the past, because all of a sudden, here comes Hammurabi, and everyone says, 'What are these?' and Hammurabi says, 'These, my children, are *laws!*'" Chapter 10, pp. 204-205.

"'Yes. Far and away the most futile admonition Christ ever offered was when he said 'Have no care for tomorrow. Don't worry about whether you're going to have something to eat. Look at the birds of the air. They neither reap nor gather into barns, but God takes perfect care of them. Don't you think he'll do the same for you?' In our culture the overwhelming answer to that question is, 'Hell no!'" Chapter 11, p. 228.

"'Just think. In a billion years, whatever is around then, *whoever* is around then, says, 'Man? Oh yes, *man*! What a wonderful creature he was! It was within his grasp to destroy the entire world and to trample all our futures into the dust - but he saw the light before it was too late and pulled back. He pulled back and gave the rest of us our chance. He showed us all how it *had to be done* if the world was to go on being a garden forever. Man was the role model for us all!" " 'Not a shabby destiny!'" Chapter 12, p. 242.

"I shook my head. 'What you're saying is that someone has to stand up and become to the world of today what Saint Paul was to the Roman Empire.' "'Yes, basically. Is that so daunting?' "I laughed. 'Daunting isn't nearly strong enough. To call it daunting is like calling the Atlantic damp.' "'Is it really so impossible in an age when a stand-up comic on television reaches more people in ten minutes than Paul did in his entire lifetime?' "'I'm not a stand-up comic.' "'But you're a writer.' "'Not that kind of writer.' "Ishmael shrugged. 'Lucky you. You are absolved of any obligation. Self-absolved.'" Chapter 12, p. 249.

"What was to be done? Stand for a moment with lowered gaze outside the county furnace where they cremate the roadkills? Someone else would have handled it differently, probably better, revealing a greater heart, a finer sensibility. Myself, I drove home." Chapter 13, pg. 261.

Topics for Discussion

Why does Ishmael initially withhold his name from the narrator?

Why does eliminating the glass between them cause both narrator and Ishmael some discomfort?

Do you accept Ishmael's thesis that modern culture plants in human beings from birth the thesis they are divinely destined to control the world? If so, discuss what you find most compelling in his argument and cite examples not in the book. If not, explain why.

How can the poster in Ishmael's room, "WITH MAN GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR GORILLA?" be understood? Which interpretation do you prefer? Does the reverse side of the poster, "WITH GORILLA GONE, / WILL THERE / BE HOPE / FOR MAN?" lend itself to such ambiguity?

Does Ishmael's exegesis of Genesis 1-4 help you understand the biblical stories? How would you critique Ishmael's approach?

Is Ishmael unnecessarily harsh with the narrator's slowness of wit and inability to see his points?

How does the narrator regard his mentor? Will he carry Ishmael's message forward by taking on students and inspiring them to take on students?