

# **Joseph Anton: A Memoir Study Guide**

## **Joseph Anton: A Memoir by Salman Rushdie**

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# Plot Summary

Joseph Anton: A Memoir is the autobiographical account of Salman Rushdie after a fatwa is issued against him for his authorship of *The Satanic Verses*.

Salman Rushdie, a native of British India, is educated in England at Exeter University, and goes on to become a writer. His first hit is a book called *Midnight's Children*, which brings him success and fame. His next book, *The Satanic Verses*, incorporates Islamic theology, and is roundly criticized by many Muslims around the world. The book is condemned, and a fatwa is issued against Rushdie, calling for his death. The book is burned, and lives of everyone associated with publication are threatened, and some are even killed. Rushdie and his second wife, Marianne, are taken into protective custody, and spend the next year moving around from one safe house to another.

Rushdie's life is threatened again and again, and each year, the fatwa against him is renewed. Nevertheless, Rushdie continues writing, and his friends rally around him. Many in the literary world do the same, but many others, under fear, abandon and condemn Rushdie. For the next decade, Rushdie lives under protection, divorcing, marrying, divorcing again, and falling in love once more. Rushdie also manages to raise his son, Zafar, into a competent young man, and begins raising his new baby, Milan. The autobiography ends with the threat against Rushdie minimized, and Rushdie ends his protection. He then goes to hail a cab to see about an apartment.



# Prologue - Chapter 5

## Prologue - Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

Summary:

Prologue - It is a bad day for Salman Rushdie. In addition to the realization that his marriage to novelist Marianne Wiggins is over, Rushdie has a memorial service for his friend, Bruce Chatwin, who has died of AIDS. Things get even worse when he receives a call from a BBC reporter, who informs Rushdie that the Ayatollah Khomeini has issued a fatwa, a decree in the Islamic faith popularly known as a death sentence, against him. Instantly, Rushdie knows he is in trouble. He rushes to the CBS station, where he has an interview. There, he reads the fatwa, which encourages Muslims to kill all the people associated with printing the book *The Satanic Verses*, including the author himself. Muslim demonstrators refer to Rushdie as "Satan Rushdie." On air, Rushdie says he wishes he had been more critical of Islam, especially given the way the Muslim world is responding. Rushdie then meets his wife at his literary agency, who brings him a packed bag. As Rushdie is enroute to the memorial service for Chatwin, he wonders about the safety of his family overseas and in England. Reporters are everywhere. Rushdie realizes that the Iranian revolution has grown unpopular with its supporters, especially in the war against Iraq. Khomeini seizes on Rushdie's book to unite Iran.

Rushdie races over to see his first wife and his son, Zafar. The police are already protecting the house. Rushdie promises Zafar he will call him every night at seven. The police are outside of Rushdie's own house, and he returns home for the night, but he does not sleep. He wonders what awaits him.

Chapter 1, "A Faustian Contract in Reverse" - When Salman Rushdie is a little boy, his father, Anis, tells him stories of the East, such as those from "Thousand and One Nights." Negin, Rushdie's mother, also tells him stories. Rushdie is born in British-India. Anis inherits his family's textile fortune, but then wastes it, dying broke. Nevertheless, Anis cares deeply for his family, and takes Rushdie to England in 1961, where Rushdie will be educated at Rugby School. Years later, before Anis dies, he writes to Rushdie, telling him how much he loves Rushdie's books, and always looks forward to the next. "Rushdie" is an invented last name constructed by Anis, in honor of Ibn Rushid, Averroes, the Spanish-Arab philosopher. Though Anis is without belief in God, the rise of Islam fascinates him, because it occurs inside recorded history, and because he finds much contradiction and inconsistency in the religion itself. Rushdie, as a younger man, is unsure about God's existence, though he later comes to discover he does not believe in God.

At school, Rushdie does his best to fit in, doing his best not to act foreign or too clever, but is not an athlete, and this causes him concern. At school, Rushdie is required to participate in paramilitary activities, but he rebels against this, saying that only recently had India gained independence from Great Britain, and he is excused. Rather than



study during paramilitary exercises, Rushdie reads science fiction novels, from Asimov to Arthur C. Clarke. Rushdie later attends Cambridge. Anis demands Rushdie study economics, or he will stop paying for college. Rushdie does not want to return home, for India is at war with Pakistan. Rushdie wants to study history, and a professor, Dr. John Broadbent, argues the case to Anis, who concedes. Among the courses offered by Cambridge is one about the rise of Islam, and of Mohammad. Mohammad, in some disputed verses of the hadith, is apparently fooled by Satan into writing down incorrect verses, only to be given correct verses from God by the angel Gabriel. The wrong verses recognize the divinity of three winged goddesses. Mohammad has been tempted, according to tradition, and Rushdie finds it to be a good story. Rushdie decides he wants to write, and spends the next thirteen years writing nothing important, until 1981, when *Midnight's Children* is published. Combining history with fiction, Rushdie realizes he is on to something. He wants to give a voice to India in the novel, and when it is published, Indians all over thank Rushdie for giving them a voice. Rushdie becomes a full-time writer with *Midnight's Children*.

Rushdie recounts the next seven years as being good ones. In the United States, *Midnight's Children* sells exceptionally well, and it surprises everyone. It is in 1984 that Rushdie's marriage to Clarissa ends. Rushdie is unable to have more children, and his wife wants a country rather than a city life. Rushdie goes on to have an affair, and begins dreaming up a new book about an interrelated world, about new things entering the world- and the idea for *The Satanic Verses* is born. Rushdie goes on to become a speaker and a member of the International PEN Society. When Rushdie turns forty, he feels as if he has finally gotten to a place where he can be happy. While working on a film called "The Riddle of Midnight," Rushdie learns that his father has cancer, and goes to visit him. Anis later dies in the hospital, and Rushdie must pay his bills using an American Express card before the body can be released to them. He later marries Marianne, on January 23, 1988. Shortly thereafter, *The Satanic Verses* is finished. The result is a reverse Faustian contract- to gain immortality, you ruin your daily life.

Chapter 2, "Manuscripts Don't Burn" - The morning after Valentine's Day (the day after Rushdie discovers the fatwa has been issued against him), he is visited by a senior officer from the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police, and by an intelligence officer. Rushdie reflects on the publishing process, as the right publisher is selected for the book. At the same time, Bruce Chatwin is dying of AIDS. A proof copy of *The Satanic Verses* is read by a supposed friend, Madhu Jain of the paper *India Today*. She begins the controversy over the book. Muslims in India's Parliament respond angrily to Rushdie's book. Rushdie's character is demonized, including by the English press. The British edition is published on September 26, 1988. The book is later banned in a dozen countries. Rushdie comes to question the idea of freedom, imagining he always had the right to write as he wanted. Soon after, death threats begin pouring in, causing Rushdie to cancel a reading at Cambridge. More death threats pour in, speaking of bombings and killing those who invite Rushdie to speak. Muslim leaders around the world, in particular in the Middle East, are coming after Rushdie with a vengeance, condemning him. In England, Muslim demonstrations against Rushdie and the book occur in Bradford. Bomb scares are had at the Viking Penguin publishing offices.



In Bradford, over a thousand people attend the protest, all of them men, and Rushdie and Marianne see the event on the news. The book is burned while Bradford city councilor tells people that Islam is all about peace. Rushdie begins to grow angry over everything that is happening. However, there are many who come out in defense of Rushdie as well. Among them are Syrian professor of Islamic Studies at Exeter University, Aziz al-Azmeh. Counter-demonstrators organize in London. The U.S. edition of the novel is published, and while there is some push back, most editorial commentary in America supports Rushdie. The book receives excellent reviews in the United States. Protests in Pakistan flare up, but they are small. Several people are killed. American interests are also targeted.

Chapter 3, "Year Zero" - The Special Branch officer, Will Wilson, and the intelligence officer, Will Wilton, discuss the situation with Rushdie. He is given two cars, two drivers, and two security agents, Ben Winters and Stanley Doll. It is believed everything will blow over in a few days. He will be staying at the Lygon Arms hotel. Everywhere Rushdie and Marianne go, they are stared at. One woman even wishes Rushdie good luck. The second day there, Stan and Benny explain that Khomeini has hinted that if Rushdie apologizes, he could be spared from his fate. The approved apology is craven, and Rushdie reworks it so that he apologizes for offending people, not for the book itself. It is a weak move, Rushdie asserts, and results in the rejection of the apology. He writes that he should have made a stand against intolerance instead. Rushdie goes to stay at the Thames, Oxfordshire cottage of Hilary Rubenstein at the A. P. Watt Agency. Rushdie and Marianne instead go to the Middle Pitts farm of friend and composer, Michael and Deb Berkeley, on the Welsh Border. He is given the farm as long as he needs it, but he and Marianne agree they need to find their own place to live.

In the world, Muslim rage against the book continues, spearheaded by Khomeini and Rafsanjani. Support of Rushdie also appears to be wavering in Britain, India, and the United States. Publishing offices are receiving threatening phone calls. But PEN America vociferously defends the novel, and Germany and Italy also move ahead to publish the novel. In Britain, though, Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey How condemns the book. The literary front in defense of Rushdie also breaks. The West Berlin Academy of Arts, for example, refuses to allow a pro-Rushdie event. At the same time, a new place to live is found, called Tyn-y-Coed, or "house in the woods," a white-walled cottage with a slate roof in Pentrefelin. A new protection team is brought in, including Dev Stonehouse, Gerry Fitt, Tom King, and Ulsterman Ian Paisley, as well as two drivers, Alex and Phil. They go for a walk in the nearby Black Mountains, and caution Rushdie against visiting his son in London too often. Rushdie later learns that the entire incident will not blow over in a few days, but may go on indefinitely. Regular police may have to take up watch, and Rushdie will not be allowed to return to his normal life. Yet every night, Rushdie continues to call his son at seven, as promised. Stan and Benny return, and Rushdie is concerned when his son doesn't answer the phone at seven. He tries again a few times, and the police are sent to the house, and observe the wrong house. They report the door is open and all the lights are on, and Rushdie fears his family is dead. But fortunately, they are just late getting home, and the mistake of the wrong house is quickly discovered. Rushdie describes it as the worst day of his life.



Rushdie then moves on to a house called Porlock Weir near the village of Porlock. Marianne, who has no restrictions on her movement, comes and goes, and begins telling lies about Rushdie. But Rushdie doesn't want to live alone, and so he stays with her. He is also encouraged to change his name, and Rushdie chooses Joseph Anton, after his favorite authors, Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekhov. Rushdie knows he must continue writing, and so begins doing reviews of books. After speaking with his son, and reflecting on the bath time stories he told Zafar, Rushdie begins to write once more. Meanwhile, Islamic hatred heats up, and Muslims who do not hate Rushdie are themselves killed. Rushdie, meanwhile, manages to see movies and see his son, even when superiors say he should not. Rushdie is offered shooting lessons, but he declines. Watching a documentary on the failed assassination of Ronald Reagan, Rushdie comes to realize there is no such thing as absolute security. The security team for Rushdie enjoys his literary circle of friends, who feed them and treat them well on visits. Yet at the same time, rumors of specially-trained gunmen being brought in specifically to kill Rushdie, abound.

As Rushdie moves around, he comes into possession of the new cell phone, which he describes as a brick with an antenna on it. Rushdie is taken to a place in Talybont while Marianne returns to visit America for a graduation from Dartmouth. As time goes on, Rushdie's good friends solidify around him, and are happy to be seen in his company. When Marianne returns, they are moved to Dyke House in Gladestry. He and Marianne then separate. The publishers begin questioning a paperback edition of *The Satanic Verses*. Bill Buford, American boyfriend of Jane Wellesley, secures a house for Rushdie in Essex, allowing his name to be used on the rental agreement. Rushdie also works on an essay to be published around the one year-anniversary of the fatwa. As 1989 ends, the Brandenburg Gate is thrown open in Berlin, and the city is reunited.

Chapter 4, "The Trap of Wanting to Be Loved" - Rushdie dreams of being vindicated, in which people would understand what he had done. Surveys taken reveal that most booksellers want the paperback version of the "Verses" to come out. Rushdie's essays are published, and Khomeini renews the calls for Rushdie's death. Rushdie gets into video games because of his son, and Marianne, who comes around, tells him to read books instead. Rushdie continues working on his new novel into the spring of 1990, which will become *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Rushdie's friends and agents discover as well that Penguin has been underpaying Rushdie's royalties, and correct the issue. Rushdie considers going to America, and speaks with Ambassador Maurice Busby, head of America's counter-terrorism operations. Rushdie will be allowed to come to the U.S., but in three or four months, after hostages in Lebanon are released. Meanwhile, Marianne makes sure Rushdie finds her journal, in which she eviscerates him, forcing him to seek a divorce. Arabs are arrested time and again for seeking to carry out the fatwa. Attempts through the UN to settle the issue fail. All of the early potential publishers for "Haroun" have rejected the story for various reasons.

A Pakistani film comes out, about a group of jihadi terrorists who hunt down and kill Rushdie. It is refused licensing by the British Board of Film, being censored to protect Rushdie's freedom. Rushdie finds it ironic. The same year, Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait, and war breaks out. Rushdie later meets Elizabeth West, and they hit it off.





They continue their relationship, one that is mostly kept quiet, because Elizabeth has no police protection. Haroun and the Sea of Stories is published, finally, and early readings receive good reviews. A concession is made from the Iranian government, that they would do nothing to implement the fatwa, but could not lift it, for it had already been set in motion. The divorce with Marianne is finalized, and she goes to live and write in Washington, D.C. Salman goes on to finalize a collection of essays he is assembling. It is an attempt to make peace, to find common ground. A meeting is arranged with Muslim leaders for Rushdie, where he signs a document attesting to his belief in Islam. Despite this show of weakness, the Muslims do not reach out to Rushdie, but increase their threats against him.

Chapter 5, "Been Down So Long It Looks Up to Me" - Through the winter, Rushdie comes down with a fever, and is confined to bed. The increased threats against him further restrict his freedom. Page proofs for his collection of essays, *Imaginary Homelands*, arrives. Rushdie comes to the realization that, no matter what he does, not everyone is going to love him. He comes to understand he is fighting against censorship, hatred, and the idea that people could be killed for their beliefs and ideas. He also realizes he is fighting for freedom. A team of professionals, meanwhile, has accepted the task to kill Rushdie, and new precautions are taken, and new restrictions are made. Despite this, Elizabeth, working at Bloomsbury, continues to see Rushdie, bravely. Paperback editions of the "Verses" are now being published elsewhere in Europe. Elsewhere in the world, radical Muslims begin taking out targets in conjunction with the "Verses," and in opposition to radical Islam. Rushdie moves into a house on Hampstead Lane at the northern part of Hampstead Heath. Rushdie has finally found a permanent home, and will remain there for the next seven or eight years.

Rushdie wins a Writer's Guild Award, and is allowed to make an appearance to claim it. Helen Hammington, the new manager of Rushdie's case, relaxes his restrictions a bit to be able to do these sorts of things. He is later cleared to go to the United States for a visit to the Low Library, where he is warmly received. Zafar is meanwhile accepted into the Highgate School, and Rushdie's protection is planned to be withdrawn, facing cost issues. Writer Scott Armstrong invites Rushdie to speak at the Freedom Forum, and Rushdie is escorted by a private security firm hired by the Freedom Foundation. The American team is friendly and kind, and they all ask for copies of the "Verses." In the United States, Rushdie meets other writers and supporters, from Christopher Hitchens to Bob Woodward to Katherine Graham, owner of the *Washington Post*. The Americans see to it that Rushdie's protection detail is not withdrawn.

Analysis:

Salman Rushdie begins his autobiography, "Joseph Anton: A Memoir", by describing the first day of knowing a death sentence has been pronounced for him. It is alarming for the reader to learn that a member of the Western world, living in the confines of Western civilization and culture, can be a target for radical Islamists thousands of miles away. What is even more terrifying to the reader -especially to the American reader- is that the exercise of free speech through the written word can bring a death sentence. At first, Rushdie is terrified, as anyone would be in such a situation. Rushdie is confused,





though, because he has not attacked Islam in the book "The Satanic Verses", but has been indifferent to it. Scenes eerily reminiscent of Nazism and Communism in Europe are repeated by the rate at which nations ban the books, and the burning of the novel in Bradford. Even many in the Western nations seek quickly to distance or condemn Rushdie and the book, out of fear for their own lives, and hoping to appease the radicals -a similar reaction to Hitler, and later Stalin.

Rushdie, however, quickly recovers, and despite his protection detail, determines that he is not going to stop living his life. Interestingly, Rushdie, an Indian by birth, despite having grown up under British influence, falls in love with the Western tradition, especially with freedom. From an early age, Rushdie is taught stories and develops an appetite for novels, and prizes the freedom that allow such books and stories to exist. He realizes he is in a fight for freedom against terrorism, against hate, and so he resolves to keep writing and to keep speaking out whenever and wherever he can. He understands a war of ideas is being waged, and it is not a war he intends to lose, even if it costs him his life. His heroic acts of defiance against radical Islam certainly resonate with the West today, living in a post-9/11 world. Unfortunately, hatred of Rushdie flares up, and Rushdie is denied his freedoms in order to protect him -something which he reluctantly accepts, but nevertheless rails against.



# Chapters 6 - 10

## Chapters 6 - 10 Summary and Analysis

Summary:

Chapter 6, "Why It's Impossible to Photograph the Pampas" - Rushdie wonders if, one day, he will write about his experiences in conjunction with the fatwa. Rushdie reveals that it is Islam that has changed, that it has become phobic of newness. Over the next few years, Rushdie travels around under heavy security, speaking about his book and in defense of freedom, from Scandinavia to Spain to the United States. But elsewhere in the world, including in the Middle East, moderates and Muslims who refuse to condemn the "Verses" are murdered. Back in England, Zafar begins attending Highgate, and stays with his father. He is very happy to do so. Elizabeth continues standing by Rushdie, and she and Zafar get along well. Meanwhile, Bono of U2 speaks out in defense of Rushdie and The Satanic Verses, and Bono and Rushdie become friends. In Stockholm, Rushdie receives the Kurt Tucholsky Prize, awarded to persecuted writers. Rushdie and Elizabeth later go to Ireland to stay with Bono in Killiney. There, Bono and Rushdie sneak out and go to a bar for half an hour. In February, 1993, the World Trade Center in New York is bombed by Muslim terrorists. Radical Islam is not going away.

Rushdie meets with Prime Minister John Major. Rushdie thanks Major for the protection he has enjoyed. Major, facing an economic decline, needs to rally the country- and does so by condemning the fatwa against Rushdie. Clarissa is meanwhile diagnosed with cancer, undetected for eighteen months. Meanwhile, Rushdie's divorce with Marianne is still pending. U2 holds a concert in Wembley Stadium, and Rushdie, Aafar, and Elizabeth attend. Bono brings Rushdie out on stage, for solidarity. William Nygaard, a Norwegian publisher, is shot three times in October 1993 by a radical Muslim sniper, but William lives. Christopher Hitchens pulls strings with George Stephanopoulos to get President Bill Clinton to meet with Rushdie. Clinton brings the United States fully behind Rushdie. It becomes front page news.

Chapter 7, "A Truckload of Dung" - 1994 begins with the New York Times withdrawing its offer for a syndicated column to Rushdie. Outside of Great Britain, Rushdie is known as a likable figure, and inside Great Britain, writers like Christopher Hitchens are attempting to defend him. The International Parliament of Writers is founded in Strasbourg and, among its duties, seeks to help persecuted writers when their own governments will not. Rushdie becomes its first president. He also learns that he has won the Austrian State Prize for European Literature, two years after it has been awarded to him. Meanwhile, Zafar has secretly been stealing money from Rushdie to buy a boat. When Rushdie finds out, Zafar is punished. When gold jewelry goes missing from Elizabeth, she has Rushdie awaken Zafar in the middle of the night to find it, only to discover Zafar has not taken it, that it has been elsewhere. This causes an irreparable rift between Rushdie and Elizabeth. Rushdie also begins writing once more. He finishes his story collection "East, West," and the first part of his novel, The Moor's



Last Sigh. Rushdie, Zafar, and Elizabeth go to Scotland and then to the United States, and Rushdie is excited to be able to drive again, on the interstate through New York State. Rushdie finishes up *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and an American summer tour is planned. Clarissa beats her cancer, much to the happiness of everyone.

It is further revealed to Rushdie that when *The Moor's Last Sigh* is published, Rushdie will be permitted to do public readings and signings. These could even be publicized. But soon after, Scotland Yard begins to worry that it is not a good idea, but later relents to Rushdie. Globally, the G7 has come down in line to condemn and call for an end to the fatwa against Rushdie. Rushdie and Elizabeth try to have a baby, but continue to fail at it. She recommends Rushdie have a sperm test done. Rushdie, meanwhile, reads an excerpt from *The Moor's Last Sigh* at the Writer's Forum in Central Hall Westminster. There are no protests. Rushdie decides he wants to travel to Australia and New Zealand from his South American tour. He visits Chile, where he is taken into custody but walks away without incident, continuing on to Argentina and Mexico. In Australia, Rushdie and Elizabeth listen to Homer's *Iliad* on tape as they drive. They get into an accident with a truck, which Zafar sleeps through. They later learn the truck is full of dung.

Chapter 8, "Mr. Morning and Mr. Afternoon" - As Rushdie gets into his late forties, he begins to wonder if the rest of his life will be the way it currently is. He feels as if the past seven years of his life have gone by entirely too fast. Meanwhile, *The Moor's Last Sigh* sells well, though it causes some trouble in India, and the book's importation is stopped. It is also during this time that Rushdie has an affair with the young, beautiful daughter of a friend, Caroline Lang. Rushdie later rents a house on Long Island, New York for two months hoping to keep his freedom. Soon after, Elizabeth becomes pregnant with Rushdie's second child, a son. Zafar, meanwhile, has been skipping school since he has gotten his driver's license. His grades have also slipped, and Rushdie demands Zafar do better.

One day, one of the guards in the house accidentally fires off his gun while cleaning it, which leads Rushdie to press to have the weapons taken out of his home. A counteroffer is made, of having one officer be responsible for private movements, and the rest of the officers withdrawn. Frank Bishop is given the job as the main man, and Dennis the Horse as his backup. Parliamentary elections are held, and Tony Blair becomes prime minister. Rushdie attends the celebration. On Tuesday, May 27, Elizabeth gives birth to Milan Luca West Rushdie. Word breaks out in the press of the birth, but Elizabeth is unhappy that Milan's last name is not hyphenated to be West-Rushdie. Zafar turns eighteen, and the family vacations for the summer in America. While there, Rushdie and Elizabeth formally marry. Thereafter, Great Britain's Random House takes on the paperback edition of *The Satanic Verses*. Meanwhile, a miniseries adaptation of *Midnight's Children* for the BBC is being produced. By the time Milan is seven months old, cracks begin appearing in the Rushdie marriage. A second attempt to have another baby ends in a miscarriage, and Elizabeth turns away from Rushdie to busy herself with Milan. They grow distant, and it is noticed by friends.

Word comes that India, which has banned Rushdie from visiting, may soon be lifting those travel restrictions. During summer vacation in America, Rushdie works on *The*



Ground Beneath Her Feet. The night of September 22, 1998, CNN breaks the story that President Khatami of Iran has declared the death threat against Rushdie to be over. There is much excitement and happiness. Though the fatwa would remain, the government of Iran would dissociate itself from the fatwa. Rushdie now has his freedom back. That Sunday, Rushdie and Clarissa take Zafar to Exeter for college. In Iran, meanwhile, outrage erupts, and many call for the renewal of the fatwa. Iranian students, especially, protest the decision, and chant that they are ready to kill themselves in order to kill Rushdie. Rushdie's mother tells him to write a nice book for his next project.

Chapter 9, "His Millenarian Illusion" - The tenth anniversary of the Bradford book burning rolls around, and many in Iran still declare the fatwa to be on. Rushdie suffers from droopy eyelid syndrome, ptosis, which is treated with an operation. Khatami later takes a hard stance against Rushdie, stating that European nations who support Rushdie also support intolerance and war. The release of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* occurs in conjunction with an eight-city U.S. tour. As the year 2000 approaches, Rushdie falls under the sway of the idea that the new millennium will bring a great transformation of life. Clarissa is later admitted to the hospital, and the fluid removed from her lungs is found to have cancer in it. Clarissa is dying. Rushdie does his best to be there for Zafar. He frantically uses the internet to find cures for his mother's cancer, but Clarissa fades quickly and dies. Soon after, the Rushdies's house on Bishop Avenue is robbed, and their marriage later disintegrates. After they divorce, and after several years go by, Elizabeth and Rushdie are able to become friends again.

Rushdie is seeing writer and actress Padma Lakshmi. They live freely and openly in New York, and many believe that Rushdie is making fun of British security, which he is not. Only by living openly could he end the fear around him, Rushdie explains. Rushdie is finally able to return to India, and he does so with Zafar. The trip attracts few protestors, indicating that much of the controversy over *The Satanic Verses* has died down. Rushdie even goes on to act in a scene in the movie "Bridget Jones' Diary." Zafar goes to live in New York with his father and Padma, of whom he approves. British intelligence reanalyzes the threat level against Rushdie, and downgrades it. Rushdie is one level away from not needing protection. The divorce with Elizabeth comes about, and Milan will come and live with Rushdie. When Rushdie moves into a new house, Joseph Anton passes away.

Chapter 10, "At the Halcyon Hotel" - Padma brings Rushdie to Los Angeles. While there, he works in the library in Beverly Hills. He also has lunch with Christopher Hitchens and Warren Beatty. But things with Padma break down, the apartment Rushdie wants in New York is costing a lot of money to fix up, and the divorce with Elizabeth is getting bad. Rushdie also writes for the "New York Times," finding the modern world of technology to be demanding. Rushdie's new novel, *Fury*, comes out on September 11, during the terrorist attacks. Rushdie writes in defense of freedom and attacks terrorism. Shortly thereafter, meeting at the Halcyon Hotel, Rushdie's threat level is downgraded, and security withdrawn. Rushdie then hails a cab to look at an apartment.

Analysis:



Though at times Rushdie feels as if he is alone, he knows this is not the case. He still does his best to be a good father, and even manages to get married to Elizabeth West, despite the way that he must live under protection. Indeed, Rushdie's stand against radical Islam, and in defense of human freedom, compel his good friends to rally around him, and expands his name dramatically in the literary world. He wins numerous prizes and awards, and continues writing. He gains many friends who are writers, and who are proud to be seen in his company. Indeed, Rushdie's fight against the radicals who want to kill him is given new impetus by U.S. President Bill Clinton, who condemns the fatwa against Rushdie. Soon after, the G7 condemns the fatwa, as does the United Nations. A huge international outcry eventually pressures Iran into dissociating itself from the fatwa. And all the while, Rushdie continues to write and speak out against the evils of terrorism, refusing to back down.

Prophetically, with the rise of terrorism in the new millennium -the horrific terrorist attacks of 9/11- Rushdie's defiance becomes a rallying point for many. Terrorism cannot be backed down from, Rushdie maintains, and it must be defeated by people refusing to be afraid to live their lives, just as Rushdie has done. Unfortunately, due to infidelity and other circumstances, Rushdie's marriage to Elizabeth breaks down, and his new marriage to Padma Lakshmi is not a happy one. Rushdie presses on though, buoyed by the strong young man Zafar has turned out to be, and by the way baby Milan has grown into an intelligent child. After 9/11, Rushdie's security threat is reassessed, and he is given the option to refuse any more protection from the British. Rushdie immediately accepts, wanting a normal life, and the protection is called back. Rushdie then begins his normal life with the simple, everyday act of hailing a cab to see about a new apartment.



# Characters

## Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie is the author and narrator of his autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*. He is the husband of Padma, and former husband of Elizabeth West and Marianne. Rushdie is an excellent, though controversial novelist. Born in British-India, Rushdie is educated in the West, in England at Exeter. As a student, he enjoys reading novels, having grown up listening to the stories his father tells. Rushdie, after graduating, becomes a novelist, and his book *Midnight's Children* makes literary waves, and Rushdie begins making a name for himself. While in college, Rushdie studies Islam, and writes a novel incorporating Islam called *The Satanic Verses*. The novel instantly sets off a firestorm in the Muslim world, and the Ayatollah of Iran issues a fatwa against Rushdie, calling for his death.

Rushdie, who is married and has a son, must go into hiding. He assumes the name Joseph Conrad, after his two favorite authors. While in hiding, Rushdie's marriage ends with Marianne, and he later falls in love with and marries Elizabeth West, who gives him a son, Milan. The marriage later breaks apart, and Rushdie remarries Padma. Meanwhile, Rushdie continues writing and publishing, determined to make a stand for freedom. Bono of U2, President Bill Clinton, the United Nations, and other countries, leaders, and organizations take to defending Rushdie, and eventually succeed in having Iran dissociate itself from the fatwa. Rushdie then seizes on the chance to cast off his protective detail, and does his best to resume a free, normal life.

## Joseph Anton

Joseph Anton is an alias assumed by hunted writer Salman Rushdie. Joseph Anton is formed from the first names of Rushdie's favorite writers, Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekhov. Joseph Anton exists for more than a decade as Rushdie's alias, and simply disappears when Rushdie moves into a new house, away from his then-permanent home at Bishop Street.

## Clarissa Luard

Clarissa is Salman Rushdie's first wife, who bears him a son named Zafar. Clarissa and Rushdie continue to be friendly following their divorce, and often do things together to make Zafar happy. Clarissa is later diagnosed with cancer, and beats it. Much later, however, her cancer returns, and she dies from it.



## **Marianne Wiggins**

Marianne is Rushdie's second wife, who is married to him for several years, including his first years in hiding. She lies about Rushdie, and forces him to press for a divorce by writing mean things about Rushdie in her journal, and then leaving her journal for Rushdie to find.

## **Liz Calder**

Rushdie's first and only editor, Liz Calder is a close friend of Rushdie's, and helps to found Bloomsbury Publishing press.

## **Zafar Rushdie**

Zafar Rushdie is the son of Salman Rushdie and Clarissa Luard. He is bright, energetic, and deeply committed to his parents. Rushdie does his best to ensure Zafar grows up happily despite the protective detail and the fatwa. Zafar does indeed grow to be a capable young man.

## **Elizabeth West**

Elizabeth West is the third wife of Salman Rushdie. She falls in love with him while he is in hiding, marries him, and gives him a son, Milan. But Rushdie's infidelity, a miscarriage, and distance between them leads to a breakdown in their marriage, and they later have a nasty divorce.

## **Helen Hammington**

Helen Hammington manages Rushdie's protection case, and is the first leader who allows Rushdie some freedom. Rushdie greatly respects Hammington for this.

## **President Bill Clinton**

President Bill Clinton is president of the United States, and meets with Salman Rushdie at the White House in the Oval Office. Clinton condemns the fatwa against Rushdie, which helps to encourage other international groups and nations to do the same.

## **Milan West Rushdie**

Milan West Rushdie is the son of Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West. Like Zafar, Rushdie raises Milan as best he can, hoping to give Milan as normal a life as possible



despite the fatwa. When Rushdie and Elizabeth divorce, Milan goes to live with Rushdie.



# Objects/Places

## India

India is where Salman Rushdie is born and grows into young adulthood, whereupon he leaves to study and live in England. After *The Satanic Verses* is published, Rushdie is banned from visiting India for more than a decade.

## England

England is where Salman Rushdie goes to study, and later to live. It is throughout England that Rushdie is kept in hiding.

## Bishop's Avenue

Bishop's Avenue is the location of the house in North London that becomes Salman Rushdie's permanent home for several years. When Rushdie leaves Bishop, he also leaves behind the alias Joseph Anton.

## New York, New York, USA

New York, New York, USA, is where Salman Rushdie comes to live, and where he experiences new-found freedom following his years spent in hiding. He becomes a man about town, and appears in photos in the press frequently.

## Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., is the capital of the United States of America, and is the location of the White House. It is in Washington, D.C., that Salman Rushdie meets President Bill Clinton.

## Halcyon Hotel

The Halcyon Hotel in London is where Salman Rushdie learns that his risk assessment has been downgraded. It is where Rushdie rejects his protective detail, and goes on to live a normal life.



## **The Satanic Verses**

The Satanic Verses is a book written Salman Rushdie, which incorporates Islamic history, and is roundly condemned by radical Islamists in Iran and around the world. A copy of the book is burned in Bradford.

## **Armored Car**

An armored car is how Salman Rushdie is transported around England. An armored car brings him to and from visits to friends and public appearances.

## **Cell Phone**

A cell phone is what Salman Rushdie acquires in order to make phone calls since he moves around frequently. He uses the cell phone to call his son, Zafar, every night at seven.

## **Gun**

Guns are carried by Rushdie's protection detail. One is accidentally fired in the house, which outrages Rushdie, and causes him to press for a change in his security plans.

# Themes

## Freedom

Freedom is a major component of the Western cultural tradition, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. Freedom occupies a prominent and major place in Salman Rushdie's memoir, *Joseph Anton*. Freedom in part consists of the ability to write, speak, and present one's beliefs and thoughts clearly. This is what Rushdie exercises when he composes *The Satanic Verses*. Yet it is these very freedoms that come under attack by radical members of the Muslim community, who condemn the book and demonize Rushdie. Indeed, hatred of Rushdie and his book go so far as to have Iran issue a fatwa against Rushdie, calling for his death. Rushdie's crime is that he has written something with which Islamists disagree.

Rushdie is taken into protective custody and his own freedoms restricted in order to preserve his life. Nevertheless, Rushdie rails against radical Islam, continues to write, and opposes his security. Eventually, the West at large comes to stand behind Rushdie, recognizing his stand for freedom. Slowly, restrictions on Rushdie's travel are eased, and Rushdie begins to live freely once more. Indeed, Rushdie acknowledges he is fighting for freedom by defying the Muslims. After the attacks of 9/11, Rushdie writes scathing articles against terrorism, and defends freedom. Rushdie eventually regains his own freedom, when his risk is downgraded, and he rejects security protection.

## Radical Islam

Radical Islam is a concurrent theme throughout Salman Rushdie's autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*. Radical Islam consists of the warping and twisting of Islam to meet personal and political ends, to crush and conquer and subdue, and to instill fear in others through the use of terrorism. Rushdie describes radical Islam in his book as something that is phobic of everything new and modern.

Radical Islamists condemn Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*, and Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini issues a fatwa against Rushdie, calling for his death. Other Muslim leaders call for the deaths of all people associated with the publication of Rushdie's book, and many people are killed. Bombs, death threats, firebombs, and other such tactics are utilized by radical Muslims to carry out the fatwa. Many are wounded as well, in failed assassination attempts, such as William Nygaard.

Radical Islam, and the fatwa against Rushdie, ultimately become a rallying cry for the West, and for moderate Muslims, all of whom come to Rushdie's defense. At first, it is Rushdie's family and friends who defend him, and then later, organizations such as PEN America and PEN International. Eventually, entire nations get involved against radical Islam, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Even international bodies, such as the UN and G7, condemn the fatwa against Rushdie.

## Courage

Courage is a major, dominant, and overarching theme in Salman Rushdie's autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*. Courage consists of a person facing danger or difficult circumstances, even if such circumstances and dangers are overwhelming. Courage exists in Rushdie's book on two levels: the personal, and the group level.

In terms of courage existing on the personal level, Rushdie exhibits such bravery. It is he whom the fatwa is issued against, and it is he who must go into hiding. Yet, Rushdie does not break or back down, ultimately coming to challenge his attackers by writing and carrying on in the tradition of Western freedom. He scathingly condemns terrorism and radical Islam, at the peril of his own life, while relentlessly defending the Western tradition of freedom. The family, friends, and individuals who support and rally around Rushdie also exhibit freedom, for they risk their lives as well to do so.

Courage at the group level comes in the form of organizations and nations that ultimately defend Rushdie, putting themselves at risk as well. Among the groups who protect Rushdie are his security detail, various writers organizations such as PEN America and PEN International. Later, entire nations, such as the United States and England, condemn the fatwa against Rushdie as well.

# Style

## Perspective

Salman Rushdie tells his autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* in the third-person omniscient perspective, replacing "I" with "He." Rushdie tells the book in this fashion because he, as the narrator, is recounting his own life story, tracing the events of this period of his life years after they have happened, thereby adopting an omniscient position on those events. Referring to himself as "he," Rushdie takes on an elegant form of politeness by refusing the word "I." This is also done because, for most of the novel, Rushdie is writing about his alias, Joseph Anton, rather than himself, Salman Rushdie. It is at once an autobiography, and a biography of someone else.

## Tone

Salman Rushdie tells his autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* in a tone that is measured, calm, and reflective, for the events of the novel happened two decades before, culminating in events that occurred only a decade before. This calm and measured approach presents a relaxed, objective counterpoint to the rash, horrifying, and hotblooded events of the book, from the fatwa to Rushdie's days in hiding. Furthermore, the tone adopted by Rushdie is that of a man who has lived through the worst troubles of his life, and is later recalling them so that contemporaries and posterity can understand his struggles, and be better braced for future struggles of their own, especially in defense of freedom.

## Structure

Salman Rushdie structures his autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir* into ten broad chapters and a prologue. The prologue details the events of the day that Rushdie found out about the fatwa against him, and the succeeding ten chapters trace the events of his life through the early 2000s. The ten chapters are arranged in chronological, linear format, in order to systematically guide the reader through the chaotic events of his life. Rushdie further titles each chapter with a mark of something significant from its contents; Chapter 10, "Halcyon Hotel," for example, details Rushdie regaining his freedom at the Halcyon Hotel in London; Chapter 7, "A Truckload of Dung," includes an event in which a collision with a truck full of excrement almost kills him.



## Quotes

"He realized, in that footstep-haunted silence, that he no longer understood his life, or what it might become, and he thought for the second time that day that there might not be very much more of life to understand." Prologue, p. 16

"Man was the storytelling animal, the only creature on earth that told itself stories to understand what kind of a creature it really was. The story was his birthright, and nobody could take it away." Chapter 1, p. 19

"If you gave ordinary people a voice, and enough time to use it, an everyday poetry flowed movingly from them." Chapter 1, p. 81

"To skulk and to hide was a dishonorable life. He felt, very often in those years, profoundly ashamed. Both shamed and ashamed." Chapter 3, p. 147

"He was trying to defend the book against the burners of books. These small battles of the bookish seemed like tragedies at a time when literary freedom itself was so violently under attack." Chapter 3, p. 157

"He forgot that there was a third trap: that of courting approval, of wanting, in his weakness, to be loved. He was too blind to see that he was running headlong toward that pit; and that was the trap that ensnared him, and almost destroyed him forever." Chapter 3, p. 212

"As you are fighting a battle that may cost you your life, is the thing for which you are fighting worth losing your life for? And he found it possible to answer: yes. He was prepared to die, if dying became necessary, for what Carmen Callil had called 'a bloody book.'" Chapter 5, p. 285

"The only reason his story was interesting was that it had actually happened. It wouldn't be interesting if it wasn't true." Chapter 6, pp. 340-341

"The fatwa itself may be seen as a set of modern satanic verses. In the fatwa once again evil takes on the guise of virtue and the faithful are deceived." Chapter 6, p. 372

"These will be our weapons. Not by making war, but by the unafraid way we choose to live shall we defeat them. How do we defeat terrorism? Don't be terrorized. Don't let fear rule your life. Even if you are scared." Chapter 10, p. 624





## Topics for Discussion

Discuss the theme of freedom in Salman Rushdie's autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*. What is freedom? How does freedom appear in the book? Why does Salman Rushdie risk his life to defend the idea of freedom? Is this a worthy reason to risk his life? Why or why not? Defend your claim.

In Chapter 5, on page 285, Rushdie writes, "As you are fighting a battle that may cost you your life, is the thing for which you are fighting worth losing your life for? And he found it possible to answer: yes. He was prepared to die, if dying became necessary, for what Carmen Callil had called 'a bloody book.'" What battle is Rushdie referring to? What is he defending? Is this worth his life? Why or why not?

Why is Islamic opposition to Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* so stiff? What is the novel about? What do radical Muslims take issue with in particular? How does Rushdie respond? How do the United States, Great Britain, and the West at large respond?

Discuss the theme of courage in Salman Rushdie's autobiography, *Joseph Anton: A Memoir*. What is courage? In what ways does courage appear in Rushdie's book? Who has courage, and how is this courage displayed? What is courage used to defend? Why?

Imagine you are in Salman Rushdie's place. Would you apologize for or defend your novel, *The Satanic Verses*? Why? Would you allow yourself to go into hiding, or to be protected by security? Why or why not? What is to be gained and lost by security, according to Rushdie? Does this matter? Why or why not?