

Joy in the Morning Study Guide

Joy in the Morning by Betty Smith

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



Contents

Joy in the Morning Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-2.....	4
Chapters 3-4.....	6
Chapters 5-6.....	8
Chapters 7-8.....	9
Chapters 9-10.....	10
Chapters 11-12.....	11
Chapters 13-14.....	12
Chapters 15-16.....	13
Chapters 17-18.....	14
Chapters 19-20.....	15
Chapters 21-22.....	16
Chapters 23-24.....	18
Chapter 25.....	19
Characters.....	20
Objects/Places.....	25
Themes.....	28
Style.....	30
Quotes.....	32
Topics for Discussion.....	34

Plot Summary

The reader first meets Annie McGairy and Carl Brown as they prepare to marry soon after Annie arrives in the Midwest from Brooklyn, New York. Due to Annie's youthful appearance, the authorities attempt to delay the marriage because Annie fails to produce permission from her parents to marry. Finally, though, she produces her birth certificate, and the justice of the peace performs the ceremony, assuming that Annie carries Carl's child already.

Soon, Carl and Annie set up household in a boarding house near the university where Carl studies law. Though they live on a modest income, it feels extravagant to these two young people that never before made their own decisions. Gleefully, they write the news to their parents, none of whom respond with support. Undaunted, Carl and Annie continue their new life together.

At first, it appears that the Dean of the college will expel Carl because of the marriage, but, ultimately, Dean Darwent becomes a staunch supporter of Carl's education, making suggestions for work that will both support his small family and allow him to continue his studies.

Carl and Annie make several adjustments to their new marriage and their new surroundings. Annie, especially, appears enamored with college life. She begins by taking books out of the library, which she reads passionately. Then, she begins eavesdropping on classes. Dean Darwent finds out and invites her to audit some classes on writing, at which she excels.

At the beginning of the year 1929, however, a new and difficult struggle appears in Annie's life—a pregnancy. At first, she hides it from Carl for the sake of his studies. When he finds out, he despairs for his education, but, once again, Dean Darwent offers suggestions to allow Carl to continue. He attends summer school to ease his fall load of classes.

Also, The Browns receive the chance to live rent free, in a caretaker's cottage on the field of the local high school. Carl also takes night work in a lampshade factory. Now living in the town of Lopin, Annie makes new friends, who help her with her new responsibilities as a mother. The newest and direst hardships occur during Annie's pregnancy, but their dedication to one another prevails each time.

The baby arrives at the beginning of Carl's final year in law school. Soon after, Carl graduates from law school. Despite the struggles they faced, the family seems to be prepared for a bright future.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

In the opening of the novel, the author provides a detailed description of the town hall where Carl Brown and his girlfriend, Annie, are about to be married. Next, he gives background on Carl, who grew up in Brooklyn, but now goes to university in the Midwest. Annie McGairy also comes into the story at this time. She offers a less colorful background and a more straightforward name. However, she appears very young, which causes some problems as they try to marry without the consent of her parents.

The local justice of the peace, Willis J. Calamus, marries the young couple, but only after Annie produces her baptism certificate, proving her status as an adult. During the ceremony, Annie thinks back to her childhood, ending with her mother's disappointment at Annie's decision to leave. Just at the end of the ceremony, Annie's attention returns to the present. When the judge attempts to offer a congratulatory kiss, Annie adamantly resists and the young couple leaves the town hall.

Following their simple ceremony, Carl shows Annie around the campus. She shows special interest in the university's library. On the spur of the moment, Carl sells their tickets to the college football game in order to take Annie to a nice restaurant as a celebration of their marriage. At dinner, the couple discusses their finances. Though they have little in the way of income, they decide that they will live comfortably, though simply.

After dinner, Annie wires news of the marriage home to her mom; Carl decides to write a letter, feeling the additional time is necessary to break the news. As they stroll through campus, the couple reminisces about dating back in Brooklyn. They share a park bench as they wait for their room in the boarding house to become available.

Even after they make their way to Ms. Hansom's boardinghouse, the room has not been vacated. The young couple enjoys an amorous exchange on the porch swing, but, when Carl becomes insistent, even violent, Annie reacts hysterically. When they finally occupy their room, Carl holds Annie in the rocking chair and the couple falls asleep without consummating their marriage.

The next day, Carl returns to work in the university's cafeteria. He returns in the evening with leftovers for Annie. Together, they discuss his hectic schedule, which involves several part-time jobs and his class schedule. Left alone, Annie misses her younger brothers.

Carl takes Annie to the cafeteria at his first opportunity to meet his coworkers. After the chef, Mr. Felix, makes a rude comment about Annie's fertility, Carl reacts in anger. Annie begs him to let the comment go, however, because the couple needs the money. For two hours, Annie sits and watches Carl bus tables in the cafeteria.



Chapters 1-2 Analysis

In the opening chapters, the author mostly uses descriptions with little breaks for narrative elements. This offers the reader a great deal of background about the both the characters and the setting.

The author also uses flashback to establish not only Annie's background but her characters. From her recollections of childhood, the reader infers there was an inappropriate relationship between Annie and her step father. Her revulsion for him, plus her anxious reaction to both Carl and the judge support this assumption. The author never goes into more detail, however, and the reader can only guess as to the truth.



Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

When Carl leaves for his first day of classes after getting married, he leaves a sweet note for Annie on the table. Annie awakens later with much to do with her first day to herself. She writes a letter to her mother, and sends money for her brothers. Next, she reads the want ads, looking for work, but finds little that suits her. Then, she visits the bank, to transfer her savings from Brooklyn, though Carl swore she will not use her money for household expenses. After talking with several of the townspeople, Annie wonders about their accent, which differs from hers noticeably.

After a bite for lunch, Annie visits the dime store for an alarm clock. She successfully haggles the man on a fair price for a simple clock. As she walks back to the boarding house, she passes a flower shop and after admiring some bittersweet berries in the window goes inside the shop to purchase some for her plain room. Mr. Byrd, the florist, talks to her about the northern land from which the berries grow. Hearing his description, Annie encourages Mr. Byrd to write his story, which he promises to do.

Back at the boardinghouse, Annie thoughtfully arranges everything in the room. Pleased with the results so far, she proceeds to make a shopping list of household items she still needs. Then, she prepares for a trip to the library. Reverentially, she walks down stacks of books, dreaming about owning some of her own. Using Carl's student ID, she checks out several books, including David Copperfield. Walking back to her room, she admires the dress of the female students, who have their own uniform of sorts. She adds the various pieces of clothing to her shopping list. Annie spends the rest of the afternoon reading.

When Carl returns home, he fails to immediately notice the changes Annie made. When she points them out, however, Carl reacts with supportive excitement. As Carl tries to study in the small room, however, he complains that the clock ticks too loudly. Annie promise to make the room quieter; they hide the clock in the bureau drawer. Annie attempts to write, in play form, the story of their marriage; however, she continues to distract Carl. The two have a fight and Annie leaves the room.

As time passes in silences, Carl cannot study for fear for Annie's safety. He remembers his conversation with the Dean of the university when he decides to get married. The dean disapproved of the idea because of the stress on Carl's studies. Carl remembers that the dean promised no leniency for Carl after the marriage. However, Carl feels he cannot send Annie away and decides to take one year off from school.

When Annie returns and Carl shares his plan, Annie refuses. She vows to leave him if he drops out of school. With happiness, Carl weeps; he vows he will quit smoking if they need the money. Annie insists he keep his one vice.



The couple continues to adjust to married life. Carl reads Annie's play manuscript and pokes fun, which causes Annie to take offense. After every skirmish, though, the couple makes up.

Chapters 3-4 Analysis

The author continues to use flashback, this time with Carl, who thinks back to his threatening conversation with the dean. Each flashback serves to describe the pressures placed on the couple to succeed in their marriage. Both Carl and Annie appear motivated rather than discouraged by the pressure.

Some irony lies in the fact that Annie, from the busy town of Brooklyn, New York, feels so simple and out of place among the Midwestern college students. She feels dowdy and uneducated next to the girls at the college. The feeling of inferiority seems to be all in her mind, however, as she never suffers prejudice for anything in her background.

Much of the novel so far deals with domestic matters. A modern reader will notice the many differences between marriage life at this time and married life today. This difference must be taken into account lest the reader forms a prejudiced opinion about with Annie or Carl.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

In chapter five, Carl gets a threatening letter from his mother, who believes the marriage to be pending, but not complete. She threatens to cut Carl off financially, should he marry Annie. Both Annie's mother and Carl's mother assume a pregnancy has sparked the need for marriage. Carl writes a letter telling his mother the truth, and Annie considers leaving to ease the pressure on Carl, but Carl resists. He explains his life with such a pushy mother but resists losing Annie for his mother's sake. He confesses that he dreads his mother's response to the truth.

In his little bit of free time, Carl attends a tennis match with a Japanese friend. Annie feels inferior next to such an exotic person. When Carl's friend addresses her as Mrs. Brown, she puzzles at the address but finds it agreeable to her.

After several days, Annie receives her money, with interest, from the bank. She goes shopping, purchasing the necessary clothing to look like the other female students. She also gets her hair bobbed, a new style for her. When Carl arrives home, he kids her about her appearance.

After several daily visits, Annie feels she has befriended the widowed grocer. Back at her room, she lists the people she has met in town, including the grocer and florist.

Within a few days, Carl receives a letter from his mother, demanding back money she had advanced him for the semester. She also insists he pay for the watch she gave him as a gift. Carl sends his mother an IOU and pawns the watch to pay back the money due on it. It has now been four weeks since the couple married. When Annie becomes sick, Carl reacts with much worry until Ms. Hansom, the woman who runs the boardinghouse, explains to Carl the woman's menstrual cycle.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Though Carl never takes time off, the first three weeks of marriage prove to be a honeymoon period for the couple. They live in an ideal world with few cares or expenses. When Carl receives the bad news from his mother, however, the reality of adulthood sets in. The couple begins to make hard decisions, and the conflict of the novel arises. The novel works as a coming of age novel for both Carl and Annie, though most of the maturing occurs on the part of Annie.

Besides Carl and Annie, few characters receive much development in the novel. The grocer and the florist never appear outside of their job, and the reader only has the briefest of conversations and descriptions from Annie by which to imagine them.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

On Annie's next visit to the grocery, she watches the squirrels eat through a bag of nuts on the doorstep. The grocer explains that this is what he does every year for his birthday.

As Annie wanders around campus, she finds a literature class that grabs her attention. For several weeks, she eavesdrops on the class, following the readings and even completing the writing assignments. After a few weeks, the dean asks Carl to bring Annie in for a meeting. The couple learns that the professor of the class caught Annie eavesdropping. The dean invites Annie to audit the class, to which Annie enthusiastically agrees. Faithfully, Annie attends the class. After the first writing assignment Annie turns in, the professor compliments her paper to the class.

The couple discovers that their small purchases begin to add up. Soon, they are in need of more money. Annie plans to audit a playwriting class but also finds work as a nanny. Carl warns Annie against working for Bev Karter, who has a bad reputation around the university. Annie insists they need the money too badly to turn down the work.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

The more Annie gains a life outside her marriage, the more confident she becomes. However, even after joining the classes, Annie feels like an outsider on the campus.

The couple's constant but minor struggles with money foreshadows larger problems to come. A mature reader will recognize their irresponsible habits and anticipate some climax in their money troubles later in the novel.



Chapters 9-10

Chapters 9-10 Summary

After meeting Bev Karter, Annie describes the art inside the woman's house for Carl. She then describes a male friend of Bev Karter's but seems innocent as to the true nature of the relationship. Carl fears the truth and feels frustrated at the need for more money.

One night at Bev Karter's house while putting her daughter to bed, Annie overhears a conversation between Bev and her male friend about the man's wife. Annie finally realizes that Bev Karter is the man's well-paid mistress. This news morally offends Annie to the point that she immediately quits and goes home. At home, Annie confesses the awful truth to Carl and worries she will go to jail for being part of such a deal. Carl assures Annie that she will not get into such trouble. Annie thinks back to the streetwalker she knew of in Brooklyn and rationalizes why Bev Karter allows such a situation in her life.

At Christmas, Annie and Carl agree not to buy one another presents, but the list of items they both feel they need continues to grow. Annie finds a job for the holidays, and she buys presents for Carl and Ms. Hansom. She almost makes a visit to the florist for some holiday decorations; the florist once again promises to begin his book.

After opening their Christmas cards, Carl and Annie exchange gifts. Annie bought Carl's watch back from the pawnshop, which greatly excites Carl. Carl presents Annie with a blank notebook with her name engraved on the cover. In doing so, he encourages Annie's writing. After their exchange, the young couple walks through town, enjoying the holiday season. Carl laments their needs for money, but Annie assures him that they are poor for a good cause because one day he will be a successful lawyer.

Chapters 9-10 Analysis

Annie's innocence once again shows during the incident with Bev Karter, though her experience in Brooklyn seems at odds with her naivete concerning Bev Karter. The reader will not only relate to this but also to the Christmas exchange. Though both insist they do not want a gift, they secretly hope the other sacrifices to provide something.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

In chapter eleven, the author takes a break from the narrative to explain the relationship between the nearby town of Lopin and the university. The townspeople of Lopin rely heavily on commerce and employment at the university, but they remain far enough away from the university that the students rarely visit Lopin. The reader should be careful not to confuse Lopin with the town where the university is located.

The author then describes how Carl receives a letter from the principal at the high school in Lopin. The couple receives free rent at a cottage near the field house in exchange for keeping the furnace going. In spite of Carl's warnings, Annie becomes immediately attached to the cottage, though the job is only until spring when the new coach arrives.

Annie tours the town of Lopin, meeting many interesting but not friendly people. She continues to prepare the cottage and learn about cooking, including how to make coffee. Annie bids a tearful goodbye to Ms. Hansom, but quickly makes friends with Aggie from the dry goods store in Lopin. Their life continues pleasantly until Annie realizes her period is late.

For days, Annie prays not to be pregnant. She continues to audit the playwriting class. Finally, in February, Annie admits to herself that she must be pregnant but decides not to tell Carl until after his exams. She talks about pregnancy with Goldie, the pregnant woman at the grocery store in Lopin.

At the end of the semester, Carl shows Annie that he made the dean's list, and gives credit to her. Annie writes two plays for the end of her playwriting class. One the class receives well; the other they laugh at. At home, Carl notices Annie's quietness and worries she is losing interest in him. Finally, Annie confesses her pregnancy.

Carl becomes angry about the secret she kept from him. He worries about providing for an expanding family. They learn that the new coach does not intend to live in the small cottage so, for the time being, they continue to enjoy free rent.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Finally, with the discovery of Annie's pregnancy, the reader learns of the true conflict in the book. The reader quickly realizes that the couple's money situation will worsen considerably with the arrival of a baby. Some of the conflict is resolved, however, when Carl learns they can continue living in the cottage.

As a coming of age novel, Annie's pregnancy adds a new area in which both characters must grow. This marks their transition from childhood to adulthood.



Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

To save money for the upcoming baby, Carl applies for a student loan. When he goes to see the dean, Dean Darwent not only assists with the loan but also suggests a local gynecologist. The dean also commends Annie for her writing.

During the gynecological exam, Annie shows a great deal of discomfort and insists that Carl wait in the waiting room. After a good report, other than worries about Annie's narrow pelvis, the doctor explains his fees. Annie agrees to deliver at the university's hospital, where, in exchange for experience for medical students, the fees are lowered.

Back home, Carl befriends the new coach at the high school. This pleases Annie because she fears Carl's moodiness stems from a lack of male friends in the new town. After writing to both of their mother's, they receive no support.

In preparation for the upcoming baby, Annie offers to babysit for Goldie, the woman who runs the grocery store. She brings Les home while Goldie delivers her new baby, and Annie enjoys watching Carl play with the little boy. After three days, Goldie returns to work with the new baby in tow. Aggie, though, warns Annie against forming a friendship with Goldie, who lives with the children's father, though unmarried. Annie disregards the warning and maintains her friendship with both women.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Annie's shame concerning anything gynecological implies once again, something hidden in her past, but the author continues to keep this information from the reader.

Both the dean and the doctor stand in as parents for Carl and Annie. From these two men, the couple receives the advice that one often receives from one's parents when making such decisions. The estrangement from their parents forces Carl and Annie to seek counsel aside from their parents. They always seem to find the appropriate person to help them, though.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

At the end of the semester, Annie feels bittersweet about her final class. She admits she will miss going to school but now feel superior to the other young women, who only have school; Annie feels more mature in her motherhood. At the last class, the professor announces that several plays have been chosen for publication by the university's press. Much to Annie's surprise, hers is among the winners. Before heading home, she enjoys a coke with her classmates to celebrate. For once, she feels like a true female student.

Back home, Annie excitedly tells Carl about the publication. Carl feels the baby move for the first time and becomes very worried about the new life. He also points out that Annie refers to the baby as "hers" not "theirs."

With the end of the semester, Carl and Annie adopt the fraternity boy's dog, Michelangelo, who they call Jello for short. Carl also enrolls in summer school at the dean's insistence, so that his fall load will be lighter when the baby comes. Annie, however, refuses to attend classes in the summer, embarrassed to be seen in public in her condition.

She also learns that the plays will not be published until one more play is selected the next year. For Annie, the summer turns out to be hot and boring. She attends one poetry reading and finds that the reading excites her unborn baby.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

One conflict that arises in this part of the novel, Annie's possessiveness about the baby, never is resolved. Even in the hospital, Annie names the baby without Carl's advice. She clearly feels ownership towards the baby and shares none of this with her husband.

The selection of Annie's play to be published serves a bright spot in an otherwise stressful time of her life. However, the novels' delay adds to the stress of her pregnancy. The compounded waiting adds to the stress of their household.



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

During the summer, money for food runs out. Annie cashes out her bank account and Carl once again pawns his watch. Yet Annie spends some money foolishly on things that are not necessary. Carl finds one job drafting a will for a friend of the principal's. He receives food from the farmer as payment. In order to save money, Carl also switches from cigarettes to a pipe. Finally, after jealously watches the Dog chew on a bone from the grocer, Carl applies for a job at the all-female lamp factory.

Pulaski, the manager of the factory tells Carl he has no job for a man. Carl then writes to his mother for a loan, but she quickly responds, assuring Carl that she has no extra money. Just when Annie is about to charge their food to a store account, Pulaski calls, asking Carl to take over the night watchman's job while the older man is in the hospital. Carl gladly takes the job but confesses he feels guilty that they get money from someone else's misfortune.

In her notebook, Annie writes about the night watchman. To her delight, Carl borrows her alarm clock to make sure he awakens for his rounds at the factory. Annie's bad day of the summer occurs when Carl goes to sell back his textbooks. She buys a damaged copy of *WAR AND PEACE*, the first book she ever owned. Carl, becomes upset that Annie stays up for hours reading the book then rewriting it so that she can understand the plot. Carl feels she is ignoring him for her books.

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

The degree of the family's need for money shows when Carl swallows his pride and seeks for work at the lamp factory. He shows a great deal of growth at this point that he thinks enough about his family to do work otherwise beneath him. Annie, however, continues to show her immaturity by the ways she wastes the family's money on frivolous purchases, though they barely make enough for food.

In the novel, the alarm clock symbolizes things that have an unrealized value. Though Carl ridiculed the alarm clock at first, he needs the object to perform his job at the factory. In this way, many of the things Carl and Annie learned growing up prove valuable to them in their married life.

When Carl refuses cash money for drafting the will for the farmer, Annie resists, and quickly receives a lesson in a wife's position, for the era in which the story is set. Carl shows his superiority by asking for food instead and Annie, properly chagrined apologizes to her husband.



Chapters 19-20

Chapters 19-20 Summary

Carl also gains some extra money by painting the bleachers. This allows him to converse with the coach, who offers to drive Annie to the hospital when the time for the baby comes.

One day, however, Carl oversleeps and misses a check at the factory. He receives a warning from the manager. Annie finds a forgotten cigarette behind the bed and presents it to Carl to cheer him up.

Carl receives five dollars for painting the bleachers and Annie confesses that she wants to waste the money on a baby carriage, which would double as a bassinet. Carl takes Annie back to the university town, where she visits Mr. Byrd. He pretends he has started his book, but Annie sees through the ruse. When Carl expresses jealousy over Mr. Byrd, Annie assures him that he has nothing to worry about. She describes Mr. Byrd as effeminate, and Carl agrees.

Chapters 19-20 Analysis

The reader senses that Carl and Annie live minutes from disaster on multiple fronts. Carl feels the pressure of working and school, along with the coming baby. When he oversleeps at the factory, it seems he may lose his job. However, the couple continues to avoid the worst that could happen repeatedly. Sometimes they depend on the goodness of others and other times they seem to have blind luck.

Annie's insights into Mr. Byrd's personality shows a mature side of her that rarely shows. It also shows that she has grown considerably since arriving in town to be Carl's bride.



Chapters 21-22

Chapters 21-22 Summary

Annie brings home a carriage from the second hand store, and Carl ridicules her choice as a broken waste of money. Annie throws a fit, but Carl still takes the carriage back. He discusses payment plans with the coach, who assures Carl that, on large purchases, buying on time is necessary. He refers Carl to a local home store, with his recommendation.

Carl returns home with the new carriage, but Annie remains angry. Carl feels on edge because of a lack of sex, due to Annie's condition. After her last doctor's appointment, Annie feels sure she will have a girl because she does not feel strong enough to have a boy.

With the coming of the new school year, Carl fears that Jello, Annie's dog, will return to the fraternity. He also worries about missing the birth, but the Dean's secretary promises to find Carl in class when the time comes. After the first few days of class, the fraternity boys come for the dog, and Jello excitedly follows them home. Annie appears very devastated over this. However, that night, Jello returns home for good. Soon after, Annie's water breaks and the coach comes to take them to the hospital.

As Annie suffers in labor, various nurses offer assistance. Carl gets ten minutes to visit his wife. Then Annie sends him to work. The doctor enters with two medical students as promised. One of the interns exhibits great bedside manners and sets Annie at more ease.

After hour without labor, the doctor begins to prepare for a cesarean section. However, Annie feels renewed motivation to have a natural birth in the face of major surgery. She delivers her baby boy and soon after the doctor puts her to sleep. Before drifting off, she writes her feelings, which Carl reads as she sleeps. Her heartfelt words make him weep at her pain.

Chapters 21-22 Analysis

Annie shows the most maturity and strength during the labor and delivery. She takes control of the situation, if only out of desperation, and delivers her baby as she intended to.

However, a modern reader may cringe at the methods and habits of a delivery ward at this time. This, once again, shows both the time period of the plot and the period of time in which the author wrote the story. Such detailed descriptions of the setting give a great deal of credibility to the time period and the plot.

Often, Annie uses her writing as therapy. After the stressful delivery, she writes freely of her feelings. The words appear so potent that Carl decides against any more children. In this, her writing shows as much growth and development as Annie herself.



Chapters 23-24

Chapters 23-24 Summary

Hours later, the nurses bring the baby to Annie for a visit. She names him Carlton. Annie naming him herself upsets Carl, but the mention of his birth name touches him. Annie confesses that she wants another child, though the trauma has left Carl to wonder if they should. Annie also shows excitement about the birth announcement in the local paper. Annie writes a long letter to her mother about the birth. Carl writes a brief note to his mother as well.

Soon after the birth, Henry, from the grocery at the university, dies. Annie learns that the baby is not thriving on breast milk and must use formula. This upsets Annie and makes her feel like a failure as a mother.

Carl feels that with the new baby, his time is too full. The dean helps him get a job in the rare book room, where he can work and study uninterrupted.

On the eve of 1929, Carl rocks the baby in the chair the way he used to rock Annie.

Chapters 23-24 Analysis

The author wraps up several different plotlines in the closing chapters. She seems to imply a happy ending for Carl, Annie and their son. Annie deals with the death of Henry as she deals with most things, by writing a tribute to him.

The dean continues to look out for Carl because Carl reminds him of himself at this age. Aside from Carl and Annie, the dean is one of the few characters that receive much description. The dean's thoughts about Carl's success appear briefly in that the dean hopes Carl achieves his dreams and retains his family.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

The rest of the year passes quickly, and Annie and Carl find themselves at graduation day. Annie watches with pride as Carl graduates. He then brings home a surprise for her, the published book containing her play. Carl receives a spot at a private, rural law practice and the future for the small family looks bright.

Chapter 25 Analysis

Carl points out that the book of plays serves as Annie's diploma, signifying that she graduates not only as a student, but also as a woman, into motherhood. Though Annie and Carl go into the future full of promises, the reader knows unknown struggles lay ahead. Yet, as they face everything, Carl and Annie seem prepared to face their problems head on.



Characters

Carl Brown

The beginning of the novel gives a detailed description of Carl's background. His parents named him after his father's boss, but, when the boss proved less than generous, they shorten Carlton to Carl. Young Carl leaves his hometown in Brooklyn to study law at a university in the Midwest. For the first year, Carl's proud and doting mother supports him generously.

After a year, Carl sends for his childhood sweetheart, Annie McGairy, to join him and become his wife. This news causes his mother to cut him off. Carl then works very hard to support his new family. Annie often looks to her husband for worldly knowledge. He tries to inform her about sophisticated matters without changing her personality.

Carl shows a multifaceted personality. He offers Annie education about marriage and life as an adult, yet much about a woman's personality and physiology catch him off guard, such as her monthly cycle. Carl is more logical about their money and attempts to restrain her wasteful spending. However, Carl sees no frivolity in his own spending on sports and tobacco.

The character of Carl shows growth in the novel. He changes from a somewhat immature college student to a responsible husband and father. In the beginning, he freely accepts money and gifts from his mother. When he faces the birth of his own son, he realizes the foolishness in going into debt as his mother did. Annie gladly observes, in the end, that Carl become a success, not only as a budding lawyer, but also as a father.

Annie Brown

The author first describes a young Annie McGairy from Brooklyn. She grows up with her mother, brothers and stepfather. She suffers from a poor relationship with her stepfather, though the details remain unknown. Even though Annie loves her mother and brothers, she leaves her home for the unknown to university where she will marry her childhood sweetheart.

Though Annie appears and remains a simply and naive girl, she shows much courage and tenacity. Alone, she travels to marry Carl without her mother's blessing. By her own admission, Annie lacks the worldly knowledge to set up a household but willingly learns all that she needs. In addition, she seeks knowledge at the University for its own sake. Her constant eavesdropping on a writing class catches the Dean's attention, and he allows her to audit similar classes.

Annie's greatest area for growth occurs in her becoming a mother. Annie's character shows great growth in wisdom and responsibility as she prepares for the birth of her



child Her old innocence continues to show, such as when she assumes her baby will be a girl.

The character of Annie shows the most growth in this novel. She changes from a simple girl to a worldly woman. She expands her knowledge and her influence, gains confidence and makes friends. Though she could not manage to make coffee in the beginning, she cares for her new baby with growing confidence in the end.

Mr. Byrd

One of Annie's first purchases at the university is some flowers. She finds a kind of friend in the florist because she imagines him to be a writer by the way he talks of his travels to northern forests. Throughout the novel when she visits the florist, she encourages him to write his book about deforestation, but he never does. Annie observes that the man is like a girlfriend to him; he does not possess the same manly qualities that Carl does. When Carl shows jealousy about her relationship with the florist, she points out the man's effeminate nature as a defense.

Landlady

From the first day that Annie arrives on campus, Carl rents a room in a boardinghouse. The proprietor not only provides room and board but also offers the young couple much advice. She teaches them how to make tea and gives them an ear when necessary. The proprietor educates Carl about a woman's menstrual cycle, so he can make Annie more comfortable.

Annie and the proprietor become close in the months that Carl and Annie rent the room in her boardinghouse. When the couple moves to the caretaker's cottage, the landlady tearfully invites them back to visit and promises to rent them a room again should the need arise.

Miss Vi

Miss Vi, a secretary in the office of the justice of the peace, witnesses Carl and Annie's marriage certificate and wishes them well.

Willis J. Calamus

Calamus serves as the justice of the peace for the university town, though he calls himself a judge. After verifying Annie's status as an adult, he performs their short ceremony. When he offers to kiss the new bride, Annie reacts strongly against this. As the young couple leaves, Calamus shares with his secretary that he suspects that Annie is pregnant, thus the reason for the wedding.



Dean Darwent

At first, the dean of the university strongly disapproves of Carl's marriage. He emphasizes the difficulty of finishing a demanding law degree with the added pressure of supporting a wife. In the end, however, Carl's resolve holds up to all the discouragement, and the dean admits that he, too, married while in college.

For the rest of the novel, the dean offers valuable advice and assistance. He allows Carl to obtain student loans to pay his tuition. When Annie becomes pregnant, the dean suggests summer school to lighten Carl's load for his final two semesters. Finally, at the novel's end, the dean obtains a placement for Carl in private practice.

To Annie, also, the dean shows support. When he learns of her eavesdropping on the writing course, he arranges for her to audit courses in writing. This opportunity proves most memorable to Annie and allows her to see one of her own plays published by the university's press.

Annie's mom

Though Annie shows love for her mother, she shows little respect for her advice. This stems from the fact that Annie's mother points to Annie's stepfather as a kind and generous man, though some obvious inappropriate behavior occurred between him and Annie.

When Annie leaves to marry Carl, her mother often writes of the pain this causes. Even when Annie tells her mother about the coming baby, her mother mentions that she wishes Annie to know pain from her own child like the pain Annie caused in her life.

Carl's mom

As a single man, Carl enjoys every luxury his mother can afford and some that are even beyond her means. However, when she loses her spot as the number one woman in Carl's life, she withdraws all support and demands payment for the gifts she gave him, such as his watch.

In the remainder of her correspondence with Carl, she makes little mention of Annie, and, when she does, is mildly insulting. The young couple makes their own way without the support of any family back in Brooklyn.

Professor

The professor of the classes that Annie listens in on turns out to be a friend of Dean Darwent. The two men arrange for Annie to audit the class, followed by other classes on



writing. Her professor encourages and critiques her writing, eventually choosing one of her plays to be published in a volume by the university's press.

Bev Karter

When Carl's mother cuts off her support, Annie finds a job as a nanny for Bev Karter, a local in the college town. Carl warns against working for this woman but does not prohibit the job because they do need the money. However, after some months, Annie recognizes that Bev Karter sleeps with a married man for monetary support. This scandalizes the innocent young girl and causes her to quit on the spot. Carl consoles his offended wife, who gains valuable worldly knowledge from the affair.

Mr Lopin

Just when Carl and Annie seem to be at the end of a financial rope, Carl gets the opportunity to live in the caretaker's cottage for the local high school in the nearby town of Lopin. The principal, Mr. Lopin, warns that the placement will only be temporary until a new coach arrives in the spring; however, Annie becomes immediately attached to the place. Thankfully, the coach turns down the small cottage, and the principal continues to allow the Browns to live there in exchange for some maintenance of the grounds and field house.

Aggie

In the town of Lopin, Annie meets the older lady that runs the dry goods store, Aggie. The woman seems friendly but obviously disapproves of Annie's friendship with Goldie because of Goldie's unmarried relationship with the father of her children. However, when Annie refuses to stop her friendship with Goldie, Aggie continues to help the younger woman.

Goldie

After moving to the town of Loping, Annie seeks to befriend everyone with whom she comes into regular contact. Most of all, she seeks the friendship of the woman who works at the grocery store. Several people in town avoid the woman because she lives with a man to whom she is not married. The couple has one child, and when Annie meets them, another child is on the way.

Goldie offers Annie much advice, especially during Annie's pregnancy. Once the friendship is established, Goldie also proves generous in offering Annie bones for Jello, the dog. Annie also offers assistance to Goldie, babysitting for her toddler son after the birth of Goldie's daughter.



Doc

After Annie tells Carl about her pregnancy, he insists that she see a doctor on a regular basis. They find an understanding physician in town. He even offers a discount if Annie will allow medical students to assist in the birth. Finally, he offers to accept a payment plan from the young couple for his services.

Coach

When the new coach for Lopin High School arrives, he turns down the small caretaker's cottage as too small for his family, thus allowing Carl and Annie to continue to live there. Then he befriends Carl, even offering to drive Annie to the hospital when she goes into labor.

L.L.

Annie gains valuable childcare experience in watching Goldie's young son, LL, while she is pregnant.

Pulaski

When Carl first sees Mr. Pulaski about a job at the lampshade factory, the man points out that all of the factory workers are women. Carl asks for a job as a security guard, but Mr. Pulaski assures Carl that a man already holds the job.

Soon, though, Mr. Pulaski calls back because the security guard is hospitalized. Carl takes over the job, which helps the family make ends meet after Annie quits her job due to her advanced pregnancy. Carl uses Annie's alarm clock to make his rounds on the third shift security detail.

Carlton Brown

Everyone is surprised when the Brown's baby turns out to be a boy. Annie welcomes her son lovingly into the world. As a tribute to Carl's birth name, she names the boy Carlton.



Objects/Places

Campus

Annie observes life on campus with much interest. She attempts to copy the young coeds in dress and habit. Life on campus sustains much of the local economy, which becomes most apparent when Carl cannot find work for the summer.

Brooklyn

Both Carl and Annie were born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. Annie notices differences both in language and habits between the place of her birth and their new home in the Midwest.

Florist Shop

One of Annie's few frivolous purchases comes from the florist shop, where she frequently stops to buy flowers to decorate their small room at the boarding house.

Boarding House

From the day that Annie arrives on campus, she and Carl live in a local boarding house. They remain there until Carl gets the opportunity to stay in the caretaker's cottage.

Cottage

During their first winter together, Carl and Annie get the opportunity to live in the caretaker's cottage on the local high school grounds in Lopin. This not only gives them a bigger house but also allows them to save money on room and board. Against Carl's warnings, Annie becomes attached to the cottage; Carl is therefore relieved when the new coach turns down the opportunity to live in the cottage, thus allowing the Brown family to stay.

Lampshade Factory

When money becomes tight during the summer of Annie's pregnancy, Carl seeks for work at the nearby lampshade factory.



Lopin

The town near the university but separate from it is Lopin, a town settled by one settler, who married a local Native American girl. Many of the townspeople still carry the name of Lopin, such as the man at the grocery and the high school principal.

Library

With much delight, Annie visits the university's library, borrowing books as fast as she can read them. She delights in the limitless possibilities for reading that exist there. Soon, she begins borrowing the books that the professor requires for classes.

WAR AND PEACE

Annie buys her first book, WAR AND PEACE, secondhand from the university bookstore.

Alarm Clock

Soon after moving to town, Annie purchases an alarm clock. During their stay in the boardinghouse, Carl complains about The clock's loud ticking. However, when he takes the third shift job at the lampshade factory, he uses the alarm clock to keep him on schedule for his security checks.

Baby Carriage

When Carl and Annie receive a windfall of money, Annie convinces him to buy a secondhand baby carriage; however, Carl feels the carriage is in poor condition. He returns it and, for the first time, makes a purchase on time (credit), buying Annie a new baby carriage.

Jello

During Carl's second year, the fraternity boys "adopt" a stray dog, feeding it enough to keep it around. When they leave for the summer, the dog takes up residence with Annie. In the fall, the fraternity boys attempt to lure the dog back, and, at first it seems like Jello will leave. That night, however, he returns to the cottage to stay.



Tobacco

In the beginning, Carl and Annie budget money for Carl's smoking habit even when the money begins to run out. After the news of her pregnancy, however, and the worst of their money troubles, Carl gives up smoking.



Themes

Coming of Age

This novel, foremost, tells the story of Annie Brown's journey from childhood to adulthood. She leaves childhood behind when she, against her mother's wishes, moves away to marry Carl Brown, her childhood sweetheart.

The novel, to a lesser extent, tells the coming of age story of Carl, who goes from a single college sophomore to a husband, father and lawyer in two years. He steps up to provide for his family while pursuing his dreams to become a lawyer.

Several conflicts arise within the novel that causes growth in the characters of Annie and Carl. Annie learns much about how the adult world works when she begins observing the students on campus. She strives to copy the young female students, viewing them as much more sophisticated than she is.

When Annie becomes pregnant, however, she grows up faster than ever. Soon, the activities that entertain the female students bore Annie. She learns to cook and keep house.

More than anything, though, Carl and Annie learn what making a family entails. They must decide how they will deal with the disapproval of their parents and strike out on their own. They quickly learn that love will not pay their bills, but, despite all their struggles, they never look back and they never regret their decision to marry young.

Success through Determination

The author uses this story to prove that a person can accomplish their dreams in the face of adversity, if the person works hard. This theme comes out most clearly with Carl Brown. He faces challenges, both self inflicted and circumstantial, as he pursues his law degree. Despite dwindling finances and the coming baby, Carl continues to pursue his dream of becoming a lawyer.

Annie also emphasizes this theme, as she encourages Carl to pursue his dream. She even threatens to leave him if he drops out of school. Their poverty, Annie assures Carl, differs from most poor people because they suffer for a greater cause—for Carl's law degree.

Annie also shows determination in bettering her writing, first by eavesdropping on the classes, then by auditing them as a non-student. She often works harder than the regular students and gains a reward by seeing one of her plays published by the university's press.



Finally, determination shows through during the delivery of her baby, when Annie refuses a cesarean section. With nothing but determination, she delivers the baby when the doctors say it cannot be done.

Love Conquers

From the novel's beginning, Carl tells Annie and himself that he cannot go on in school without Annie. He feels he would rather give up his schooling than lose his wife. In this, he shows his selfless love for his wife. He continues to suffer for Annie by pawning his watch, twice, and by applying for work at the lamp factory when they are most desperate for food and money.

Likewise, Annie suffers for the success of the marriage. She moves away from her family to be with Carl with no promise of success. Quickly, she begins working to support Carl through school. Finally, her love shows when she keeps the news of the pregnancy to herself in order to allow Carl to finish the semester.

In the closing of the novel, it becomes clear that Carl and Annie have learned that as long as they have one another, they can tackle any problem. Their marriage allows them to look for the bright side of the bleakest of circumstances.



Style

Point of View

The author tells the story in the third person point of view. Mostly, the story follows the character of Annie, though much insight also comes from Carl. A few times the author tells the inner thoughts of Dean Darwent.

This point of view works to endear the reader to Annie. The reader sees her struggles, though not always her thoughts about the struggles. In addition, the lack of insight from other characters emphasizes how alone Carl and Annie are. Each time Annie meets a new person, they are also a stranger to the reader.

The author also uses dialogue to tell the story. Annie converses with many of her new friends around the college town at first, and, later, in the town of Lopin. The dialogue and Annie's thoughts give the only insight into the characters and their intentions.

Setting

The story takes place at a university in the Midwest where Carl studies law. The first half of the novel occurs exclusively in the town surrounding the university where Carl and Annie rent a room at the boardinghouse.

The location of the novel serves to take Annie out of her comfort zone and gives suspense to the novel. The location also emphasizes the loneliness of both Annie and Carl. Finally, the setting allows for the introduction of a number of new characters, and the explanation of such gives information to the reader.

Half way through the school year, Carl receives an offer to live in the cottage at the field house of the high school in the nearby town of Lopin. Though the economy of Lopin relies heavily on the university as well, the students themselves avoid the town, and the townspeople do not hold the students in high regard.

Much of the story takes place in the home of Annie and Carl, be that the boardinghouse or the cottage. Annie also enjoys some time in the classroom and the various businesses around the university. Finally, the end of the novel often finds Annie in the doctor's office and the hospital.

Language and Meaning

The author uses a simple and conversational language. The reader will find few words that are hard to understand. The most difficult vocabulary stems from the time period in which the novel was written, rather than an attempt on the author's part to sound dated.



However, the reader will not have problems following the story, as the vocabulary is not difficult.

When Carl uses a legal term, he quickly defines it for Annie's sake, thus defining it for the reader as well. Otherwise, the novel remains free of jargon.

The author uses a mixture of dialogue and narrative. She describes, at length, changes in setting. Yet, Annie and Carl have long conversations as well. Even Annie's writing, when it appears, relies on dialogue, as it is in play form. Annie feels most at ease expressing her thoughts in the dialogue of her plays. She writes them in lieu of a diary.

Structure

The author tells this story in 304 pages. She uses 25 chapters of roughly equal length.

The plot of the novel follows the maturation of Annie most of all. Though much of the novel lacks a definite conflict, Annie goes through many changes. In the last half of the novel, the main conflict centers on Annie's pregnancy and the strife this causes the young family.

The pace of the novel varies. Sometimes several chapters move slowly; other instances allow for the passage of much time in just a few pages. The novel covers the last several years of Carl's college, with the most attention being paid to the second year after his marriage to Annie, and the summer following.



Quotes

"Helpless? he thought incredulously. Why, that girl could fight a buzz saw! p. 34

What made the accent different? The water they drank? Because there weren't near the ocean? The sharper, more pungent air? What? p. 46

I bet, she thought, no other girl in my old neighborhood ever saw a campus—much less walked across one. p. 51

That night she kissed Carl with more than her usual tenderness when he came home, and whispered in a new shy way that she loved him very much. "What brought that on? He was pleased though. 'Nothing. Only I'm so happy I could die.'" P. 112

"But, fortunately, these big dramatic emergencies did not materialize. It was the small nickel and dime things that came up day by day that plagued them." p. 114

"'Another woman?' he asked incredulously. 'God forbid! I have all I can do to handle the one I already have.'" p. 127

"'But it's not the tenement kind of poor. That's being poor for nothing. But we're poor for something. You'll get a law degree out of it, and I'm getting so much out of it right now by being allowed to go to my class.'" p. 142

"'Carl? Will you tell me not to move heavy furniture?' 'Especially heavy furniture. Don't move any heavy furniture.' 'Thank you, Carl.' Her eyes filled with years. 'I wanted somebody to say that to me so bad.'" p. 169

"It was a simply, logical contingency. They ran out of food because they ran out of money because Carl ran out of work." p. 205

"A quarter didn't go very far—that is, not far for the year 1928. It bought a couple of eggs, a loaf of bread, an onion, and a nickel sack of Bull Durham tobacco." p. 210

"She fought for self-control, got it, but couldn't resist muttering, 'If people figured out all the things that could happen, who'd get married?'" p. 218

"In nine months they'd be adults. It was like the birth cycle: conceived by the university as children, and at termination of pregnancy reborn as young men and women." p. 249

"'It will be over before you know it and tomorrow you'll wake up with a beautiful baby girl.'" p. 279

"It was a memorable week. The baby's birth, their first wedding anniversary, and Annie's nineteenth birthday all came in that week." p. 294



"She was really pleased, though. I'm glad, she thought, that Carl likes to take care of him. Because, then, if I died or something I wouldn't have to worry about what might become of my baby." p.302



Topics for Discussion

To which character do you relate? Explain.

How does the background given on Carl and Annie add to the plot?

Discuss a point of foreshadowing within the novel.

Why does the author sometimes give observations from Carl's point of view?

How does the setting impact the plot?

Compare and contrast Carl and Annie.

How does Annie's character develop throughout the story?

How does Carl change in the novel?

What is the key conflict in this novel?

As a coming of age novel, which character grows more, Carl or Annie?