

# **Katherine Study Guide**

## **Katherine by Anya Seton**

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## Plot Summary

Katherine by Anya Seton is the story of Katherine Roet. The story covers her life from the year 1366 through 1396, her forced marriage to Sir Hugh Swynford, and her enduring love affair with John of Gaunt, the powerful Duke of Lancaster. Katherine's mother died in childbirth and her father, shortly after being knighted, was killed in battle. While her older sister Philippa Roet was assigned to be a courtier in service to the queen, young Katherine was sent by the queen to an obscure Catholic convent to be raised by nuns. As a teenager, Katherine chooses, eagerly, to leave the convent and join her sister at court, unaware of the harshness and complications that she would encounter outside of the protective convent walls. While Philippa will marry the now-famous Geoffrey Chaucer, having no dowry, Katherine is coerced into marrying the rough and coarse Hugh Swynford, a knight whose social skills have much to be desired. Her new home at Kettlethorpe proves to be a nightmare of poverty, disarray and dissent. Katherine's relationship with the duchess Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, provides a beacon for her womanhood. When Blanche passes away, and Hugh Swynford mysteriously dies, Katherine becomes the duke's paramour, but they are unable to be married, given her low station in life. The duke, in his desire to rule over Castile, marries a Castilian princess, Costanza, but keeps Katherine at his side. Katherine bears four children of John's, and they live happily in spite of the nuisance of John being married to Costanza. John's greatest insecurity lies in the possibility that he may not be the true son of the king, an idea that torments him most of his life. When the English peasants revolt, their lives are torn apart. Katherine's oldest child, Blanchette disappears. Katherine is overcome with guilt over her adulterous relationship with John and, after her long pilgrimage and a return to Kettlethorpe, the two formally separate, perhaps forever. However, later in life, John asks Katherine to marry him, and their grown children are "legitimated." Based on historical fact, this story is a fascinating series of events that shape the lives of people in the middle ages, who lived in a feudal system that was not always just.



# Part One 1336-1337/One

## Part One 1336-1337/One Summary

Katherine by Anya Seton is the story of Katherine Roet. The story covers her life from the year 1366 through 1396, her forced marriage to Sir Hugh Swynford, and her enduring love affair with John of Gaunt, the powerful Duke of Lancaster. Katherine's mother died in childbirth and her father, shortly after being knighted, was killed in battle. While her older sister Philippa Roet was assigned to be a courtier in service to the queen, young Katherine was sent by the queen to an obscure Catholic convent to be raised by nuns. As a teenager, Katherine chooses, eagerly, to leave the convent and join her sister at court, unaware of the harshness and complications that she would encounter outside of the protective convent walls. While Philippa will marry the now-famous Geoffrey Chaucer, having no dowry, Katherine is coerced into marrying the rough and coarse Hugh Swynford, a knight whose social skills have much to be desired. Her new home at Kettlethorpe proves to be a nightmare of poverty, disarray and dissent. Katherine's relationship with the duchess Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, provides a beacon for her womanhood. When Blanche passes away, and Hugh Swynford mysteriously dies, Katherine becomes the duke's paramour, but they are unable to be married, given her low station in life. The duke, in his desire to rule over Castile, marries a Castilian princess, Costanza, but keeps Katherine at his side. Katherine bears four children of John's, and they live happily in spite of the nuisance of John being married to Costanza. John's greatest insecurity lies in the possibility that he may not be the true son of the king, an idea that torments him most of his life. When the English peasants revolt, their lives are torn apart. Katherine's oldest child, Blanchette disappears. Katherine is overcome with guilt over her adulterous relationship with John and, after her long pilgrimage and a return to Kettlethorpe, the two formally separate, perhaps forever. However, later in life, John asks Katherine to marry him, and their grown children are "legitimated." Based on historical fact, this story is a fascinating series of events that shape the lives of people in the middle ages, who lived in a feudal system that was not always just.

Chapter One introduces Katherine Roet, a 16-year-old orphan who is leaving her convent home on horseback with Godeleva, the convent's prioress, a nun named Cecily and a royal messenger named Long Will who is escorting them. Katherine is excited to leave Sheppey priory, having lived there for the last five years at the direction of the Queen. She longs for life outside the strict structure of the convent, and hopes to find fun and love. Her sister Philippa is a member of the Queen's court, and Katherine assumes she has arranged to send for her. The queen's messenger, Long Will Finch, is a bit impatient with the two nuns and Katherine, but is attracted to Katherine in a coarse sort of way, thinking of her as a tasty wench, and good for bed-sport.

Long Will's flirting makes Katherine remember a visiting squire she received at the convent a year ago. Squire Roger DeCheyne was one of the Duke of Lancaster's men, who was sent by Katherine's sister to ask whether she wanted to stay at the convent or



leave. Katherine desperately wanted to leave. The Squire flirted with Katherine until the prioress sent her away. Katherine was strongly attracted to him and remembers this as she travels along behind Long Will, finally released and heading toward court. Long Will fondly mentions the Duke of Lancaster, and that there is new talk of war with Castile. The prioress recalls the struggle through the recent war with France, and how the black death had taken so many serfs from the fields, and how the newer breed of serfs were eager to go to war.

Katherine and her sister Philippa were born in Hainault, one of the queen's small countries in the Netherlands. Their mother died in childbirth and their father followed the king to England, where he was knighted for a battle against France, and died shortly thereafter from an arrow wound. The girls' grandparents died from plague, and the queen took pity on them. She arranged for Philippa to serve in her household and, when Katherine was well, sent her to Sheppey to grow up. Katherine grew well-educated in languages and astrology in the convent, as well as beautiful. The prioress now hopes that Katherine's connection to the queen will bring some money to the priory, as it did upon Katherine's arrival years before.

The coarse townspeople in Rochester taunt the party of virgins as they pass through the town with their escort. One points out that Katherine's beauty compares to Blanche of Lancaster, which surprises Katherine, who is humble and unassuming.

## Part One 1336-1337/One Analysis

Katherine has reached an age where she is interested in men and real life outside the stifling atmosphere of the convent, and she is thrilled to be leaving, even though she has fond feelings for the convent and the nuns. We know that she is enthralled by men because of her attraction to Long Will, her attraction to the Squire, Roger Decheyne a year ago, the fact that she has been cloistered away from men, and by the narrator's comment about the blood running hot and rich in her veins when out in the world. She is also going out into the world in the tender, green time of April, an allusion to budding and blossoming. Katherine's strange sense of power is mentioned, as well as the bugs' avidity as they landed on her tender naked body.

There is a sharp contrast drawn between the thinking and behavior of the little group from the priory and the outside world. Katherine and the nuns possess a quality of innocence and demure modesty that is the complete opposite of the prying, sarcastic and lewd townspeople. One understands how protected Katherine has been when the ribald virginity comments and bawdy music reach her naive ears, but she likes it and wants to experience freedom. Foreshadowing her future is the leathermonger in Rochester who begs that Katherine not be put in a nunnery but should warm some lucky man's bed. Long Will replies that the queen will find Katherine a husband. Long Will then shouts to children who are playing "hoodman blind" in the street, perhaps suggesting that he has no idea how things might really go for Katherine.

The nuns are very superstitious. They expected bad luck when a spider was killed, and pray to different saints for different reasons.

We learn that Katherine's sister Philippa is dark and plump, unlike Katherine, and that she is a strict taskmaster over the queen's ladies, as she was over Katherine when they were children. This indicates that Philippa may soon have some controlling role in Katherine's life, since she is in a position of authority.



## Part One 1336-1337/Two

### Part One 1336-1337/Two Summary

The trip to Windsor is made longer by the nuns' inadequate horses and Long Will's impatience to return to the parties and celebrating of St. George's Day at the castle.

Long Will shares that John of Gaunt, or the Duke of Lancaster, has inherited wealth through lucky marriages and deaths. Windsor is teeming with people, both royal and common, including knights and nobles, rich and poor. When Katherine is called a charity wench by the local bishop, she reminds herself that her father was a knight, but is still feeling quite uncomfortable about her poor clothing and simple appearance. Once they arrive, Philippa tells them that the queen is quite ill and will not be able to see Godeleva, who was hoping for some royal favor and new novices to take back to the convent.

After a warm greeting, Philippa is all business, and Katherine feels homesick for Sheppey. We learn that Alice Perrers, another of the queen's ladies, is apparently sleeping with the king and wears the king's mother's ruby ring. The other ladies consider her a slut, but Alice wields some power in her position as his mistress. Katherine is scrubbed down by the ladies and dressed in a borrowed gown. Katherine learns that her sister Philippa, who is called "Pica" in court, is betrothed to Geoffrey Chaucer.

Katherine is in awe of the bejeweled royals, and fascinated that Alice Perrers sits next to the king, while the queen's chair is empty. Geoffrey familiarizes her with the king's sons, Thomas of Woodstock, the youngest, Lionel of Antwerp, the eldest, Edmund of Langley, Edward, Prince of Wales who is not there, but at his own court in Aquitaine, and the Duke of Lancaster, husband to the lovely and wealthy Lady Blanche. The Duke arrives late with a flourish and standing reception, his status and power connected with his marriage to Blanche. He announces that Henry Trastamare has foully usurped the throne of Castille, leaving the rightful King Pedro pleading for help from England, which probably means war.

An unattractive man, Sir Hugh Swynford, stares at Katherine. Katherine happily sees the Squire, now a knight, who visited her at the convent a year ago.

### Part One 1336-1337/Two Analysis

The bishop's welcome to the nuns is less than warm; this, and the introduction of the King's controversial chaplain who has dared to defy the Pope tells us that religion may not be practiced in the same pious way here, as it is in the priory.

Philippa implies that the queen's illness may be due to the scheming of Alice Perrers, who has, by design, stolen the king's affection.





It seems that Geoffrey Chaucer has a penchant for books and writing, which Philippa does not apparently hold in high esteem. Of course, Geoffrey Chaucer's writing later becomes legendary.

Katherine is dazzled by both the Duke of Lancaster and by his wife, Lady Blanche, who seems to resemble the Virgin Mary. We learn that Geoffrey Chaucer is in love, at a distance, with Lady Blanche, although he accepts his marriage to Philippa.

Philippa is exposed as a practical, somewhat unemotional person who feels that her beautiful sister Katherine is too outgoing, and should be married immediately before she gets into trouble with the lustful young men at court. Geoffrey also senses that Philippa is a bit jealous of her beautiful sister, who may marry at a higher level than Philippa, even though she has no dowry.



## Part One 1336-1337/Three

### Part One 1336-1337/Three Summary

Hugh Swynford is hopelessly in love or lust with Katherine, much to his mocking colleagues' delight. Katherine is not interested in him at all, and is excited by all of the entertainment and the new, busy environment of the court. When she goes out of the courtyard to hear people singing, Hugh attacks her and tries to rape her. The Duke of Lancaster stops him, but Swynford says he wants to marry Katherine. Katherine is brought to the duke's wife, Blanche and tells her of the incident. Suddenly, the duke is repelled by Katherine and feels resentment toward her without knowing why, although he is also attracted to her.

We learn that Hugh Swynford comes from a family of fighters and has inherited the manor of Ketel the Dane, or Kettlethorpe, from his father. His stepmother's money had been used for the purchase, and the home was said to be haunted by a demon dog. The elder Swynford was cruel and violent to his wife. Hugh left home to join the army and met John of Gaunt (duke of Lancaster), who was his same age. After his father's death, Hugh left his stepmother, Lady Nichola, at Kettlethorpe. Hugh's loyalty to John of Gaunt, and his inability to pay his dues to the duke, placed him in service to him as a knight. The other knights do not like Hugh as he is morose and uncourtly.

Katherine is hiding, frightened and miserable. Philippa and the other ladies of the court criticize Katherine for not wanting to marry Hugh, since she will become a Lady with her own manor and serfs. Katherine is desperate to avoid this marriage, and seeks out Godeleva, but learns that Godeleva has left for Shippey. Blanche, in sympathy, sends presents to Katherine, including money and clothing. Hugh comes to her when she is alone and gives her a ring, telling her the betrothal is approved by Philippa, the Duke of Lancaster, and also by the queen. The queen's word has always been the guiding principle for Katherine. She gives up and accepts the ring, giving him a piece of her sleeve to wear in the upcoming joust. Her mood lightens as she accepts her fate.

### Part One 1336-1337/Three Analysis

The overwhelming power of the queen's opinion is clearly revealed in this chapter. The queen is pleased about Swynford's betrothal, so Katherine accepts it, after all of her anguish over it. Katherine realizes that the facts of her situation are what she had wished for when she was in the convent, but the particulars were not what she visualized. Her youth is evident through her resilience and her eagerness to participate in the celebration, see the jousts and enjoy this new life in a glamorous setting.

A shift occurs at the end of this chapter when Katherine proceeds with a page to the joust, dressed in a beautiful gown, a jewel on her finger and rosewater rubbed into her hands. Her transformation from convent orphan to courtier is in the works. The author



portrays Katherine as beautiful and innocent. Katherine does not recognize her own beauty, but everyone around her seems to be charmed by her, including the duchess Blanche. Blanche's nursing of Katherine's wounds foreshadows a relationship between them that will endure for some time. Swynford says several times that Katherine has bewitched him, reminding us of the superstitious beliefs held by people of that time.



## Part One 1336-1337/Four

### Part One 1336-1337/Four Summary

Katherine is the subject of ridicule by the ladies of high rank who are watching the jousting tournament, however, the Duchess spots her and invites Katherine to sit with her, which puts the women in their place. As she sits in the duke's loge, she is able to see the king and his court, as well as the jousting.

Roger DeCheyne rides up to Katherine asking for a token from her for luck in the melee. Katherine gives him a flower from the Duchess's bouquet. Although DeCheyne is married, there is nothing improper about this, except that Hugh Swynford is not happy about it. Swynford asks permission to change sides so that he can joust with DeCheyne and the duke agrees, although he reminds him that this is only sport and the real fighting will come at Castile.

The melee involves forty knights at once proceeding on their separate lanes, jousting with the oncoming knight. Hugh Swynford and Roger DeCheyne embark on a sword fight. The Duke of Lancaster breaks up the fight, and Roger is carried from the field. However, Swynford continues the fight and in his rage, turns on the duke. The duke manages to knock the sword from Swynford's hand and, admonishing him, sends him from the field.

The duke and his brothers proceed to finish the joust elegantly. The duke is not kind to Katherine, but she is strongly attracted to him. He is impressed with her aristocratic manner, but ignores her. The jousting casualties are reported, and John is now preoccupied with war with Castile. Henry Trastamare, referred to as the Bastard, needs to be overthrown so that King Pedro can resume his throne. Pedro and his daughters have escaped to Bordeaux.

John of Gaunt (Duke of Lancaster), has never had the opportunity to distinguish himself in battle. He sired a child at a young age, and was promised to Blanche of Lancaster, whom he found easy to love. He looks forward to the battle at Castile. John takes the time to reminisce about his childhood, and his foster mother, Isolda Neumann, whom he loved more than anyone. Isolda's spiteful, crippled son, Pieter, was jealous of John, and found ways to humiliate him. Pieter told John that he was not really a son of the king, but the son of a Flemish butcher, a changeling. John became distraught. Pieter's mother, Isolde, promised John that her son had lied, and that many would lie to him and try to hurt him because of his royal status. She promised never to leave him, but soon died from the plague, leaving him alone and desolate at a very vulnerable time.

### Part One 1336-1337/Four Analysis

Katherine begins to experience the intricacies of court behavior, including the meanness and gossip of the competitive women. She is still innocent and does not realize that she



is as beautiful as others perceive her to be. She also feels a strange pain in her heart when she realizes that the duke has not been harmed.

Hugh Swynford's rage emerges again, as he completely loses his temper and any sense of decency on the jousting field. He is so blinded by his fighting nature that he does not realize he is fighting with the duke of Lancaster.

This chapter allows us a look into the personality of John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster. John has many insecurities. He has not been a war hero and is only his father's third son. He carried looming doubts about his heritage throughout childhood and the woman he loved the most, Isolda, disappeared abruptly when he needed her most. We deduce that his strange reaction to Katherine is because Katherine reminds him of Isolda. Although her gray eyes bring back memories of Isolda, the memories carry bitterness and a sense of abandonment. He sees Katherine's beauty as troubling, and decides he still does not like her, but this foreshadows a relationship between them, since he is not at all neutral about her. His rebuke to Katherine suggests that she was not even concerned about the two knights who fought over her, revealing the pain he still holds about his foster mother's disappearance.



# Part One 1336-1337/Five

## Part One 1336-1337/Five Summary

Katherine's wedding is planned to take place before Swynford leaves for Bordeaux with the duke. The duke's court has moved to the Savoy Palace, and people are beginning to assemble in response to the call to arms for war. Swynford goes on ahead to the church to make arrangements, leaving his body guard Ellis to escort Katherine and Philippa to London.

The queen, who is feeling slightly better, has asked to meet Katherine. The queen's body is swollen with dropsy and, in her delirium, she still grieves for half of her children who have died. In a moment of lucidity, the queen remembers that she had not sent the convent enough for Katherine's keep for the years she lived there. She orders a ton of wine sent to Sheppey, as well as two marks and a novice with a dowry, which makes Katherine very happy. As a wedding present, the queen gives Katherine a small silver brooch with the motto, "faith will conquer." Philippa is frustrated with her sister for not being able to squeeze more out of the queen.

Katherine is afraid of being married, but enjoys the sights on the wedding trip to London. The trip is pleasant and filled with colorful nature. It is May Day, and the people of England are preparing to celebrate. Katherine realizes the beauty of the world outside of the convent and enjoys the bustle of the city. However, after meeting with Hugh Swynford and learning that her wedding is to be in two days, Katherine's mood changes as she becomes desperate to escape him. Although Hugh does not tell Katherine, the duke is punishing him by temporarily not allowing him to dine at court.

The party arrives at Geoffrey Chaucer's family residence to spend the night, but Geoffrey's father is ill with what may be the plague. Philippa stays on to help the family, and Hugh, Katherine and Ellis go on to the home of Guy le Pessonner, a wealthy fishmonger. Katherine and Hawise Pessonner, the eldest daughter, become close friends. Hawise is in love with an apprentice, and thinks she may need to get pregnant before her father will give his consent for Hawise to marry him. Katherine is shocked that there may be another way to look at mortal sin.

Katherine spends her last day as a child, playing and singing with Hawise on May Day. At her wedding the following morning, the Duke and Duchess of Lancaster make a surprise appearance at their wedding. The duke demonstrates to Hugh Swynford how to kiss his new wife, and kisses Katherine on the mouth, which causes a strong reaction in her. Geoffrey Chaucer notices the attraction between the duke and Katherine, as well as his own attraction to the duchess.



## Part One 1336-1337/Five Analysis

The queen's grave illness portends trouble. Her small gift to Katherine, reminding her to keep the faith, suggests that there may be tough times ahead. Philippa has obviously learned the conniving and competitive games of courtiers, as she tries to squeeze wedding presents out of the queen, who is desperately ill. Philippa is not unkind, but all business.

Katherine's fear of marrying Hugh Swynford is based on her knowledge that he is violent, and on her repulsion of him, but she has no choice. Her vision when the "pyx" (consecrated wafer) goes past into the Chaucer household is another indication of the power that religion had in the daily lives of people in the middle ages. These characters are constantly monitoring themselves and seeking redemption for their sins, which are multitudinous. The supernatural experience that Katherine thinks she experiences is taken as a sign that she should stop resisting her marriage to this cruel man.

Katherine enjoys the Pessonner family because they are casual, and say "right out whatever was in their minds" (85), so unlike both the courtiers and the convent people. They practice none of the fussy manners or pious restrictions she is accustomed to, but seem to enjoy their lives without fear of breaking rules.

It is meaningful that Katherine's wedding day is a rainy one, after the beautiful, sunny day before. Katherine experiences her wedding through a mental fog. Geoffrey's ruminations about what it would be like to be married to the duchess give way to a sense of fear that he experienced when the duke kissed Katherine. Geoffrey senses a menacing force, providing another supernatural reference.



# Part One 1336-1337/Six

## Part One 1336-1337/Six Summary

On their wedding day, Katherine asks Hugh if they can stop to look at a shrine containing a huge black marble cross, which gave Hugh a superstitious shrinking feeling on his neck. When they view the cross, Hugh's sword magically unfastens and falls to the pavement, rolling down to the floor and pointing toward the western door. The pilgrims at the shrine immediately assume this is a sign that the Holy Cross was angry with Hugh, and wanted him to leave, wondering what kind of sin he has committed. The resident monk feels that the holy cross is wanting the sword as a sacrifice, but the sword has sentimental value, and Hugh will not give it up. He is coerced into giving money to the Friar instead, but wonders what this might mean for his marriage.

After an extremely unromantic wedding night in a cheap room, Katherine is finally able to stop crying and finds strength in her loathing and contempt of Hugh, although she has had moments of pity for him. Her faith in the saints is weakened and she realizes that she must endure her situation alone. She decides that she will be a good wife, but because she feels nothing for him, she will be free. In the days that follow, Katherine shows more loving tenderness to her new horse, Doucette, than to her husband, but bravely puts up with him.

The couple stops at one of Hugh's manors and finds the reeve drunk and the manor in shambles. He hits the reeve, loosening his tooth, and then leaves, telling Katherine that Edgar will do alright because fear makes the best taskmaster. Hugh cares only for what money his manors will bring, and is not interested in their maintenance. The money Hugh gave to the monk at the black cross has reduced him to a few pence.

After a miserably long ride to Swynford's Kettlethorpe manor, Katherine and Hugh find the place is overgrown and seems to be abandoned. No one is left at the manor but the old gatekeeper, Toby, Hugh's insane stepmother Nichola, and Gibbon, Hugh's bailiff who is dying. Katherine rises to the challenge of setting up a household in the dilapidated house. As she came to the marriage with no dowry, Katherine does not feel she can question the reasons for Hugh's poverty.

Nichola is said to have water-elf sickness. She believes she hears voices, and goes in and out of lucidity. She keeps a little kitten with her for company, and is a very fearful woman who was severely abused by Hugh's father. The few servants that are around the manor have become slack and lazy about their duties, and Katherine angrily makes a stable boy tend to his duties. Katherine pays a visit to Gibbon, who is paralyzed from his illness. Katherine learns that Gibbon is actually Hugh's half-brother, which explains Gibbon's concern for the Swynford properties. Katherine asks for Gibbon's help so that she can learn what needs to be done.





## Part One 1336-1337/Six Analysis

During the incident at the black marble cross, Katherine questions the validity of the common religious superstitions, but corrects herself as being unpious. She also experiences a moment of pity for Hugh, which reveals that her contempt for him is not without compassion.

The rough sexual treatment on her wedding night solidifies Katherine's resolve to take responsibility for her own life and somehow strengthens her, even though she realizes that her faith in the saints has been shaken. Although she is in a terrible situation, she is steeling and strengthening herself for what lies ahead.

The shocking situation at Kettlethorpe would be intolerable if Katherine were faint at heart. She is surrounded by poverty, filth, illness and insanity, as well as being unwillingly married to a violent man. Katherine has very quickly gone from being a humble orphan to married Lady, but again finds herself poor. Since leaving the convent she has experienced extreme luxury at court and now, at Kettlethorpe, realizes that if she is to have a decent life at all, it will be up to her to make it so. A revealing moment is when she makes her way through the brambles and nettles to the stagnant water of the moat and sees a rat swim away, but then hears the hunter's horn, which may mean meat for dinner, and represents hope in the midst of misery.



# Part One 1336-1337/Seven

## Part One 1336-1337/Seven Summary

Katherine has managed to hold a celebration at Kettlethorpe for the Feast of the Assumption holiday, with dancing, food and blessings for all in the village, at Gibbon's advice. Hugh has punished the lazy serfs and exacted the manor's dues. Gibbon is brought to court on a litter, and tries to help Hugh with advice. With new servants and employees, the manor is being administrated more appropriately, and Gibbon is being cared for. The servants, although still somewhat defiant, are no longer as rebellious.

After he strikes her in the face, Katherine informs Hugh that she may be pregnant. Hugh is pleased and plans to be back in May for the birth. He warns her to stay away from Nichola so that the baby will not be affected or "marked" by the contact. Hugh leaves for Southampton at the duke's orders, with his reorganized staff sending him off in the traditional feudal manner. His armor is polished and his shirts mended. Katherine is kind to him, but is glad to see him go. She is certain he will return, because he will be with the invincible Duke of Lancaster.

We are introduced to Sir Robert de Northwode, the manor priest who is second in command to Hugh Swynford due to his station in life. He is greedy and lazy, but well liked and keeps a mistress and children, even though he should be celibate. He is of no real spiritual counsel to Katherine and does not read or write but occasionally delivers mass. His wife, Molly, is the midwife who will attend Katherine in childbirth.. On Halloween night, Robert arrives, bringing Katherine a letter from Geoffrey Chaucer. It is clear that Philippa and Geoffrey think that Katherine is living a luxurious life. Northwood's mistress, Molly, is the village midwife who will deliver Katherine's child.

Katherine grows depressed and unmotivated. The weather is cold. Protecting her pregnancy means not riding her horse, not staring into the fire, saying an Ave if she saw a spider, rat or toad, and other superstitious practices. After a dream of being a little child with her loving family again, Katherine remembers that it is her birthday. In her misery, she curses the child inside of her, instigating rumors among the household staff, who resent her. Her lady, Milburga, exaggerates the story.

The duchess, Blanche, sends a message to Katherine asking her to come to Bolingbroke for Christmas. Although Katherine knows she should not ride her horse, the messenger tells her that Blanche is even larger and rides her horse daily. Katherine promises Gibbon that she will be happier when she returns, but he has a foreboding sense about her and wishes, as do the servants, that Hugh had married a different woman.



## Part One 1336-1337/Seven Analysis

Katherine is taking control of her life and improving Kettlethorpe. She is somewhat out of touch with her pregnancy and "felt herself as alone and untouched as ever" due to her mental distance from Hugh. The baby seems imaginary to her, and she has no sense of its presence.

Although she does not miss Hugh, she misses the company of friends. Realizing that her birthday has arrived and no one on earth has noticed or known, she lashes out verbally against the baby, which indicates madness to the servants. Milburga's treatment of Katherine is described as oily deference and petty bullying which Katherine finds annoying, but this is an ominous insight, since Katherine is there with servants who do not particularly like her or her poor heritage. Further, she is not someone they can boast of to others, and her arrival made a huge change in their lazy lifestyles. Another interesting note about the servants is that the cook, who was severely flogged by Hugh during the manor court, would have run off into the forest, but his "stiffened knees hampered him, as did the dead weight of custom" (124). However, since it is a mortal sin to mutiny against one's feudal lord, they continue to serve, although grudgingly.

Katherine has a moment of unpleasant shock when she hears of Blanche's pregnancy. Although she cares for the duchess, she cares even more for the duke, even though she suppresses her feelings about him.

The break in Katherine's depression comes with the invitation from Blanche. Just as the baby finally "quickens," or moves, Katherine sees the duchess's messenger arriving on his horse. The invitation seems to turn everything around for Katherine, but Gibbon's foreboding in the night about her trip may foretell problems.



# Part One 1336-1337/Eight

## Part One 1336-1337/Eight Summary

At Bolingbroke, Blanche's childhood home, Katherine and Blanche formed a loving friendship, partly due to Katherine's admiration of her. They sew, sing and play music together. Katherine temporarily forgets the difficulties of Kettlethorpe. Katherine does not know that the duke had written to Blanche, asking her to look in on Katherine, since Hugh has told him Katherine is pregnant.

Katherine feels guilty when Blanche's children respond warmly to her, and seem to prefer her over their mother, but Blanche does not react.

Katherine calls Blanche the Queen of Heaven, and Blanche sends her back to Kettlethorpe in a beautiful carriage with many gifts. During the long carriage ride, Katherine has time to think. She decides to live her life as Blanche does, and realizes that she had been guilty of the sin of accidie - spiritual sloth. However, Kettlethorpe has not changed, and Katherine prays for resignation.

As spring arrives, the mood at Kettlethorpe lifts. A visiting friar informs Katherine that Blanche has given birth to a boy. Katherine is hurt that Blanche did not notify her personally.

Katherine has forbidden her servants to participate in an annual pagan celebration that involves the sacrifice of animals and two days of drinking and dancing. On the last day of April, Katherine's energy had increased and her maid, Milburga, is certain that Katherine is about to go into labor. Milburga wants to bring the midwife, Molly, but Katherine refuses the offer and reminds Milburga that she expects to be obeyed regarding the forbidden heathen celebration.

As predicted by Milburga, Katherine does start labor that evening, but no one is at the house with the exception of the insane Nichola and the paralyzed Gibbon. Gibbon instructs Katherine to go to her bed. When Nichola hears Katherine's screams, she creeps down to the bedroom, and stays with Katherine until the child is born. As soon as Nichola has cut the baby's umbilical cord, she wraps the little girl up and steals her from Katherine. Katherine is screaming when Nichola is intercepted by the visiting Duke of Lancaster.

The duke is angry at the servants, who have gone against Katherine's wishes and celebrated all night. He has Nichola chained to her bed. When Katherine awakens, she kindly says that the problems were her own fault as she had not let Milburga get the midwife. The duke feels pity for Katherine, as well as the urge to protect her. John, the duke had finally had success in battle, restored King Pedro to his throne in Castile. He realizes that he cannot let Katherine stay unprotected at Kettlethorpe. His first decision is to christen the baby and become her godfather, a great honor. He then assigns his



loyal servant Nirac, a Gascon, to stay with Katherine and guard her until Hugh returns. Nirac's loyalty to John is due to John having saved his life in battle. Nirac, who thinks only in black and white, perceives love between the duke and Katherine, and pledges to guard Katherine with his life.

Katherine enjoys Nirac's company and enjoys being a new mother. When the manor's reeve, Sim, comes to request permission for the annual church celebration, he and Nirac engage in a bloody fight wherein Nirac injures Sim with his knife. The priest was called to minister to Sim, but stays on hoping for free food. Hugh returns home, much to Gibbon's relief, who hopes that now Katherine will be safe.

## **Part One 1336-1337/Eight Analysis**

The contrast between Bolingbroke and Kettlethorpe is stark, with Bolingbroke being a place of beauty and serenity, and Kettlethorpe being filled with anger and poverty.

Katherine has decided, as John may have also, that the kiss and attraction between them is not romantic, but Nirac is convinced they are romantically involved.

Nichola's plan to take baby Blanchette to the river would have surely meant the demise of the baby, but once again, the Duke of Lancaster has saved the day for Katherine. Although the wise Gibbon is getting better care, his condition is worsening. He watches Katherine with affection. Katherine finds a new happiness and sense of purpose as a mother and is learning more domestic arts.

Nirac's extreme thinking may foreshadow trouble with him later, although he is pleasant enough, and Katherine comes to like him. For a moment, Katherine believes the duke has returned and feels joy, but then realizes it is Hugh.



## Part Two 1369/Nine

### Part Two 1369/Nine Summary

The year 1369 brings Lollards, famine, pestilence, a comet and other bad omens to England. John's brother Lionel died on his wedding trip, perhaps of poison. In addition, there was rebellion and newly declared war against France. The area around Kettlethorpe has flooded, washing away flocks, game and crops. One of the priest's sons drowned, and the flood waters drive Nichola so crazy that she jumps out the window to her death. Katherine defends Nichola's suicide, saying that she was bewitched by water elves.

Gibbon has died. Katherine now has a new son, Thomas, whose looks and manner resemble his father's. News came to Katherine of the plague in London, the death of the queen and her sister Philippa's pregnancy. Geoffrey wants to bring Philippa to Katherine while he goes to France under orders of the king, mostly so that she can be away from the plague. Hugh returned from Castile with a severe chronic case of dysentery and is weakened, even with all of the potions, magical formulas and bleedings.

Nirac and Hugh clashed before Nirac's departure, with Hugh striking Nirac across the mouth and accusing them of adultery. The servants and Gibbon convinced Hugh that there was nothing going on, but Hugh maintains his hatred of Gascons. The duke has not called Hugh back to service, ordering him to stay at Kettlethorpe and take care of Katherine.

Philippa is appalled by the living conditions at Kettlethorpe, being accustomed to royal surroundings. In her domineering way, Philippa suggests that Katherine go to Bolingbroke to wait on the duchess Blanche, and to leave her to tend to the babies and the manor. Philippa tells Katherine that since she had the plague as a small child, she is no longer susceptible to it. Katherine has a vague memory of being nursed and cared for by Philippa during that time.

Geoffrey, who continues to read and scribble despite Philippa's intention to cure him of it, reads a poem about romantic love to Katherine, who does not understand the concept, but feels she may have glimpsed it once. Katherine admires Geoffrey's ability to be true to himself and his self-sufficiency, and feels the only thing that could threaten her own is if anything should happen to threaten her babies

### Part Two 1369/Nine Analysis

Katherine's realization that she has never experienced true love seems ironic, since the only time she has felt real love is toward the duke. Although Geoffrey and Philippa are happily married, Geoffrey still loves Blanche, but keeps his feelings to himself, except through his writing. Geoffrey still thinks Katherine is beautiful and virginal, even after



having two children. He thinks his prediction about her special fate was wrong, and that she will end up doing the same things most other women do.

Hugh's illness seems to have aged him and there is a resignation in Katherine that allows her to dress shabbily and be somewhat careless of her own habits. Hugh may have mellowed a bit with his illness, but he is still an unpleasant person. His comment to Geoffrey about Gascons reflects his bitter jealousy regarding Nirac's relationship with Katherine. Nirac's comment to Katherine that he will not forget Hugh foreshadows future interactions between the two that will probably not be positive.

Philippa's overbearing personality has not changed, and her jealousy of the gift given to Blanchette by the duke is obvious. However, Philippa is capable and knows how to manipulate royalty to get her needs fulfilled.



## Part Two/Ten

### Part Two/Ten Summary

Katherine leaves for Bolingbroke after weaning baby Tom. Hugh has been better, but is now having impotence problems. Katherine is secretly relieved, and does not pray for his health in that department.

Ellis, Hugh's servant, escorts Katherine on the trip and reminds her to remember her rank. A fellow traveler rides alongside Katherine and tells her that the king's concubine has persuaded the king to take the staple from Lincoln and set it up for themselves. The wool, hide and tin will no longer pass through Lincoln for export, causing financial loss for the area. The man, Robert Sutton, showed too much interest in Katherine for Ellis's liking. Robert's father finally warned him away. The travelers came upon thick yellow fog that carried a strange stench. A bonfire in the road was burning, and they spotted a red cross painted on Bolingbroke's drawbridge, indicating plague had come to the castle. A guard told them that sixteen people have died unshriven, and there is no living priest or friar.

Since Katherine was immune to the plague, she goes into the castle against Ellis's advice. When he tries to stop her, she slaps him. Katherine, taking stern control, sends Ellis to the nearest village to fetch a priest.

When she entered the duchess's apartments, Katherine sees crazed, drunken people dancing naked to crashing cymbals, groping at one another. Finding the duchess near death, Katherine guides the friar to her, who administers last rites. The plague retreats from the castle, taking only one more life, a total of thirty. The servants have mostly vanished or died, and Katherine stays on to help, caring for Blanche's daughters and baby boy, Henry. Blanche's daughter Elizabeth is spoiled, detached and self-centered.

Philippa warns Katherine through Ellis that she is not to come home, since she may carry remnants of the plague with her. Katherine is deeply grieved over the loss of Blanche, and will wait for John's return.

### Part Two/Ten Analysis

It is ironic that Katherine happens to be immune to the black plague, when so many people are dying. She is not able to save her beloved duchess, but makes sure that the priest is with her at her death.

During the huge funeral procession, although Katherine was with the duchess at her deathbed, she is relegated to the middle of the crowd and holds no special position in the ceremony. The children, whom she has recently cared for, are whisked away. Clearly, she had no idea when she left Kettlethorpe that she would end up with this huge responsibility or experience this devastating illness first hand.





Strangely, of the half dozen people who partied wildly, waiting for their turn to die from the plague, only one died. The children had been sequestered in another tower of the castle, spared from the infection.

Katherine's temper surfaces toward Ellis when he tries to keep her from going into the castle, and again when he suggests that a wife can be easily replaced. Katherine is learning to treat her servants like other people of rank.



# Part Two/Eleven

## Part Two/Eleven Summary

Katherine travels with the ceremonial funeral process that takes Blanche's body back to her home at Savoy castle. The king is obviously very grieved, after having lost his wife only a short time ago and now the second most powerful woman in England. However, behind him is Alice Perrers, who is extravagantly dressed and perfumed, faintly smiling. The supper at court was solemn at first, but turned raucous and celebratory, much to Katherine's disgust.

Katherine becomes lost trying to find her assigned room, and asks a friar, William Appleton, to guide her to Beaufort tower. Unable to sleep, Katherine goes to the chapel to be with the body of Blanche, and finds John, duke of Lancaster, prone on the floor, crying. He sends her away, and she prays for him. The duke hides himself away after the interment, and sees nobody except Raulin, his squire. His men wait impatiently for directions regarding the war. His physician talks of the astrological position of the planets and how a shift may change things for John.

The Earl of March, a young man who has recently wed the only child of John's brother Lionel, has come to summon the duke to the king, who has ordered him to Westminster for a conference. The young earl, a son of Mortimer who killed the king's father, is now in a position of being a grandson to the king by marriage. Earl is jealous of John of Gaunt and his holdings, but he knows that his own child is closer to the throne than the duke's. John refuses the summons to go to his father but asks that they tell the king he will be there soon.

Katherine has left the palace to visit with Hawise. The duke's children were taken away, and she needs to figure out how to afford a trip home to Kettlethorpe. Hawise has married Jack and has a two-year-old son. Jack has become a soldier and gone to war. Hawise recognizes loneliness in Katherine.

Raulin, the duke's squire, knocks on the Pessoners' door and privately tells Katherine that the duke, John of Gaunt, wants to see her. Katherine rushes away with him, in a daze.

## Part Two/Eleven Analysis

The celebration at the funeral dinner for Blanche is eerie, with sugar confections shaped like the grim reaper, and people laughing and being bawdy. Life at court is even more tacky and ugly than Katherine remembered it, and she finds Alice Perrers' behavior disrespectful.



Katherine feels quite alone after being lost in the shuffle of Blanche's massive funeral, being grief-stricken in a strange castle all alone, and having been rejected by the duke in the chapel. Seeing Hawise grounds her somewhat, but she is at loose ends.

Hawise, comically, knew when she dropped the porridge ladle that a visitor would come.

The duke is devastated over losing his wife, so it is not too surprising that he is not tending to his country's business. However, his need to see Katherine at this time portends some deeper feelings for her than he had formerly acknowledged. When Katherine gets the message to go to him, Hawise states, "Twas like she wandered in a fearing dream and yet feared more to wake."



# Part Two/Twelve

## Part Two/Twelve Summary

Raulin, the duke's Flemish bodyguard, leads Katherine through a secret passage that leads to the inner chambers of the castle. John wants to thank her for caring for Blanche at Bolingbroke, but Katherine protests that she loved Blanche and wants no payment. The duke's last military maneuver was an expensive failure and being without Blanche to help him makes his grief more difficult. His victory of restoring King Pedro to the Castilian throne was reversed, when Pedro was murdered, and his bastard brother took control.

John shows Katherine a poem he received from Geoffrey Chaucer, written to and about Blanche and expresses appreciation for her family. He then designs a personal blazon for her and tells her that it will be entered on the Lancaster Roll of Arms. They kiss and admit they love one another, but Katherine cannot commit adultery. John promises to provide for her and to have an escort take her home.

She flees to Hawise and the Pessoners to spend the night so that she can leave early in the morning. Katherine wants no escort from the duke's men, and Hawise offers to ride with her and serve her as her maid. Hawise tells her that baby Jack will be fine since he loves his grandmother more than her, and that she will have to return when her husband returns from war. Katherine, Hawise and Jankin, Pessoner's apprentice, ride together toward Kettlethorpe. On the way, they run into some suspicious, outlaw types who seem to threaten them. Back on the road, they are chased by four helmeted men, who turn out to be sent by the duke.

Raulin has brought their escort to them, as well as some messages to be delivered to people in Lincoln, and a painted, finished shield for Katherine. Jankin is sent back to London. The small party happens to see Philippa and the children as they pass through the small town market at Danesgate. Philippa is six months pregnant. She tells Katherine that Hugh is better, but is worried that he has not been able to pay the manor dues. Hugh is talking to the receiver for Lincolnshire, trying to put off paying their debts for a bit longer. Katherine enters with her escort, and they deliver the messages from the duke. As reward for her services to the late duchess, the duke has granted to Katherine all issues and profits from the towns of Waddington and Wellingore in the County of Lincoln, to be paid at once. In addition, the letter provides for one of the duke's stewards to attend Katherine whenever Hugh is in service as a knight.. Hugh questions whether this was only for her service to Blanche, and Katherine swears that it was.

Katherine reads to Hugh a letter addressed to him from the duke. He is ordered to report for knight's duty in Aquitaine under Robert Knolles. Hugh is happy and relieved, and decides that the duke's special favors toward them are connected with John's being Blanchette's godfather. Katherine vows to forget the evening she spent with John.



## Part Two/Twelve Analysis

Katherine is torn between her duty to God and herself, and her love for the duke which has lain beneath the surface since she met him. Her dramatic vacillating, running away and dreaming of being in his bed adds to the soap-opera tone of this predictable chapter. Katherine rides a roller coaster of grief, sadness, loneliness, joy, fear, relief and finally, peace. The duke has provided nicely for the Swynfords, who will no longer suffer from poverty. Hugh's self-esteem will improve with his orders back to service. This chapter ends on a happy note and, once again, Katherine decides to put her love for the duke behind her and tries to forget it.

Katherine's love for Blanche was very real. It could be seen as tasteless that John has tried to seduce her while they are both in still in such deep mourning. Katherine makes a more mature decision than she might have as a younger woman.

John's love/hate relationship with Katherine is disturbing. He runs hot and cold with her, ostensibly because she reminds him of a woman he loved greatly and who abandoned him. His designing a personal shield for Katherine is a high compliment to her autonomy, and indicates that he would rather she be herself than just the wife of Hugh Swynford.



## Part Three 1371/Thirteen

### Part Three 1371/Thirteen Summary

At the new home of the Duke of Lancaster, three noble men discuss who, of John's family, is the better or more courageous knight. John's brother, Edward, is apparently ill and has lost a male child. We learn that the duke may be interested in marrying the Queen of Castile, Costanza, even though she is not currently on the throne.

Perhaps John is hoping to rule Castile, and overthrow the bastard king who dethroned King Pedro. He has a dream of being in the same cathedral where he celebrated his victory at Najera, as well as the birth of his son, but in the dream he is wearing the golden crown of Castile. Nirac tells John that the Infanta Costanza was looking shabby; that she is bony, flat-chested and wears a hair-shirt to remind her of her father. His description is not appealing. However, the duke tells Nirac that he will marry Costanza, and he wants Katherine of Swynford to attend his new wife. He also mentions that Hugh Swynford is ailing with an injury from the recent victorious battle at Aquitaine. John tells Nirac that he must see Katherine again before he marries, secretly hoping that her charm and beauty has diminished with age and that he will be cured of his desire for her. He will send for Katherine on the pretense that she needs to nurse Hugh Swynford while he recovers.

Katherine takes a rough ride on a ship to Bordeaux. Among the passengers is John's sister, the obnoxious gossip, Isabel, who is suspicious of Katherine's motives. Isabel plans to look in Italy for her husband, who has managed to avoid her for some time. The duke comes aboard the ship to greet his passengers and Katherine is cool to him, asking him whether Nirac might take her immediately to Hugh. Katherine sees Bordeaux as garish, and misses her home.

### Part Three 1371/Thirteen Analysis

John's scheming to take over Castile is perhaps because he will never be king of England, and needs recognition, since he is so far from the throne. He still suffers from low self-esteem over battles not won.

John hopes that Katherine's "earthly vitality" will offend him as it did when he first met her, but we have already learned that she is even more beautiful than before. Seton does a good job of describing the trip over rough seas, with cramped quarters, people being sick and locked in for their own safety. Their fears of being drowned are assuaged by fervent prayer, and when they arrive safely, they sing a song of praise to the Virgin of the Sea.

We are reminded that Nirac hates Hugh Swynford for humiliating him at Kettlethorpe, even though the duke tells him that Hugh has done a good job of fighting as a knight. The duke's quickened breathing when he sees Katherine is something she notices, but

ignores. Katherine's perception of Bordeaux is of violent sunlight, garish savage colors, and a sense of foreboding, which foreshadows things to come in Bordeaux.



## Part Three/Fourteen

### Part Three/Fourteen Summary

Hugh is suffering greatly from his problem with his bowels, but his leg seems to be healing, thanks to the duke's own leeches. He is not too ill to notice Nirac's presence or ridicule of him. Hugh is gruff at first, but as Katherine tends to him and tells him news of their children, he grows gentler. Hugh's only weapon against his impotence is drink and rage, and Katherine tries not to think of the violent nights before he left Kettlethorpe, but does inform him that she is not pregnant.

The friar who has saved Hugh's life comes for a visit. He applies a poultice of pounded watercress to the wound, and reminds Hugh to take his camphor poppy juice to heal the flux. The friar has served as confessor for Hugh and knows all about him and his love for Katherine.

Katherine leaves the room early to attend Mass, because she wants to refresh her gratitude for safe passage on the ship. John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, is in the cathedral disguised as a pilgrim, and wants to see her in private. He tells Katherine that he loves her and cannot exist without her. Again, her joy is painful, and she tells John that she made a vow to St. Catherine on the ship that she would be a true wife in thought and deed to her husband. John thinks she is foolish to think she saved the whole ship with her vow, but she intends to keep it. He cries and returns to the castle in his pilgrim disguise, passing a hilarious dwarf, bird and monkey performance without even noticing.

Edmund, John's brother, has been given permission by their father, the king, to marry Costanza's younger sister, Isabella, who is 15, which will secure Castile for England. Baron DeLePole notices the sadness in John.

Nirac has overheard John confess his desire for Katherine, and his frustration that Hugh Swynford does not die. Nirac takes this as a sign that the duke wants Hugh dead. Nirac goes to where Hugh and Katherine are staying, bringing the dwarf, his monkey and the popinjay with him. He and Katherine help Hugh to the window so that the Swynfords can watch the little performance and while they do, Nirac mixes a poison powder into Hugh's medicine, and leaves.

Hugh is feeling better, and Ellis arrives with food. They enjoy the new fruits and wine, and Katherine makes sure Hugh takes his medicine. Hugh awakens with a dream of the Kettlethorpe pooka hound, and is in terrible pain. Hugh vomited and purged, so Katherine gave him the rest of his medicine. He continues to become more and more ill. The gray Friar arrives and administers last rites to Hugh. The friar feels there may have been a rotten spot in his bowel that burst. Ellis weeps. Katherine is in a state of shock and disbelief.





## Part Three/Fourteen Analysis

Nirac's loyalty to his duke is obviously out of control. He takes it upon himself to murder Hugh without even discussing it with his lord. Nirac has been described as black or white, and nothing in between — rather than let his duke suffer, in his loyalty, he feels the need to fix things for the duke.

Katherine, although still torn from her love for the duke and her loyalty to her marriage, undertakes nursing and housekeeping without complaint. She has once again hidden away the moments with the duke and written it off. She is kind to Hugh, who seems to be starting to respond with kindness, himself.

The evil pooka hound, a legend passed down from the former owners of Kettlethorpe, has become so symbolic of death for Hugh, that he imagines the hound taking him to his own death. Interestingly, the gray friar who has come to attend Hugh perceives Katherine to have sense of spiritual health. The next morning, Katherine yearns for the blissful comfort of communion.



# Part Three/Fifteen

## Part Three/Fifteen Summary

Katherine is giving a sleeping opiate and Ellis has drunk himself into oblivion, while Hugh's body is removed for preparation. The friar decides he should consult with the duke before making any decisions. The duke seems depressed, and orders the council to give the Queen of Castille what she wants. When Nirac comes to the duke with important news, the duke excuses himself, much to the consternation of his men who want to discuss duGuesclin. The duke reminds Thomas Felton that he has authority to administer these matters and leaves.

The duke takes the news of Hugh's death in a state of awe and joy, since he has prayed for it and feels he has been blessed. He gives the friar some gold coins and tells him to go. The duke's mood lifts, and the court becomes merry with hunting, dancing and falconing. Katherine receives a note from the duke and agrees to receive him, but only to say farewell. Katherine seems to be in the deepest state of grief. Ellis has spent time polishing Hugh's armor for Katherine's little son, Tom. The duke arrives and forcefully takes Katherine to his horse. They ride for many miles, headed to the Captal de Buch's chateau, he being one of the few people John has confided in about Katherine. John had arranged for the chateau to be lavishly appointed with huge fires burning, and a beautiful extravagant bed had been transported to the castle. He had a dress made for her bearing a symbol with their initials intertwined.

Katherine does not want Nirac to wait on them, because she has a "whim" about him. John promises to love Katherine until he dies. They stay three nights, mostly in the bedchamber, in a state of physical lust and emotional love. When Captal finally interrupts them to discuss business, the duke informs him that Katherine is his heart's blood and his life, and that he wants nothing but her. John learns that the preparations for his marriage to Costanza are fully underway, with contracts, a ring and wedding gifts. The thought of Costanza sickens the duke, but the Captal reminds him that she is just a means to an end. John says that he will not return to Bordeaux for two more weeks, but will take Katherine to the Pyrenees. The Captal clearly thinks this is foolish and dangerous, and that the English are mad.

Nirac's services have not been needed, and the duke sends him back to Bordeaux. His attitude has changed and he has, perhaps, regret over his actions, and he glances at Katherine with a look of hatred. Later, Nirac takes some bad medicine and in his illness, says things to the friar about Katherine and John, which arouses the friar's suspicions. He decides, however, that Katherine was not a part of any treachery.

John pledges his love to Katherine in a small chapel and gives her Blanche's ring. After a week of freedom and happiness in the mountains, they must return to Bordeaux, John to marry Costanza and Katherine to return set sail to wherever it is that John will decide to send her. She returns to Bordeaux and her mourning clothes. The duke receives her,



and she informs him she is pregnant with his child. He wants her to live at Savoy and serve as governess to his children. Katherine is concerned about losing her honor, but the new baby will be seen as Hugh's, and they will be together. Katherine misses her own children, but will do as the duke wishes.

## Part Three/Fifteen Analysis

The Captal sees Katherine as a harlot, despite the duke's insistence on his love for her. She is interfering with his political duties.

When they leave the chateaux, Nirac looks as though he may cry. Katherine assumes he is jealous. Nirac has made a great sacrifice for the duke, who now rejects his service. Based on his flamboyant personality, it seems Nirac will resurface in this story, perhaps in an unpleasant way.

The two white herons that rise from the marshes are symbolic of the freedom that John and Katherine are experiencing as they travel away in disguise. The inn where they stay is a rendezvous for smugglers, and the two stay there like happy outlaws. They exchange vows of love in a little ruined chapel, and John gives Katherine the ring that Blanche had once given him.

The friar, brother William, seems disgusted with Katherine. Katherine is forced to speak with the duke's sister and brother, who seem cruder and less royal than she.

Although Katherine is bitterly jealous of the duke's marriage to Costanza, she knows it is inevitable and is willing to do what he wants to be with him. The duke has it all figured out - Katherine was in service to Blanche, Hugh was in service to John, and it is fitting that Katherine should be governess to his children and that he should take care of her and her family. She recognizes that men only see what they want to see, and she knows that they will be faced with much difficulty as they try to hide their secret.



## Part Four 1376 - 1377/Sixteen

### Part Four 1376 - 1377/Sixteen Summary

Katherine is the contented governess at the duke's castle, beautifully dressed, perfumed and bejeweled. The duke has again led a courageous military feat that resulted in loss instead of gain, and does not have the same level of support from England that he once had. The king of England has grown senile and there is a new king of France, with whom England has a precarious truce.

The duchess Costanza's newborn son died, and Katherine's two sons sired by the duke are thriving. The duke's daughter Elizabeth is difficult and strong-willed, but his daughter Philippa is strange and has a way of annoying her father. Philippa is pious, and concerned for Katherine and John because they live in sin. John has provided nicely for Katherine's children and the two have stopped hiding their relationship, especially since their youngest son, Harry, was born. Nirac has died in Bordeaux. The gray friar, Brother William is still the duke's personal physician, but he avoids Katherine.

In this chapter, John is returning to Kenilworth castle to celebrate St. George's Day, and Katherine is there to welcome him. He arrives with thirty men, still with the Flemish Raulin as his personal servant. The castle is being remodeled and, normally, John would first check on the work being done, but on this day he retires to his room. Katherine finds Hawise in her bedroom shaking a rowan branch on the bed and muttering a charm to keep Katherine from conceiving again. Hawise is concerned for her health and feels two bastards is enough.

Hawise, who is now paid greatly to serve Katherine, is concerned that John may tire of Katherine. Katherine has changed, being more concerned about her looks than before. She is still not interested in politics, but only in being a good mate for John. The duchess Costanza gave birth to a child in 1372 and, unaware of Katherine's existence, named the baby Catalina, meaning Katherine in English. Costanza likely knows now about Katherine, but speaks only Spanish to her Spanish staff, and not much at all to her English staff. Philippa, Katherine's sister, is happily in service to Costanza, and the family has all risen, despite the unusual situation between Katherine and John.

At the gathering in the castle hall, there is tension among the attendees. Among visitors such as Michael de la Pole and Lord Neville of Raby, was the king's chamberlain, Lord Latimer, as well as the controversial priest John Wyclif, leader of the heretical Lollards. Although the duke's orthodoxy has never been questioned, the duke and Wyclif have a bond between them based on their agreement to debase and despoil the fat monks and bishops who are bleeding England. Wyclif's radical Lollards defy the Pope and the need for confessions, saints and pilgrimages.

Geoffrey Chaucer and his wife Philippa now live in separate places, although Geoffrey works in the custom house dealing with the finances surrounding the sheep business.



Geoffrey is somewhat disturbed at the inappropriateness of the affair between John and Katherine and the open manner in which it is handled. Katherine does not feel guilty, and she only occasionally confesses, but still attends Mass as an example to the children.

The duke is disturbed, not so much by the rumors in London that he was corrupt, disloyal with designs against his brother, but more from the rumor that is circulating that he is a changeling. His doubts about his true royalty have loomed again, and he has had nightmares about Isolda and Pieter. His fear makes him determined to crush his enemies who would suggest that he is disloyal to his own family and trying to seize the English throne. His father and brother are both in weak health. His brother, the Prince of Wales, wants his own son to inherit the throne. He has therefore called Parliament to back the Commons in its attack on the corruption that surrounds the old king, his father, and asks John for support. The king, whose attention is only on Alice Perrers, asks John to "spare him discomfort and uphold the divine rights of the crown" (296). When John tries to obey them both, the people call him a traitor. His anger seems to cleanse him of the fear over being called a changeling, and he promises Katherine that he will be alright. She realizes there is much about him she does not know.

## **Part Four 1376 - 1377/Sixteen Analysis**

There is a lot of political turmoil in England underlying this Chapter, even though Katherine's life seems peaceful and joyous. The duke is struggling, torn between the people of England, his brother and his father, and torn between John Wyclif's beliefs and his own country's dominant religion of Catholicism.

Although Katherine seems to have accepted her illicit role as the duke's mistress, and all of the rewards that come with that status, there is still some discomfort surrounding John's marriage to Costanza, and the fact that John has tried to father a son with Costanza.

Katherine is also disturbed about Brother William. It is not clear whether Katherine knows that Nirac killed Hugh and is pretending not to, or whether she just had a feeling about him. She dismissed Nirac as a friend in Bordeaux, even though he spent such a pleasant time with her back in Kettlethorpe. Her reaction to news of Nirac's death is indifferent, and she is aware of Brother William's disapproval of her.

John's daughter, Philippa, although sixteen, is devout and odd, not wanting to dress in the gowns her father likes, although his disapproval makes her sad and prayerful. The fact that she is at an age to be married and is not vibrant, smart or beautiful foreshadows some trouble for her and for John in their future political dealings surrounding her marriage. John's son Henry, although still young, travels with John and has a court of his own.

John is out of favor with England and again, his greatest fear, which is that of not being truly his father's son, has come back to haunt him. Isolda's son's cruelty to him as a

child has affected him into adulthood, and the mere mention of a rumor of his being a changeling sends him into despair and determined anger.



# Part Four/Seventeen

## Part Four/Seventeen Summary

St. George's Day at Kenilworth is joyous for Katherine, John and their children. When the duke and his men, including young Henry, John Wyclif and Geoffrey, are mounted and ready to leave the castle, Katherine gives him the traditional drink of mead for safe travel, after confirming with him that he will not be seeing Costanza. He assures her that Costanza is not eager to see him, either, as he heads out for parliament in London.

At parliament, John's brother, the Prince of Wales, is deathly ill with dropsy. The king is old and tired and does not pay attention, except for noticing Alice's hidden presence. John's younger brother Thomas of Woodstock is not of age and is not consulted by anyone about political matters. The proceedings are long and boring with nothing out of the ordinary. The king is in a stupor, and soon wants to have lunch with Alice. The Prince of Wales begs John to hold England together so that his son, Richard, can take the throne. He is extremely ill.

Twelve hostile bishops and lords are chosen to join the Commons, including John's enemy the Earl of March, and another enemy, the Bishop of Courtenay, who disapproves of John's relationship with John Wyclif. The meeting of the house of commons is contentious and accusatory. Among others, they accuse Lord Latimer, the King's chamberlain, of corruption and treason. John objects to the treason charge and it is dropped, but the other charges against Latimer hold, causing exultation for the first time the Commons had impeached a minister of the crown. The feeling of revolt is prevalent in the Commons, as well as in all of England. The next accused is Lord Neville of Raby, who has served the duke loyally for many years. Neville cannot prove that the charges against him are false, so is stripped of his title and fined.

The next to be accused is Alice Perrers. Among other things, they said she bribed judges, forged signatures, took funds and jewels and was married and wallowing in flagrant adultery. She is also accused of holding the king with witchcraft. The commons agree to have her banished and ordered not to go near the king.

The Prince of Wales, Edward of Woodstock died from dropsy at age 46. John and his father, the king, pledge their allegiance to Richard, the Prince's small son, who will be king when the old king dies.

The duke is in London for an interminably long period of time under great pressure. Katherine is depressed, and it has affected her daughter, Blanchette, as well as Hawise. John finally sends for Katherine and his children, asking them to visit him in at Savoy Castle in London to celebrate the annual obituary for his late wife, Blanche. They spend another happy week together, dancing, riding on the duke's barge of state. When they returned from the barge, Costanza and her people had arrived at the castle. Katherine is relegated to the knights' table, and finally is forced to look at Costanza, who is not



ugly as she was told, but was young and small. The duke shows Costanza deference, and Katherine cannot eat. Katherine is called before the queen, who hopes she is not neglecting any religious observance with the king's daughters.

## Part Four/Seventeen Analysis

The Commons have it in their minds to cleanse the court of corruption, and John agrees with their decisions because he knows he has no choice. He feels sorry for his father's loss of Alice Perrers, and imagines what it would be like to lose Katherine.

Katherine is paying the price for her love of a married man. Although she knows John does not love Costanza, having to face her in person is extremely difficult. It is interesting that she thinks, initially, that John is trying to humiliate her by making her pay homage to the queen; this may reflect her continuing sense of instability in their relationship. She is still having trouble being the king's "lover" while he has a legal wife. It may be ominous that the Castilian queen understands more English than she admits.





# Part Four/Eighteen

## Part Four/Eighteen Summary

Costanza wants to make a pilgrimage to Canterbury in the hope that St. Thomas will help with her bloody flux condition so she can bear more children for Castile. She tells John that her father wants John to revenge his death, and John wants nothing more than to take Castile. Costanza makes him swear on the finger she wears around her neck belonging to Santiago that Katherine will not keep him from doing this. He escorts Costanza to her bed. She smells bad due to her pious denial of the physical body. Brother William has declared her sane and says that she is sick due to astrological reasons, as well as because of John's relationship with Katherine. Brother William makes a veiled accusation about Nirac's death and warns the duke to beware for his soul. Rather than punish him, the duke sends William on a healing errand far away.

Costanza leaves the castle in sackcloth on the back of a donkey, emulating Jesus. On the way to the commemorative mass for Blanche, the duke is thinking he did well to be moderate with the Commons, and sensed a renewed approval from England. However, as he leaves the church, he encounters a mob led by Hawise's husband Jack. A message has been posted that the duke is not the king's son, but is the son of a Flemish butcher who substituted for the queen's dead baby. The notice states that the duke plots to seize England's throne, and that the queen confessed the story to the Bishop of Winchester on her deathbed. John, in an emotional state, rides alone to Havering Castle to see his father, the king..

Katherine is angry at Hawise for Jack's actions, but Hawise says that part of the reason Jack has done this is due to Hawise's love for Katherine, and that she did not know he was involved.

The duke stays at Havering with the king. He invites Alice Perrers back to court, releases the prisoners that were sentenced by the Commons, and reverses the measures that the reform Parliament had passed. He dismissed the Privy Council appointed by the Commons, and Lords Latimer and Neville were released and reinstated in court. All the jailed merchants were released. The king is happy to be with his son and happy to have Alice back, and is agreeable to John's decisions. John strengthened his authority and power through the king's men and his own. He has only two enemies left to deal with, one of them being the Earl of March, the other the Bishop Courtenay of London, both of whom he had appeased during the sweep the Commons made to eliminate corruption. With the support of Percy of Northumberland, the Earl of March was ordered to leave the country.

The duke summons William Wykeham, the Bishop of Winchester before the new Privy Council, charging him with graft and robbery of public funds. John accuses him of being involved in the lie about his mother's deathbed confession and, although the bishop denies it, he is still guilty of all of the other charges and is stripped of his wealth. John



Wyclif, a true priest, but a controversial one, was present in the chamber in support of John.

The duke's men are happy and supportive of all the changes, with the exception of the knight Baron de la Pole, who expressed his concerns to the duke and was sent away from Havering for it. By chance, Michael de la Pole meets up with Brother William Appleton. Appleton tells him he overheard two young monks and a Flemish man making up the parchments to slander the duke. They decide not to inflame the duke any further with this story, but to wait. Appleton once again calls the duke's love for Katherine a vile, adulterous love and says God will scourge them for it.

## Part Four/Eighteen Analysis

It is clear that Costanza is not mentally balanced and has now gone so deeply into her religious life that she is out of touch with reality. It is revealed in this chapter, however, that she really does resent Katherine.

John's self-doubt and humiliation drives him to reverse the actions that were taken at a time when he was more magnanimous and willing to get along. He is now out for revenge and power. The lands stripped from the Bishop are given to young Richard, John's nephew and the future King of England, making it clear that the duke has no ambition to take the English throne.

The Flemish clerk responsible for printing the slanderous notice about the duke wears gold rings and his description fits that of Pieter, Isolda's son. The monks plotting with him are opposed to John Wyclif's revolutionary thinking about religion, and are easily swayed to go against the duke who is Wyclif's friend and student.

Katherine is upset and concerned for John. When he does not return, she returns to Kenilworth with the children. The ugly rumor that casts doubt on his heritage makes him passionate politically, his passion for Katherine being put on the back burner.



# Part Four/Nineteen

## Part Four/Nineteen Summary

Katherine receives a formal letter from John with a New Years gift, directing her to bring his daughter Philippa to Savoy to discuss marriage negotiations. Katherine feels he does not love her any longer and considers not going, but realizes she has no choice.

The King's squire, Robin, has come to escort them to London. On the trip, Robin discusses the duke and his recent activities. He explains that the wealthy Bishops are still a challenge to the duke, and that he agrees with John Wyclif and the duke, that the poor, humble preachers are the honest ones. Robin tells them that the Bishops, particularly Courtenay, have dared to defy the duke and have called John Wyclif to trial.

John has become, perhaps, mentally ill with this obsession about his heritage. He is having night terrors, fearing witchcraft and is focused on taking and holding power in London. He has assigned Katherine a room far away from his own, and does not realize he has neglected her. He does not want her to see him in one of his nighttime fits and has no time for love.

Percy of Northumberland has become a friend, and the duke has appointed him as marshal of London. Percy has great plans to abuse his power in office, withdrawing rights from the people and risking a civil war within the city. Brother Appleton, who will stand in defense of Wyclif has joined them, and as they ride through town, Appleton spies the clerk he had seen who was making the slanderous placard against the duke. The men surround Pieter, and John has him put in the stocks. They find another, even more damning parchment on him, and the duke recognizes him to be Pieter Neumann. Under duress, Pieter confesses that the bishop Courtenay has paid him to make these placards.

Katherine decides to attend the trial of John Wyclif and asks Robin to go with her. The trial is being held at St. Paul's Cathedral, due to the huge crowd of people it has attracted. The duke, Percy and Wyclif make their way through the crowd, but the Bishop denies Wyclif a seat. They argue and the duke draws his sword, causing the crowd to go into an uproar. Robin quickly gets Katherine out and escorts her to the Pessonner's home for safety. While at the Pessonner's, Jack Maudelyn, Hawise's husband, storms into the house looking for weapons to use against the duke. Katherine sends Robin to warn the duke. The duke, Percy and Wyclif are not at the Savoy as the crowd thinks, but have gone to Cornhill instead. Katherine instructs Robin to tell the duke that his nephew Richard is in peril so that he will go to Kennington to protect him. Emma Pessonner removes Robin's badge, and he leaves.

Guy Pessonner arrives in a fury, also ready to join the mob and kill the duke, but his wife forces him to calm down and stay home. He tells Katherine that this mob will not stop until they kill the duke.



## Part Four/Nineteen Analysis

It appears the duke has gone off the deep end in his need to demonstrate his power. The accusation of being a changeling has brought up a rage in him that makes him forget everything that was formerly important to him, including Katherine and his family. His political actions, reversing everything done earlier by the Commons, may be his undoing, since putting Percy of Northumberland in charge is going to enrage the people further. The bishops and priests, who have gained much power and wealth over the years, are determined to maintain their status. The Archbishop Courtenay has gone to great lengths to discredit John Wyclif and usurp the power of the duke, even resorting to posting lies about him, using the pathetic Pieter Neumann.

Katherine is convinced that John no longer cares for her, but defends him and protects him at all costs. This chapter provides the most action in the book, so far. A mob of two thousand, treachery, a life or death situation and possibly the end of a relationship makes this chapter intriguing and unsettling.

John may be in some kind of manic state over this accusation that has triggered his rage, but Katherine does not know or understand why he has changed toward her. The author uses the device of miscommunication, or non-communication to complicate the situation between Katherine and John. Katherine has purposely stayed out of politics and is unaware of what John is going through, so naturally, she has drawn incorrect conclusions about his behavior.



## Part Four/Twenty

### Part Four/Twenty Summary

Katherine learns the next morning that the duke and Percy escaped the mob, and Bishop Courtenay had rebuked the mob, telling them they had gone too far and that he was ashamed of them. The mob disbanded and went home. Pietre has escaped from his imprisonment at Percy's inn. Guy Pessonner agrees to take Katherine back to the Savoy, and she tells him that she will be taking Hawise to her home in Lincolnshire, and that she will not be bound against her will like a serf. The duke's shield at the gatehouse has been turned upside down, the mark of a traitor. She makes plans to take the children and servants to Kettlethorpe, and feels that John will not care, since he is so distant. The contempt she has been shown by the other ladies in court has never bothered her because she has always had the duke's protection, but now she must consider whom she will take and what of her property she will retain. She starts to throw her ring into the river, but changes her mind. Katherine's spiritual devotion has waned considerably.

The king's Squire, Robin, arrives and says he is to take her to Kennington, but she refuses. He tells her it is the order of the Princess Joan, who commands it in the name of Prince Richard, leaving her no choice.

Princess Joan, John's sister, tells Katherine that she needs her help in bringing John to his senses. Her husband Edward also had "dark, violent fits" and she describes an incident wherein John had wakened in the night, screaming for Katherine. The princess feels John has gone mad, since he plans to muster his army and march on London, creating a civil war. There will be no England left for young Richard. John has also threatened to violate the law of sanctuary by hanging a prisoner who has escaped to St. Paul's. Katherine fears for the damnation of John's soul for this violation and intuitively concludes that this prisoner has something to do with John's rage. The princess feels Katherine is the only one who can save England.

Katherine intercepts the fully-armored duke as he tries to leave, telling him she needs to see him alone, and that she commands it by reason of the ring he gave her. They retire to the chamber, and Katherine convinces him to eat and drink wine. John had not slept in two nights and not eaten. She and Robin get him out of his armor, and she continues to feed him food and wine. Katherine admits that she no longer wears his ring, because she thinks it has lost its meaning. He assures her it has not.

As he thinks of killing Pietre with his own hand, he becomes nauseated. Katherine sees the terrified child in him, and thinks of a time she saw his 4-year-old son looking exactly the same way when he believed a little calf was a werewolf after him. Katherine challenges John to look at his fear, and John admits that he fears witchcraft. He thinks Pieter has cast a spell on him. Katherine tells him the people are behaving this way toward him because he has made them afraid, and remind him he is the most powerful



man in England, asking him to be merciful. He remembers Isolde saying the same thing. He has never spoken Isolda's name all these years and Katherine's eyes remind him of Isolda, who promised not to leave him, but died. John felt that since Isolde lied about leaving him, perhaps she lied in the chapel about Pieter's lie. Katherine helps him realize that it is only the frightened child in him that questions his birth, and John finally goes into a sleep that lasts many hours.

Katherine contemplates her religion and questions whether the saints really do respond to prayers. She realizes that her moral integrity was only a decision that she, herself, had made.

John awakens, cheerful and hungry. The princess's adviser, Simon Burley, tells John that a deputy of Londoners have gone to the king to beg him to reconcile John's quarrel with the city. The people are afraid, with John's army amassing at the Savoy. John decides that he will figure out what to do about this later, but for now, is hungry. He has returned to his old sensibilities.

## Part Four/Twenty Analysis

The message that love conquers all is prevalent in this chapter. John's temporary insanity, triggered by a deep grief from childhood that was never resolved, becomes softened and healed through Katherine's loving intervention. It seems impossible that this violent situation can be turned around, with armies gathering and people forming mobs, but it miraculously dissolves as the duke's temperament is soothed. Wine and food also play a big role in the transition.

Katherine's questioning of her religion is her common sense and maturity surfacing. It is not that she wants to go against her religious upbringing, but she is realizing that we all have control over our own actions and lives, regardless of how much time we spend in prayer and supplication. She also rises above her own hurt feelings to a level of understanding that John's problems are not about her, but are connected with unresolved issues from his past.

There is also the political message that when royalty becomes so divided from the common people, there will be revolution. Royalty is expected to guide and participate, but not rule unfairly or with an iron fist. John's decisions were coming from his own angst, and were not being made in the interest of the common people. We contemplate that right and wrong are not necessarily determined by our religious leaders, or by our political leaders, but by fairness and calm.



# Part Four/Twenty-One

## Part Four/Twenty-One Summary

Katherine's status at the Savoy has risen, with her strengthened relationship with the duke. Princess Joan shows new respect for Katherine, who is treated well and now sits next to the duke. Her chair was as magnificent as his. The duke has returned to his normal, fair state of mind, extending only mild punishment to those who rioted. He withdrew the bill that was designed to curtail the citizens' liberties and granted Peter de la Mare a fair trial. The bishop is reinstated by bribing Alice Perrers to convince the king to do so.

On Maundy Thursday, the duke and his children ceremoniously washed the feet of poor paupers and beggars, fed them and gave them silver. John's daughter Elizabeth did a mediocre job, complaining that the peoples' feet stank and that the fleas and lice jumped on her. His son, Henry, tried to imitate his father, washing the feet carefully.

Brother William reports to the duke that Pieter and the two monks have been banished to Cyprus, shipped away while chained in the galleys. Brother William tells Katherine that they were allowed the legal forty days of sanctuary and that he had been at their trial. During this same conversation, William advises Katherine to give up her love for John, saying that it will end in disaster. William is still suspicious about Nirac's death and is experiencing nightmares that involve Katherine.

Katherine celebrates spring like a child, and tells the duke she is expecting another child. He is concerned because of her illness with the last child. The duke feels so much for her that he begins to tell her all the things he will give her and get for her, but she reminds him that she had her brooch engraved with the words, "it is as it is."

The duke's father, King Edward, dies at sixty-five-years-old. Even those who hated him for his desire to rule France and his extravagance, were shocked. Alice of Perrers was with him when he died, and she quickly removed some of his rings and fled for safety, knowing that her time of power was over.

In a huge, lengthy and ritualistic ceremony, young Richard of Bordeaux becomes king and a semblance of peace comes over the political and religious factors in England. At the coronation procession, Katherine's son Tom is allowed to march among boys who were nobly born. From their seat, Blanchette spots her uncle Geoffrey Chaucer in the king's procession, but her aunt Philippa is not in attendance. Young Elizabeth, irreverent as ever, criticizes the delicate looking 10-year-old king, whom she has known since childhood. Elizabeth also makes a snide remark about paramours to Katherine, which makes Blanchette cry and become nauseated. Blanchette holds some animosity toward the duke and favors her own younger brother.





Costanza is in attendance at the royal banquet in full regalia, much to the pregnant Katherine's distress. Young Richard, just a child, is paid homage and carried to the banquet table, where he complains that the crown is too heavy for his head. He tries to get his friend Thomas Swynford to try it on, but the Earl of March violently intervenes. The little king already has big plans to make his young friends earls.

Princess Joan is sitting with Costanza, who notices that Katherine is pregnant again and comments that Katherine makes the duke soft, and that he forgets Castile. Although Joan does not want Castile to come up as an issue again, she does realize that John's ongoing affair with Katherine may hurt his credibility, and thinks perhaps he should place Katherine in a more discreet castle where he can visit her in secret.

## Part Four/Twenty-One Analysis

The pomp and circumstance of the coronation of a ten-year-old king seems absurd relative to today's standards.

We can conclude that until King Richard is grown, the most powerful person in England may be his mother, Princess Joan. Joan's new concern about John and Katherine's affair portends trouble for them. Costanza still wishes to produce an heir, which means she will be wanting to sleep with the duke again. Katherine's life, although luxurious and abundant, is always clouded with the fact that she is not John's real wife. The mocking tone that his daughter Elizabeth uses toward her, combined with Joan's new attitude and William's warning leads the reader to believe that everything may be about to change for Katherine.

In addition, the Earl of March, John's enemy, is still in the picture and, although politically things are temporarily friendly as King Richard takes the throne, it is clear that there is more turmoil ahead. Costanza's wish for John to take Castile is ongoing, and John's desire to do so has not been an issue, but perhaps may soon surface again.

Katherine's extremely luxurious clothing, furs and jewelry lend an uncomfortable feeling to the story, since she has gone from being an innocent girl to a fabulously rich adulteress. It is interesting to note that the description of her ultra-rich clothing and jewelry, and the duke's promises of more and more wealth come on the same day that Brother William predicts disaster for her.

Also worth noting is that Katherine's daughter, Blanchette, has developed a stutter, and cries when Elizabeth mocks Katherine. It seems that she may be undergoing some stress and peer pressure about being the daughter of the duke's mistress.





## Part Five 1381/Twenty-Two

### Part Five 1381/Twenty-Two Summary

Young Henry of Bolingbroke, the duke's son by Blanche, will be married during Christmas time at Leicester. Princess Joan, who does not attend the wedding, has not talked much to Katherine. Katherine knows that Joan suggested she be sent away, a suggestion which met with the duke's indignation. Since that time, Katherine had traveled all over England with John. Katherine's children, with the duke have been named Beaufort, and there are now three of them, plus a little girl who is named Joan. The duke treats them as if they were his legitimate children. Young Henry, who is thirteen, is marrying a twelve-year-old countess. Young King Richard, who is now fourteen, will be marrying Anne of Bohemia soon. Elizabeth, the duke's flirtatious sixteen-year-old daughter is now married to an eight-year-old husband, John Hastings. The duke's daughter Philippa remains unmarried and a virgin at twenty-one.

At the raucous wedding celebration, Robin, the king's squire, is masked and putting on a show as the Lord of Misrule. He was drunk, and commanded the crowd that each man shall kiss the lady of his heart, at which point he turned and kissed Katherine on the mouth. The duke is furious and Katherine tries to laugh it off, but he is suspicious and very jealous. They leave the celebration and go to bed. Blanchette has had an emotional response to Robin's kissing of her mother. Blanchette is being forced by her parents to sit with Sir Ralph Hastings, whom they would like for her to marry. John decides to send Robin to the Scottish border.

Katherine's sister, Philippa, as beautifully dressed as Katherine herself, is intercepting bad looks from the bride's sister because she feels Philippa exceeds her rank by sitting in a high position and being dressed well.

The Castilian bastard Trastamare who stole the throne from his half-brother, King Pedro, has died. King Charles of France has also died, and the heir to his throne is only twelve. Portugal is now an English ally, and the opportunity to take Castile is on the horizon for John. Katherine is concerned that Costanza, as anointed queen of Castile, may not be so tolerant of her. The duke makes it clear that he is staying in England temporarily only as strategy, and not due to his love for Katherine, as Costanza believes.

The Lollards and John Wyclif have overstepped themselves, losing the duke's support. Wyclif has attacked the sacredness of Mass and reduced the sacred wafer and wine to mere symbols, denying that they were actually the body and blood of Christ. John said it would be better to worship a toad, which was the last straw for the duke.

Hawise tells Katherine of Blanchette's desire for Robin, which explains her sulking and unhappiness. Blanchette has old memories of Kettlethorpe and of her father. On a trip to inspect the manor, Katherine was revolted by punishment of the serfs and by seeing the



hanging body of Sim Tanner, the reeve, but Blanchette was only filled with happy memories of her father and Kettlethorpe.

It occurs to Katherine that her children might be imperiled if anything ever happened to John, and she does not think that her children would have enough to support themselves.

John Ball is stirring the people up about the recently passed poll tax, which was initiated to help pay for England's wars. John Ball is talking out in favor of freedom for all serfs, and against the feudal system, and the people are listening.

## **Part Five 1381/Twenty-Two Analysis**

Katherine has become entrenched in her royal life, acting as John's pseudo-wife, traveling with him, and being accepted by everyone as his mistress. She is more comfortable with him in court, and Costanza has mostly been out of the picture.

John's implication that he will try again to take Castile feels threatening, since it will force Katherine and John to live nearer to Costanza.

Katherine has clearly forgotten what it was like to be poor. She does not understand why people would so violently protest the poll tax, since the duke often feeds three hundred people in a day, and he set free ten serfs on Christmas, even when his son was married. Hawise reminds her there are thousands more. In addition, she has only negative feelings for Kettlethorpe, and has become accustomed to her life of luxury.



# Part Five/Twenty-Three

## Part Five/Twenty-Three Summary

After a deep spring cleaning at the Savoy, the May day celebration arrives. John has been assigned by the king to work on border matters with Scotland, even though Percy of Northumberland has all but claimed the job for himself. The poll tax of one pound per head was in effect and being enforced on everyone of fifteen years old. John Ball, whose sermons had caused trouble, has been imprisoned in Kent.

Blanchette's betrothal to Ralph Hastings was to be solemnized. When Ralph arrives at the Savoy to claim Blanchette, Katherine goes to find her. Blanchette is spending time releasing birds from their cages while she sings, reminding Katherine of old Nichola. Blanchette is still pining away for Robin. Blanchette refuses, and calls Katherine the duke's "creature., you and the scurvy pack of bastards that you bear him!" (416). Katherine thinks Blanchette is just spoiled and that she has been soft to her too long. She will have her betrothed and put in a convent until her marriage. As she is being prepared for her betrothal, she becomes ill with something like scarlet fever. Blanchette escapes from the ceremony, with vomiting and pain in her head. The duke leaves for Scotland, and Hawise takes the babies and goes on to Kenilworth, leaving Katherine and Blanchette at Savoy with a skeleton crew of servants. It takes Blanchette a full month to get well. Brother William, who has been nursing Blanchette, is still cold to Katherine, but brews her a potion to help her feel better and suggests they move to a different room.

Katherine detects a change in the servants' behavior, and learns there is rioting in Kent. John Ball has been released from jail and violence is erupting in Kent and Essex. The friar tells Katherine that what the rioters want is equality of man and freedom. They are tired of paying for unsuccessful wars, receiving unfair wages, eating poorly while lords of the manors live in luxury. The black death has taken half the population. Brother William reminds her that, although many serfs are treated well by their lords, some prefer freedom. Brother William has kept his vow of poverty, giving any gifts he received from the duke to charity. He would like to save Katherine, but does not know how. Katherine decides to go see what is distracting the servants from their work and finds them listening to music. The castle's sergeant calms her fears about the rioting in Kent, telling her they would not come to London.

Blanchette has noticed that Katherine does not pray in the same way she did years ago, and expresses a lapse in her own faith in the saints. Katherine tries to assure her of their value.



## Part Five/Twenty-Three Analysis

Clearly, Blanchette does not want to be forced to marry someone she does not love, as her mother was. Her attack of illness on the day of her betrothal, however, may be coincidental, since she finally cooperated with everything up until the moment she became sick.

An interesting relationship between Brother William and Katherine continues to develop. William is revolted by her choice to be the duke's mistress and, at the same time, would like to be able to save her. He likely still thinks that the duke killed Nirac and believes in Katherine's innocence, but his dream about her connection with disaster is still with him.

Blanchette's peculiar behavior may be due to something we do not yet understand. The stuttering and rebellious withdrawal could hardly be attributed to her love for Robin and his attraction to her mother. She and Katherine become very close during her illness, but Blanchette still has memories of her father and Kettlethorpe and obviously is torn about her mother's relationship with the duke.

We feel the beginning of the end of feudalism taking place in this chapter, as people everywhere are questioning a system where so many are poor, and so few are so very rich. Katherine is, rightfully, concerned, but still too entrenched in her privileged lifestyle to really understand the plight of the serfs. The black plague has taken half of the population, rich and poor, leaving the need for new standards of living and new ideas.



# Part Five/Twenty-Four

## Part Five/Twenty-Four Summary

Blanchette is starting to think that maybe the birds are happy in their cages after all. Her stutter begins to disappear, and she begins to get her strength back. She has grown very close to her mother during her illness.

Guy LePessonner comes to pay a visit to Katherine. The mobs are moving in closer to London. The king is now in the Tower with Princess Joan, as well as the creators of the hated poll tax, the Archbishop and the king's treasurer. The king has not been able to talk to the peasants due to the mob's threatening behavior. Blanchette feels the king might not be as young as he seems and may know better than his elders. Guy has disowned Jack, his son-in-law, who has become a bloodthirsty radical. Guy passes on Dame Pessonner's warning, that if Hawise and Katherine are at the Savoy, they should head north. Sergeant leach reassures her that she and Blanchette are safe, but alerts his men to lower the portcullis.

John Ball is leading mobs of people across England telling them that the feudal system must end, that things cannot be right in England until all are equal. The mob has demanded the heads of Simon of Sudbury, the archbishop who instigated the poll tax and imprisoned John Ball, Robert Hales, the treasurer of England and John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster.

Brother William comes for Katherine and Blanchette, telling her the peasant army is pouring into London. The three tried to escape through the privy stairs, but the mob raised the portcullis, overcoming the sergeant and servants. Jack Maudelyn came at the friar and Katherine, stabbing William with his lance. Katherine manages to get the three of them locked in to the Avalon chamber, but Brother William is seriously injured. Brother William tells Katherine that it is because of her sinful relationship with the duke that all of this has come about, and that in the abbeys they write that Katherine has bewitched the duke, and that is why they hate him. Knowing he is near death, William also accuses her and the duke of putting Nirac up to murdering Hugh Swynford, and reminds her that it was she who handed Hugh the drink that killed him. Katherine denies her guilt, but cannot swear that she did not long for Hugh's death. Blanchette now thinks her mother murdered her father.

The mob enters and destroys the palace. They behead Brother William, but are not sure who Katherine and Blanchette are, since they are dressed in dull gray, Blanchette being splashed with William's blood. Katherine recognizes Cob o'Fenton, one of her rebellious serfs from Kettlethorpe, as well as Jack Maudelyn. Blanche tells the men that she will be a murdering whore like her mother, and she runs. Jack Maudelyn grabs Katherine and her head hits the tiles.



## Part Five/Twenty-Four Analysis

The events in this chapter have been foreshadowed throughout the book, with Katherine's increasing wealth and detachment from her humble beginnings. The political climate has grown uglier for the duke, especially since he went against the Commons and reversed their decisions. There have been hints of witchcraft, but only in this chapter do we learn that people are actually accusing Katherine of it.

Ironically, her relationship with Blanchette has become warm and close throughout the child's illness, but with Brother William's revelation, Blanchette quickly sinks into a deep hatred for her mother. As this chapter ends, the Savoy and all its riches are destroyed, the castle is on fire, William is dead, Katherine is unconscious, and we do not know what has become of Blanchette.



# Part Five/Twenty-Five

## Part Five/Twenty-Five Summary

Katherine's unconscious body has been laid in a field near the Savoy's gatehouse. Cob o'Fenton, remembering how Katherine freed him from the stocks and restored his land, momentarily considers saving her, but thinks better of it considering how she might punish him later. The Savoy explodes in fire. Some of the Essex men who were indulging in the castle's wine cellars have become trapped in the fire and exploding gunpowder. Katherine's Swynford coat of arms makes Cob think of home and the years of loyalty his family has given to the Swynfords. In his nostalgia, he tries to waken her before the fire reaches them, but she does not wake up. He rolls her into the brook with her head above water and she becomes conscious. She is confused, but Cob helps her run from the fire, cutting off a length of her skirt so that she can run. She does not remember the events in the Avalon chamber, and is confused when Cob tells the rebels that she is a serving wench. They come upon a scene where beheadings are taking place. Cob takes her to the Pessoners' home, but Guy and Dame Emma are gone and only the old night watchman is there. Cob makes Katherine drink from his cup, and she goes upstairs to the same bed where she has slept before with Hawise. He helps himself to the food in the Pessonier household Guy returns home and is distressed at Katherine's presence, but lets her sleep.

At Guy's meeting with the fishmongers the night before, a plan was hatched to attack the rioting peasants, but the king sent an order that conciliation would be tried first. After sleeping, Cob wonders why he bothered to help Katherine, and wishes he would have taken her purse.

King Richard meets the angry crowd, who reiterate their love for him. The king does not yet know that Sudbury and Hales have been sacrificed to the crowd. The king announces there will be no more bondage, and charters begun to be issued to the serfs and peasants. Princess Joan does not want Richard to have to face the mobs again, but he agrees to meet them again in Smithfield. Wat, the tiler, one of the leaders of the mob, has dressed up in nobleman's clothing for this meeting. Young King Richard tells them that all their demands will be met, and that they should all go home. Wat tries to be buddies with the king, but the king's squire calls Wat a knave and a robber, and the king's men kill him. The crowd becomes pensive, but Richard rides into the middle of the crowd and tells them that now he shall be their leader, as they wanted. The king leads the peasant army out of London, and after seeing Wat's head on a pole, they disperse as free men. Cob and his companions travel northward, comfortable with the king's word that serfdom was abolished.



## Part Five/Twenty-Five Analysis

Cob o'Fenton resurfaces strongly as a leader of the revolt. He only spares Katherine's life, because she reminds him of the old days.

The young king has calmed the people and proclaimed the end of serfdom, but many leave without their charters, trusting that his word is good. The demise of the overly zealous Wat is not surprising, since his enjoyment of the revolt may be stronger than his wish to be free. It is ironic and telling that when Wat goes down under the king's sword, some of the crowd think he is being knighted.

Katherine has not yet remembered the scene with Blanchette and the accusations of Brother William, her concussion relieving her of any memory of the recent past. There is a hint that she may blame herself for all of this trouble once she comes around, but for now she is blessed with sleep.





## Part Five/Twenty-Six

### Part Five/Twenty-Six Summary

Katherine's memory is returning as she wakes up in the Pessonier's home. Dame Emma has returned and takes care of Katherine. The streets are quiet, and the peasants have retreated and gone home. Regaining her strength, Katherine is determined to find Blanchette, and Dame Emma will not let her go through London alone as some dangers still being present. Savoy castle has been reduced to rubble. Katherine returns, alone, to the church where she married Hugh Swynford and realizes that Hugh's love for her had bloomed again for Blanchette, but had been cut short. Katherine tries to make a confession to the priest there, who is appalled and denies her absolution, telling her to go to her own priest. Katherine, as expected, has bought into the friar's accusation that she killed Hugh. She goes to Duchess Blanche's grave and apologizes to her spirit, asking her for help in finding Blanchette. She remembers Duchess Blanche's suggestion that some day she should make a pilgrimage to Walsingham, who is especially kind and merciful to mothers.

Katherine stays for a week looking for her daughter. Guy Pessonier sends his apprentices out to announce a reward for anyone who can locate Blanchette. The night before she has planned to leave, Geoffrey Chaucer comes. Katherine has shaved her head and is fasting, blaming herself for the loss of Blanchette and for Brother William's death. The family discusses Jack Maudelyn's participation in the riots, and his looming death due to injuries. Emma does not believe Katherine will go looking for the duke and assumes that more happened to her than they know yet.

Katherine comes in dressed like the lowliest of nuns in coarse cloth, bare feet and a wooden cross. Katherine has decided that the huge hatred for the duke is the result of their great sin. Katherine takes Geoffrey to see Brother William's head and tells him that he died trying to protect Katherine and save her soul. She sends Geoffrey with a letter to the duke, which Geoffrey knows will shock him more than burned castles and catastrophes. Even Geoffrey, himself, feels shamed and considers that he may have dropped into sin, as well, with his Troilus and Criseyde story, whose character was based on Katherine. He decides to revise the story and change it from a funny story about about carnal love into a lesson for young people to "cast their visage up to God" (486).

### Part Five/Twenty-Six Analysis

Katherine's guilt now consumes her, and she has returned into her fantasy world of spirituality in which she was raised. The loss of Blanchette and William, and William's accusation of murder have turned her away from her love of the duke and away from herself, plunging her into the depths of piety and renewed devoutness. She has definitely experienced a traumatic event, and it has sent her into what some might



recognize as mental illness but, with her background in the convent, it is not surprising that she would try to return to the path not taken.

Blanchette was already slightly mad before her illness overtook her, but Katherine assumes that William's information about the murder of her father has turned her to madness, and takes total responsibility for more, perhaps, than she should.

Her kindness to Cob o'Fenton was returned in his decision to get her to safety. Hawise's family represents a double-edged blessing to Katherine. Hawise and her mother, as well as her father, have shown kindness and protection toward Katherine. However, Hawise's husband Jack, is the lowest of men, who has caused some of the most destructive violence.



# Part Five/Twenty-Seven

## Part Five/Twenty-Seven Summary

The Duke of Lancaster has been denied re-entry into his own country after signing truce agreements with Scotland. Percy of Northumberland has ordered his men to keep him from crossing the border, and he, Michael de la Pole and Sir Walter Ursewyk are confined in a tent. Percy has seized their luggage train. A hundred of the duke's men have remained with him, while rumors swirl of a devastated England and immense hatred of the duke. Percy has a hundred thousand men backing him up. The men tell John that Percy is jealous of his power. John is worried about Katherine and his family.

The Baron de la Pole offers to take a message to the king, feeling that Percy knows that the king trusts de la Pole and will let him through. John wrote a letter to the king telling him that if the king wishes, he will remain in exile, but asks for safety for the Lancasters. The Baron tells John that the Scots love him, as they loved his father, and would probably provide him with an army if he wanted, but John is not a traitor and stands by the fealty he has sworn to King Richard. As Michael de la Pole leaves, John asks him to find out about Katherine.

The young king sheds tears over his favorite uncle's letter and states that Percy had no royal sanction to do what he has done. The duke is welcomed back into England and he sends for Percy, challenging him to mortal combat. Michael de la Pole has to report that he was misinformed about the safety of John's family, and that Katherine has never reached Kenilworth. John knows that he left Katherine at the Savoy and now learns that it has burned to the ground. John denies that Katherine could have been hurt with all the guards there, but he does not know that they were all killed.

De la Pole assures John that Costanza, after fleeing Hertford, although denied entry at Pontefract, was safely at Knaresborough Castle. De la Pole knows that if something did happen to Katherine, it would not hurt the duke's reputation since the scandal surrounding his relationship with her had hurt his popularity considerably. He suggests to the duke that he receive Costanza and little Catalina warmly, since she was stoned by the rebels and has been through a lot of trauma. John becomes angry at the Baron for questioning him in this way, but they hear Percy approaching.

Percy has sent, instead, his little son to fight with John. Little Hotspur tells them that his father has a bad shoulder and cannot fight. Hotspur insists on fighting, and the duke easily knocks him off his horse, making him cry, and tells him to return to his father and tell him that he fought bravely.

The duke prays and promises that if he finds Katherine, he will build a chapel to Saint Catherine. John contemplates his ancestors and their desire to accomplish something and the barriers that had blocked and denied his wishes. Geoffrey Chaucer approaches with Katherine's message, which tells John they must not see one another again, and



explains the sin they have committed. Geoffrey also tells him that Katherine sends her apologies to Costanza.. John is so hurt by Katherine's decision to leave him that he swears he will never forgive her or try to find her. Her abandonment is a repeat, for him, of Isolde's.

When Costanza and her women meet the duke, she is dressed in satin and wears a jeweled coronet. She is very happy to see him, and he takes her arm so they can go to see Catalina. Philippa and Geoffrey realize that now that Katherine may have lost John, their entire family is probably out of favor with the duke now.

## **Part Five/Twenty-Seven Analysis**

This chapter provides another roller coaster of emotions. The duke is denied entrance to England, and the entire country hates him. Young King Richard loves him and welcomes him back. He is angry at Percy and forced into a demeaning fight with Percy's little son, and he fears for Katherine's safety. He is eager to receive Geoffrey's letter from Katherine, then becomes enraged and terribly hurt over her letter and her withdrawal of love for him. His coolness toward Costanza changes to warmth, and Costanza has taken pains to be more human and warm to him. Philippa and Geoffrey are now concerned about their future. The duke's sagging shoulders symbolize his defeat and resignation, when he says that he looks forward to seeing Catalina. It is a tumultuous time for England and for John and Katherine, and although things may now be settling down again, they will clearly never be the same.



# Part Five/Twenty-Eight

## Part Five/Twenty-Eight Summary

Katherine has been in a pilgrim hostel in Waltham Abbey, which is where she had visited the black cross with Hugh. She is living in punishment, remorse and guilt. She overhears that young King Richard will be arriving at Waltham that afternoon, and has some remote hope that he might have seen Blanchette.

Katherine learns that the king has had Jack Strawe, one of the rebel leaders, beheaded for treason. When King Richard arrives, he makes it clear that he only placated the serfs to stop the riots, but had never intended to free them and calls them fools, dolts and traitors, promising them that they will be serfs until doomsday, and that the worst of them would be punished that very day. Katherine sees Cob o'Fenton who is about to be killed, and asks the king to give him back to her, making him recognize her but asking him not to say her name out loud. She cuts the bindings on Cob's hands and tells him he will be a free man. He does not believe her, because he has already been tricked by the king, but she reminds him of his kindness toward her at the Savoy and promises that she will give him a document that will set him free. They go to a clerk at Waltham where the document is drawn up and sealed. Cob is so grateful to Katherine that he kisses her feet. He heads back to Kettlethorpe with new clothes and his freedom, a happy, free man.

Katherine is still in a very dark mood and sees her entire life since Sheppey as evil, and the future a menacing blank. She heads toward Walsingham, sad with memories of John. She hears William's voice telling her that "It is meet and just that you bear it" (512).

One mile before Walsingham, Katherine stops to pray at a slipper chapel, where she hears people joking and laughing. When one of them calls the other Lollard, she cringes for a moment. She is in a hair shirt, covered with sores and her teeth are loose.

Katherine gave up her betrothal ring and prayed to the Queen of Heaven. No miracles happened, and Katherine left, dropping the pin that the old queen had given her, which was the last of her jewels. A hunchback picked it up and followed her. Katherine overhears someone saying that the Duke of Lancaster has renounced his paramour, calling her a witch and a whore, and begged for his wife to forgive him. Katherine runs away but the kind hunchback, who turns out to be a priest, has followed her and gives her food and counsel, asking her to see Lady Julian before she goes to Sheppey, the convent of her childhood.

## Part Five/Twenty-Eight Analysis

Katherine is lost and looking for miracles and some kind of magic that will restore her daughter to her. She hopes to do enough penance that she will miraculously be



forgiven. She allows her body to break down and suffer, thinking that this might help her situation.

Her kindness to Cob comes at a time when she is at her lowest point, but she uses what little money she has to secure his freedom. Dropping the queen's pin and not wanting it back was her final step in giving up hope and faith. She is finally completely broken in every way, when Father Clement sees her drop the pin. Since Sheppey is the last place where she was innocent and good, she needs to return there. She wants to disappear, but does not want her children marked by her suicide. Her kindness toward Cob does not help her see herself in a different light.



## Part Five/Twenty-Nine

### Part Five/Twenty-Nine Summary

Katherine has no more wish to live and was doubtful and mistrustful of Dame Julian, whom the hunchback Father Clement wants her to meet. Lady Julian wants her to heal her body, and they put her to bed, bringing her bull's liver and dandelion greens. She visits Lady Julian in her cell which is part of the church. Julian has had sixteen visions. She explains to Katherine that love is the Lord's meaning, and that we are not blamed by God for our sins. Nothing happens by chance, and God is in everything. Katherine begins to recognize beauty and feels hope. Katherine learns about love and humility, which she realizes she has never really known through prayer, and is taught that grace and mercy are already extended to us. Katherine realizes that although she intended to repent when she sent John her letter, she never really thought he would let her go. She thought a miracle would take place at Walsingham and that she would find Blanchette and her sins would be forgiven, but Julian tells her that in her visions, there is no wrath in God, and that God sits in our souls. Katherine has an experience in which she finds real peace and meets the real love of God. Rather than dwelling on having no one, she finally experiences God.

Katherine has decided to return to Lincolnshire, to Kettlethorpe, which was the one thing she never thought she could do. She receives the Holy Sacrament from Julian, who knows that whatever befalls Katherine after this, she will not be this bereft again. Father Clement returns the queen's pin to her. Katherine recalls that Julian has told her that it is only with right understanding, true belief and sure trust of our own Being that we are in God, and God in us. No demands for proof or promise that sorrow would be banished, but only trust in our Being.

Katherine goes home to Kettlethorpe and sees that things have changed, but the Lancaster flag still flies. Robert Sutton, the master of Kettlethorpe, tells her that he has heard Blanchette married a knight and already had a dowry from the duke, but this is probably just another rumor. Katherine asks Robert to write to the duke and ask him if she can have the children and raise them at Kettlethorpe, and she promises Robert that she will try to make no trouble.

Things are better than years ago, but there is still disarray among the servants. Katherine encounters Cob o'Fenton, who tells her that the servants had prayed every day for her return, and they have been waiting for her. Conditions are bad, but she is going to try to make them all glad that she has come home.

### Part Five/Twenty-Nine Analysis

A spiritual awakening is what Katherine seems to have been hoping for since she was a child at Sheppey, but she did not realize what it was going to take to reach one. She has



been through hell now, and has lost a tremendous amount in her life, but having truly hit bottom, she has found the true goodness in the world and will probably live a better life from this time on.

Her kindness to Cob will undoubtedly help her through some rough times at Kettlethorpe. Her new faith in God rests in the fact that she simply exists, and that He exists in everything. With all of the trappings that she has relied on having lost their meaning, or having changed in meaning, she is a free woman, now, with a renewed and more genuine strength than she has had in the past.

Home, for Katherine, now holds a different meaning, as she returns to a place she once despised. After the torment she has experienced, she has a deeper appreciation of Kettlethorpe. Her kindness to Cob o'Fenton has resulted in a warm welcome, and sense of hope about the future.





## Part Six 1387 - 1396/Chapter Thirty

### Part Six 1387 - 1396/Chapter Thirty Summary

King Richard and Queen Anne are expected in Lincoln on March 16, 1387 on a goodwill tour through England. The king's popularity has been slipping.

John has been in Castile with Costanza, their daughter and his two daughters by Blanche for the last year. Katherine has been at Kettlethorpe six years, and the king has commanded her to Lincoln. She is sewing by the fire in her town house on Pottergate, putting gold stitches on the mantle she would wear to greet the king. Philippa, her sister, was sewing as well, and Hawise was in the kitchen. Katherine had given birth to her son John Beaufort in this house, and she had her older boys, John and Henry, in school in Lincoln.

Katherine is reviled by the citizens of Lincoln, who have looted her house, attacked her servants and beaten them. They disrespect her for her former relationship with John and because of disagreements with the duke's local constable. Katherine had to appeal to the king who sent investigators, and she now lives in relative peace.

The king has sent word that Katherine is to dine at the bishop's palace when the royal party arrived in Lincoln. Katherine's sister, Philippa, is ill with what may be breast cancer, and is fading. Little Joan is eight-years-old now, and wonders why her brother Thomas hates the king. Thomas is now nineteen and a knight in service to his half-brother, Henry of Bolingbroke. Thomas, who resembles his father Hugh, ignores his bastard brothers and sister, and is ashamed of his mother's reputation. He does approve, however, of Katherine's management of his inheritance, after finding out that the serfs she has freed are working better and more efficiently than they had on the servile system.

Robert Sutton, soon to be mayor of Lincoln, is widowed and in love with Katherine. He has planned a visit to her at Pottergate to ask her to marry him. She knows he wants to marry her but is not sure he likes children, and plans to observe his behavior toward them.

The duke has been fair with Katherine, but there has been no communication over these years. Legal documents provided for her and her children for life. A final quit-claim document had been sent to release both sides from any further claims, and a ton of Gascon wine was sent to Kettlethorpe as a final present. Katherine's son John Beaufort is only fifteen but wants desperately to be a knight like his half-brother. Young Harry Beaufort is a serious scholar. The boys are not considered "true-born" but still love their mother. Thomas, called "Tamkin," is still a young boy of ten.

Robert Sutton brings each older boy a pup hunting dog, and a yellow bird for Joan. Katherine tells Robert about her lost daughter, Blanchette, and the little girl's love for



birds. There is an assumption that Blanchette has died. Katherine decides to try to learn to love Robert Sutton, who will be Mayor of Lincoln, but is not of royal blood.

She goes to see the procession of King Richard and Queen Anne, who are dripping in gold, silver, furs and jewels in "unbridled extravagance." Richard's treacherous friend deVere, the Duke of Ireland, may be a bad influence on him; Richard has come to be loathed by his people, peers and commons, and there has been much violent and perversion at court.

After the procession, Robert de la Pole greets Katherine personally, and she invites him to her home for wine. He has been accused of everything from embezzlement to cowardice and been dismissed from office, but is now a favored Earl.

He tells Katherine that he feels John thinks of her often. He also reports that the duke actually did build a chapel to St. Catherine, and that he never publicly denounced her, as she had heard. He tells her that John's daughter, Philippa, is married and now Queen of Portugal, and that Catalina will marry Enrique of Castile, and the two will rule Castile instead of John and Costanza. The Benedictine chronicles have said bad things about John because of his support of Wyclif, the persecution he dealt to the monasteries after the changeling accusation, and because he has always favored the friars. When De la Pole mentions that John has been ill, Katherine leaves the room, emotionally upset

The earl leaves her home to return to the king, and Robert Sutton shows up to escort Katherine to the banquet. Katherine tells Robert she cannot marry him, that she was a fool to think she could forget the past, and that she can give herself to no other man. Whether or not it is returned, her love for the duke will not change. Robert Sutton is furious. She does not attend the king's banquet, but sends word that she is ill.

## **Part Six 1387 - 1396/Chapter Thirty Analysis**

Although he is well-loved by the people, it seems that King Richard has reached new heights of decadence and wealth. Contrary to the idea that the feudal system may be dissolving, the royal status of the court has not become any humbler. Katherine notices that the richly dressed King Richard, Queen Anne and their court are all very young. Richard has been referred to as delicate and womanish several times in the story.

Their bastard status, although the king has given the boys their own special badge and coat of arms, is a deterrent to the boys in their ambitions for knighthood and the clergy. Great emphasis was placed on the marriage status of peoples' parents, even if their blood is half royal.

Katherine has done well at Kettlethorpe, to the extent that she can afford nice clothing and a town home. However, she still has dreams of John and re-experiences her love for him. Lady Julian's wise teachings have helped her tremendously over the years.

All it took for Katherine to be true to her own devotion to the duke was to hear that he had been ill and in danger. She realizes that she cannot have a relationship and stop

thinking about John and, even though she has already said yes to Robert Sutton, she realizes she must be true to herself.



# Part Six/Thirty-One

## Part Six/Thirty-One Summary

Kettlethorpe is preparing for their annual celebration of St. Catherine's day, wherein they honor Katherine with a feast, dancing, speeches and gifts. She is tired and depressed, worried about disease among her sheep. Janet Swynford, her son Tom's wife, was coming for a visit with their year-old twins, but Katherine does not approve of how they are being raised. Her daughter Joan, now sixteen, is already a widow, having been briefly married to a knight at Leicester Castle, where her son, Henry is married to Mary deBohun. Countess Mary died, and her husband died, and Joan was forced to return to Kettlethorpe. Joan is in love with Neville of Raby, but the Nevilles do not marry bastards, so a match between them is impossible.

Katherine has never accepted Blanchette's death, and still has mass held for her on the anniversary of her disappearance. Katherine is now forty-five-years-old, and has graying hair. When Robert Sutton withdrew his advice and support of her, she had run the manor alone. In the last year Queen Anne died of plague, Mary de Bohun, wife of Henry of Bolingbroke, died in childbirth, and the duchess Costanza had died from illness. Upon Costanza's death, the Beaufort children received fresh grants. Katherine thinks that the duke has taken a concealed interest in them. John has gone to Aquitaine to rule in the year since Costanza died.

Janet, Katherine's daughter-in-law, complains that she does not see her husband, Thomas. She feels Katherine prefers her base born children to her legitimate ones. Janet calculates how and when Tom might inherit from Katherine, and considers Katherine to have led a wicked life.

Young John Beaufort arrives home late, unexpectedly. John tells her he has been in Bordeaux and was summoned there by his father, the duke of Lancaster. He has brought a letter to Katherine with John's seal, which no longer reflects his status as king of Castile. Katherine takes the letter upstairs and prays before she opens it. John tells her that he will be back in England at Christmas and wants to see her again, begging her to forget all past bitterness. He wants to see their daughter, Joan, and has summoned their son Harry from Germany. He will visit Thomas at Oxford before coming to Lincolnshire, and John will remain with her until his arrival. He tells her she has done well with the children.

Katherine feels it is too late for them to meet again and that they are too old. It is good for the children to meet with him, but she decides not to be there when he comes. She has created a relatively peaceful life for herself and does not relish new scandals or an anti-climatic visit, but wants to keep the memory of their love untarnished by disillusionment. When her son Harry arrives, he convinces Katherine to be present for the duke's visit, since leaving might prejudice him against the children.



John arrives on New Year's Day and, upon seeing his herald, Katherine is determined not to be swept up and submerged in the "raging current that all those symbols stood for." The duke has also brought Tamkin with him, so their entire family is now gathered together at Kettlethorpe.

Katherine and John go to her chapel and, seeing Hugh's tomb, John asks her if this is to stand between them forever, to which Katherine answers that there is a lot more than Hugh that stands between them. He asks Katherine to marry him, and apologized for not coming sooner, but the king had sent him to Aquitaine. He assures her that the children can be "legitimated" and that the king has approved their marriage. John reminds Katherine that he swore he would love her for his entire life.

They are married in Lincoln Cathedral by the bishop, who refused. John saw to it that their own son, Harry, was appointed as bishop to Lincolnshire. Katherine is now the true duchess of Lancaster. The duke tells her not to look back. Cob o' Fenton cheers for them, and their children are thrilled. Their children are granted new titles and wealth, and Joan will be married to her love, Neville. Robert Sutton realizes that, until King Richard is remarried, Katherine is now the first lady of England. Sutton kneels to her and makes his feudal oath.

Katherine, unlike Blanche, had given John nothing but herself. John feels that even back when they were first lovers, that Katherine was no less his wife then than now.

## Part Six/Thirty-One Analysis

In this predictable chapter, Katherine's immense suffering finally concludes with the most miraculously settling event that could befall her. By marrying John, she is able to legitimately have the love of her life until she dies, her children suddenly are legitimized and the entire family is instantly extremely wealthy. Katherine's honor is restored as she assumes a great deal of power, all in this one happy wedding day.

Her initial reluctance about marrying John, or even seeing him again, is due to the great strain, suffering and pain she has experienced as a result of her love for him. Her deep sense of guilt has been difficult, as well. Katherine even sees the faces of Blanche and Costanza in her mind during her wedding. She has been so traumatized for so many years of her life, and now that she has found some peace and quiet in her older age, she is not willing to go back. Nonetheless, her love for John is too strong to resist, and the removal of the stain from her children's name is extremely appealing to her, her maternal nature being a dominant force in her life.



# Part Six/Thirty-Two

## Part Six/Thirty-Two Summary

Katherine is back in Windsor castle, amidst the political interactions among the highest ranking leaders in Europe. King Richard will take an eight-year-old bride who is a princess of France, and will ratify the treaty of alliance with France which is long overdue. Richard's younger uncle, the duke of Gloucester, would prefer to go on fighting with France and is frustrated with Richard. The duchess of Gloucester has been instructed on the proper way to address Katherine.

Katherine sits next to the King, burdened with gold, jewelry and the heavy jeweled coronet of Lancaster. The king is in white brocade sprinkled with diamonds. The Lancaster marriage had been met with less hostility than expected, and John is considered the last sensible leader in the kingdom, given his nephew's extravagance and contempt for the people. The ladies at court were not tolerant of Katherine's new status, and the king is delighted to have his aunt Eleanor in such a state, since he hates her as much as he hates his uncle Thomas. Katherine and John will soon go to France, where Katherine will take charge of the new little queen.

Katherine remembers when she was a young girl, wearing a borrowed gown and looking at the royal table as if the Plantagenets were angels by God's throne. The court welcomed the Lancasters in deference to the king, but there are undercurrents of enmity. Richard has a massive body guard of which all England is afraid. Richard is pleased with himself for allowing Katherine this status as it reflects his omnipotence. Richard fears his enemies, especially since his wife Anne has died, and he is not sure they did not murder Anne.

Richard calls Geoffrey Chaucer's poems scurrilous, but forgives him because they have brought him pleasure, too. He asks Katherine about the vow she had made on the day he saw her in Essex, when he was putting down the revolt. She tells him that her daughter had disappeared and that she had taken the pilgrimage in hope that a trip to Walsingham would help her find Blanchette. Richard, himself, has not gotten an heir and will not until his young queen is of age. He suggests that Henry of Bolingbroke might be coveting his throne, but Katherine assures him that neither John's nor Henry's loyalty should be doubted. Richard waves his lace handkerchief and starts the dance, with his new aunt, the Duchess of Lancaster.

The Lancasters stay over at Kenilworth, a castle with pleasant memories for Katherine. John tells her he is proud of how she handles herself and ignores malice and slander, and admits that it only bothered him once when that changeling story arose. The children at Kenilworth are John's grandchildren, Henry's children, who love their grandfather. Katherine remembers Elizabeth's naughtiness as a child. Elizabeth is now unhappily married to King Richard's lustful and unprincipled brother. Katherine tries not to think of Blanchette.



Hawise is still with Katherine, and they have been close friends for many years. Roger deCheyne, a squire in the court, is the son of the squire to whom Katherine was attracted as a young girl when she was still at Shippey. After a stately breakfast, Katherine is told that two nuns are waiting to see her. They are Cistercians in white habits. The prioress spoke for her companion, Dame Ursula, who is deaf. Ursula looks fully at Katherine, and Katherine slips off her chair in a dead faint, realizing that Ursula is Blanchette. Blanchette tells her she could no longer live with her hatred toward her mother. The scarlet fever, which Katherine nursed her for at Savoy, had deafened her and caused her to withdraw. Blanchette is happy with convent life, and has never told anyone about herself. Blanchette began to think of her mother when she heard of the marriage, and wondered if she had heard incorrectly about the murder of Hugh. Katherine explains everything to her. Blanchette explains that, when the castle was being burned, she had gone up to find her little green bird, and was rescued by someone going by on a boat. Blanchette has decided to be an anchoress, like Julian, and feels God has stopped up her ears so that she can hear Him better. Katherine feels that they have finally been totally forgiven.

John hears that his brother of Gloucester has made bloody threats against King Richard, and he has also awakened from a dream in which King Richard was covertly watching the duke's son, Henry of Bolingbroke. They hear the king's herald, and John admits to Katherine that he senses a foreboding of danger ahead. She assures him that there was never any promise that they would not be tempest and travailed, and John takes comfort, once again, in her strength. He has not been able to do the things he had hoped, and his knighthood has not held the honor that he wished, but he knows that to Katherine he holds an abiding loyalty.

## Part Six/Thirty-Two Analysis

It seems that Katherine was always meant to live a royal life, and has returned to a pace that is uncomfortable, but perhaps satisfying. She again must play the games and carry on the useless chatter that she learned to do in court many years ago, but it comes naturally to her now, and is the natural result of her marriage to John.

Through hardship, Katherine has attained a level of peace that is comforting, not only to herself but to John. She has learned to take things as they come and not to expect any special treatment from life, but to be appreciative of the beauty of nature and thankful for her life. Her maturity is complete and, although she is aging, she remains gracious and lovely.



# Afterword

## Afterword Summary

In 1397, Richard had his uncle Thomas, duke of Gloucester, murdered for treason, as well as Lord Arundel, both his enemies. Shortly thereafter, Richard had Henry of Bolingbroke exiled. Two years later, John, duke of Lancaster died at Leicester Castle, after three years of marriage to Katherine. King Richard confiscated all of the Lancastrian estates and heritage, and Henry returned to England to reclaim his rights. Richard was forced to abdicate the throne in favor of Henry, and Richard was imprisoned in a remote castle where he died of starvation, under the constable, Thomas Swynford.

Katherine lived four more years and died in 1403. She and Joan are buried in Lincoln Cathedral where her son Harry became bishop. The royal line of England eventually descended from the Beauforts.

## Afterword Analysis

Royal blood is not necessarily required to become a royal. Having royal blood is no guarantee that a person will be kind, noble or just. This story, based on historical fact, is an astonishing look at the culture of the middle ages, its unreasonable beliefs and rules, and its violent and sometimes barbaric nature. If the story delivers a message, it is that love conquers all.





# Characters

## Katherine Roet Swynford

The main character in this story, Katherine was the daughter of a herald, who had just become knighted before he died. She later married Sir Hugh Swynford, and was mistress to the Duke of Lancaster for many years, bearing his four children, in addition to the two she had with Hugh Swynford. She eventually married the Duke of Lancaster, and became the Duchess of Lancaster. Katherine is portrayed as a lovely-spirited, if tormented person whose religious background is at odds with her love for the man she cannot marry, but whose four children she bears.

## John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster

Third son of King Edward, John of Gaunt became the Duke of Lancaster through his marriage to Blanche of Lancaster. He never achieved the victories he imagined, but was a stalwart servant of England all his life. His religious opinions were in line with John Wyclif, the controversial priest who was head of the Lollards. John was married to Blanche until her death, and was then married to Costanza of Castile. He became King of Castile until rule was turned over to his daughter, Catalina and her husband.

## Sir Hugh Swynford

Hugh Swynford was a coarse and hard-fighting knight in King Edward's court under the duke of Lancaster. He forced marriage on young Katherine Roet, who had no dowry, and was in and out of favor with the duke for various reasons. Hugh had two children with Katherine, Blanchette and Thomas. He died from poison administered to him indirectly by the duke's servant, Nirac.

## Philippa laPicarde Chaucer

Philippa is older sister to Katherine and was put into the Queen Joan's service when she and Katherine became orphaned. She was very organized, meticulous and bossy. She was married to the now-famous Geoffrey Chaucer, writer and poet. After the queen's death, Philippa served Costanza and eventually lived out her days in her sister, Katherine's household.

## Geoffrey Chaucer

Husband to Philippa la Picarde, Katherine's sister, and a writer-poet whose work is still studied in today's universities, Geoffrey had a lifelong love of Blanche of Lancaster, and was always in service to the duke in one capacity or another. He wrote sometimes



scandalous poetry, and spent most of his life living separately from Philippa, although they were good friends. Geoffrey was supposedly changed by his conversations with Katherine after she finished her studies with Julian, and cleaned up his writing to reflect the idea of love rather than simply sex.

## **Costanza, Duchess of Lancaster, Queen of Castile**

Pious and strange, the dark-eyed Costanza spent much of her reign as Queen of Castille without her husband, who was involved with Katherine Swynford. She did bear him one child, Catalina, who later became Queen of Castille. The duke of Lancaster married her with the hope of reigning over Castile.

## **Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster**

Married to John of Gaunt, Blanche is a most beloved and kind duchess, who loves her husband and children. She serves as a generous role model for Katherine, who calls her the Queen of Heaven. When Blanche contracts the black plague at Bolingbroke, Katherine manages to get a priest to give her last rites.

## **Nirac deBayonne**

Nirac is a Gascon who fought against the duke of Lancaster at Navarre, but when the duke saved his life, he became a radically devoted servant to him. When he perceived that the duke wanted Katherine so badly that he wished Katherine's husband Hugh would die, Nirac slipped poison into Hugh's medicine cup, which Katherine gave him to drink. After Hugh's death, Katherine sensed something strange about Nirac's attitude, and the duke placed him elsewhere. Nirac's loyalty ended up being a source of great pain and rejection.

## **Hawise Pessonier Maudelyn**

Hawise is the daughter of Guy le Pessonier, a local fishmonger merchant, with whom Katherine and Hugh stay when they are on their way to be married. Hawise is close to Katherine's age, and they become fast friends. Katherine turns to Hawise many times for comfort and as the duke's mistress, she employs Hawise as her lady in waiting. Hawise is married to the radical Jack Maudelyn, who hates the duke and is heavily involved in the peasant riots in London.

## **Pieter Neumann / Isolda Neumann**

Pieter Neumann was the Flemish son of Isolda Neumann, who was governess and foster mother to John of Gaunt, who later became the Duke of Lancaster. Isolda loved and nurtured John, and Pieter was very jealous of him in their childhood, telling John



that he was a changeling, and not really the son of King Edward. Isolda swore to John this was not true and that she would stay with him forever, but she died very shortly thereafter. Young John was never sure if she had lied to him about his heritage, since she lied to him about staying with him. Pieter Neumann, later, plotted against the duke and with the help of the Bishop Courtenay, propounded the same rumor about John's heritage to incite the people to revolt against him.

## Swynford children

Katherine has two children with Hugh Swynford: Blanchette, who disappears during the peasant riots in London after hearing that her mother and the duke are responsible for her father's murder. She comes to Katherine many years later and is a nun, who is planning to be a hermit. She was a troubled child and is happy with convent life as an adult. Thomas Swynford is the son of Katherine and Hugh. He resembles Hugh and has his fiery nature. He becomes a knight under King Richard .

## Beaufort children

Katherine and John of Gaunt have four children, whom they have given the last name of Beaufort, and whose shields are posted at Beaufort castle. The eldest son, John Beaufort, is a knight under his half-brother Henry, Harry becomes bishop at Kettlethorp, Thomas, or Tamking, is knighted, and Joan is married to Neville of Westmoreland.

## Pedro, King of Castile

King Pedro's reign over Castile was usurped by his bastard brother, Henry Trastamare. The Duke of Lancaster is able to remove Henry and get Pedro reinstated as rightful king, but Henry eventually took the throne again. Pedro is the father of Costanza.

## Wyclif, John

John Wyclif was a famous priest who went public with his ideas that perhaps the clergy should not hold power and wealth, but should take a vow of poverty and truly serve God in the way they were intended. He was outspoken against the corruption in the clergy, and gained many enemies. John of Gaunt was one of his biggest supporters. His movement of "Lollard" priests was extremely controversial in England. Eventually, Wyclif went so far as to say that communion, the ingesting of the body and blood of Christ, was only symbolic and that one might as well worship a toad. At that point, he even lost the duke's support and was considered to have gone off the deep end of radicalism.



## **Cob o' Fenton**

Cob was a serf at Kettlethorpe manor from the time he was a small child. His feisty attitude about his liberties got him into some trouble there, but Katherine had his land reinstated to him and lifted his punishment. When he found Katherine in a field unconscious during the peasant riots in London, he helped her to the Pessonier's home and saved her life. Later, she saved his life when he was about to be executed by King Charles for his radical behavior during the riots. Katherine takes the time and money to get him officially emancipated from the servile system. He returns to Kettlethorpe and works as a free man, and is a huge fan of Katherine's.

## **Robert Sutton**

Sutton is a manager of sorts at Kettlethorpe, and eventually becomes the mayor of Lincolnshire. He wants to marry Katherine after her return in later years but she refuses him. After her wedding ceremony when she becomes the Duchess of Lancaster, Sutton formally pledges loyalty to her.

## **Lady Nichola and Gibbon**

When Katherine moved to Kettlethorpe, she found that the insane Lady Nichola, Hugh Swynford's mother-in-law, lived in an attic room talked to water fairies. Nichola tried to steal Katherine's baby.

Gibbon was a kind old bailiff who was actually Hugh Swynford's half-brother, and who resided at Kettlethorpe in squander, because he was paraplegic from a crippling disease.

## **William Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester**

This bishop employed Pieter Neumann and two monks to print up placards accusing the duke of being a changeling. The bishop has spread the rumor that the queen confessed upon her deathbed that her son, John, was the child of a Flemish butcher whom she took as her own when her own child died in childbirth.

## **Lady Julian**

A famous spiritual anchoress, or recluse, who gives strong advice and counsel to Katherine after the pilgrimage to Walsingham appears to have been a failure. She helps Katherine turn her spiritual beliefs around and helps her find peace.



## Father Clement

A parson of Norwich who takes Katherine to see Lady Julian. Father Clement sees Katherine at Wlsingham as she tosses away her pin that the queen had given her. He picks it up and gives it back to her when she is feeling better.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Shippey**

Shippey is the convent where Katherine Roet lived until she was sixteen

### **Kettlethorpe**

Kettlethorpe is the home of Sir Hugh Swynford and Lady Katherine Swynford

### **Savoy Castle**

Savoy Castle is the main castle in London where the Duke of Lancaster resided

### **Aquitaine**

Aquitaine is a region in France, sometimes controlled by England

### **Castile**

Castile is a region in Spain, the birthplace of Costanza of Castile

### **Bolingbroke**

Bolingbroke is the birthplace home of Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster

### **Lincolnshire**

Lincolnshire is the region in England where Kettlethorpe is located

### **Windsor Castle**

Windsor Castle is home to King Edward and Queen Joan

### **Waltham Abbey**

Waltham Abbey is the church with the black marble cross



## **Coleby Castle**

Coleby Castle is the neighboring castle to Kettlethorp, owned by the Lancasters and by Sir Swynford

## **Najera**

Najera is a plain in Castile, the site of an English victory over Spain.

## **Savoy Castle**

Savoy Castle is a castle in London, home to the Lancasters

## **Kenilworth**

Kenilworth is a castle where Katherine raised the Swynford children and the Beaufort children

## **Hertford**

Hertford is a home of King Edward, and later of Costanza, Queen of Castile

## **Portcullis**

Portcullis is a castle drawbridge gate that raises and lowers, held by chains

## **Canaille**

Canillae is the lowest class of people, or rabble

## **Accide**

Accide is a spiritual sloth

## **Philter**

Philter is a magical potion or charm that causes one to fall in love



## **Gittern**

A Gittern is a guitar of middle ages

## **Marchpane**

Marzipan, a highly decorated candy made from almond paste

## **Murrain**

Murrain is a plague or disease

## **Stirrup cup**

Stirrup cup is a farewell drink given to one departing on a horse

## **Pyx**

A Pyx is a holy wooden box that holds consecrated wafers

## **Rood**

A Rood is a catholic holy cross

## **Unshriven**

Unshriven is not blessed by the church or given absolution





# Themes

## Good triumphs over evil

Katherine battles with good and evil throughout the story, trying to determine whether what she has been taught by the church is really good, and trying to understand how her love for John can be evil, just because it she is not married to him. She learns, through her kindness and much suffering, that there are no saints or gods who are going to step in and help us, but that we must be grateful to just be, and to simply have a life with no expectations.

Although there is a roller coaster effect of the characters in this book who go in and out of favor with the people, the king and each other, those who are truly kind, like Katherine, Blanche, John, Hawise, Geoffrey Chaucer, Philippa and de la Pole are the strength and backbone of the history of that time. On the other hand, King Richard, who is careless and extravagant, Hugh Swynford who is rough and mean and Bishop Courtenay who plots to overthrow the duke, all meet with dastardly demise. The interesting part of this theme is that these things are true. Of course, there are characters who do not seem to deserve what they got, such as Costanza, but the theme of good and evil stays pretty consistent throughout the story.

## Religion and politics

Much of the turmoil in London during the years covered in this story was a result of John's support of the priest, John Wyclif. The existing clergy system in England at that time was extremely corrupt and wealthy, and was also a major force governing political matters. Pieter Neumann worked with the bishop of Winchester and two monks to get the London riots started and to stir up unrest against the Duke of Winchester. The primary issue of contention was simply the threat to England's religious power structure.

The only true spiritual guidance in the story comes from Julian of Norwich, who is a recluse, John Wyclif, who has taken a vow of poverty and the convent nuns, who live in poverty. Holding God over people to get them to comply with the law doesn't work, or at least, not forever.

Brother William, who was John's physician and mentor, is so convinced that Katherine and John killed Hugh Swynford, that he causes a huge amount of destruction within the relationships of John, Katherine and Blanchette. His judgment is of them is harsh and cruel, and his word carries an enormous amount of power for Katherine.

The strictness of religion was necessary to keep everyone reminded of their proper place in the feudal system, and it also contributed to many of the superstitious beliefs that kept people frightened and confused. Channeling England's politics through the religious system was a way to keep the people in awe of their exalted leaders who, by birth, were considered closer to God and more powerful. The religious system also



provided some refuge for criminals, who were legally allowed to hide within the protection of the church for a period of time.

Finally, religious leaders became ambitious, greedy and hypocritical members of the upper class, with all of the money and powers they were granted, losing sight of their tasks to care for the needs of the people.

## Innocence lost

Katherine arrives at court at age sixteen with a happy heart, but is attacked by Hugh Swynford, and is exposed to the cutting gossip and back-stabbing of the courtiers. Flirtation is everywhere, and the court is competitive and corrupt. When Katherine married and moved to Swynford, she found Hugh's insane mother-in-law who thought she had a water disease and talked to pixies, and poor Gibbon, the bailiff, who was paraplegic and dying. The servants were angry and lazy, and the place, unlike the luxurious castle and the neat, prim convent, is drafty, dirty and in ill-repair.

The great love that Katherine had looked forward to feeling as a girl was, unfortunately, directed toward someone who was forbidden to her. When she does get him, it is considered an adulterous affair and she can never qualify as his true wife. Katherine's innocence is peeled off in layers through her loss of Hugh, her rejection by members at court, the violent riots, the loss of her daughter, the loss of John and her tormented pilgrimage to find God.

Katherine's strong belief in her religion began to come into question when she first arrived at the castle and realized that the bishop had no interest in her convent because it had no status.

Katherine finally realizes, after much pain and hardship, that no matter how hard she prayed to the saints, things will go the way they will go and God does not hear and respond to each prayer. She gained a more realistic approach to her spirituality, but lost her innocence, as well.

## Beauty goes a long way

One of the consistent emphases throughout the story is that of Katherine's beauty. Although she has no royal status, no dowry and no real connections besides Philippa, she is wanted by all of the men at court. The duke's love for her is always described in terms of her beauty, and he wants her to dress up in jewels and extravagant clothing to show off her beauty. Further, the men at court, Robert Sutton, Nirac, John's brother and almost every male character, including the priests and bishops, notice and recognize Katherine's beauty at some point in the story.

Katherine is enthralled with Blanche's beauty, and relieved over Costanza's lack of it. The story describes the faded beauty of the duke's sister and makes her seem foolish. We learn that Philippa is no beauty. The beauty, or lack thereof, of almost every female



character is assessed in this story. Clearly, beauty was an extremely important asset and could make the difference in one's life events.

The author claims she has not invented Katherine's beauty for fictional purposes, but the her research has borne it out. She reports that the epitaph on John of Gaunt's grave referred to Katherine as "...eximia pulchritudine feminam," and the monk of St. Mary's Abbey called her "une deblesse et enchanteresse" (xi).

## Mother love

Katherine's great maternal love is a key element of this story. Her maturity and love blossoms with the birth of her children, and she happily gives birth to as many as might come along. Her nurturing spirit makes her endearing, not only to her children but to others, as well. The loss of Blanchette seriously affected her life, and the legitimization of her children's birth may have been the reason she agreed to finally marry John of Gaunt.

John of Gaunt's major psychological issue is associated with a mother figure, Isolda Neumann, who was his foster mother and the woman he loved the most as a child. Her death affected him for the rest of his life. Even his attraction to Katherine was based on the similarity of her eyes to Isolda's. Katherine mothers John during his manic spell when he is obsessed with the accusation that he is a changeling. She feeds him, undresses him, nurtures him and, at one point, he even thinks she is Isolda.

Mother Mary is a prominent figure in the Catholic religion, and is often the subject of prayer and profound respect. Katherine is described as a much more hands-on mother than the royal mothers, perhaps because she lost her own mother in childbirth. Her sister, Philippa, chides her for being too involved with her children, but clearly it is a desirable and admirable trait.



# Style

## Point of View

This story is told from the point of view of an omnipotent narrator.

## Setting

Set primarily in medieval England, this story takes its readers to many different regions of England, as well as to France. Much of the story takes place in the beautiful, ornate castles of England royalty. Kettlethorpe, situated in northern England, is a more remote location where the weather is not the best. Lincolnshire, the village where Kettlethorpe is located, is a small, rural town.

We also get a mental tour of the streets and different regions of London, such as the Pessoners' home, the Chaucers' home and the Savoy castle that was burned in the riots. Katherine travels through the pleasant English countryside, and loves to spend time in her pleasaunce, or protected gardens, in the castles.

Katherine's voyage to Bordeaux over the rough waters of the bay of Biscay, take her to a town with harsh sunlight and hot weather, and gaudily colored buildings. Bordeaux, France seems tropical and bohemian compared to the moist, lush greenery of England.

## Language and Meaning

Anya Seton, who wrote this book in 1954, was a student of English history and had the ability to tell this story with all of the lush detail that her studies provided. Her writing style, from the omnipotent viewpoint, moves fairly quickly and covers an amazing amount of material, condensed very neatly into readable prose. The reader is able to immerse herself in Seton's story, as it flows along through time as rapidly as we truly experience time. Her style of introducing many characters, and bringing them back to us at other points in the story, makes it easy to learn the history she is describing, as well as the characters she develops. For instance, Pietre Neumann is described as a physically challenged young boy who is angry, jealous and rebellious. Later, he returns to the story as an adult conspirator behind the riots in London that caused great damage and destruction. Another example is Nirac, who stays to guard Katherine at Kettlethorpe under the duke's orders and later, out of overly zealous loyalty to the duke, murders Hugh Swynford in Bordeaux.

Seton is able to offer us an intensive history lesson, while weaving a story of intensity, romance and frightening suspense, based on the events as they well may have happened. She fills in only the possible and probable details that we will never know for sure about a group of fascinating individuals.

## Structure

Anya Seton tells Katherine's story in six parts, beginning in the year 1366 and ending in the year 1396, a relatively short thirty years. The story of Katherine begins when she is a sixteen year old girl, and ends when she is in mid-life, which in medieval times, meant old age. Although the story closely follows Katherine's activities, we are also able to know simultaneously what is going on for John and others due to the author's omniscient viewpoint.



## Quotes

No matter how dutiful one tried to feel, it was impossible to be sad at leaving this [convent] behind, not when the blood ran hot and rich in the veins, and when out in the world there were all the untried beckoning enchantments: dancing, sensuous music, merriment — and love. (p. 3).

The stench inside the hut near knocked her over, and she stood blinking in the darkness and retching uncontrollably while red fear smote her. (p 110).

He [Nirac] came of a primitive southern race where emotions were as simple as they were violent. There was love and there was hate, and no nuances between. (p. 148)

The Bishop of Winchester was stripped of his rich manors, and his coffers full of gold. At one stroke all of his worldly possessions were removed from him — though his episcopal office, even the duke could not touch — for that had come down through St. Peter from God. (p. 327)

Everything contributed to the optimism born of Nature's own gaiety. (p. 412)

"Who am I?' she said in a high, sweet, questioning tone. "Nay, that, good sir, I must not tell you." Her eyes moved unseeing over the faces of the other men, who had turned to watch. "But I can tell you who I'll be —" She nodded three times slowly, and she laughed low in her throat. Wat swallowed. The men behind did not stir, their mouths dropped open and a shivering unease held them. "why, I shall be a whore — good sir," cried Blanchette in a loud voice, "like my mother. A murdering whore — mayhap too — like my mother!" (p. 454)

When he [Geoffrey Chaucer] refreshed himself and his horse at alestakes or taverns along the way, he noted as always the quaint oddities of people, and his mind teemed with stories that he wished to tell. It was his way to finger voluptuously and without moral judgment, all the multicolored skeins of experience that folk spun for themselves — yet now he was disquietened. (p. 485)

I had been thinking of my sins, I was in great sorrow. Then I saw Him. He turned on me His face of lovely pity and He said, "It is truth that sin is cause of all this pain; sin is behovable — none the less all shall be well, and all shall be well, you shall see yourself that all manner of thing shall be well. These words were said to me tenderly, showing no kind of blame. And then He said, "Accuse not thyself overdone much, deeming that thy tribulation and thy woe is all thy fault; for I will not that thou be heavy or sorrowful indiscreetly." Then I understood that it was great disobedience to blame or wonder on God for my sin, since He blamed me not for it. (p. 525).

...the King and Queen and their retinue were another matter. Never had anyone imagined such a dazzle of cloth of gold, of pure silver tissue, such yards of ermine to trail in the muddy streets, such flashing of jewels. (p. 550)



Meddle, meddle — 'tis all it seems to me I do nowadays, at least so my enemies think. A lifetime of service to the Duke, to the crown, and at the end nothing but hatred and ingratitude. Gloucester was the real enemy, and Arundel of course. Impeachment, accusations. Michael had suffered both. They said he was nothing but a tradesman, a Hull merchant far too rich to be honest. They said he was a coward because he had influenced Richard towards peace, towards making an end of this senseless, crippling war with France. And now it would soon be exile. No doubt of that.



## Topics for Discussion

Discuss Nirac's personality and its flaws. Why does he murder Hugh Swynford? Is he a bad man or a good man?

What are some of the superstitions that people in the middle ages lived by? What purpose did they serve?

Over time, does Katherine experience a spiritual awakening, or does she simply shut down her spirituality? Discuss the spiritual changes in her and what they mean.

Could any nation thrive, today, with a ten-year-old leader? Why were people in the middle ages so willing to pledge their allegiance and pay homage to a young child?

Discuss the intricacies and structure of the feudal society during Katherine's day. Could a person enter the upper echelons of society without a royal birth? How?

Knowing that the facts of this story are based on historical records, has the treachery and corruption at the highest levels of government changed significantly? Discuss contemporary examples of a young leader who has arbitrarily abused his or her power.

Women were not allowed many liberties in the middle ages, and they were not always allowed to make their own decisions about marriage. How has the concept of marriage changed over the centuries?