

# **A Little Princess Study Guide**

## **A Little Princess**

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# Plot Summary

A Little Princess is a juvenile fiction story in the bildungsroman genre. It is the coming-of-age story of a young rich girl who is thrust into the harsh reality of servitude upon the sudden death of her father when she is only 11 years old. Until her father's death, Sara Crewe is treated like royalty at her private boarding school in London. Despite Captain Crewe's great wealth and his willingness to spend it on her, Sara remains sensible and caring, often sharing her comforts with her friends and giving money to the poor, just like a princess would do. The princess ideals are what keep Sara from losing her temper with the teachers and bullies at the school.

When Miss Minchin, the greedy school administrator, learns that Sara's father died suddenly after losing all his money in a diamond mine investment, she is ready to turn Sara out onto the streets. Captain Crewe's lawyer reminds her how that bad publicity would ruin her school. Instead, she immediately takes Sara away from her lavish birthday party, takes away all her finery, and sends her to the attic to live by Becky, a 14-year-old girl who is a servant at the school.

The rich neighbor's servant, Ram Dass, notices Sara in her attic room one day and they exchange greetings. When his monkey jumps into Sara's window, she asks him to come retrieve the monkey. He jumps onto her rooftop with ease and enters her room to retrieve the monkey. He notices her cold, bare room and tells his boss about the poor little girl who lives in the attic next door. Ram Dass begins keeping an eye on Sara through her skylight to make sure she is okay.

Even in her darkest time, while grieving the loss of her father, Sara holds her head up and continues to act like a princess. She still tries to be kind and giving even though she is penniless, tired and hungry. She deals with the segregation imposed upon servants, keeping her away from her two close friends, Lottie and Ermengarde. At night, the girls sometimes sneak to the attic to visit Sara. One night, when Sara was at her hungriest and coldest, Ermengarde brings a basket of goodies sent to her by an aunt to share with Sara and Becky in the attic. Miss Minchin catches them and is infuriated that Ermengarde is socializing with the help. She threatens to throw out Becky the next morning and punishes Sara by not letting her have meals the next day. Of course, she does not actually kick Becky out because she is not easily replaced.

After the turmoil with Miss Minchin, both girls go to bed tired, cold, and hungry, with no hope of a good meal in their near future. While Sara sleeps, Ram Dass, sneaks in through her skylight. He lights a fire in her grate, sets a table with food, leaves lots of bed coverings, and leaves a note saying the items are from a friend. Sara is awakened by the sound of the skylight closing and thinks she is in a dream. Her room is toasty and there is food. When she is sure it isn't a dream, she knocks on the wall to invite Becky to come enjoy it. Together, they get warm and have a good meal. Sara shares the bed coverings with Becky and they both feel so great the next morning that Miss Minchin is angered that they don't look ashamed or scorned.



As Sara learns bits and pieces about the rich neighbor next door from the kitchen staff, she grows fond of the man who sounds a lot like her father. He moved to London from India, where Sara had lived with her father before she attended boarding school. Unknown to Sara, the man next door is her father's business partner and he is searching for her. Instead of losing all of Captain Crewe's money, the diamond mine investment paid off shortly after his death. He is looking for Sara because he knows she is orphaned and he wants to take care of her and give her Captain Crewe's fortune.

Ram Dass and his rich boss continue sneaking gifts to Sara, even clothing which is delivered to the school. Seeing this, Miss Minchin relieves Sara of some of her work duties and allows her to attend class again, hoping Sara's secret benefactor will begin paying her tuition. One night, Ram Dass' monkey escapes and Sara finds him on her roof. She takes the little monkey in and tells Becky she will return him the next day. When she takes the monkey back, the rich neighbor, Mr. Carrisford, realizes that she is the girl for whom he has been searching.

Sara leaves the boarding school immediately and moves in with him. He makes arrangements for Lottie and Ermengarde to come visit and hires Becky to be Sara's assistant. Sara is happy to have a family again and asks if she can do something special with her money. Mr. Carrisford agrees and takes her the next day to a downtown bakery. The bakery woman gave Sara six buns when she only had enough money for four one day when she was a servant. Sara set up an account at the bakery to feed other hungry children. The baker agreed to feed all the hungry children and to bill the expense to Sara.



# Chapter 1: Sara

## Summary

An omniscient narrator introduced the book's main character, Sara Crewe as she arrived in London with her father, Captain Crewe. Sara and her father lived in India where her father was a wealthy businessman. Her mother had died when she was just a baby. Sara was very close to her father and very respectful of him so she did not complain that he was sending her to London for boarding school. Sara is described as peculiar-looking, but attractive. She was tall and slim for her age and had intense facial features. Her greenish-gray eyes really stood out since she had black hair that curled on the ends. She also had long, black eyelashes. Sara thought she was ugly.

Captain Crewe had told his daughter all her life that she would move to London for school when she was seven years old. As their cab drove them through London on a very foggy day, Sara realized that the day had come. The narrator explained that both were sad and were going to miss each other terribly, but both father and daughter were brave because it was the respectable way to act. While Sara's new school prepared her room, her father stayed in London with her for a few days in a hotel. They shopped and bought Sara a doll, which she named Emily. Emily was going to be her friend and confidant at the new school. They also bought Emily a stash of fancy clothing.

In addition to a new doll with fancy clothes, Sara entered her new school with the fanciest clothes for herself. She also got her own suite away from the other girls. It was full of books, cakes, and anything else the little girl desired. Captain Crewe told the school owner, Miss Minchin, that his daughter should be given anything she requests. He explained that Sara was not one for frivolous requests and was a rather clever child. He said his local attorneys would handle all of Sara's finances on his behalf.

Captain Crew dropped his daughter off at school and told her goodbye. He said he would be setting sail back to India the next morning. Sara did not cry because she wanted to be a brave soldier like her father had been. Instead, she locked herself in her room. When the school attendants knocked on her door to check on her, Sara politely informed them that she would like to be alone.

Miss Minchu told her sister, Miss Amelia, that she thought Sara's fine clothing and accessories were ridiculous, but was willing to go along with Captain Crewe's request because it would give her school prestige to have such a rich, well-educated little girl enrolled in it.

## Analysis

Chapter 1: Sara gives a great deal of expository information. The reader learns a lot about Sara's life in the first 13 pages of the book. Sara is thoughtful and imaginative,



respectful and caring. Her father describes her as an old soul who has "old-fashioned thoughtfulness in her big eyes" (3).

The bond between Sara and her dad is also important expository information. After her mother's death, Captain Crewe maintained a key role in his young daughter's upbringing. She did have a nanny back home in India, but Sara still spent a lot of time with her father. They both found comfort in each other. She respects him as her father and his valor as a former soldier; he relies on her thoughtful quirkiness to entertain him and to help him keep life in perspective. In Chapter 1, Sara makes it very clear that her father is not simply dropping her off at some long-distance boarding school because he no longer wants to deal with her. He does it to give her the very best education and she accepts his reasoning.

The strength of the father-daughter bond is emphasized so much in the first chapter that it makes it seem as though something will happen between Sara and Captain Crewe later in the story. This is not the only instance of foreshadowing in the chapter. The description of Miss Minchin's school is also foreshadowing. Instead of simply telling the reader what the room looks like, the narrator shares Sara's thoughts on the room. She thinks the room looked tall, dull, respectable and ugly and she thinks Miss Minchin looked the same (7). Sara thinks Miss Minchin had cold, fishy eyes (7), another instance of foreshadowing of Miss Minchin's true personality.

The narrator shows the reader that Captain Crewe is not prejudiced in his opinion of Sara through conversation held between Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia. Miss Amelia thinks it is odd that Sara does not cry for her father like all the other girls usually do. Miss Minchin describes her as spoiled even though Sara does not act spoiled, showing that Miss Minchin does not have high regard for children in her school. While she thinks Sara's clothes are fancy and ridiculous, she tells Miss Amelia to be sure Sara sits up front at church on Sundays to help build the school's image in the community. These statements lead the reader to allude that Miss Minchin is more concerned about making money than educating her students.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is it important for Sara to be Emily's mother?

## Discussion Question 2

Sara's father gives her many fine things, but does she act spoiled? Discuss why or why not.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Sara's "cleverness." Was she a clever child or did her doting father just think that? Justify your response with evidence from Chapter 1: Sara.



## Vocabulary

expression, companion, frock, abundant, boarder, ayah, elated, regiment, burrowing, solemn, gallow



## Chapter 2: A French Lesson

### Summary

Sara went to her first class the morning after her father dropped her off at the school. As she entered the French class, all the other girls looked at her, and she at them. They knew Miss Minchin considered her to be a credit to the school and they knew she had her own maid. Lavinia, a 13-year-old student, and Jessie, another girl near Lavinia's age, whispered back and forth about Sara before class began. Lavinia made spiteful comments to Jessie about Sara's shoes and eyes and even said she was ugly. Jessie remarked that the little girl looked peculiar, but had features that made people look twice at her, including her long eyelashes and her eyes.

Sara was seated at the front of the class near Miss Minchin. She wondered what the other students were thinking about her. She wondered if they liked Miss Minchin, if they liked school, and if any of them loved their father as much as she loved hers.

The narrator explained that before class, Sara spent time with her doll, Emily. After the maid got Sara dressed and ready for school, she handed Emily a book and told her she could read it while Sara was gone. Sara explained to her maid, Mariette, that she liked to pretend that dolls came to life when humans were not around. She said they did this because they knew humans would make them work if they were aware they were alive. After sending her off to class, Mariette told the head maid that the little girl was creative, intelligent and had perfect manners. She was not at all spoiled like she expected. Mariette also liked that Sara could speak to her in her native tongue, French.

Miss Minchin finally arrived in the classroom and introduced Sara to the girls. Miss Minchin called Sara to her desk and said that she believed Captain Crewe had hired a French maid for her so she could be immersed in the study of French. Sara said she believed her father hired Mariette because he thought she would like her. Miss Minchin sourly replied that Sara had been spoiled and thought everyone did things for her because she liked those things. She reiterated that Captain Crewe wanted Sara to study French. Sara was not sure what to do. She knew she should not correct her teacher. Sara grew up speaking French because her father taught her the language. Sara's mother had been French and he wanted their daughter to know the language. Sara tried to explain that to Miss Minchin, but the teacher told her to sit down and start reading.

Sara tried to explain to the teacher again when Miss Minchin asked why she looked angry. Sara finally gave up and thought she would explain, instead, to the French tutor who would arrive shortly. Miss Minchin introduced Sara to the tutor, Monsieur Dufarge, and said the girl seemed to not want to learn French. Sara spoke to Monsieur Dufarge in French and explained the misunderstanding. Monsieur Dufarge explained to Miss Minchin that Sara was French and already knew the language. Miss Minchin was angry and told Sara she should have told her, but she knew the little girl had tried. Sara





apologized and said maybe she should have started her explanation a different way. Lavinia and Jessie laughed at Miss Minchin and from that moment, Miss Minchin did not like Sara.

## Analysis

The reader already knows Sara can speak French because the narrator tells that she speaks to her French maid using her own language. The maid even notes that the accent is perfect. The reader knows as soon as Miss Minchin refuses to let Sara speak that conflict will arise between the two. The narrator says Miss Minchin develops a grudge against Sara, foreshadowing a continuation of that conflict. Since the conflict is between two people at this point, it falls into the man versus man category of conflict.

Two minor characters are also introduced into the story. Lavinia and Jessie are fellow students at the school and both are older than Sara. Lavinia harshly judges the new girl, but Jessie, even though she gossips about Sara, admits the little girl has some striking features. This leaves the reader to wonder what a 13-year-old girl might have against someone almost half her age. Is she just a bully, or is there a reason for her feelings toward the new girl? The reader can expect these questions to be answered later in the story.

In addition to learning about the grudge Miss Minchin develops for Sara, Chapter 2: A French Lesson demonstrates more about the teacher's character. The narrator notes that she does not allow Sara to complete her sentences many times and dismisses the child's thoughts. The truth is, this educator has little concern for her students. She is as cold toward them as Sara first thought she would be.

Ironically, the lesson in French in Chapter 2 was more for Miss Minchin than Sara. The teacher should have learned a lesson from the way she treated Sara and should have realized she needed to know more about her new student. Instead, Miss Minchin became angry about looking foolish to the other students. Her foolishness was her own fault, but even 7-year-old Sara was big enough to try to assume some of the blame for not making the teacher understand.

With the teacher's grudge against Sara announced by the narrator, it seems to set the story up with Sara as the protagonist and Miss Minchin as the antagonist. Sara perfectly fits the role of protagonist since she is polite, intelligent, creative, and largely misunderstood. Miss Minchin, who is already in the first two chapters seen as cold and uncaring, is firmly rooted in the antagonist role.

This chapter introduces the reader to a few French phrases, giving the reader a brief lesson in French as well. The French phrases are noted by italics. "*Comme elle est drôle*" translates in English to "As it is funny." "*Elle a l'air d'une princesse, cette petite*" translates to "She looks like a princess, this little" (18).



## Discussion Question 1

Why might the oldest girl at the school, Lavinia, be so harsh to judge Sara, who is almost half her age? Use clues from the chapter to support your claim.

## Discussion Question 2

How many different ways does Sara try to tell Miss Minchin that she already speaks French? How does Sara deal with the disappointment dealt to her each time the teacher stops her?

## Discussion Question 3

Why are Sara's manners important in this chapter? How does the reader know she is well-mannered?

## Vocabulary

grand, petticoat, abashed, whimsical, fancies, engaged, ceremoniously, curtsy, flush, scrutinizingly, cross, violently, monsieur, infuriated, grudge



## Chapter 3: Ermengarde

### Summary

Ermengarde St. John, a student about Sara's age, is introduced in this chapter. Sara noticed her in French class. Ermengarde was a blonde-haired, blue-eyed girl who was overweight and did not look to be very clever. Sara noted that her mouth seemed like she was good-natured, though. Ermengarde had her braid pulled in front of her face and bit the end of it during class. She seemed to daydream and could not answer the tutor's questions when he called upon her. When the other girls giggled, Sara felt sorry for her. After class, Sara introduced herself to Ermengarde. Ermengarde talked about her inability to learn and how her father told her many times that she had no sense. The narrator said the girl spent most of her life crying because of her inability to learn. Sara offered to help tutor her and invited her to play in her room.

While playing in Sara's room, Sara explained her pretend ideas about dolls coming to life to Ermengarde. The idea of pretending impressed Ermengarde as much as Sara's ability to speak French. Sara told her she could teach her how to pretend, too. Sara admitted that she missed her father, but said pretending helped make her stronger. Ermengarde and Sara decided to become best friends.

### Analysis

Chapter 3 brings the introduction of another minor character, Ermengarde, who becomes Sara's friend. Sara is drawn to the girl when she sees the others making fun of her. Sara tends to root for the underdog, and Ermengarde falls into that category. She is not as bright as the other students, she is overweight, and she seems to have no friends. Sara steps up to be a friend to the otherwise lonely girl. Right away, Ermengarde discusses her faults and academic weaknesses. Not only does she get ridiculed at school; her father also ridicules her. Sara sees that the girl needs some encouragement and offers to help tutor her. More importantly, she offers friendship to Ermengarde.

Sara's father always encourages her to make believe and enjoys the tales she weaves. Ermengarde's father, however, never encourages her to be herself at all. He even makes fun of her for being a slow learner and basically says she is worthless. It is no wonder that she lacks confidence and does not feel worthy of friendship at school. Ermengarde is good for Sara, too. Sara finally speaks about how much she misses her father to Ermengarde. Having a friend to pretend with relieves some of that pain for Sara and establishes Ermengarde's role as a confidante to the book's protagonist.

With the introduction of Ermengarde, the author begins to build a fuller character representation for Sara. The narrator says that she always wants to fight for those in



trouble (24), but this chapter shows how the little girl builds up others and how she treats all people with the respect they deserve.

When Sara introduces the notion of pretending to Ermengarde, she explains that pretending helps her to bear her sorrow, foreshadowing that this skill will become very important to Sara later in the story.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Compare and contrast Sara to her new friend, Ermengarde.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why do you think Ermengarde has no experience in pretending?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Sara have her own playroom?

## **Vocabulary**

gleam, society, embarrassed, bewitched, remotest, voyage, acquaintance, fluttered, distress, dull, pupil, contradictory



## Chapter 4: Lottie

### Summary

The narrator notes that if Sara had been a spoiled child, she would have complained to her father and left the school. Miss Minchin wanted his money so much that even though she thought Sara's living conditions were ridiculous, she did not complain. She also never tried to show her disdain for Sara, because as long as her expenses were covered, Sara was a credit to the school. Sara was smart, well-mannered and friendly. The narrator noted that Sara gave money to a beggar.

Sara attributed her own success in school to accident. She believed that she just happened to like school, and just happened to have a good memory. She believed she was not more deserving than anyone else. She wondered if people would tell her if she was a rude child since her father was rich. She was afraid people catered to her because of her father's money. She said perhaps she was not mean and bratty because she had never had any obstacles; her father always gave her plenty. Ermengarde pointed out that Lavinia also had no obstacles, but she was horrible. Sara said maybe Lavinia was horrible because she was growing. The narrator said Lavinia was very jealous of Sara because she had been the school's star pupil until Sara arrived. Lavinia was pretty and the oldest, so she held the first spot in the processional until Sara enrolled in the school. Jessie told Lavinia that she felt like Sara was genuine and not a braggart. But, Jessie agreed with Lavinia that it was disgusting how Miss Minchin showed Sara off to prospective students and their parents. For everything nice Jessie had to say about Sara, Lavinia had something bad to add. Lavinia had apparently talked with her mother about Sara, because her mother said pretending like Sara did could lead to an eccentric adult.

Lottie, a 4-year-old, was throwing a tantrum. She was screaming, "I don't have a mama" because her mother died when she was younger. Miss Minchin said she should be whipped and Miss Amelia did not know what to do to calm the girl. Sara asked if she could try to help the little girl. Miss Amelia thought it was ridiculous, but allowed Sara to try because she did not want to deal with Lottie herself. Sara told Lottie that she did not have a mama either. The shock of hearing this quietened Lottie who finally asked Sara where her mother was. Sara told her that she was in Heaven and that she believed she came out to see her sometimes and that she believed Lottie's mother came out of Heaven to check on her, too. The idea that her mother might be watching made Lottie straighten up. Lottie got upset again, though, when she tried to explain that she had no mother at the school -- no one who loved her at the school like a mother would. She did not like Miss Minchin and she thought Miss Ameila was a dullard. Sara offered to be Lottie's adopted mother at school. making the doll Emily Lottie's sister.



## Analysis

Sara is so nice that she even makes excuses for Lavinia's horrible attitude, blaming it on the teenage angst of growing. The reader learns why Lavinia is so jealous of Sara -- Sara took her place as star pupil at the school. The idea of being replaced by a younger student was an extra blow to Lavinia's ego.

Another minor character, Lottie, is introduced in this chapter to further build on Sara's character development. Not only is Sara not stubborn, she is kind and nurturing to those who feel helpless like Lottie. Lottie is just the opposite of Sara, which really shows how kind and good-natured Sara is. Even when the adults are fed up with the little girl, Sara takes on the challenge of calming her. She really likes to help people. The reader notes that with each new character introduced in the book, Sara just seems nicer and nicer. The author uses this technique to reinforce what a kind person Sara is because the adult teachers in the story continue to grow to dislike her. At first, Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia sarcastically referred to Sara as a princess because of her fine clothing. Sara's maid said she seemed like a little princess because her manners are so perfect. Now, with kindness reinforced through several characters, it seems as if Sara does possess all the attributes of the princess archetype.

Sara's attitude of her own success is very well-grounded. She does not pretend to be a genius of any sort nor does she flaunt her wealth. Instead, she attributes her success to luck. She believes she has been blessed with good luck, so it is her duty to be responsible with her blessings. Questioning whether she might really be mean and bratty with no one to tell her so shows that Sara is like other children. She has self doubts and wants to have friends just like the other girls. She is happy to share her prized doll with her friends and shows no foul attributes of being spoiled as her teachers suggest.

In the story, Sara never ponders or worries about not having a mother but the way she deals with Lottie shows that she has given her deceased mother some thought. Whether it is her religious faith, her ability to pretend, or a combination of the two, Sara deals with her own mother's death by believing she watches over Sara at times and even comes to visit. She believes her mother enjoys fields of flowers and other heavenly benefits, so she can deal with the pain of missing her more. This is very much the way she deals with the pain of missing her father after he dropped her off at the school. The idea that Sara knows how to deal with the loss of a parent foreshadows another loss that she will have to face later in the book and alludes to how she will deal with that loss.

## Discussion Question 1

Compare Sara to another fairy tale princess. What qualities do they share and how do they differ?



## Discussion Question 2

Why is it that Sara can make Lottie happy but Miss Minchin and Miss Ameila cannot?  
How do their tactics in dealing with Lottie differ?

## Discussion Question 3

Sara is important to Ermendgarde, but how is Ermengarde important to Sara?

## Vocabulary

horrid, opinionated, domineering, indulged, charitable, calculate, scarcely, denied,  
strenuously, suppress, consternation, tempestuously, flounced



## Chapter 5: Becky

### Summary

Sara, who had been at the school for two years already, caught a glimpse of a poor servant girl one winter day. She saw the girl again late that evening when she sat telling a story about mermaids to fellow students. The servant girl was quietly adding coal to the fire and was trying to listen to Sara's story. Sara noticed and talked louder so she could hear. Lavinia shouted that the servant girl was listening, so she got up and scurried out of the room. Sara said she knew she was listening and asked why she should not. Lavinia said that her mother would not want her telling stories to a servant and Sara said her mother would want her to tell stories to everybody. Lavinia asked Sara how she knew what her mother would want since she was dead. Lottie piped up and shared their idea that their dead mothers watched them sometimes and enjoyed fields of flowers in Heaven. Lavinia called Sara wicked for making up stories about Heaven. Sara told Lavinia she would never find out what Heaven was like if she did not start being nicer to people. Sara took Lottie and they left the others.

Sara asked Mariette who the little servant girl was. Mariette said the little girl, Becky, was replacing a scullery maid but did much more than just kitchen duties. She polished all the boots, carried coal up and down the stairs, scrubbed floors and cleaned windows. Mariette said the girl was 14 but Sara thought she looked closer to 12. Sara hoped to see her again, but Becky was always working so hard that she did not have time to speak.

Becky liked to save Sara's room for last so she could linger in it and enjoy it a little longer. Becky carried coals up every evening to keep the fire going. One evening, Becky sat in one of Sara's chairs and accidentally fell asleep after a particularly long day of work. Sara noticed and let her sleep just a few more minutes, but then worried Becky might get in trouble if Miss Minchin came looking for her. A lump of coal crackled and started Becky awake. Becky apologized to Sara who said it was okay for her to take a nap there. Sara said they were both young girls just the same and offered her a piece of cake and an extra piece to take back to her room. Sara said it was only by accident that each girl was who she was; Becky did not understand. Becky told her about a time when she saw a princess and how much Sara looked just like her. Sara told her to come back another night and she would finish telling her the mermaid story. After Becky left, Sara sat and imagined that if she was really a princess she would share her generosity to all the people in her kingdom. Knowing that she was not a princess with a big kingdom, though, Sara was happy sharing what she had with the people of her school and making it a little better for them.





## Analysis

Through a new character, Becky, the reader gets yet a stronger sense of what Sara is like through indirect characterization. Not only is Sara kind and giving to other girls just like her, she is the same with those who are less fortunate. A previous chapter showed Sara caring for the poor when she gave money to a beggar. Here, though, the reader learns that she actually treats the poor just like she treats everyone else. Lavinia was the one who tried to draw a distinct line between the servant class and the students. Sara was the one who stood up for Becky and said she had every right to hear the story she was telling. Lavinia also ironically calls Sara evil for making up descriptions of Heaven. Throughout the first five chapters, the author has portrayed Lavinia as the evil one.

This chapter is the first time the reader sees Sara give a witty retort to an opposing character. In previous chapters, when Sara was younger, she thought about things she would like to say to Lavinia; but here she speaks her mind. This shows that Sara is growing in confidence and does not mind a more public stance on standing up for people despite the fact that she was much younger than Lavinia, who by this time was 15. Another thought is that perhaps Sara, playing the role of Lottie's mother in this case, sees herself as older and feels completely confident in speaking against Lavinia. In this instance, Lavinia would have been a back-talking teen and Sara, in the role of Lottie's mother, is old enough to put the girl back in her place.

Sara notices all the work Becky does and she realizes that if her lot in life was just a little different, she could be expected to work just as hard as Becky. Becky cannot imagine being in Sara's place, so the theory goes over her head. Sara's theory about being just the same except for luck foreshadows events to come later in the book.

At the end of the chapter, Sara thinks about all the good things she could do if she really was a princess. Many 9-year-old girls might instead think about all the things they would have or places they could go if they were a princess. Sara, however, thinks only about how much more generous she could be. She decides to pretend being a princess so she can always keep a kind heart with the goal of spreading kindness and generosity. This kind of pretending always makes strife easier for Sara, indicating that even after being at the school for two years, the oppression established by the teachers has not lightened.

### Discussion Question 1

Discuss the irony in Lavinia calling Sara evil. Is Sara evil? Why or why not?

### Discussion Question 2

It seems as though the idea of getting to hear the completion of Sara's mermaid story makes Becky feel better. What really makes her feel better?



## Discussion Question 3

How might Sara's comment that she and Becky were just the same except for accidental luck present itself as foreshadowing in the future?

## Vocabulary

perch, admiration, reflections, cupboard, frock, gasp, fender, pupil, devoutly, largess, populace



# Chapter 6: The Diamond Mines and Chapter 7: The Diamond Mines Again

## Summary

In Chapter 6: The Diamond Mines, Sara received a letter from her father explaining that he had invested in diamond mines. An old school friend looked him up and offered to include him in the venture. Captain Crewe told Sara their wealth would grow even bigger. Ermengarde and Lottie loved to hear Sara tell the story about it but Lavinia was hateful about it. Jessie, who only giggled that the diamond mine story bothered Lavinia so much, told Lavinia that Sara pretended to be a princess. She also tried to get Ermengarde to pretend to be a princess with her but Ermengarde refused to since she was overweight.

Sara took Lottie to the schoolroom to play with some younger children. While she was reading a book, Lottie was sliding on the floor and spinning in circles, all while being loud. Lavinia told her to stop and called her a cry-baby. Lottie loudly protested. Jessie tried to quiet her with a penny. Sara quieted Lottie by promising to whisper her a story about the diamond mines. Lavinia said she would like to slap Sara. Sara said she would like to, and should, slap Lavinia, but would not because they were not gutter children and were both old enough to know better. Lavinia taunted her by calling her "royal highness." Sara admitted that she often pretended to be a princess to remind her to behave like one. From then on, girls who were jealous of Sara called her Princess Sara.

Becky heard of Sara's nickname and thought it was fitting because she did act and look like a princess. Her friendship with Sara continued to grow in Chapter 6 as Sara told her stories in installments. Sara also gave her food to take to her room, but Becky said she had to be careful not to leave crumbs or the rats would come out. Sara shuttered at the idea of rats, but Becky told her people get used to things when it is necessary.

Captain Crewe sent Sara a letter shortly before her eleventh birthday. He was sick and said he was not a good businessman after all. He made preparations with Miss Minchin for Sara's birthday party and said he was sending a new doll. Sara wrote back to him and told him that this would be the Last Doll she would ever get because she was getting older and that no one would ever take Emily's place. When Captain Crewe read the letter, it made him happy and he wished she was there with him.

To celebrate her party, Miss Minchin decorated the schoolroom with holly and her presents were waiting for her. Before the party, Becky left a little hand sewn square pincushion made of red flannel for Sara. Sara loved the gift and the time and thought Becky put into it.

Chapter 7: The Diamond Mines Again began with Sara entering her party. Miss Minchin arranged for an elaborate processional. Becky was at the end of the line wearing a



clean apron and new cap. Miss Minchin asked Becky to leave once she put down a box she was carrying. Sara asked if Becky could stay for her party and reminded Miss Minchin that Becky was still a young girl herself. Miss Minchin was appalled, but allowed Becky to stay as long as she did not sit too close to the students. Miss Minchin gave a long speech about how important Sara was since she would inherit a huge fortune.

Sara opened her presents sent by her father -- a box full of books, the Last Doll, and clothes custom made for the doll. Miss Ameila asked the girls to go enjoy refreshments so Miss Minchin could visit with Captain Crewe's lawyer in the schoolroom for a bit. The lawyer, Mr. Barrow, told Miss Minchin that Captain Crewe had died of jungle fever and business troubles combined. Mr. Barrow said Captain Crewe's friend ran off with his money and there were never really any diamond mines. Immediately, Miss Minchin realized Sara had no value to her school any more. The little girl had no where to go, no other relatives, and Miss Minchin was expected to take responsibility for her. She said she would turn Sara out on the street, but Mr. Barrow reminded how poorly that would reflect on her school.

When Mr. Barrow left, Miss Minchin called for Miss Amelia. She told her to get a black dress from Sara's room. Miss Amelia said she had one black velvet dress, but had outgrown it. Miss Minchin told her to get it and have Sara put it on at once and to stop the party. Miss Minchin heard a noise and realized that Becky had been in the room and heard her entire conversations with Mr. Barrow and Miss Amelia. Becky asked if she could be Sara's maid since she had become accustomed to having one. Miss Minchin said that Sara would wait on herself and on others.

A few hours later, Sara went to see Miss Minchin as requested. She also demanded that there be no crying during the meeting. Miss Amelia said Sara had made no fuss when initially told of her father's death; she just ran out of the room. Sara went to her room to cry and to talk to Emily about her father's death. After putting on her black dress, she dressed Emily in a black cloth. The whole day seemed surreal to Sara, like a bad dream. All remnants of her party were gone, like it had never happened. Miss Minchin told Sara she would not have time for dolls anymore because she would start working there instead of being a student. Miss Minchin also told Sara that she had paid for the last doll on behalf of her father, who obviously would not be paying her back. Sara told her to take it away because she did not want anything that did not belong to her. Her pride only aggravated Miss Minchin. Sara was happy to learn that she was going to be allowed to work, which also angered Miss Minchin. She told Sara she would tutor the younger children, run errands and help in the kitchen. Miss Minchin told Sara to thank her for her kindness in giving her a home. Sara told her teacher that she was not kind and that her school was not a home, then she ran out before Miss Minchin could reply.

Miss Amelia told Sara that she no longer had her room. She had to sleep in the attic by Becky instead. The attic was dark and only had a hard bed and a worn footstool in it. Becky stopped by to see her. Sara reminded her of their first conversation and pointed out that they really were just the same, just two little girls no matter what their circumstances. Becky told Sara she was still a princess.



## Analysis

Sara's storytelling is one of the things most of the students love about her, which is why it vexes Lavinia so. When Sara begins telling the diamond mine tales, Lavinia is infuriated for two reasons -- students have a new story to hear and Sara will be even richer some day. Sara continues to dish it out to Lavinia whenever she makes hateful comments in front of Lottie. At this point, Sara only does this when she is with Lottie, giving further credibility to the idea that Sara stands up for herself and Lottie to the older girl because she is feeling motherly, and thus old enough to do so.

Sara is embarrassed that her secret of pretending to be a princess has been told, but she does not lie to try to hide it. Her honesty fits the princess archetype and the fact that she maintains dignity when dealing with Lavinia in Chapter 6 further cements Sara's image as a princess. Sara knows the nickname Princess Sara exists among those who do not like her, but she does not let it bother her.

The letter from Captain Crewe to his daughter lets her know he is ill and that he has business concerns. Sara picks up on her father's concerns, but does not see them as any obstacle he cannot beat. After all, she sees him as a strong person and tries to mirror his morals and standards. Surely, the news of his death in Chapter 7 came as a crushing blow to Sara. She did not cry in front of anyone, though, and maintained her dignity much as a real princess would do. She grieves alone and puts her best face forward when leaving her room.

Captain Crewe's death in Chapter 7 serves as the inciting force of this novel. With his death, Sara is left penniless and has no one to care for her. Crewe certainly would not have wanted this for his daughter. The fact that Sara is no longer an heiress changes her life before Sara is even told that her father has died. When Miss Minchin talks with Mr. Barrow, she is very clear that the girl is of no use to her without her fortune. She even considers throwing Sara out on the street, showing that she really never had any concern for Sara and probably has none for the other girls either. By the end of Mr. Barrow's visit, Sara went from being the school's prize pupil to being another scullery maid.

Miss Minchin's role as antagonist is very well-developed at this point and everything she does is for the purpose of antagonizing Sara. When Sara handles the news of her father's death, her new plight as a scullery maid, and her new attic room with dignity, Miss Minchin is infuriated even more. With Sara's fortune gone, Miss Minchin now has no reason not to treat Sara very poorly, foreshadowing that Sara will be even more mistreated by the woman as the story progresses.

It seems as though the relationship between Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia is becoming stressed. Miss Minchin made Miss Amelia tell Sara about her father's death and kick Sara out of her room. Miss Amelia's amazement that Sara did not cry about her father shows that she may be leaning toward taking Sara's side in the future.



When Sara makes her way to her attic room for the evening, she explains to Becky what she meant previously when she said that they were just alike except for accidental good luck. The original comment's foreshadowing comes true when Sara's father runs into financial bad luck, and she becomes socially considered an equal with the servant girl. The fact that she becomes exactly like Becky, a scullery maid, is situational irony.

Another instance of situational irony in Chapter 7 is Miss Minchin's long speech that kicked off Sara's birthday party. Within a matter of minutes, all the fine things she said about Sara were blown away with the news of her father's death and financial mishaps.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the tone of conversation between Miss Minchin and Mr. Barrow. What is their top concern?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why is Sara talking back to Lavinia and Miss Minchin more? How does she handle herself when she does?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Miss Minchin make Sara put on an old black dress that is too small for her instead of allowing her to continue wearing her usual clothing?

## **Vocabulary**

temper, scolding, restraining, sympathy, ascend, acquaintance, perilously, disposed, matter-of-fact, dread, hysteric, ominously, gaze, rapture, amiability



## Chapter 8: In the Attic and Chapter 9: Melchisedec

### Summary

In Chapter 8: In the Attic, As Sara spent her first night in the attic trying to fall asleep, she kept whispering to herself "My papa is dead!" (90). Her bed was so hard and room was so dark that she could not get comfortable, especially when she began to hear the rats scratching inside the wall. The next morning, Lavinia took the star pupil seat by Miss Minchin. Miss Minchin told Sara that she would sit with the younger children to keep them quiet during meals and to make sure they did not waste food. Every day after that, Sara was given more duties. She no longer got to attend classes herself. Afraid she might forget what she had learned, Sara spent time in the schoolroom reviewing old lessons and reading after all her work was done. Miss Minchin kept Sara busy enough that she did not have time for friends. Miss Minchin did not provide new clothes or shoes for her, so Sara wore shoes with holes and her tattered dress. Sara did not complain because she wanted to be like a soldier. She worked very hard and pretended her struggles were part of a war. At first, Sara thought Ermengarde no longer wanted to be her friend since she was a maid. The truth was, the girls just did not know how they could talk with each other during the day. Finally one night, Ermengarde waited in the attic for Sara to arrive. They decided they were still best friends no matter what. Ermengarde decided to visit each night when she could slip away from Miss Minchin without getting caught. Sara told her she pretended her challenges were battles in a war and that she was a prisoner in the Bastille.

In Chapter 9: Melchisedec, 7-year-old Lottie surprised Sara by finding her new room. Lottie was upset that the room was so ugly and bare. Sara begged Lottie not to cry because she had been scolded all day and did not want to be scolded for Lottie coming to her room. Sara calmed Lottie by telling her the room was not so bad because she had an incredible view of the city. She held Lottie up to show her. They fed some bread crumbs that Lottie had in her pocket to a sparrow on the roof. The little bird returned several times and even brought other birds with it. Before she left, Lottie loved Sara's new room. When Lottie left, Sara realized how lonely she was. She saw a rat come out to get some of the crumbs Lottie dropped on the floor. Sara considered the rat's lot in life -- he did not ask to be a rat and he probably did not like when people jumped and screamed at seeing him. Sara sat very still on her footstool so the rat would come get a large piece of bread that Lottie dropped. She imagined the rat needed to take it back to his rat family. Sara named the rat Melchisedec. She taught it to come when she whistled, and he would eat small crumbs and take the bigger one back home. She said he was a nice rat because he was polite and takes care of his family. Ermengarde noted that Sara talked about the rat like he was a person. Sara insisted that Melchisedec was a person -- he got hungry and frightened and took care of a family. Ermengarde also got to see the wall-knock system of communicating that Sara and Becky developed. At night, they knocked to check on each other before bedtime.





## Analysis

Chapter 8: In the Attic shows how much work Sara is expected to do and how hard the 11-year-old child must work. Sara does a full day of work, whatever is asked of her, without complaining and then makes time for her studies at the end of the day. She has the commitment and ethics of a princess, even in her lot as a scullery maid. She values education and does not want to lose what she has developed. It seems as though the antagonist, Miss Minchin, continually tries to make Sara's life miserable. She starts with some basic duties and when Sara handles them with grace, the woman piles on more work. She is becoming the archetypal "evil stepmother" character. Even though Miss Minchin has no relation to Sara, she is put in the caregiver role upon the death of Captain Crewe. Sara is living the daunting life of pre-fairy godmother Cinderella. As in the Cinderella story, Sara even befriends sparrows and rats, both of which are considered to be very skittish of people.

Also in Chapter 8, Sara talks of being a prisoner in the Bastille. This is an allusion, referring to a state prison in France that was built in the 14th Century. In 1789, the Bastille was taken over during the French Revolution. Ironically, Sara began her own French Revolution at Miss Minchin's school on her first day of French class. Now that she is imprisoned in her pretend Bastille, the reader can assume a revolution is foreshadowed.

Chapter 9: Melchisedec introduces both the sparrow and the rat to the story. She has patience to deal with both creatures. Since the rat shares a room with Sara, she bestows human characteristics upon him and even names him Melchisedec. She explains that the reason for the personification is because the rat has human qualities like hunger and fear. Like humans, the rat also has a family to care for, and by helping him, she feels like she is part of the family, too. Ironically, this family connection is the only family she has. She considers the rat's feelings and does not want him to feel like a beggar or a thief, so she brings him food and calls him to come get it as a gift. She is giving the rat the dignity she wishes she would receive from Miss Minchin.

Miss Minchin is obviously not taking care of Sara. She clothes her in tattered outfits that do not fit. Sara knew all along that Miss Minchin did not really like her, but now she has her proof. A person could not go from caring about a person to not caring all of a sudden. Miss Minchin is driven only by money and Sara was right about her all along. Sara does not complain about missing her fine clothing, her personal maid, and all of her privileges. All Sara really misses is learning and her friends. Being able to see her friends in short spurts helps Sara deal with the loneliness a little, but the more she sees them, the lonelier she gets when they are away.

## Discussion Question 1

In Chapters 8 and 9, Sara talks of being a princess, a soldier, and a prisoner. Discuss the typical qualities of all three and how they relate to Sara in these two chapters. Be sure to use examples from the book to justify your response.





## Discussion Question 2

Discuss Melchisedec's human characteristics. Do you agree with Sara that he is a person? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

What do Lottie and Ermengarde think when they first see Sara's new room and how does she change their opinions of it?

## Vocabulary

coldly, labors, exacting, commissions, deserted, shabbier, addressing, muffled, unsteady, injustice, muffled, doubtfully, mounting, aghast, apologetic, timid, shuffled



# Chapter 10: The Indian Gentleman

## Summary

Chapter 10: The Indian Gentleman told of Sara's observances out of the house. As a servant, she was often sent on errands all around town. She watched people and created stories or characteristics that she associated with them. One family she observed was nicknamed by Sara as the Large Family. The family had eight children and the mother and father. She liked seeing the kids welcome their father home from work. She assigned them the last name of Montmorency and gave each person in the family a different first name. One day near Christmas, one of the young boys gave Sara a sixpence because he felt like she was a poor girl. Sara realized then that she looked like the beggars to whom she once gave money. She tried not to take it, but he insisted. As the family left, the boy's older sisters chided him for giving the girl his money. They said she did not speak like a beggar. From then on, they referred to Sara as "The-little-girl-who-is-not-a-beggar." Sara took the coin home and pushed a hole in it. She added a ribbon into the hole and wore the coin around her neck as a sign of affection to the Large Family.

Sara talked to Emily about the best way to deal with people. She said that when she is insulted, she chooses not answer. She said being quiet shows the insulter that she is stronger for being able to contain her rage. Sara tried to comfort herself with talks to her doll, but when Emily did not answer, it made her sad and lonely. She tried to pretend that Emily was a good witch that took care of her. One night, after working hard in the cold rain that day and not getting any food, Sara announced to her doll that she would die soon. Emily just looked at her. Sara started sobbing and knocked Emily onto the floor out of frustration. After crying for a while, Sara regained composure and picked Emily up, kissed her, and put her back on her chair. Sara looked out her window and wished someone would move next door because the attic windows in the two houses were so close.

One day while out running errands, Sara noticed a moving truck next door. She watched some of the furniture get moved in and saw an elaborate table and chairs, an Oriental screen and other lavish items that reminded her of India. She had a weird feeling but thought the things probably belonged to a nice person. Knowing that someone next door had a fondness for India made Sara feel as though she had a friend. That night, she saw the father from the Large Family visit the house. Becky told her that night that a rich Indian man moved into the house and the father from the Large Family was his lawyer. A few weeks later, Sara learned that the man was not married and had no children. He had bad health and was not happy for some reason. During a lesson one day, Lottie told Sara she saw a yellow man and asked if he was Chinese. Sara told her no and got her focused again on her lesson.



## Analysis

Sara uses her imagination to create names for a family she has observed, the Large Family. Even when her father was alive, her family was small, so she is enthralled by this big group of children. She is most happy to see them greet their father after work, something she wishes she could do with her own father. Using her imagination, Sara makes a connection with the Large Family. The children from the Large Family also make a unique connection with Sara. When the youngest boy gives Sara a sixpence, the older girls chastise him for giving it to her because she is not a beggar. Sara is an oxymoron -- she looks like a beggar and does the work of a beggar, but does not sound or conduct herself like a beggar. Ironically, the Large Family children assign her a nickname, too. This is a reminder that Sara, although her workload is heavy, is still a child and it foreshadows a future connection between Sara and the family.

Sara breaks down and throws her prized possession, Emily, out of frustration. Sara desperately needs someone, anyone, to care about her and to care for her. On the day she had worked so hard in the bad weather with nothing to eat, she takes her frustration out on Emily. She is surprised by her actions and is immediately remorseful. However, she does not dwell on her emotional slip or the fact that she broke a small piece off of her doll. When she regains her composure, she immediately personifies the doll again and tells her she knows she cannot help her lot in life, being a doll. In this way, Emily and Sara are a lot alike. Neither of them can help their lot in life. Sara did not ask to be an orphan and Emily did not ask to be a doll. In taking her frustration out on Emily, Sara got a small taste of what it would be like to be Miss Minchin. The difference between Miss Minchin and Sara, however, is that Sara immediately feels remorse and picks Emily up to care for her. Miss Minchin is not remorseful in anything and she cares for no one but herself.

A new neighbor adds to the rising action of the story's plot. At the very least, Sara has something different to see and pretend about during her lonely times in her room. She hopes to someday see a person in the attic room next door because it simulates contact with another person. Plus, the man next door has a connection with the Large Family and India, so she already feels he is a kindred spirit. Between her own observations and what she hears from Lottie and Becky, Sara pieces together that the new neighbor is also sickly.

### Discussion Question 1

Discuss the Montmorency children's reasoning for referring to Sara as "The-little-girl-who-is-not-a-beggar." How is Sara different from a beggar? Why does she not just introduce herself to the children?

### Discussion Question 2

Discuss how important seeing furnishings representing Indian culture are to Sara.



## Discussion Question 3

Explain what Sara means when she says "There's nothing so strong as rage, except what makes you hold it in -- that's stronger" (123).

## Vocabulary

parcel, forlorn, glimpse, stout, perambulators, sash, cloak. affluence, evermore, rosy, bobbed, strove, fancifulness, sneering, tempest, presently



# Chapter 11: Ram Dass and Chapter 12: The Other Side of the Wall

## Summary

In Chapter 11: Ram Dass. As Sara admired the sunset from her attic window, someone in the house next door was doing the same. He was a Lascar, an Indian man-servant, named Ram Dass. He smiled and she felt comforted. The man's monkey jumped from the Lascar's window into Sara's. She spoke to Ram Dass in his own language, which surprised the man. He answered that the monkey would not bite, but he was hard to catch. She allowed Ram Dass to come to her room to catch the monkey. He steadily walked from his roof to hers and into her room through the window to retrieve the monkey. While in the room, he noticed the bare walls and how little she had in the way of comfort, but he did not treat her any differently. He told Sara that the monkey entertained his ill boss, thanked her, then left. Sara was so happy to see someone from her homeland. Even though she was English and French, India was the only home she knew until she attended Miss Minchin's school. She enjoyed being treated with respect from Ram Dass and knew she would never again get that respect from Miss Minchin. She realized that as she grew up, Miss Minchin would still expect her to teach and continue working hard. Sara reminded herself that she could still be a princess inside and that it is a bigger triumph to act like a princess in trying times than when times are good.

Sara often reminded herself to act like a princess and even entertained the idea that a real princess could order Miss Minchin's execution, but would be too kind to do so to such a stupid, lowly creature. While putting up the French books after tutoring the young girls, Sara thought of the story of Alfred the Great. He burned cakes and then was beaten by a herdsman's wife. Sara considered how scared the woman must have been when she found out that she had abused a king. Sara imagined discovering she really was a prince and that Miss Minchin would feel like the herder's wife. Snapping out of this daydream startled Sara and she gave a small chuckle. Miss Minchin heard and asked what she was laughing at. Sara replied that she was just thinking, and Miss Minchin reminded her to say "Beg my pardon." Sara said she would beg her pardon for laughing if it was rude, but would never beg her pardon for thinking. Jessie and Lavinia were in the room with other students and heard this argument. Miss Minchin scolded Sara for thinking in front of them and demanded to know what thought made Sara chuckle. Finally, Sara very politely said that she was thinking that Miss Minchin did not know what she was doing, and what if she really was a princess and someday Miss Minchin would regret the way she treated her. Miss Minchin sent Sara to her room. On her way out, Sara bowed and asked to be excused for laughing if it was impolite. Jessie said she would not be surprised at all if Sara did indeed turn out to be a princess.

In Chapter 12: The Other Side of the Wall, Sara wondered what happened in the house next door. Sara told Ermengarde she had adopted the old Indian man as a friend even



though she had never met him. She liked the Large Family because they seemed so happy, but liked the Indian gentleman because he seemed so ill and sad. He reminded her of her own father, even though she had never met him. In the kitchen, Sara learned that the man was an Englishman who moved to India, got sick and had some business and personal troubles. She found out that his business troubles turned out okay and that he would recover from his illness. Still, she noticed he looked sad and troubled.

The Large Family children often visited the neighbor. The narrator gave a glimpse into their visits. Janet, one of the girls from the Large Family, told the gentleman, Mr. Carrisford, a story about the Little-girl-who-is-not-a-beggar. Mr. Carrisford was very interested in the story, especially when Ram Dass told him of rescuing the monkey from the attic next door. Mr. Carrisford said he felt bad that a little girl would live in such conditions and wondered how many others in the neighborhood were doing the same while he enjoyed great wealth, most of it not even his. Mr. Carrisford wondered if the girl he was searching for might be reduced to the horrible conditions experienced by the girl next door. His lawyer, Mr. Carmichael, said he was going to Moscow to check on an adopted girl to see if she was the girl he was looking for. He asked Mr. Carrisford if he was sure Ralph Crewe's daughter had been sent to school in Paris. With the excitement of the diamond mines and then his sudden illness, Mr. Carrisford could not remember. He only recalled that the girl's mother was French. Mr. Carrison said he must find the girl to take care of her and to give her the inheritance she was due. Mr. Carrisford said he was ashamed for running away instead of facing Crewe to tell him he had lost his fortune in the mines. Mr. Carmichael pointed out that the man ran away because he was sick and under extreme mental torture. When Mr. Carrison finally got out of the hospital, he learned that Sara's dad had died but the mine investment paid off. He began searching for Crewe's daughter, knowing she had no family or money. Mr. Carmichael assured him they would continue searching for the girl.

## Analysis

Ram Dass notices Sara's poor living conditions, but continues to treat her with dignity and respect when he goes to her room to retrieve his monkey in Chapter 11: Ram Dass. The narrator's choice to note that he sees the room's poor conditions foreshadows that something will come of this recognition in the future. Sara's attitude and her appearance were contradictory, an oxymoron. the nickname given to her by the Large Family, the Little-girl-who-is-not-a-beggar, reinforces the oxymoron. Although her toes protrude through her old shoes, she carries herself like a real princess. Even when she is scolded or demeaned, she holds her head high and continues to look people in the eye, something many servants did not do.

In reading the argument in Chapter 11: Ram Dass between Sara and Miss Minchin, the reader might think Sara is being antagonistic and intentionally aggravating the teacher. Instead, she is standing up for the idea of justice, like she would expect a real princess to do. When she politely and calmly tells Miss Minchin exactly what she was thinking and that she will not apologize for thinking, she solidifies her image as a princess to the other students, with the exception probably of Lavinia. Jessie speaks up and says that



she would not be surprised at all if Sara did turn out to be a princess, foreshadowing a happy ending to the story.

The story that Sara recalls about Alfred the Great alludes to an English folklore story about King Alfred. As the story goes, Alfred flees from the Vikings and takes refuge in a house with a woman who is baking bread. Alfred is supposed to watch the bread, but instead he worries about his kingdom. When he burns the bread, he is severely scolded by the woman, who has no idea he is the king.

In Chapter 12: The Other Side of the Wall, it is ironic that the conversation in the house next door is actually about her. The reader learns that the man next door is looking for Sara and has been for the past two years. He feels obligated to fill the role of her father and wants to give her the inheritance she is due. The rising action of the plot is nearing its climax with this new revelation. The information about Mr. Carrisford's health shown in Chapter 12 also helps the reader see that the man can be trusted, foreshadowing the fact that his trust will be important later in the story. Knowing that Sara has created warm feelings for the man already without even meeting him, along with her fondness for the Large Family, leaves the reader to believe that she will trust them when and if the time arises. The problem remains, however, that the people searching for her are on the other side of the wall as the chapter title suggests. While Mr. Carrisford is interested in stories about the Little-girl-who-is-not-a-beggar and the girl in the attic next door, they have no way of knowing their two-year search could end with a simple conversation with a girl next door. This adds suspense to the plot.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is it so important to Sara to act like a princess?

## Discussion Question 2

Why does Sara say she will not apologize for thinking? What does the comment indicate about the treatment of servants?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Mr. Carrisford's problems. If he will recover from his illness and did not lose all his money in the mines, what is the cause of his anxiety? Why does it worry him so much?

## Vocabulary

jutted, enclosing, subdued, native, chattering, seldom, indulgence, hastily, liberty, admonish, devour, peril, harassed, sneer



# Chapter 13: One of the Populace and Chapter 14: What Melchisedec Heard and Saw

## Summary

In Chapter 13: One of the Populace. Sara was sent on an errand on a horrible winter day. Her tattered clothes were soaked. On top of it all, Miss Minchin chose to punish her by not letting her eat dinner. The next morning, Sara was also denied breakfast, but she found a fourpenny piece in the mud that had been there for some time. On her way into a bakery, she noticed a girl younger and in far worse shape than herself. She went into the bakery and asked the owner if she had lost a fourpenny piece. The woman told her no. Sara asked to buy four pieces of bread. Recognizing just how hungry she looked, the woman gave her six pieces. Sara pointed out the mistake but the woman insisted she take the extra rolls. On the way out, Sara kept one roll and gave the other five to the hungry little girl. The bakery owner noticed and was surprised and impressed with Sara's act of kindness. She went out to talk to the beggar girl and invited her in for more food, wishing Sara had not hurried away so she could give her more as well. As she walked back to the school, Sara imagined that the bun was magic and each bite was a full meal. She slowed down to look at the Large Family as she walked by their house. She heard them say goodbye to their father, who was leaving to go to Moscow to look for a little girl. As Sara walked back into the school, she wondered who the little girl was that the father was going to search for in Moscow.

In Chapter 14: What Melchisedec Heard and Saw. Ram Dass and another man entered Sara's room through her skylight while she was gone. They scared Melchisedec out of the room. Ram Dass said he secretly checked on Sara every night through the skylight to make sure she was safe. He told the other man about how she tamed the sparrows and befriended the rat. He also explained that another girl came to visit when she could and that the school owner was evil and treated Sara horribly. The other man took a tablet and pencil from his pocket and made some notes about things Sara's room needed. Ram Dass revealed that he heard Sara one night pretending to live in a grand, comfortable room. He told Mr. Carrison about it, and he wanted to give those things to the girl. They planned to sneak into Sara's room while she slept to redecorate her room.

## Analysis

Chapter 13: One of the Populace shows Sara's princess-like generosity at work again and in Chapter 14: What Melchisedec Heard and Saw, the reader learns of a plan to treat the girl to a more comfortable environment.





In Chapter 13: One of the Populace, the narrator says Miss Minchin chose to punish Sara. The narrator does not tell of any infraction Sara made, so the reader can assume that Miss Minchin deprived the girl of dinner just to be mean. Depriving her of breakfast the next day is another act of pure meanness. The reader sees Sara as both kind and honest in this chapter. After finding a coin stuck deep in the mud, Sara still made an attempt to find its owner. Her honest effort impressed the bakery owner and she gave Sara two extra pieces of bread. After realizing that Sara gave five of the pieces to a young beggar girl, the bakery owner went out to speak with the little girl, which is out of character for the rest of the book. Throughout the book, people have limited their time speaking to beggars or servants. The fact that this woman goes out and invites the girl inside, foreshadows something that will be revealed later in the story.

As the Large Family children tell their father goodbye as he leaves hoping to find Captain Crewe's daughter, the oldest girls wonder about the Little-girl-who-is-not-a-beggar. Sara wonders about the little girl for which the Large Family father is searching. Both are instances of situational irony, since the Little-girl-who-is-not-a-beggar, Sara, is actually the girl their father hopes to find.

In Chapter 14: What Melchisedec Heard and Saw, the reader learns that the rich neighbor wants to take care of the girl in the attic, Sara. Ram Dass, who knows the girl is quite different from the others, took a liking to the girl when she spoke to him in his native language. He watches out over her to make sure she is safe at night. He is the first adult to acknowledge how wretched Miss Minchin is. The notion of Ram Dass sneaking into her room to redecorate while she sleeps also adds suspense. He is certain it can be done, but the other man has his doubts, leaving the reader to also question the probability of the task.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the importance of charity to the populace to Sara and discuss two examples of it in Chapter 13.

## Discussion Question 2

Sara pretends a lot. Why does she not pretend that she is the little girl for which the neighbor has been searching?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Mr. Carrisford want to give Sara new comforts if he does not know who she is? Use examples from the book to justify your points. Why do he and Ram Dass prepare to carry out the plan at night as she sleeps instead of during the day when she is gone?

## Vocabulary

alluring, tropical, forlorn, tiresome, downtrodden, jostled, ragged, brougham, portmanteau, furtively, reconnoiter, aperture, precipitately



# Chapter 15: The Magic

## Summary

In Chapter 15: The Magic, Sara was late getting home from errands after having to trudge through mud. When Miss Minchin asked why she was late, Sara told her it was because her shoes are so bad that she slipped a lot and it was difficult to walk. Miss Minchin dismissed her concerns. Sara asked the cook if she could have something to eat, but was told that tea was already finished. Sara was given old, hard bread from the pantry. Ermengarde stopped by to visit her that night and commented on how tired Sara looked. Ermengarde took Sara a stack of new books sent by her father. Ermengarde told Sara that Miss Minchin was suspicious of her improved French lessons and of Lottie's improved math.

While the girls talked, Ram Dass watched over them through the sky light. They heard a noise and realized Miss Minchin was in Becky's room accusing her of stealing meat pies. She slapped Becky hard enough for Sara and Ermengarde to hear. After she was sure Miss Minchin was gone, Sara told Ermengarde that the cook takes things then blames Becky. She said that Becky was often so hungry she ate crusts from the ash barrel. Ermengarde asked if Sara was ever hungry. Finally, Sara confided that she was starving. Ermengarde felt bad for not realizing it sooner and Sara said she did not want her to know. She showed Ermengarde the sixpence hanging around her neck that was given to her by the little boy who thought she was a beggar.

Ermengarde remembered that her aunt sent her a box of food. She said she would go get it so Sara and Becky could eat. They knocked on the wall to invite Becky over and Ermengarde went to get the box. Becky and Sara used a shawl and old handkerchiefs to set a table for the special event. Just as they were finishing their first piece of cake, they heard someone coming up the steps. Miss Minchin swung the door open hard and said Lavinia was right. She slapped Becky and told her to get out in the morning. She punished Sara by withholding breakfast, dinner and supper from the on the next day. When Sara told her that she had not had dinner or supper that day already, Miss Minchin said that was even better and perhaps she would learn her place. Miss Minchin sent Ermengarde back to her room with all her books and food and told her that her father would be upset to know she was hanging out with servants. Sara stared at her and Miss Minchin demanded to know what she was thinking. Sara said she was wondering what her own father would say if he knew where she was that night. Miss Minchin shook her then slammed the door as she left. Tired of trying to pretend she was anything other than tired and hungry, Sara gave up and went to sleep.

Sara slept soundly but awakened quickly, but kept her eyes closed. She did not realize that the sky light latch was what awakened her. She did not want to get out of bed because she was nice and warm. She assumed she was dreaming. She dreamed she felt nice, thick quilts on her, too. Although she did not want to wake up, her eyes began to open anyway. She saw a warm fire in the grate, a kettle, a folding chair and table,



dishes, food, rug, a teapot, new books, a silk robe and slippers, and a satin quilt. She still thought it was a dream. She found a note that said only "To the little girl in the attic. From a friend." Sara burst into tears of happiness for having a friend. She went next door and woke Becky up to share the warmth with her. Sara told her the magic had come while they slept.

## Analysis

The hunger and cold are taking their toll on Sara, but still she tries to be brave and proud. When Ermengarde actually hears the accusations from Miss Minchin to Becky, she begins to consider hunger as a problem for Sara for the first time. Sara has always helped her, but she never once considered Sara might need help herself. The girl feels ashamed, but Sara explains that her pride kept her from telling her friend of her hunger. This pride, however, is not considered hubris, an excessive pride. Sara had just determined not to complain because it was not princess-like to do so. Ermengarde had already brought Sara food for her mind (the books), and by sharing her care package food, she also nourishes her body and soul.

When Sara shows Ermengarde the sixpence she wears around her neck, the reader realizes that she did not spend it in Chapter 13 when she wanted to buy bread from the bakery. She never even considered it at the time. Instead of valuing the coin as money, she values it for sentimental reasons. It represents the kindness of others and gives her a connection with the Large Family. She treats it like it is a family heirloom even though she does not know the family.

The physical abuse inflicted upon the girls in this chapter is sobering. Becky gets slapped twice and Sara gets shaken. This is the first time Miss Minchin has laid a hand on Sara, indicating a real change in Miss Minchin feeling superior, finally, to Sara. Sara's lack of food and her fatigue make it easier for Miss Minchin to abuse her. For the first time, Sara has a tough time shaking off the feeling of being belittled, so she decides to sleep it off instead.

This could not have been a better time for Ram Dass to sneak in to work his magic on Sara's room. She had the basic comforts provided to her during her sleep and she awakened to new-found hope and childlike reassurance in her belief in magic. After all, she is still just a child even though she is expected to endure so much work. While she did not go to sleep feeling very princess-like, she certainly wakes up feeling that way. Having a satin robe and slippers along with nice, warm bed coverings make her feel like royalty. Instead of enjoying it all by herself, she runs to Becky to share the warmth with her.

Finding the note makes Sara burst into tears of happiness. She says she is happy to have a friend, someone who cares for her. She already has several friends -- Becky, Lottie and Ermengarde. The friend who sent the magic, however, looks after her. Generally, Sara finds herself in the position of looking after her friends. She cries tears of happiness and relief to know that someone knows and understands her plight and



wants to do something kind for her to make it better. Sara has not had anyone care for her since her father's death.

## Discussion Question 1

Explain why Becky was too scared to speak when Sara went to get her to share her new room with her.

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss why, after finding the girls in the attic having a "party," Miss Minchin told Becky to leave the next morning but did not tell Sara the same.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the social differences between students and servants at Miss Minchin's school. How does Sara fit into those cultural expectations?

## Vocabulary

heaved, wicked, vulgar, affairs, coverlet, conjugations, sums, sufficiently, famine, pillaged, chatelaine, faltered, napery, darting, intemperate, insolent



# Chapter 16: The Visitor

## Summary

Sara and Becky sat down together and feasted on hot soup, sandwiches and muffins left by the visitor. Sara gave Becky blankets to take to her room, too. The next morning, everyone in school knew that Ermengarde had been punished, Sara was in trouble and Becky was to leave before breakfast. The kitchen staff, however, knew it was hard to find a scullery maid who could work so hard for so little, so they knew Becky would not be kicked out right away. The school girls knew that Sara would not be turned out on the streets because it would reflect poorly on the school.

Jessie told Lavinia it was mean of her to tell on the girls. Lavinia said Lottie accidentally told her that they occasionally met Sara in the attic. All the girls, especially Lavinia, expected Sara to be especially disgraced when she arrived to work in the schoolroom that morning. Jessie said it was horrible that Miss Minchin was starving the girl. Miss Minchin expected Sara to be pale with hunger and red-eyed from crying all night. Instead, Sara entered smiling, with a spring in her step and color in her cheeks. Miss Minchin, shocked, reminded her that she was in trouble and should act like it. It was hard to be upset after the big surprise that had been given to Sara though. Sara knew that if Miss Minchin saw her new things, that they would all be taken away. Even so, Sara would at least know someone cared about her and she desperately wanted to thank her new unknown friend. She endured another cold, sloppy day of outdoor errands and knew that she could make it until breakfast on the meal that the visitor had left for her the night before. As she re-entered her room at the end of the day, she worried that her room might have been stripped by Miss Minchin. Instead, the Magic had been back, leaving enough cups and plates for her and Becky. The walls were covered with fabric and cushions added to a wooden box made it into a sofa. She knocked for Becky to come enjoy it. When Sara went to bed, she realized she had a new soft mattress and big fluffy pillows. Her old bed was moved to Becky's room, which was more comfortable than the couch on which she usually slept. Almost every day, something new happened by Magic for Sara.

Miss Minchin commented to Miss Amelia about how well Sara was looking and Miss Amelia said she had started to look like a half-starved crow. Miss Minchin took offense to the comment and said that she had always given the girl plenty to eat. Miss Minchin called Sara's well-being an act of defiance. She said any other child would be humbled by her lot in life, but that Sara seemed like she was a little princess. Miss Amelia reminded her about the time Sara said she wondered what Miss Minchin would do if she discovered she really was a princess, but Miss Minchin denied remembering the incident.

Sara was sent to open the door for a delivery. She set two packages on the hall table and was examining the address when Miss Minchin came in. She told her to stop staring at them and to take them to the girl to whom they were sent. Sara told her the



packages were sent to her. They were addressed to "The Little Girl in the right-hand attic." Miss Minchin demanded she open them. There were comfortable, pretty clothes, shoes, stockings, hat, gloves, an umbrella, and a new coat. The note said that the clothing would be replaced when it was necessary, Miss Minchin was irritated and worried. She kindly sent Sara up to change and told her to join the other girls in the classroom to work on her studies. When Sara entered the classroom, Jessie mentioned that she thought, perhaps, Sara had come into a fortune and that she always knew something would happen for Sara. Miss Minchin called Sara to her old seat of honor. That night as they ate dinner in Sara's room, Sara told Becky she wanted to know who her special friend was, but did not want to disrespect his wishes if he did not want to be discovered. She wrote him a note and left it on the table for her friend. She signed it "The Little Girl in the Attic."

The next evening, she and Becky saw the neighbor's monkey on the skylight. It was late, so Sara kept the monkey in her room overnight. She told the monkey he needed to be with his family because she was not his real relation. He slept on her bed curled up at her feet all night. She said she would return it to the neighbor the next day.

## Analysis

Sara's life improves greatly with regular meals and, naturally, she shares with Becky. The problem is that the girls do not look downtrodden enough for Miss Minchin, who does not know about Sara's secret friend initially. The morning after Becky and Sara were scolded, rumors fly around the school, but neither girl appears too distraught. While Jessie is a gossip, she still believes there is more to Sara than meets the eye and thinks Lavinia is mean for telling on Becky, Sara, and Ermengarde. Jessie serves as the foil to Lavinia's spiteful character and provides a reminder to the other characters that Sara might possibly be a princess after all. When Miss Amelia reminds Miss Minchin of the conversation in which Sara wondered how Miss Minchin would act should she discover she really is a princess, Miss Minchin denies remembering the event at all. She really does, though, and all these contradictions with Sara are getting into her head and making her wonder about the girl.

Miss Minchin describes Sara's improving appearance an act of defiance. She knows she has done everything to break Sara's spirit but nothing seems to do it. She was sure that depriving her of meals for a day and a half and shaking her during their argument had done it. But the next morning, Sara was magically different. The truth is that Sara was broken after that, but awaking to a magical room full of food and warmth gave her new strength to continue and to keep her positive attitude. When Miss Minchin sees that Sara is receiving packages of clothes from someone, she considers Sara's remark about how she would react if Sara did turn out to be a real princess. In a story where the antagonist saw the evil of her ways and wanted to change, Miss Minchin would be remorseful; but that is not the case here. Even at this point, Miss Minchin is still only concerned with money. She begins supposing notions about Sara's circumstances and wants to be in a good position, and liked by Sara, should this charitable friend ever make himself known. For Miss Minchin, it is really all about making more money and



increasing her school's reputation. She does not take Sara back into the classroom because she is remorseful; she takes her back in hoping to gain favor with Sara's apparently rich secret friend.

When Sara writes her secret friend a note, she signs it as anonymously as the friend did -- "The Little Girl in the Attic." Maybe this is her way of letting the friend know she understands his desire to remain anonymous. Maybe she simply signs it that way because that is how he addresses things to her. Maybe she is too proud to admit that she, Sara Crewe, needs help. Regardless of her reasoning for using that signature, the important thing to Sara is that she finally finds a way to say thank you to her kind, unknown friend. The reader, however, knows that if she had just simply signed her real name, the neighbor's search would be over.

While things seem to be working out better for Sara with Miss Minchin, the story still is not resolved because the man next door has not found the girl he has been searching for during the last two years. The rising force is somewhat stagnant as far as that plot line until the monkey gets out of his house and goes to Sara's window. When she brings him inside, the reader knows she now has an excuse to visit the neighbor and the possibility to reach the plot's climax. Sara's comment to the monkey, that he should be with his family because she is not his real relation, offers suspense and foreshadowing that perhaps the two do have a relation in common that is not yet known.

## Discussion Question 1

Other than just being mean, why is it so important to Miss Minchin that Sara looks tattered and hungry? Why does she suddenly invite Sara to attend class again?

## Discussion Question 2

Miss Minchin hates Sara for putting on princess airs, but Becky never does that. So, why does Miss Minchin treat her child servants so poorly?

## Discussion Question 3

Why is it so important to Sara to thank her secret friend? What does this say about her personality?

## Vocabulary

lent, bounden, slave, priggish, bewilderment, obstinate, merrily, concealed, sneer, vulgar, thither, hither, relation





# Chapter 17: "It is the Child" and Chapter 18: "I Tried Not to Be"

## Summary

In Chapter 17: "It is the Child." Janet, Nora, and Donald from the Large Family visited Mr. Carrisford while waiting for their father to arrive back from Moscow. Donald said that the Little-girl-who-isn't-a-beggar had new clothes and perhaps she had been lost but someone found her. Mr. Carmichael told Mr. Carrisford that the girl in Moscow was not the one they set out to find. Mr. Carrisford insisted they start a new plan to find the lost girl right away. Mr. Carmichael suggested searching in London and suggested starting next door. Mr. Carrison said there was a girl there who was not a pupil and was very unlike his friend Ralph Crewe. Just then, Ram Dass announced that the servant child from the attic next door stopped by to return the monkey. He asked Mr. Carrison if he wanted to meet her, and he did.

Sara met Mr. Carrison and asked if she should give the monkey back to the Lascar. When asked how she knew about Lascars, Sara said she was born in India. He asked if she was a pupil at Miss Minchin's school, but she said she was not exactly sure what she was. She had been a pupil but now a servant. Mr. Carrison was excited to hear the news and asked Mr. Carmichael to interview her for more information. Within a few minutes they knew her identity and she knew about their two-year search for her.

In Chapter 18, it was the mother from the Large Family, Mrs. Carmichael, who explained the situation to Sara. She said that Mr. Carrisford was not wicked and did not steal Captain Crewe's money. She explained how the mine investment had looked weak and it drove Mr. Carrisford crazy with grief. He contracted brain fever and almost died. Before he could recover, Captain Crewe died. As soon as Mr. Carrisford knew of his death, he began searching for Sara. She explained that he had been searching for her in France because he had been following false clues. Mrs. Carmichael said that when he saw Sara pass by the house in tattered clothes and looking sad, he wanted to do something to help her. She revealed that Mr. Carrisford had been her secret friend all along. He did those things for a needy girl for little lost Sara Crewe's sake, Mrs. Carmichael explained.

Sara thanked Mr. Carrisford profusely for all the nice gifts he had given her in the attic. She was so happy to find her friend that she kissed his hand over and over again. Mr. Carrisford decided that Sara should never go back to Miss Minchin's, and that Mr. Carmichael would stop by to tell her. Just then, Miss Minchin stopped by to apologize for Sara's intrusion and to retrieve her. She told her to return to the school at once and that she would be severely punished. Mr. Carrisford said Sara was not going. Mr. Carmichael explained the situation to Miss Minchin. The fact that the diamond mines were real and had paid off fabulously was a slap in Miss Minchin's face. Realizing that Sara was suddenly rich, she appealed to Mr. Carrisford and Sara to have the girl return



to school. When they refused, Miss Minchin told Mr. Carrisford that Sara was an ungrateful liar. She spitefully told Sara that she supposed she felt like a princess again. Sara said she had tried not to act like anything else, even when she had been so cold and hungry. Ram Dass led Miss Minchin to the door.

Back at the school, Miss Minchin lamented her problem to Miss Amelia. Miss Amelia told her sister that she knew she had worked Sara too hard for a child and only half-fed her. Miss Amelia continued with a hysterical rant, telling her sister she was mean, selfish, and only after wealth. She said that by being mean to Sara, she lost a good student and could lose all her students if Sara talks about her treatment there. To try to calm Miss Amelia, Miss Minchin applied smelling salts to her instead of fighting with her. The sisters' commotion continued all day and into the night.

When the students gathered in the schoolroom before bedtime, Ermengarde shared with them a letter written to her by Sara. They stayed up until midnight re-reading Sara's letter. Ermengarde was excited to have a play date with Sara at her new home the next day. Becky went upstairs a little earlier to enjoy looking at Sara's attic room one more time. She had hoped all the items would still be there. Ram Dass surprised her by meeting her there. He had a fire waiting for her and supper on the table along with a note from Sara. He also informed her that starting the next day, she would be Sara's attendant and would live at the house with them.

## Analysis

Chapter 17: "It is the Child" is considerably shorter than the next chapter, showing, ironically, just how little time it took to find Sara once they spoke to her. Even Donald notes that he should have asked her name when he gave her the sixpence. Just a little conversation is all it took to end Mr. Carrison's search. His comment about Sara's new clothes and how, perhaps she had been lost then found offers ironic foreshadowing that comes true later in the chapter.

There are many times in the story that Sara could have introduced herself -- when Donald gave her the coin, when the father was leaving to look for a lost girl, when Ram Dass met her the first time, and when she signed the note to her secret friend. She does not identify herself simply because no one asked her name. Sara's situation as a child servant makes communication difficult for two reasons -- the culture dictates that children only speak when they are spoken to, and the same is true for servants. A child servant, then, is less likely to be engaged in conversation outside of her workplace. Sara knows and understands this social norm because she does not interact with the children from the Large Family in all the times she passes by and sees them outside.

When Mr. Carrison asks Sara if she is a student at Miss Minchin's school, Sara does not know how to reply. Miss Minchin recently invited her back into the classroom after she received a new set of clothing from the secret friend, but she still sleeps in the attic. Sara is confused about her role at the school, but this confusion and her attempt to explain it is what leads to the discovery that she is the lost Crewe girl, the story's climax.



In Chapter 18: "I Tried Not to Be." Sara spends very little time with the motherly Mrs. Carmichael and rushes to spend time with Mr. Carrisford instead. She has not grown up with a mother, so she is naturally drawn more to the man who was her father's friend. From her father's letters, she knew what great friends they had been and she sees many resemblances of her father in him. Hearing the story about the search for her from Mrs. Carmichael, however, solidifies to Sara that she can trust the man and that she is not wicked or evil as she believed from what she previously knew about her father's circumstances.

In this chapter of falling action, the reader sees many previous instances of foreshadowing come to fruition. Sara felt a connection with the old man, Mr. Carrison, before she ever met him. She knew they shared a connection with India and even with diamond mines. She knew he had become sick with a fever like her father had, but he survived. Mr. Carrisford, likewise, felt a kindred spirit with the girl long before he knew her name. He felt sorry for her and decided to help her because he could not find the Sara Crewe for which he searched. Ironically, the help he gave to the little girl in the attic in the name of Sara Crewe actually did help Sara Crewe.

Mr. Carrisford knew all that Miss Minchin had put Sara through because Ram Dass watched over her and reported back to him. He knew she was an evil woman and did not want Sara to have to deal with her any more. Miss Minchin and her entire staff, including some of the students, often mocked Sara after her father died about his diamond mine investment, so realizing that Sara's fortune came from those mines was a dose of irony that really upset Miss Minchin. When she realized she could not talk Mr. Carrisford into sending Sara back to her school, Mr. Carmichael suggested she ask Sara, because Mr. Carrisford would not deny her. This puts Miss Minchin in the position of begging Sara to return to the school. Miss Minchin tries to sway her by reminding her that her dear old father chose that school just for her. Knowing that Miss Minchin did not care much for what her dear father would have wanted when she was suddenly penniless, Sara said no. Angered by begging for nothing, Miss Minchin makes the snide remark about Sara feeling like a princess again. Sara explains that she always tried to act like one, even when she was cold and hungry. It makes Miss Minchin angry that Sara had been so kind and good, so hard-working without complaining through all the trials she made the young girl endure. She is not remorseful, but worried instead that Sara's story could result in parents withdrawing their students from the school.

Sara's good fortune, the fact that she had been an heiress all along, empowers Miss Amelia to speak out against her sister. Miss Minchin, for the first time, tends to her sister instead of arguing with her, not so much because she thinks Miss Ameila is right, but to keep the commotion to a minimum. Still, the students realize something is happening. It is fitting that Ermengarde, who the other students seldom took time to talk with, is the one that delivers the news of Sara's good fortune. Again, the diamond mine irony stands out in the story for Jessie, who all along wanted Sara to prove to be a princess, and to Lavinia, who made fun of Sara for the diamond mine tales.

In keeping with the princess archetype, Sara not only invites Ermengarde for play time the next day, she makes sure Becky is fed that night and will have a job with her the



next day. Working for Sara will be nothing like working for Miss Minchin and the reader knows Becky's life will be greatly enriched in her new surroundings.

## Discussion Question 1

In Chapter 17: "It is the Child," Sara very quickly trusts a man she has never met, one whom she thought stole all her father's money. Why does she trust him now?

## Discussion Question 2

In Chapter 18: "I Tried Not to Be," Miss Minchin does not express remorse for the way she treated Sara. What emotions does she experience and what do they say about her role as the antagonist in this story?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Miss Amelai's rant and how Miss Minchin reacts to it. Why is the rant significant and how does it change the sisters' relationship?

## Vocabulary

journey, pitiful, salaaming, concealed, dwelt, haggard, neglected, kneel, sympathies, inquiry, astonish, uttered, boarder, interfere, sordid, salts, sahib, agile



# Chapter 19: Anne

## Summary

In Chapter 19: Anne, Sara and Uncle Tom (Mr. Carrisford) told their story to the children in the Large Family. Sara and Uncle Tom became great friends and he enjoyed taking care of his best friend's daughter. One night, Sara was quiet, thinking about the little girl at the bakery who had been so hungry. She realized she had forgotten to tell Uncle Tom the story. Sara asked if she could make arrangements with the bakery to feed the hungry children and pay for it with her money. Uncle Tom thought it was a great idea and told her to take care of it the next morning.

The carriage pulled up to get Sara just as Miss Minchin was looking out her window. She saw Sara, nicely dressed and wearing warm furs, get into Uncle Tom's carriage with Becky, who was also respectfully dressed and looking healthy. They were on their way to the visit the baker. Miss Minchin did not like seeing them fare so well.

Sara introduced herself to the baker and thanked her for giving her the six pieces of bread instead of the four that she had enough money to buy. The baker remembered her because she gave five of the six buns to a hungry little girl. She happily agreed to Sara's plan. Sara learned that the baker told the little girl to come back anytime she was hungry. The woman gave her small chores to do in exchange for food. She got to know the little girl and like her so much that she invited her to live with her. The girl's name was Anne. Sara suggested that Anne get to give the hungry children bread because she, too, knew what it meant to be hungry. With arrangements all complete, Sara and Uncle Tom left in their carriage.

## Analysis

Chapter 19: Anne is a brief chapter that brings Sara's story to a close. Even though she and Becky are cared for by Uncle Tom, there is an unresolved matter of taking care of the populace, the hungry children who have no one to care for them. The cause is dear to Sara because she remembers that all children are just the same except for accidents that cause them to have different circumstances. Sara knows she was lucky to have a secret friend to pay for her comforts until she met Uncle Tom. She wants to be a secret friend to children who are in need as well. Sara's idea to pay for their food helps the children and the woman's bakery. It also gives Anne a chance to give back to children with whom she can identify since she will be handing them the bread. Sara and Anne are a lot alike. Both are being cared for by people who are not family members, both know the pain of hard hunger, both know what it is like to have no one to take care of them, and both have happy endings. The story's resolution shows that Sara and Uncle Tom live happily ever after as most stories about princesses end.



In one last glimpse at Miss Minchin, the reader sees that she has not changed. She still despises Sara and her good fortune. Now she also begrudges the fact that Sara took Becky from her and gave her a better life. Seeing both of her former servants looking so healthy and well-dressed still aggravates Miss Minchin. In the end, she remains unchanged and evil.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Compare and contrast the baker to Mr. Carrison (Uncle Tom).

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does it mean with the baker says that Anne has no other name?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Explain how Sara's princess attitude on her hungry day at the baker actually inspired the baker. What was she inspired to do?

## **Vocabulary**

waif, tone, occupants, decent, prophesied, slates, fanciful, hearth



# Characters

## Sara Crewe

Sara Crewe is an only child whose mother died when she was just a baby. Raised and spoiled by her wealthy father, Sara does not act like a spoiled child. Her father describes her as an old-fashioned soul and he loves her clever wit. Sara starts at age seven as a student at Miss Minchin's school, but when her father dies unexpectedly four years later, she finds herself in a kind of indentured servitude at the school.

## Captain Ralph Crewe

Captain Ralph Crewe is a man of great worth who enjoys spending time with his little girl, Sara. It breaks his heart to take her to boarding school, but he always promised his late wife that she would have the best education. He takes her to England for a proper education and tells Miss Minchin not to spare any expense in granting the child's every desire because she was not foolish in wanting things. He dies of jungle fever and business problems when Sara is 11, and she learns about his death the day of her birthday party.

## Emily

Emily is Sara's doll. Sara and her father searched all over London for the perfect doll that would keep Sara company at boarding school. Sara's father also arranged for custom doll clothing to be made for the doll.

## Miss Minchin

Miss Minchin is the head mistress at Sara's boarding school and the antagonist of this story. She is greedy and cares very little about the children enrolled in her school, especially Sara. She puts up with Sara's imaginings until she learns of Captain Crewe's death. At that point, she feels like she put up with the clever child for nothing. She works Sara hard and starves the girl when she becomes a servant in the school.

## Miss Amelia

Miss Amelia is Miss Minchin's foolish sister. She allows Miss Minchin to ridicule her and call her names but makes her inform Sara of her father's death. At the end of the story, however, Miss Amelia has her say and tells her sister what a horrible person she is.



## Lottie

Lottie is four years old when Sara arrives at the school. As the youngest student at the school, it is not unusual for her to throw a tantrum, often screaming that she has no mother. Sara put one of Lottie's tantrums to rest by telling her that she also had no mother. Sara said she would be Lottie's school mother and her doll, Emily, would be Lottie's sister.

## Ermengarde

Ermengarde is plump and not too bright in her studies and the other girls often make jokes at her expense. Ermengarde and Sara become best friends. Their relationship is strained a little when Sara becomes a servant, because she is not sure how to interact with the students since her role shifted.

## Becky

Becky is the scullery maid that lives in the attic room next to Sara's when she becomes a servant. Becky fell asleep in on of Sara's chairs one night and was startled when she discovered Sara was already back in her room. Sara assured it was fine for her to nap in her room and the two become good friends. Becky becomes Sara's assistant once she moves to the house next door.

## Lavinia

Lavinia is the oldest student, at 13, when Sara begins school there. Lavinia is spiteful toward Sara because until Sara arrived, she was the school's star pupil. She often ridicules Sara for pretending to be a princess and even tells Miss Minchin about Sara's late night visits with Ermengarde to get her in trouble.

## Jessie

Jessie is a student at the school. She loves to gossip about Sara, but ultimately does not want anything bad to happen to her. Jessie thinks it was mean of Lavinia to tell on Sara and her friends for their visits. She also says several times that she would not be surprised if Sara did turn out to be a princess, offering a consistent foil to Lavinia's hateful character.

## Mr. Carrisford

Mr. Carrisford was Captain Ralph Crewe's business partner in Indian diamond mines. He was worried about the investment and contracted brain fever that made him very ill. He did not see Ralph Crewe for some time. When he was finally better, he learned that





Crewe had died, leaving his daughter orphaned. Mr. Carrisford immediately began a search for her and was happy to find her to give her the wealth due to her.

## **Mr. Carmichael**

Mr. Carmichael is Mr. Carrisford's lawyer. Before Sara meets him officially, she knows him as the father of the Large Family or as Mr. Montmorency, the name Sara made up for the family. He assists Mr. Carrisford in his search for Captain Ralph Crewe's daughter.

## **Ram Dass**

Ram Dass was a man-servant for Mr. Carrisford. Sara meets him for the first time when they are both admiring the sunset from their respective attic windows. Ram Dass goes to Sara's attic room to retrieve his monkey and sees the horrible living conditions she has. He tells Mr. Carrisford about the girl and the two scheme to make her life more comfortable.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Princess

Reference to a princess throughout this story refers more to wealth than royalty, although for at least Miss Minchin wealth and royalty seem to be one and the same. There are archetypal characteristics of a princess - they are kind, charitable, and thoughtful of others even in their own distress. Sara fits all of these.

In observing the princess as a symbol, it is also important to note that in many literary instances, princesses need rescuing. This is not true when Sara starts Miss Minchin's school, but it certainly becomes true upon her father's death.

## Education

Education is a symbol of wealth and of high society. Parents of Miss Minchin's students paid a good deal of money to enroll them there, evident because of the head mistress' emphasis on money. Sara realizes that not everyone learns the same way and tries to help Ermengarde do better with her lessons. She also believes Becky, the scullery maid, should be allowed to listen to her stories and to fraternize with the students. This shows that Sara believes education is for everyone despite their wealth or lack of it.

## Clothing

Clothing is used as a symbol of status in *The Little Princess*. When Sara arrives at school, Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia are in awe of her clothing. Miss Minchin thinks it is too elaborate for a child, but says nothing since Sara's father is rich. While enrollment in the school proves that the other students are well-to-do, Sara's clothing points out that she has more. When her father dies, Miss Minchin thinks it is important for Sara to wear an old black dress that is too small for her, not in mourning of her father's death, but because it is the most drab frock she owns. Miss Minchin takes all of Sara's other clothing away to insure that she never gets to wear clothing that suggests wealth again.

## Carriage

As a convenient means of transportation, a carriage symbolizes wealth. Before Sara's father died, she had a maid and her own carriage. Upon his death, however, the carriage is taken away. As further reminder that only the wealthy had carriages, Sara's chores at the school include many walking trips into town. She quickly wears out her shoes from all the walking, reminding her that poor people walk to town.



## Books

Books are a symbol of knowledge. Sara, a smart student, loves books. Ermengarde, who is less-than-average in her studies, hates books.

## Bread

Bread represents sustenance and charity in this book. Even when Sara does not have much to give, she finds a way to give a hungry little girl some bread. Sara needs the bread just as much as the little girl, but she feels it is more important for the younger child to have it. In the end, Sara develops a plan to share bread with all the people who are hungry.

## Dolls

Dolls symbolize youth and the hope that childhood naïveté and optimism can offer. Dolls represent something magical to Sara. She likes to believe they come to life when humans are not looking. When Sara is admitted to the school as a student, she takes Emily with her. When she is sent into servitude by her father's death, Miss Minchin tells her she no longer has time for dolls, meaning she will have to grow up and do a lot of work.

## Monkey

Ram Dass' monkey comes to symbolize several things. First, monkeys represent playfulness and mischief. His mischief is what leads Ram Dass to discover Sara's poor living conditions. Monkeys also use their tails for balance and control, symbolizing that balance and control will be restored to Sara's life. In this particular book, the monkey also symbolizes the rain forests of Sara's homeland.

## Idol

The Idol belonging to the new neighbor symbolizes how things are not always as they seem, or that making assumptions about something doesn't make it true. Becky sees an idol being moved into the house next door and assumes the new neighbor is a heathen. She assumes the man worships the idol as a pagan. Sara tries to explain that many people who live in India collect cultural items simply for decor, but Becky refuses to see it that way.

## The Bastille

The Bastille symbolizes strength for Sara. Sara calls her attic room the Bastille, a French prison. It is obvious that the room seems prison-like to her. It is run down, dirty

and cold. Pretending to be a soldier captured and imprisoned in the Bastille helps her feel like she is strong. She shares the imagining with Becky and it seems to help her, too.



# Settings

## Miss Minchin Select Seminary for Young Ladies

Sara attends the Miss Minchin Select Seminary for Young Ladies. Upon entering she notices that it is respectable and well-furnished, but ugly. Everything seems hard and polished, even the chairs that are supposed to be the softest. The very varnished clock indicates that the school is harshly polished to look perfect. Upon meeting Miss Minchin, Sara immediately realizes that she looks just like the school -- respectable but ugly, hard and disguised with polish.

## Sara's boarding room

Sara's boarding room is elaborate and comfortable, with soft chairs and a nice warm fire on cold nights. She has many books and her doll, Emily, sits in a nice chair, too. When she is alone, Sara likes to lay on the tiger skin rug, killed by her father, and pet its head as she thinks about her dad.

## Sara's attic room

Sara's attic room is cold and bare. She has an old footstool with a broken leg and a hard mattress on which to sleep. She has one old, worn coverlet for her bedding. There is also a small table in the room. Sometimes Sara stands on the table to look out of the skylight. Sara is moved to the attic room when Miss Minchin learns that her father has died and she will no longer be paid for the fancy boarding room. With funds from Mr. Carrisford, Ram Dass secretly transforms the cold, bare room into a warm, comfortable one with new bedding, fabrics hung on the walls, food, and a new fire to warm her every night.

## The Large Family house

Sara's trips to run errands often take her by the Large Family's house. Upon walking by, she sees that the home has a nice fire going and the children gather around their father in the living room. She loves this scene because it reminds her of her love for her own father.

## The bakery

When she finds a fourpenny on her hungriest day, Sara walks in to buy four pieces of bread from the baker. The woman gives her six instead. Sara gives a little girl five of the six pieces, keeping only one for herself. The baker sees her act of kindness and talks to the little beggar girl. Eventually, she takes the girl, Anne, in and gives her a nice place to

live. At the end of the story, Sara returns to the bakery to make arrangements to feed all the hungry children in the town.



## Themes and Motifs

### **Change in circumstances does not change who a person really is.**

Change in circumstances does not change who a person really is. Transformation from a rich girl to a poor one changes nothing about Sara Crewe's attitude. Becoming a boarding school student at age seven is a big change that transforms Sara from her father's amusing little sidekick to a boarding school student living in an entirely different country from her father. With her entrance into Miss Minchin's school, Sara's kindness transforms the lives of fellow students Ermengarde and Lottie and the scullery maid, Becky.

The transformation theme continues and is challenged with her father's death, when Sara is suddenly transformed from star student to an indentured servant. She is stripped of all her fine things and only is allowed to keep one old black dress and her doll Emily. In a moment's notice, she changes from heiress to pauper. A coin given to her by a little boy at Christmas time symbolizes her transformation, indicating that society views her as a beggar instead of a princess. Still, Sara continues to be kind and thoughtful, because even though she is poor, she realizes she can still afford to be kind and thoughtful of others.

Sara has yet another transformation, though. As items of comfort -- many of which are basic necessities -- miraculously appear in her attic room, she regains hope in humanity and has enough nourishment to continue working for Miss Minchin. When she is finally discovered by Mr. Carrisford as the little girl he has been searching for, her life transforms again, making her an heiress again. Her newfound wealth emphasizes how Sara's princess attitude stayed the same throughout her two years of servitude.

### **People should not be treated differently because of their job or income level.**

The author addresses the notion that people who work in service jobs are not worthy of socializing with people of higher class, ultimately making the point that people should not be treated differently because of their job or income level.

Sara starts as a rich heiress but becomes a pauper overnight. Suddenly, most of the students begin avoiding her mostly because they are not to socialize outside their own class. The truth is, the only thing that changes about Sara is the horrible life assigned to her by Miss Minchin. Sara still maintains her positive attitude, and it helps her deal with the tragedy imposed upon her by servitude.

The author shows that Miss Minchin promotes the difference in social classes. As leader of the school, her social class division is taught to the students she teaches. Lavinia is



quick to pick up on Miss Minchin's preconceived notion about poor people. Lavinia draws a line between the social class of the students and the servants when she notices Becky listening to one of Sara's stories. Sara is quite happy to tell the story to Becky, but Lavinia insists it is an outrage to speak to servants.

The author uses Miss Minchin to show how troubling it is to judge people based on their social class. She does not want Becky at Sara's birthday party, then she gets mad when she sees Ermengarde with Becky and Sara in the attic. Miss Minchin tells Ermengarde her father would not like to know she was hanging out with servants. In the end, when Sara receives all her father's fortune, Miss Minchin realizes just how wrong it can be to treat someone differently because of their social status. Whether Sara's happy outcome changes Miss Minchin or not, the reader will never know; but the reader is certain that Sara's good fortune upsets the teacher a great deal.

While many wealthy people of the era, like Sara, believe it is their responsibility to give to the poor, not many people make time to talk with the poor to learn more about them, suggesting that the social class divide is community-wide and not confined to the walls of Miss Minchin's school. The wealthy class recognizes the needs of the poor, but does not associate with them on a friendly level. Had the Large Family children talked with Sara on a personal level, they would have known quite early in the story that her name was Sara Crewe. The baker uncharacteristically talks to the little beggar girl outside her store, but the baker is of the working class, not the wealthy. Before bringing the little girl into her home, she makes sure she was capable of working, too.

## **Family does not have to be a blood-relative.**

Family does not have to be a blood-relative. When Captain Crewe leaves his only daughter, Sara, at the London boarding school, Sara begins treating her doll Emily like her family. Sara tends to her doll in a motherly way like most children would do, but in her most isolated moments, Emily is more than a doll -- she is family.

Sara also offers to be Lottie's adoptive mother at school. With Emily as Lottie's sister, Sara's little family grows a little. She brings close friends like Ermengarde and Becky into her family group at school too. Once in the attic, Sara creates a rat family and shares bread with them every night. She believes that Melshisedec has a rat wife and rat children, indicating just how important it is to Sara to have some sort of connection to a family.

Sara's interest in family is so great they she enjoys watching the Large Family (the Carmichaels). She watches the way the children interact with their father, reminding her of the father she no longer has. She watches the children play and wishes she could play with them. After her father's death especially, Sara longs for family.





## **Bravery can overcome many fears and challenges.**

The author shows many times through Sara's behavior that bravery can overcome many fears and challenges. Sara approaches her school and her servitude much like war, and she knows that only the bravest of soldiers are successful in battle. She mentally decides to stay brave as she faces being the new student at Miss Minchin's school, being without her beloved father for the first time, and being thrust into servitude upon his death. She makes the connection to brave soldiers in Chapter 1: "Sara" when she tells her father she does not like the school. She agrees to stay and be brave because even the bravest soldiers do not want to go to war.

Once confined to living in the attic, Sara relies on bravery to help her get through many challenges. She bravely watches the rat - which terrifies her at first - then befriends it. She bravely faces hunger and coldness on a regular basis. She bravely faces Miss Minchin and all the terror she brings. Sara learns that through bravery she can overcome many fears and challenges.

## **The importance of friendship**

Sara turns her friendships into school family, making her friendships very important to the girl. Even beyond the friends she makes at school, Ram Dass quickly warms up to her and finds her charming. The Large Family recognizes right away that she is more than just a beggar girl and they imagine her life as much as she imagines theirs, giving them a fake friendship connection of sorts. The secret friend saved Sara's life on her coldest, hungriest night. Having a warm fire and food, and knowing that a secret friend somewhere cared about her, reinvigorated Sara and made her servitude at the school a little more bearable.

Sara does not forget that friendship is not one-sided. Even after her life changes drastically for the worse, she still tries to be a loyal friend to Becky, Ermengarde, and Lottie. She is often so caught up in keeping her princess ideals, that she forgets to ask for help from her friends. When she finally does confide about her hunger to Ermengarde, she sees what a real friend she has in the girl.

After Sara's fortune is returned to her, she does not forget her friendships. On the very next day after moving in to Mr. Carrisford's house, she invites Ermengarde to play and sends dinner and a message to Becky. She proves her loyalty to those who have remained loyal to her.

# Styles

## Point of View

The narrator tells the story in the omniscient point of view. This point of view best suits the story because it allows the reader to know Sara's thoughts along with the thoughts of the other characters. It also provides important background information, such as how Mr. Carrisford has searched for Sara for two years.

## Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of this book is simple and straight-forward. Occasionally, especially in Chapter 2: "A French Lesson," the author incorporates a few French phrases to emphasize that Sara is already fluent in the language. The author presents the terms in such a way that the reader can determine the meaning from context clues in the paragraphs. In Chapter 11: "Ram Dass," the author shows Sara's knowledge of Indian culture by introducing terms she recalls from her childhood in India. For example, she recalls that Ram Dass is a man-servant, known as a Lascar in India. Sara defines the term as she recalls it, meaning the reader does not have to look up its meaning.

Sara is always polite with her language, but will say what is on her mind when pushed to do so. In Chapter 11: "Ram Dass," Miss Minchin pushes to find out why Sara let out a small chuckle. Initially, Sara politely says she is just thinking. When Miss Minchin tells her to ask forgiveness, Sara states politely that she will ask forgiveness for the laugh, but not for thinking. The intentional use of polite language by Sara's character is the author's way of emphasizing her princess-like qualities. The reader expects a princess to be kind, caring and charming; and Sara's language fits the description.

## Structure

The structure of this story follows a classic plot line. Exposition is given in the first chapter and the rising action develops in Chapters 2 through 16. The climax occurs in Chapter 17 with falling action in Chapter 18 and the resolution in Chapter 19.

The building of the story by examining the friends Sara makes at the school (Chapter 3: "Ermengarde," Chapter 4: "Lottie," and Chapter 5: "Becky") is a direct display of Sara's character. Giving the reader a chance to learn about each friendship individually points to positive qualities in Sara that are very princess-like: she is a champion for those who are outcast, nurturing, and cares about all people regardless of their social status. Examining each character individually also gives the reader a chance to see how very much alike they all are, even with their differing social class statuses.



## Quotes

I don't like it, Papa. But then I dare say soldiers -- even brave ones -- don't really like going into battle.

-- Sara Crewe (Chapter 1: Sara paragraph 2)

**Importance:** Early on, Sara sets the tone of her character through this quote. At only seven years old, she knows people have obligations and things are expected of them that they do not like, yet the brave ones endure them.

Haven't -- got -- any--mam---ma-a!

-- Lottie (Chapter 4: Lottie paragraph 1)

**Importance:** When Sara hears Lottie's tantrum, she thinks she can help. Sara's mother has also passed away, giving the girls something in common right away. The quote is also important because as it draws Sara to Lottie, the reader sees a nurturing side of Sara in addition to her intelligence and her imagination.

That girl has been listening.

-- Lavinia (Chapter 5: Becky paragraph 2)

**Importance:** Lavinia stops Sara's storytelling to point out that Becky, a servant girl, is listening. The statement makes it clear that there is a social separation between the students and the servant staff. Lavinia goes on to say that her mother would not want her telling stories to a servant, indicating that the social separation exists beyond the school and is accepted in their culture.

I suppose she thinks she could be a princess if she was a beggar.

-- Lavinia (Chapter 6: The Diamond Mines paragraph 4)

**Importance:** Lavinia's spiteful comment foreshadows exactly what will happen in the very next chapter and further develops her character as a jealous and contemptuous foil to Sara's kindness.

Sometimes I do pretend I am a princess. I pretend I am a princess, so that I can try and behave like one.

-- Sara (Chapter 6: The Diamond Mines paragraph 4)

**Importance:** Sara explains exactly why she pretends to be a princess, but the concept goes over Lavinia's head. She does not pretend to be a princess for folly like pretending to live in a castle or have special privileges. Sara pretends to be a princess to keep qualities such as kindness, thoughtfulness, and charity as her goals, even when Miss Minchin or Lavinia are mean or tacky to her.

Go and stand there. Not too near the young ladies.

-- Miss Minchin (Chapter 7: The Diamond Mines Again paragraph 9)



**Importance:** Miss Minchin allows the scullery maid, Becky, to stay for Sara's party, but will not let her sit with the other girls. This further demonstrates the theme of social status in the story since she implies that co-mingling with servants is unacceptable.

She must begin as she is to go on.

-- Miss Minchin (Chapter 8: In the Attic paragraph 2)

**Importance:** Miss Minchin drastically changes Sara's living and education conditions upon notice of her father's death. She does not give her time to transition or grieve and expects the girl to immediately start working to earn her room and board. The more work Sara could handle, the more she was given. On top of it, she was often deprived of meals, just because Miss Minchin could punish her even when she had done no wrong. This comment indicates that Miss Minchin has no feelings for her former star student, and further develops her character as cold, heartless and the antagonist of the story.

Adversity tries people, and mine has tried you and proved how nice you are.

-- Sara (Chapter 8: In the Attic paragraph 1)

**Importance:** Sara says this to Ermengarde when they rekindle their friendship after Sara is appointed to servitude. Sara thought Ermengarde would have nothing to do with her because she was a servant. Ermengarde thought Sara was avoiding her when she was actually working all the time. This conversation is important because they bridge a gap between the classes, showing that servants and wealthy people can form long-lasting bonds.

He is a person. He gets hungry and frightened, just as we do....

-- Sara (Chapter 9: Melchisedec paragraph 6)

**Importance:** Sara says this to Ermengarde about a rat living in her room. She names the rat Melchisedec and talks to him when he comes to gather crumbs. Ermengarde remarks how Sara talks about the rat as if he is a person and she responds that he is. This comment shows how, with just a little consideration, a person can find something in common with anyone or in this case, anything. In Sara's setting, the wealthy do not communicate with the servants. Servants are expected to scatter whenever the wealthy say, much like rats scatter when surprised by humans, and are viewed as dirty, much like the reputation of a rat.

I suppose it was a childish thing to do; but it gave me something to plan and think of.

-- Mr. Carrisford (Chapter 17: "It is the Child" paragraph 1)

**Importance:** Mr. Carrisford explains to his lawyer how he and Ram Dass worked together to make the little servant girl next door happier and healthier. It shows that Mr. Carrisford was not a wicked man out to rob his old friend on a fraudulent investment. He is a kind man who wants to use his wealth to help the less fortunate.



Will you not do your duty to your poor papa and come home with me?  
-- Miss Minchin (Chapter 18: "I Tried Not to Be" paragraph 1)

**Importance:** Miss Minchin tries to convince Sara to return to school with her so she can once again collect tuition from her. After the way she has treated Sara in servitude, after not giving her time to grieve over her father's death, Miss Minchin resorts to bringing up Sara's "poor papa" to guilt her into returning to school, proving that Miss Minchin will be an antagonist to the very end.

I know she was worked too hard for a child of her age, and I know she was only half-fed.

-- Miss Amelia (Chapter 18: "I Tried Not to Be" paragraph 5)

**Importance:** Miss Amelia is empowered by Sara's good fortune and stands up to her sister. She has held in this rage against her sister for so long that she tires herself out from hysterically ranting and raving. The reader knows all the things Miss Amelia says in her rant are true, because they saw them unfold throughout the story. The comment serves as a recap of all the bad things Sara endured at the hands of Miss Minchin.