

Little Birds: Erotica Study Guide

Little Birds: Erotica by Anaïs Nin

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Little Birds

Little Birds Summary

Manuel is an artist who, with his wife, Therese, is looking for an apartment. They find one but Manuel doesn't like it because the lighting in it is bad. Manuel begins to look around for another place to rent. Manuel happens upon a place to rent. It is rather plain looking but has large rooms and opens to a beautiful terrace that overlooks a girl's school where there are young girls playing. That evening Manuel brings his wife to the apartment to show her what he has found. When they get to the apartment it is dark and she announces that she would never live in such a place and doesn't care about the terrace or the light.

The next day Manuel goes and rents the apartment without his wife's knowledge and begins to work on the rooms. Before long he has them painted, fixed and looking wonderful. When he brings his wife back to the same apartment she is suddenly eager to move in. After they move in Manuel's wife goes to work leaving Manuel money to go and buy groceries. Manuel takes the money and goes and buys a bird in a cage and puts it out on the terrace overlooking where the school girls play. Manuel does this for several days until he has a large collection of birds and the girls take notice of the sight. Manuel tells the little girls to come over after school and look at the birds.

Manuel is worried that the girls won't come or that his wife will show up while the girls are there but the girls come and go without his wife's knowledge. While the girls are there Manuel goes to the restroom and leaves the door open so that if they look the girls can see him. One of the girls does see him and this excites Manuel. Before the girls leave Manuel gets them to agree to return the next day to look at the birds again. When the girls show up Manuel is in a kimono that can accidentally open while he is in front of the girls. While the girls are looking at the birds Manuel's kimono slips open revealing his erect penis. The girls scream and run away.

Little Birds Analysis

Manuel doesn't seem to focus on the little girls when he first finds the apartment. It appears that he genuinely is concerned about the light although it is soon explained that Manuel couldn't sustain an erection to have sex but would become aroused when someone looked at him. The relationship between Manuel and his wife isn't explained but he seems to be worried that she will come home and realize what he is doing. This does indicate that she is fully unaware of his actions. Her reaction to much of his behavior is unknown in regards to the birds that Manuel is buying. The beginning of the story reveals that he is poor and the money to buy the birds is meant to be for food. If she ever had an idea of what he was planning it isn't revealed.

The little girls that Manuel has into his apartment are explained in some detail but the names of the girls isn't told. The story will end with the little girls running away. The author will describe the escape as a flight of little birds. It isn't told if the girls reported Manuel's behavior to anyone or if he manages to convince any girls to return to the apartment. Manuel is said to be a painter but beyond his demands to have light in his apartment little mention will be made of him painting or creating any art.

The Woman on the Dunes

The Woman on the Dunes Summary

Louis can't sleep because of his increasing sexual frustration. He goes for a walk and discovers windows not fully drawn that reveal lovers. As he continues to walk he sees a woman heading toward a beach. Louis follows her and sees her pull off her clothes to go swimming. Louis does the same and the two swim naked for a time while having sex. When they return to the beach they continue to chase each other and have sex. They come to a house where they lie in the bushes under the window.

While laying together the woman begins to tell a story of when she was in Paris and went to watch a Russian that was going to be hanged. While she stood in the lines waiting for the man to walk to the gallows she suddenly realized someone was undoing her skirt from behind. While she watched the man walk to the gallows and be killed the person behind her forced his way into her body causing pain and excitement all at the same time. After the story Louis falls to sleep. When he awakens the woman is gone. Louis tries to follow her tracks in the sand but has lost her.

The Woman on the Dunes Analysis

The woman in Louis' story isn't ever named. She will give Louis a story about her life but the only title she will have in the story is she or her. Despite this the woman is very real to Louis to the point that he will try to follow her tracks after she disappears. The reason he tries to follow her isn't explained. It is possible that Louis was aroused again or that he was worried for her but these details are unknown. Louis' reaction to the woman's story is also unknown.

When Louis first finds the woman she will encourage him in many ways and it will be her that makes the sexual scene between the two last so long. It will also be the woman that tells Louis the personal story of her life. Her motives for this behavior and her sudden departure will remain a mystery.

Lina

Lina Summary

Lina is a liar that hates herself. She claims to hate lesbianism but is in love with another woman. This woman has male lovers and Lina hates them. The woman takes Lina to the home of one of her lovers, Michel. Michel has incense burning that acts as an aphrodisiac. Lina is soon groggy and Michel begins to rub on Lina and kiss her as does the other woman. The three of them have sex.

When they leave the apartment Lina has her arm around the woman and Lina pretends not to remember anything that happens. The next day Lina leaves for Paris.

Lina Analysis

Lina is described as a liar. When she leaves Michel's there is no way of knowing if she truly had forgotten everything that happened or not but the other two people in the room seemed to be unaffected by it. Lina seems to hate the thought of being a lesbian though she cares deeply for the woman. It appears that the actions that she has at Michel's home will be what spurs her escape to Paris.

Two Sisters

Two Sisters Summary

There are two sisters named Edna and Dorothy. Their father refused to let them date as teenagers although they are both sexually promiscuous. When they leave home Edna marries and Dorothy goes off to study art. The man that Edna marries is quite a bit older than her and she soon finds that he has sexual encounters with numerous men. Edna is upset by this information and leaves her husband and finds a younger lover named Robert. When Dorothy comes home she finds that Robert and Edna are living together. Dorothy hates Robert feeling that he broke up her sister's marriage and belittles Robert whenever she finds a chance.

Dorothy awakens one morning after Edna has left for work and goes into the bath leaving the door open. Dorothy doesn't realize that Robert is still at home and he looks to see Dorothy naked standing in front of the mirror. Robert goes into the bathroom and the two begin having sex. After the sex, Robert no longer feels love for Edna but wants to be with Dorothy. Dorothy is ashamed to face her sister and leaves for Paris finding a lover that resembles Robert named Donald.

Robert can't stay with Edna and leaves to find Dorothy. Dorothy sees both Robert and Donald for a time then leaves Donald for Robert with plans of marriage. At the wedding Edna appears looking very pale and ill holding flowers and refusing to talk to Dorothy, only staring. Donald bursts into the wedding threatening to kill himself because Dorothy had left him. After the wedding Dorothy is unable to enjoy sex with Robert despite everything that Robert tries. Dorothy is able to fake it for a while but becomes desperate to regain what she has lost. Dorothy goes to find Donald and begs him to have sex with her in the hopes that she can rekindle the flame with Robert that had drawn her to him. After Dorothy has had sex with Donald and one of his friends she goes home to Robert to have sex again. When Robert comes home they have sex but Dorothy finds that he no longer excites her and has to continue to fake her orgasm.

Two Sisters Analysis

Edna had left her husband for Robert. The effect that this had on Edna's first husband isn't told to the reader. Edna will act as though her sister and Robert have done something wrong but she never is seen holding any guilt for her own actions. The same will be true of Robert. He moves from one married lover to her sister but never feels any guilt. The guilt that Dorothy has will ultimately ruin her love with Robert.

Donald appears to still care for Dorothy. Despite his care for her it is unclear if she will return to him again. The story ends with the hint that Dorothy may never be able to become excited for Robert again.

Sirocco

Sirocco Summary

There are two women that are walking on the beach. One of the women is described as looking like a Viking Princess. The Viking Princess tells the story of her marriage to a man who, although not Oriental, lived in China. When they married she went there to live with him and found that he was sleeping at night with the small Chinese women in the house. He told her that she was so tall that he couldn't get excited being her because she was too big. She is distraught and leaves him to head home. While staying in a hotel she befriends an American journalist who doesn't care that she is tall. Eventually the two are in her room and he begins to tear off her clothing. The phone rings and she answers it to find her husband on the other end begging her to come back to him. She listens for a while during which the American is climbing on top of her. She finally tells her husband that the whole time she has been on the phone there has been a man laying in the bed with her. Her husband calls her every foul name he can think of and she hangs up the phone. The woman began traveling with the American journalist. The woman stops the story here

Sirocco Analysis

This woman telling the story is never named, only described. She felt that after her husband had been with other women in the room next to hers that she was exacting revenge on him in some respect by having a man on her while on the phone with him. She appears to be trying to forget her actions to some degree but it is clear that at that moment she was trying for revenge. Her tale ends suddenly and without explanation as to the American journalist and her relationship with him.

The Maja

The Maja Summary

Novalis was a painter who married a beautiful Spanish woman named Maria, who reminded him of the woman in *The Maja Desnuda* painted by Goya. Novalis wants to paint his wife naked but she is modest. She agrees to model for him one time but is ashamed of herself and asks him to paint a different face on her. She refuses to let him have any other models to paint in the nude. The relationship between Maria and Novalis becomes strained because of his desire to see her body and her refusal.

The doctor is called for Maria because she is having trouble sleeping. The doctor prescribes pills to help her sleep. Novalis soon discovers that Maria is unresponsive in this state and he begins to undress her and pose her for paintings and then cover her up before she awakens. Maria believes he is painting the same picture of her from memory and says nothing of the new paintings he is amassing but the two still do not have sex. Novalis no longer is in love with Maria. Maria goes out of the house and when she returns she finds that Novalis is laying on top of a painting of her pleasuring himself. She becomes aroused and the two make love. Maria is no longer ashamed of her body and tries to be more to Novalis than the paintings could be.

The Maja Analysis

Novalis is said to have fallen in love with Maria because she resembled the painting he so loved. It is unclear if they knew each other well before they were wed. It is possible that Novalis didn't know of Maria's beliefs in regards to how modest she was. It will be her modesty with her husband that creates the problems. When Maria truly understands the problem she will do whatever it takes to regain his love. This is the first action seen that shows that she loves Novalis as much as he had loved her.

A Model

A Model Summary

When Anais Nin was young she went to try and find work in New York but found that she had no skills wanted in the business world. A friend of hers soon advises that she try out for modeling. Anais finds a club that promotes young models and quickly becomes a favorite although she doesn't pose in the nude. Anais is worried because she is a virgin and worries that someone will try and force themselves on her because she is some kind of conquest. Anais will ask her boyfriend, who she believes she loves, if he will take her so that she will feel safe from the others, but he refuses. He discusses marriage with Anais but she is confused and admits that she doesn't want to marry him but only wants to have sex.

Summer comes and the artists go off to do their painting in different areas from the city. Anais has no money to travel but is invited by one of the artists to stay with him and he will pay her way. She goes and gets an apartment to rent but when she finds the artist that had paid her way he tries to sleep with her. She refuses and he announces that she will have no work if she doesn't sleep with him. Anais doesn't believe him but the next day finds that everywhere she goes she is turned away. Finally Anais finds a young man living the life of a hermit named Reynolds. He painted from memory and agreed to help Anais being angry at the way she was treated. Anais agreed to pose for him and he wrapped her in a blanket under the sun. Anais soon fell asleep and awoke to Reynolds massaging her between the legs. They caressed and kissed but did not make love. Later Reynolds explains that he loved a woman and got her pregnant. The girl aborted the baby and then bled to death from the procedure and Reynolds is terrified of this happening again. Reynolds gives Anais the money she needs to get back to New York.

Back in New York Anais has to go to work in dress shops since she is no longer being used by the modeling companies. Anais is finally able to get a few small modeling jobs and returns to modeling. Anais is at a party and meets a man who tells her that she is beautiful. It is this person that becomes her first lover and she forgets Reynolds and Stephen.

A Model Analysis

The story is told in the first person point of view and the name of the girl is never truly revealed. She simply refers to herself as "I" and there is no mention made from the other characters in the book as to what they call her. There will be a few other stories where this happens but this is the only one where she is the main character.

Steven had been so conventional for her. When she asked him to have sex with her his response had simply been that he wasn't ready for marriage. She was shocked because

she wasn't thinking of marriage. It isn't told when this character finally decided to break off her relationship with Steven.

The person that she finally becomes a lover with isn't named. He is familiar with Paris and he likes Anais but past that his identity isn't revealed. Reynolds reveals the story of his love that died after the abortion. This is one of the things in the book that helps describe the time period the book took place in. The fact that Anais gets a job in a dress shop is also another indicator.

The Queen

The Queen Summary

There is an artist telling the story of Bijou whom he had loved. She was faithless but beautiful like a queen. The artist calls her "the queen of the whores." Her name was Bijou. There was an artist ball and all the models were to come dressed to be looked at. The theme had been African savages and Bijou came to this artist for him to paint her. She was going to go naked to the ball with the exception of a small fig leaf. The artist begins to paint every inch of her naked body and becomes excited by the sight of her. She tells him to come to the ball after her and she will wait for him so that he can be the first but she doesn't want to ruin the paint. The artist has spent hours painting Bijou and has only time to do a simple brown paint for his own outfit. When he gets to the ball he finds that Bijou has been with multiple men and her paint is smeared. The artist explains that he could have tracked her by the trail of sperm running from her leg.

The Queen Analysis

The name of the artist isn't told. It also isn't told why he cared so much for Bijou but he does explain at the front of the story that he likes whores. It is possible that the thought of her with those other men didn't bother him but in his telling of the story it appears that it did. Since the artist cares so much for a woman that portrays herself as a whore he should not have been surprised that Bijou didn't wait for him and in truth he may not have cared. He is telling the story but the full of his emotion is left unexplained.

Hilda and Rango

Hilda and Rango Summary

Hilda is a beautiful Perisian model that becomes lovers with an American writer. Hilda is modest by nature and has been raised to think that women can restrain their sexual desires but that a man can not without hurting himself. The American that Hilda has become lovers with forces her to make the first approach for sex every time even when he is already aroused. Hilda becomes sure that she is undesirable and must beg for any sex that she can get. The person that Hilda is begins to be hidden by what she has been trained to do.

Hilda goes to a party and meets a man named Rango who is so taken by her beauty that he invites her back to his home. When they get back to Rango's place Hilda tries to make the first move and Rango calls her a whore. Hilda begs to know what she has done wrong and he tells her that she has acted like a forward whore. Hilda explains how she has been treated and Rango forgives her but doesn't make love to her. Hilda and Rango spend night after night together but Rango doesn't have sex with Hilda until much later after he has taught her to wait on him. Rango possesses Hilda fully and makes her feel desirable and like a woman.

Hilda and Rango Analysis

The length of time that Hilda spent with the American writer isn't explained but it is clear that she was with him long enough to be taught a certain way to act even though she apparently remained uncomfortable with that action to some extent. Rango had taken Hilda back to his place with the intention of having sex but the thought that Hilda was going to initiate it went against Rango's beliefs about women. It says when Hilda met Rango that he was drunk and she would find out later that Rango stayed drunk most of the time. It is unclear if they stayed together but it seems that Rango had a drinking problem.

The Chanchiquito

The Chanchiquito Summary

Laura's uncle came home from Brazil with tales of a creature that looks like a pig named a Chanchiquito. The Chanchiquito would put its snout up a woman's dress between her legs. Laura is amazed that there is room for an animal's snout between a woman's legs and marvels at this.

Laura is a young woman and goes to an artist's apartment where they begin to talk of things that they see in the plaster on the ceiling. The man, Jan, begins to draw on the plaster the images that they find: a woman, a dog with an erect penis, and other images. After drawing these images, Jan begins to put his hand up Laura's dress and the two quickly begin to have sex. Jan and Laura lay together in the bed with the paints drying on their naked bodies.

The Chanchiquito Analysis

Jan had been very young and she seemed to make a connection between the thought that it was odd that there was enough room between a woman's legs for a snout of a pig-like creature and the thought that she had just had a very large man between her legs. She comments on the fact that Jan is twice her size. The shapes that they draw on the ceiling will seemingly come alive for Laura as Jan begins to make love to her. There had been an animal on the ceiling. The animal theme seems to be prevalent in this story.

Saffron

Saffron Summary

Fay is just sixteen when she is married to a man of forty. The man, Albert, takes Fay to live in his house in New Orleans with his servants. Each night Albert comes to Fay's room and caresses her and fondles her commenting that her butt is like that of a colored woman's. Despite all this each night he leaves her without making love to her. Fay gets up one night and decides to go find Albert and discovers he is making love to one of the black women who is a servant. Fay is hurt but says nothing.

Fay decides she will force Albert to take her and show him that she can be just as wonderful as any other woman. Albert comments on her body being small and beautiful like that of an angel and that she is too delicate. Fay gets angry, crying out that she is a woman not an angel or delicate. Albert tries to push inside of her but can't. Each time he loses his erection. Fay becomes obsessed with the moaning sounds coming from the help's rooms.

One day Fay was carrying a bag of Saffron in the house and some of it got into her clothes. When Albert came to her he looked at her and announced that she smelled like a colored woman. Fay threw the bag on the bed and the curse was broken.

Saffron Analysis

The fact that they have servants and are in New Orleans may well be part of the reason that Fay didn't leave Albert. She also is very young. The fact that Albert is sleeping with other woman only forces Fay to try and make herself what he wants her to be. The end of the story says simply that the spell was broken leaving the reader to believe that Albert became faithful to Fay although this isn't said.

Mandra

Mandra Summary

Mary is lovely but is unable to attach to anyone emotionally. She has spent part of her life sleeping with men when short on money and then even went to work in a whorehouse. Mary's husband won't be able to recover from these stories. Mary sleeps with men and women alike caring nothing for any of them. Mandra cares for Mary but Mary is unable to attach herself.

Mandra goes to a party and meets Miriam. Miriam isn't as inviting as Mary but is enticing none the less. Miriam is with Paul but keeps kissing Mandra on the lips every time Paul isn't looking.

Mandra Analysis

Mandra seems to find a connection between Miriam and Mary although much of the statements that Mandra makes explains the differences between the two. Much of what they seem to have in common is the fact that they are driven by the act of sex and don't have a lot of emotional connection. Mandra will discover that both Mary and Miriam will not be able to fully react to the sexual acts that are tried.

Runaway

Runaway Summary

Jean finds a girl named Jeanette that has run away from home. The girl's mother has multiple men into the house and Jeanette can hear them through the door. Despite this Jeanette's mother won't let Jeanette have a boyfriend and keeps her locked in the house most of the time. Jean feels pity for her and gives her a place to sleep but Jeanette makes advances toward Jean and the two soon become lovers. Pierre lives in the house with Jean and can hear them making love but says nothing to them. Jean grows tired of Jeanette and begins to stay away. Jeanette comes to Pierre's room and they have sex but Jeanette remains calm and quiet unlike when she was with Jean.

Pierre wonders why he can't compare with Jean. Jeanette and Pierre are in bed together when Jean comes home. Jeanette runs to him, naked except for panties. Jean cares nothing for her or that she is sleeping with Pierre and pushes her off and leaves. Jeanette is saddened and has admitted to Pierre that she has tried to remain quiet while with him so that Jean won't think she is enjoying Pierre more than Jean. Pierre becomes enraged. He begins to have sex with Jeanette that completely takes her over. After this Pierre knows that Jeanette won't ever care if Jean is in the house or not.

Runaway Analysis

Jean didn't intend to make Jeanette his love but it appears that Jeanette had intended on doing better than her mother had done. Jeanette although young will try and seduce the two men. While she is quite content to sleep with both of them it is Jean she will want for most of the story. It won't be until Jean pushes her away that Pierre becomes the one she wants.

The relationship isn't explained in terms of how much they actually care for each other. It appears that much of the relationship between the two is simply that they are having sex. Pierre will want Jeanette to focus on him and will strive for this end.

Characters

Anais Nin appears in A Model

Anais Nin goes to New York and decides to look for a job but has no skills to gain lucrative employment. After an unproductive search for a job she decides to try modeling. In this story Anais shows how naive her thoughts are about life and how uneducated she is in the areas of sex. Anais will be approached by men with offers but is able to avoid being forced upon. Anais will at one point decide that what she needs to do is to lose her virginity to her boyfriend so that she won't seem so naive and vulnerable. Her boyfriend will tell mention marriage and Anais will admit she doesn't want to marry him. Anais' boyfriend will refuse to have sex with Anais which only makes her realize that she doesn't really care for him.

Anais will go from naive young girl to a woman that becomes quickly comfortable with her body. Anais will reveal her first lovers and the way that she remembers them. This story is one of the few that is told in the first person point of view.

Hilda appears in Hilda and Rango

Hilda is a young woman who is a Parisian model. She will fall in love with an American writer who will force her to initiate every sexual contact that they have. Because of this Hilda will become certain that she has to beg for any man's attention that she receives. When Hilda meets Rango he announces that she is a whore. Rango will listen to her reason for her actions and forgive her but will not allow her to sleep with him for some time. Hilda will be made to feel loved and wanted because of Rango.

Hilda had been shy and reserved wanting her American lover to make the first move and show her that he wanted her. It will be because of his indifference that she will be sure she is undesirable to men. It will be explained that Hilda was taught that women can control their sexual urges but that men can't without pain. Rango will take his time and show her how desirable she truly is. Hilda will feel as if she has been returned what was taken from her.

Dorothy appears in Two Sisters

Dorothy will take the lover of her sister, Edna. Dorothy will become so ridden with guilt that she will become unfeeling and unable to remain happy with her lover.

Pierre appears in Runaway

Pierre becomes the lover of Jeanette. Pierre will make it his quest to take the place of Jean in Jeanette's life.



Novalis appears in The Maja

Novalis is a painter who loves to paint his wife in the nude. His wife will become so self-conscious that Novalis begins painting her while she sleeps. Novalis falls out of love with her preferring his paintings of her instead.

Fay appears in Saffron

Fay marries an older man whom she discovers is making love to the colored help. Fay becomes distressed that her husband can't make love to her because she's white. The problem will be remedied when Fay is covered with the scent of Saffron causing her husband to comment on the fact that she smells like a black woman.

Louis appears in The Woman on the Dunes

Louis is sexually frustrated and goes for a walk and finds a woman swimming in the nude. Louis will make love to the stranger but never see her again.

Jeanette appears in Runaway

Jeanette is a young girl that runs away from her home where her mother refuses to let her have a boyfriend. Jeanette will first be a lover with Jean and then with his roommate Pierre.

Edna appears in Two Sisters

Edna will be attractive and full of life until her sister takes her lover. Edna will show up to the wedding holding a bouquet but looking so pale and old that her sister becomes riddled with guilt.

Viking Princess appears in Sirocco

The woman remains nameless but is described as looking like a Viking princess. She will tell the story of her husband cheating on her causing her to leave. The woman has a lover in bed with her when her husband calls.



Objects/Places

Maja Desnuda appears in The Maja

The Maja Desnuda is a painting by Goya. A painter named Novalis marries a Spanish woman named Maria because she looks like the woman in the Maja Desnuda painting.

Sirocco appears in Sirocco

Sirocco comes from Africa in a series of whirlwinds. It is the Sirocco that will show up on the beach in Deya and bring back memories to a character described as a Viking princess.

Flowers appears in Two Sisters

Edna will bring flowers to Dorothy and Robert's wedding. Seeing Edna looking pail and holding these flowers will cause Dorothy to faint.

Incense appears in Lina

Michel will burn a Japanese incense that causes Lina to become groggy.

Saffron appears in Saffron

Fay is carrying Saffron in the house when her husband smells it on her. The smell of Saffron on Fay will resolve their marriage troubles.

Gypsy Cart appears in Hilda and Rango

Rango lives in a gypsy cart. It will be here that Hilda and Rango fall in love.

Fig Leaf appears in The Queen

A fig leaf is the only thing that Bijou wears to a modeling party. She will be dressed as an African savage.

Ceiling Plaster appears in The Chanchiquito

Jan and Laura will draw several pictures on the ceiling plaster. Among the pictures will be a woman and a dog.



New York appears in A Model

New York is the town that the girl is living in as a model. She will work in dress shops and for painters to make a living of twenty-five dollars a week.

Dunes appears in The Woman on the Dunes

Louis will find a woman naked at the dunes. They will make love and talk of things. After Louis falls asleep the woman will disappear.

Birds appears in Little Birds

Louis will buy the birds in order to lure young girls to his apartment while his wife is gone. The girls will run away like "little birds."

Themes

The Need for Love

The need for love will be shown in the book despite the fact that the stories are based more on the physical aspects of love rather than the emotion. There will be several stories where the couples genuinely love each other and the struggle that they have in making their relationship work. In the story Saffron the main character is a young girl named Fay. Fay is tormented for much of the story because her husband is finding enjoyment with the colored women in the house. Although Fay feels betrayed she doesn't leave her husband. It will be by accident that Fay finds the answer to her problems but what she is working for is her husbands love.

In the story of the Maja it will be both the man and the woman that are going to have to work at the relationship. The story A Model will have a different take on the view of love. The main character is a young woman that asks her boyfriend to sleep with her. He will become shocked at her request and announce that he wants to marry her. This will be a disappointment to the young girl and she will have to admit that she isn't interested in marrying him. Although each story focus on a different central theme the need for love will be reoccurring in the book.

Desire

In every story there is something that the characters are looking for. Oftentimes they are already to the point that they fully realize what it is that they want. Sometimes it will be unclear to the characters what it is they need. In the story of Two Sisters it will end with Dorothy still being unsure of what it is that she needs in order to be happy. She will even wonder if it is possible that she is beyond finding her happiness. In the story Runaway the young girl believes she is looking for a particular thing and that she knows what she wants. She is described as being very young and as the story progresses what she wants and tries to obtain will change several times.

While many of the stories focus on physical desires the story of Sirocco will be about a woman's desire to leave her past. This character, referred to as someone resembling a Viking princess, has made mistakes in her life. This character will recall her past to the person telling the story. This character was hurt by her husband and then upon finding a new love will be seemingly ashamed of the way she acted. Her desire will be simply to forget what has happened.

The Struggle to Control

Many of the stories in the book will be about someone attempting to control something or someone else. Most of the characters in the book are lovers although there are mention of other relationships. The story of Lina is a story of someone who wants to

control those in her life. She will attempt to say who others can see and spend time with. Lina will be doubly cursed since she will be in a struggle to control herself as well. In the story *Two Sisters*, Dorothy will find that she is no longer able to feel the way she used to for her husband Robert. She will be desperate to regain control of that part of her life.

A different focus of the controlling theme in the stories is that of Jeanette. Jeanette is a runaway that has a controlling mother. Her mother has tried to control Jeanette's life to the point that it pushes Jeanette towards the things her mother seemed to be trying to save her from. Also, at the beginning of *Two Sisters*, there is a description given of the father. He was willing to burn books and refuse to let his daughters have suitors. Throughout the story there will be attempts for the characters to control others around them and themselves as a very easily seen theme.

Style

Point of View

There are several different stories in the book and are written from different points of view. There are stories that are written from the first person point of view but others are written as if it is from third person. All the stories are put in the past tense and based on the view of the main character. The view point will be limited in some stories but will be omniscient in others. The reader will sometimes know what a character, or several characters, in a story is feeling, but other times it will be left to the reader to decide. The characters in the different stories will not appear in more than one story. At the beginning of each story in the book the author will give a brief history as to the characters involved. This will provide the reader an insight as to the point of view.

The author uses very little dialogue for the stories. Despite the fact that there are few dialogue tags it is obvious to the reader that conversations have taken place. Since these will not be seen it won't be clear where all the given information is derived from.

Setting

The story's time frame isn't specified but it seems to have taken place during the early adult life of the author, Anais Nin who lived from 1903 to 1977. The characters will sometimes be on the beach or simply in a house in the city. New York and Paris will be two places that the story is set but many different parts of the world will be discussed. There will be a great deal of detail given to each place. There will be dust that is even described on a dance stage. While the setting focuses largely on New York and such places of the early-1900s there will be mention of the South American Jungle, Brazil, and other places. Some of these places will only be mentioned briefly and others will take up large portions of that particular story. In the story of *The Woman on the Dunes* she will recall a time when she was in Paris and saw a man hanged. The story will focus more on the actions taking place rather than Paris itself.

The setting details will seem to focus on one major sense for each character. Some will talk about what they see and others will focus more on smells or sounds. In the story of *Saffron* and the story of *Sirocco* the wives in those tales will talk in length about sounds that they hear. Sound will also be a large part of what sets the scene for *Runaway* for both Pierre and Jeanette.

Language and Meaning

The language in the story is straightforward and has a modern feel so it is easily understood. In addition it is very informal. The language in the book will be geared towards the erotic theme of the book and so much of the meanings in the book will be in

reference to sexual experiences, the human body, and the reactions that the human body has.

There is little dialogue in the majority of the stories and so much of the story is told in exposition. There will be stories that contain large portions of dialogue but they will be shown as a person telling their story to the narrator. There will be time passages that at moments will be left unclear to the reader. The author won't account for the time passage or explain how much time has passed. Each story contains a different set of characters. The characters will vary some being educated, models, French, American, even gypsies. Despite the vast differences the characters come from there will not be much difference in the way they appear to speak. The language will stay the same for each set of characters. The language and meaning will not hinder the reader's understanding of the events. Although there is not much definition between characters it will still be easy to see the distinction made between each of them.

Structure

The story, *Little Birds Erotica* by Anais Nin, consists of 148 pages that are divided into thirteen different stories. Since the stories do not connect each story will have its own title and introduction. The story will also contain a preface that explains the author's reason for choosing to write this particular kind of book and the place that the inspiration for the stories came from. Each of the different stories will vary greatly in length. Many of the stories are as few as eight pages long but some of the tales will last as much as thirty-two pages long. The longest story in the book is written in first person point of view while many of the others are written in third.

Since there are many different stories in the book there will be many plots for the reader to uncover. There are few characters in each story and so the number of subplots, while present, are minor. Since many of the stories are so short in length the reader will move from group of characters and settings quickly. This will make the book seem very quick to read. The structure of the book is set up in a way that can make the book seem choppy since the characters in the different stories never meet. There will be a generalized theme of sexuality but past that the group of characters from each tale will have very little in common. Despite this the book is easily read and understood.

Quotes

"I became what I shall call the Madame of an unusual house of literary prostitution."
Preface x

"Manuel and his wife were poor, and when they first looked for an apartment in Paris, they found only two dark rooms below the street level, giving onto a small stifling courtyard." Page 3

"Few people attended these hanging. But in the case of the Russian, because emotions had been so much aroused, all the students and artist of Montparnasse, the young agitators and revolutionaries had decided to attend." Page 17

"The next day when we met at the post office she did not even seem to recognize me."
Page 52

"Maria soon realized that she had lost his love. She did not know how to win it back."
Page 58-59

"He became my first real lover. I forgot Reynolds and Stephen. They now seemed like children to me." Page 91

"He was drunk. She was to discover that he was almost always drunk." Page 104

"Jan was an artist who laughed at hunger, at work, at slavery, at everything." Page 115

"Afterwards he said happily, 'You smell like a colored woman.' And the spell was broken." Page 126

"She had responded to Jean's words immediately but in a dazed fashion. She said, 'I have run away from home.'" Page 139

"Pierre took pleasure in buying her clothes. For this purpose he accompanied her to the shops and waited as she tried on clothes inside the little booths provided for this." Page 145

"He knew now that Jean could come in and she would not notice him. Jean could even make love to her, and she would not notice him." Page 148

Topics for Discussion

Discuss the reasons that Pierre wanted to be Jeanette's lover and be thought of more than Jean. Was it competition, love, or simply a conquest?

In *Little Birds* when Manuel looked at the apartment and saw that there were young girls playing right outside was this a factor in his wanting the apartment? Explain. If not when did it become a plan?

Why did the woman on the dunes tell Louis the story of the hanging in Paris? Why did she share this and then was gone when Louis awakened?

In *Sirocco* the Viking princess says she had hoped she could find peace here. Was the peace that she was seeking for in relation to the story she told? If so what about it was bothering her?

In the tale of *Two Sisters* Edna takes another lover while her husband is away. Why doesn't this cause Edna any guilt? Why does Edna show up to the wedding of Dorothy? Should Dorothy have felt more guilt than Edna? Explain.

The tale of *Sirocco* and the tale of *Saffron* are both about women who find their husbands are unfaithful. Explain the differences in the two women and why one left and one stayed.

The story of *The Queen*, the artist says he loves whores. Was he surprised that Bijou didn't wait on him? Was he angry? Considering he knew she was a whore why did he speak of her as if it was a surprise or he was upset by her actions?

In the story of *Hilda and Rango* what does it foreshadow when it says that Hilda will find out that Rango is drunk much of the time? If this line had been omitted would it have changed the way the story or Rango were looked at? Explain.