

Lucy Study Guide

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Plot Summary

LUCY is a novel or novella that concerns a year in the life of Lucy Josephine Potter, an émigré to the United States from a small island in the Caribbean. At nineteen, Lucy is to serve as an au pair in a large (unnamed) American city to Lewis and Mariah, a fairly well-to-do married couple with four little girls. Lucy is the book's main character and the events of her life in the United States and the West Indies, along with her external and internal reactions to those events, are the main subject of the book. Lucy is an extremely intelligent young woman, with a deep perceptiveness about the nature of other human beings. She easily sees through fake behavior and notices facts about others long before they realize it themselves. Lucy is also an incredibly angry person, as well as jealous, cynical, and jaded.

As Lucy is introduced, it becomes clear that something in her past in the West Indies has made her this way. In part due to her emotional constitution, Lucy is unable to form permanent or deep emotional attachments, and while she likes many of the people in her life, her connections with them never run deeply. Even her sexual encounters, despite being pleasurable, are not sources of emotional intimacy for her. Lucy's anger and jealousy is bound up with an inability to love deeply, and these two features of her personality seem to derive from a relationship gone wrong with her mother, Annie Potter, back in the West Indies.

The book has five chapters, which have a stream of consciousness style. The book's events are not in chronological order and contain many flashbacks. Chapter 1, "Poor Visitor," describes Lucy's arrival in the United States and her attempts to grow accustomed to life in the United States. Lucy finds Lewis, Mariah and their children to be unbearably happy and cannot understand why anyone would be so happy. Further, Lucy cannot connect with them, in part because she cannot comprehend them. In Chapter 2, "Mariah," we learn more about Mariah, Lucy's employer and new mother figure. Mariah is a complex character, but she is in many ways Lucy's opposite. She is happy, kind, peaceful, naive, and loves with great ease. Lucy finds this fascinating.

Chapter 3, "The Tongue," introduces the reader to many characters in the book and deepens the reader's knowledge of present characters. We learn that Lewis and Dinah are having an affair. We discover that Lucy is exploring her sexuality but is unable to use to express intimacy, particularly in her relationship with Hugh. The complications her personality causes her close friendship with Peggy is also evident. In Chapter 4, "Cold Heart," we explore Lucy's life. Her relationships are starting to fall apart, and her life of the past year is waning. The climax of the book comes when she receives a letter from her mother informing her that her father has died. Lucy is forced to struggle with the fact that her mother and father never expected much of Lucy, despite how intelligent she was. This was because she was female and her society never permitted much to be expected of women. After the climax, in Chapter 5, Lucy leaves Lewis and Mariah's for her own apartment with Peggy. She gradually withdraws from all her personal relationships until she is completely alone. The book ends with Lucy expressing her deep anguish that she is unable to love.



Chapter 1, Poor Visitor

Chapter 1, Poor Visitor Summary

It is Lucy's first day in a location yet to be disclosed. She is traveling to an apartment from the airport, with the driver or a passenger pointing out the sights to her. She was overwhelmed but disappointed with what she saw. After getting out of the car, she gets into an elevator and eats food out of a refrigerator. All of these things were new to her; she slept well.

In the morning, she was happy the sun was bright. She was surprised that the sun was shining, but the weather was cold to her, as she was from a tropical area. She put on a madras dress and went outside into the cold for the first time. She sometimes felt homesick and was surprised that she longed even for the things she disliked. Lucy lived in the maid's room, adjacent to the kitchen, but she was not the maid, only an unhappy girl who lived there. Everyone was nice to her, but she missed even the odder elements in her family.

Lucy's hours become routine. She takes four girls to school and then gives them lunch. Afterward, she reads to and plays with them. When they were away, Lucy studied. The winters depressed her, and she wrote home to her family. She wrote nice words to them, but they rang hollow to her.

The maid who disliked Lucy insulted her, saying that she couldn't dance and talked like a nun. The maid takes her to dance, putting on a song (presumably, by the Supremes), and sang and danced. Lucy felt like the words and music were shallow and meaningless. The maid was disgusted, and then Lucy sang a song in calypso form about a girl who fled to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad.

The house where she lived, included a wife, husband, and four female children. They all looked alike and all seemed happy. The family was nice to one another, and Lucy recalls how strict her parents were with her. At dinner one night, the family starts to call her the Visitor. Lucy did not fit in the scheme of things. The husband, Lewis, said that she often started with unfamiliarity, and the wife Mariah laughed, as she usually did. Lucy tells them about a disturbing dream of hers, and Mariah makes a subtle joke about taking her to Dr. Freud. Lucy didn't get the joke. Her dream was intended to let them know that she took them in, but because Lewis was chasing her, a girl, around the house naked, they did not get the message.

Chapter 1, Poor Visitor Analysis

Chapter one introduces the reader to Lucy, but the reader will notice that little information about her or her surroundings is given. We do not even know that her name is Lucy; the reader does not know what city she is in or what she is doing there. The chapter starts abruptly with no introduction. It later becomes clear that she is serving as



an au pair to an American family and emigrated from a Caribbean Island for this purpose.

Lucy fits in awkwardly with Lewis, Mariah and their children. She cannot stand anything fake; she is very smart, but also dour and depressed. She speaks very articulately and often mentions disturbing matters at inappropriate times. She cannot understand why the family she lives with is so happy. And she also seems to resent the family, in part because of their kindness. Lucy's parents were very strict with her. Chapter 1 gives some introduction but mainly introduces us to Lucy's unusually sharp, genuine, fierce and indifferent personality; it is clear she is an angry person.



Chapter 2, Mariah

Chapter 2, Mariah Summary

In March, Mariah asks Lucy if she has ever seen spring. But Lucy had not. She recalls memorizing a poem in school at home, reciting it and being complimented for it. Lucy hated the experience and decided she would forget the poem. And she had, until Mariah brought up spring. Mariah was sad when there was a snowstorm on the first day of spring. Lucy could not understand why she was sad about something so out of her control.

Lucy tells the reader that she used to store letters in her bra from her loved ones but did so out of hatred. Her mother's letter to her told her of horrible and vicious things happening at home, such as murder in a train Lucy's mother rode on. Lucy recalls a schoolmate of hers, whose father "had dealings with the Devil." When her "mother" at her new house told Lucy about how she and her husband had a nice experience during one of their first dates watching a Bing Crosby movie, Lucy sarcastically mocks her experience. She hated causing the woman pain but could not stop herself.

Lucy's mother was friends with a woman named Sylvie, who had a tooth-bite scar on her face and had spent time in jail. Sylvie had said something unacceptable and another woman had hugged her, only to bite and scar her face. Lucy was barred from speaking to Sylvie and her mother's friendship with Sylvie was a secret.

One day Mariah bursts into the room, singing with joy, talking about wanting children. Lucy is again stunned by how happy Mariah is and about how she seems to have never had a reason to doubt her happiness. Lucy could not understand how a person could get to be that way. Mariah tells Lucy that she loves her and Lucy continues to be surprised.

The spring comes in full. Mariah wants to take Lucy to the family house at the Great Lakes, and the children would go with Mariah. Mariah takes Lucy to a garden, and Lucy wants to destroy the life there. Lucy's heart was full of destruction and she could not share it with Mariah. Mariah leans in to hug her and Lucy resists, saying that she was once forced to memorize a poem about daffodils, flowers she would not see until she was nineteen (her current age). Mariah grew silent, and Lucy felt bad.

Lucy did not want to go to the Great Lakes. She receives a letter from her mother telling her that it had not rained since Lucy left. Lucy tried to be indifferent, since this was no longer her life. Lucy, Mariah and the children travel in a train, something Lucy had never done. But new things no longer thrilled her. She noticed that all the servants in the train were dark-skinned, and those being served were white. The night on the train frightened Lucy.



They arrive at the Great Lakes and Mariah meets Gus, a Swedish man she had known her entire life. Gus takes them throughout the countryside. Mariah seems to forget that she is a wife with children. They return to the house where Mariah grew up; it was enormous and beautiful. Lucy could see the lack from her room. Lucy was comforted by the presence of the large body of water. She notes that Mariah was intent on getting Lucy and the children to enjoy everything as she did. The children were happy to oblige, but Lucy was not. She did not seek Mariah's love, since she already had a mother. A few days later, Mariah and Gus caught fish, and they made dinner.

Lucy tells Mariah a story. At age five, Lucy learned the story of Jesus Christ and the loaves and fishes. Lucy asked her mother then how the fishes were cooked. Had Jesus cooked the fish, the people not only would have enjoyed having food but tasting it. Mariah's eyes grew sad, but she forgot the sadness later. That night, Mariah and Lucy say goodnight, but they both felt awkward. Mariah tells Lucy that she (Mariah) has Indian blood, like Lucy does. Mariah felt like she shouldn't tell Lucy this. Lucy was surprised and didn't know how to take it. Mariah didn't look Indian. Lucy never thought of herself as an Indian. And she hears Mariah's claim to have Indian within her as conceiving of being Indian as being in "possession" of a trophy. Mariah looked miserable, and Lucy responds, telling Mariah that she had always wondered how Mariah got to be the way she was. Mariah tried to hug her, but Lucy stepped out of her way. She asks Mariah again how she got to be that way, and Mariah's face filled with anguish. Lucy felt a hollow triumph.

Chapter 2, Mariah Analysis

Chapter 2 focuses on Lucy's employer, Mariah. Mariah is the wife of Lewis and the mother of four children, who Lucy is in charge of caring for in Mariah's absence. Mariah is interminably happy. She is constantly singing, wearing beautiful colors and planning activities for herself and her children. She very much wants to get to know Lucy, but Lucy constantly rebuffs her. Lucy finds Mariah's happiness completely incomprehensible. Sometimes Lucy comments on how fake Mariah seems, but then she will mention how much she likes Mariah. Lucy almost develops a fascination with Mariah that Lucy cannot resist. Lucy finds herself torn between wanting to destroy Mariah's happiness and wanting to be kind to her.

Towards the end of the chapter, Lucy deliberately says something to hurt Mariah, and when it does hurt Mariah, Lucy feels a sense of triumph along with guilt. This desire of Lucy's apparently derives from her resentment of Mariah's happiness and her desire to cut through any fake quality of Mariah's life. To Lucy, the only truth is frustration, resentment, hollowness, and anger, and she seeks to place this conception of reality all around her.

Other elements abound in Chapter 2. Lucy does many new things. But most of all she experiences the seasons and comes to like this experience a great deal. During the summer, Mariah takes Lucy and the girls to her home at one of the Great Lakes. Lucy initially does not like it there but comes to enjoy it. She particularly likes Miriam, one of



Mariah's daughters. We learn that Lucy does not read the letters her mother sends her, but instead carries them in her bra to keep her hatred for her mother warm. She is both drawn to her mother and feels like her but despises her at the same time. In some ways, Mariah represents Lucy's mother. She is drawn to Mariah because Mariah feels what Lucy cannot feel; Lucy has the same bipolar attitude towards Mariah in a lesser form than she has towards her mother.



Chapter 3, The Tongue

Chapter 3, The Tongue Summary

Lucy discovered that tongues had no taste at age fourteen, when she was kissing Tanner, a boy. She had a crush on him. Apparently cow's tongue also has no taste. During these thoughts, Lucy is at dinner with Miriam, the youngest of the four girls. Lucy had to make her eat stewed plums and yogurt with a trick; Mariah did not like that style of motivation, so Lucy hid it from her with soft speech. The summer had begun, and Mariah and the girls were down at the Great Lake.

One day Mariah turned forty; Lucy saw her as aging and felt sorry for her. She had grown to love Mariah. Lewis enters the room. He is a lawyer and is always reading but gives Mariah a lick on the neck, which Lucy sees as contrived. Lucy does not know Lewis well and is not interested in getting to know him, despite the fact that he made her laugh. Lewis was kind, handsome and intelligent. Lucy does not have a crush on him, but she understood Mariah's attraction to him.

Mariah's best friend Dinah calls. She reminds Mariah to come to a picnic honoring an endangered marshland, and Lucy cannot bring herself to care. She returns to discussing tongues; she never understood why sighing and shuddering was the right response to a tongue on the neck. But she understood why Tanner's hands on her breasts excited her. She notes that once a boy in class kissed her hard, and she reacted by kissing him back, which caused him to ejaculate. They met a few times afterward, but Lucy did not like his hair.

When Lucy and her family arrived at the lake, it was hot. She had been away from home for six months and no longer wanted to go home. She felt it was oppressive and Lucy loved the seasons. At breakfast each day, Louis, May, Jane, Miriam (the four daughters) and Lucy would go down and play around the lake. She would often carry Miriam; Lucy notes that she always loved Miriam. Carrying Miriam through the woods caused Lucy to remember that most of the stories of events in the woods at her old home were unhappy ones.

One day, Mariah's friend Dinah appears down at the lake; Lucy had met Dinah some weeks before and disliked her. Mariah wanted Lucy to like her, but Lucy found her vain. Lucy didn't believe that one should love things so much that are fleeting. She found Mariah superior to Dinah because she was less shallow. Further, Dinah was envious of Mariah's life despite having many great things for herself. Lucy had come to care for Mariah, and recounts admiring her as time went forward.

Prior to coming to the lake, Mariah was concerned that Lucy would feel alone and miss Peggy, her friend. Mariah didn't like Peggy, as she smoked, cursed, wore tight jeans and was mysterious. Lucy and Peggy were not alike but they liked each other nonetheless - Lucy liked to read, Peggy didn't; Lucy liked sunlight, while Peggy wore sunglasses,



among many other things. She had met Peggy at a train station and decided to take up smoking with her but later gave up on it. Lucy and Peggy became very close, telling each other everything.

For whatever reason, this relationship upset Mariah. She told Lucy that Peggy was a bad influence and that she could not come to the house or be around the girls. One Saturday night, Peggy and Lucy were watching movies and smoking marijuana. Boys thought they were dangerous. Peggy stayed over one night, but Mariah did not really mind. Peggy and Lucy tried to see each other as often as they could. Mariah saw that Lucy was lonely when she wasn't with Peggy, so she and Lewis threw a party for her. Dinah and some of her family came. Dinah's brother was only three years older than Lucy, and he was "worldly and smart." Hugh, the brother, immediately knew that Lucy was from the West Indies.

Lucy immediately developed a crush on him. He was handsome but five inches shorter than she, which she liked. He smelled good. At the party, they went outside and laid on the grass together. Hugh expressed, in a poetic way, that he liked being away from home. Lucy understood and pressed herself against him. He kissed her, and she loved it, but she wasn't in love. The day ended while they were together, naked in the grass. After having sex, Lucy realized she had not used protection and became concerned she might be pregnant. This filled her with dread, which leads Lucy to recount a memory.

At age twelve, Lucy receives some cloth and made clothing out of it. This caused her to realize that hair was growing under her arms; she then noticed she had hair around her genitals. She was changing and could not stop it, and one day, she had her period. She and her mother talked about it, and she decided that she would never want her mother to see her unmarried but with a child.

Lucy, for the first time in a very long time, began to feel happy regularly. Mariah noticed that it was Hugh. Yet, she was not in love with him; she did not want new bonds, being only half a year free from "unbreakable" bonds. For her, the relationship was erotic and friendly.

Mariah and Dinah were upset about the environmental damage to the local geography. Houses were being built on farmland, and the natural ecology of the area was dying. Mariah ends up writing a book about the dying ecosystem. Lucy notes the ironic fact that Mariah was not aware that there was a deep connection between her level of affluence and the destruction of the environment. This irony gave Lucy a kind of pleasure, despite Mariah's kindness.

Lewis has started a garden and some animal is eating his vegetables. Mariah and Lewis argue about which animal it is. And one night at dinner, Lewis erupts with anger over the issue and slams his fists on the table, causing everyone to become quiet. Lucy was unfamiliar with this situation. Miriam started to cry and Lucy comforted her.

Lewis and Mariah go to the marshlands on another day; the same day, Lucy gets the tenth letter from her mother that she decided not to open. As Lewis and Mariah were



leaving in the car, it sounded as if they drove over something, and Mariah screamed. They had killed a rabbit. Mariah was very upset, Lewis less so. They buried the rabbit, but Lucy did not go to the "ceremony, as it would feel inauthentic. There was a suspicion that Lewis ran over the rabbit on purpose to kill it.

One day, it became clear to Lucy that Mariah and Lewis had been growing apart for some time. They seemed to have no common interests. When Dinah came over on the same day, Lewis perked up and appeared to share something with Dinah and laugh together. Lucy noticed, and she saw Lewis kissing Dinah's neck. They were having an affair; Lucy was devastated. But this was not so uncommon in the West Indies. Her father had had thirty children, and people knew that men and women could not be trusted in some situations. The mothers of her father's children often tried to kill each other's babies. Mariah had no idea of the affair and no clue that Lewis did not love her. Instead, she focused on the destruction of the environment and began to complain more and more.

Lucy became uninterested in the lake a month before they left. She decided she would not miss it or the environment around it. She said goodbye to Hugh without him knowing it. After having sex with him, she kissed him and remembered the other boys she had been with. She had had sex with Tanner and was happy to lose her virginity. But it mattered a lot to Tanner to lose his virginity. Lucy had also made out with Peggy one night. Recalling these events was how she said goodbye to Hugh.

Chapter 3, The Tongue Analysis

Chapter 3 introduces the reader to many new characters, all of which deepens Lucy's character and the storyline. First, we meet Tanner, Lucy's first childhood sexual partner. Lucy's early sexual experiences are pleasurable, and she enjoys them quite a bit. She and Tanner had several good experiences, having sex at age fourteen. Lucy notes that for her, sex and romantic feeling are separate. She is not moved by the loss of her virginity, but Tanner is. The emotion he expresses surprises her. We learn that Lucy is a very sexual person from an early age, but that sex is not used to express emotional connection, something of which Lucy seems largely incapable.

This is continued with her experiences with Hugh. She is drawn to him and even has a crush on him. Hugh makes her happy, but she never falls in love with him. She primarily desires his companionship and wants to have sex with him. These two parts of the story introduce the reader to a deep theme in the book: Lucy is so angry, so embittered at something in her past, that she is unable to develop deep emotional connections with others, at least not permanent ones. Even intimate acts like sex are, for her, little more than a good time, a brief distraction from the hollowness of life.

The chapter also introduces the reader to Lewis and Dinah. Dinah is Mariah's best friend; Mariah likes her quite a bit, but Lucy is sharp enough to see through Dinah. Dinah is fake and also envious. Dinah seems to want Mariah's life, despite the fact that she possesses many good things herself, like four children of her own, a husband, and



a fair amount of wealth. The reader will already be familiar with Lewis, Mariah's husband. In the chapter, Lucy tells the reader that she likes Lewis, that he makes her laugh, but that he seems distant from Mariah. Lucy shows her extraordinary perceptiveness, seeing something that apparently Mariah cannot see, despite knowing Lewis for much longer than Lucy. Lucy later discovers that Lewis and Dinah are having an affair. This displays Lucy's perceptiveness and accurate cynicism in its fullness: she knew Dinah wanted Mariah's life and that Lewis loved someone or something else more than he loved Mariah.

The chapter also introduces us to Peggy, Lucy's non-conformist friend who plays a larger role in the subsequent chapter. Briefly, Peggy is a typical "bad girl." She smokes, is sexually mature and is mysterious. Lucy loves hanging out with her, despite Mariah's protestations. But Lucy realizes that the two of them have deep differences and few common interests. She recognizes that this will prevent them from being permanently close, but Lucy gets close to Peggy anyway. They often look for boys together.



Chapter 4, Cold Heart

Chapter 4, Cold Heart Summary

It is now October. Lucy had never experienced the fall season. When Lucy was young, she learned how seasonal change worked in school and noted that all the rich people in the world lived in the places with four seasons. She notes that she thinks it is nice to have too many things, but Mariah thinks her problem is having too much; she wants to have less. That day, Lewis and Mariah were taking their children out to pick apples. The family looked happy, but Lewis and Mariah's marriage was destroyed.

Lucy waited for Peggy to call. Peggy had gone to church and they were to wait in the park. Lucy notes that she does not like Sunday and did not know what it meant. Lucy recalls her past, remembering her mother speaking. Lucy feels the same as her mother, sharing the same personality with her. Peggy comes to the apartment and was eager to get away from her family. At the park, they looked for men with large hands because Peggy had said that large hands indicated a large penis. But they found no men with large hands. Lucy went home and recalled her summer and her happiness. Lucy became sad again and decided to no longer wanted to go to night school or become a nurse. She did not like taking orders or waiting on people. Lucy next feels as if she is all alone in the world and that she always will be.

Lucy and Peggy's friendship was waning. Their differences were becoming more prominent. For instance, Lucy loved going to the museum, but Peggy did not. Mariah had taken her to the museum to introduce her to the artwork of a French man. Lucy identified with him. At the museum, Mariah asks her if she is an angry person, and Lucy exclaims that she obviously would be given her past.

Peggy and Lucy go to a party in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Marijuana was smoked there. A man in her office threw the party. The host was apparently a pervert whose name was Paul. He introduced himself by kissing her, and Lucy was instantly attracted to him. There were ten people at the party, part of Peggy's life that Lucy did not know. The people were artists and mostly men. Lucy notes that she isn't an artist but likes to spend time with those who are unusual.

Later in the party when Lucy was high, she noticed Paul's eyes were focused on her. Lucy did not fall in love with him at this moment, as some other women would have. She instead wanted to have sex with him. Many of the guests left, but Lucy wanted to stay with Paul. Peggy was angry with Lucy because she had advised her to stay away from Paul. They went into the bathroom and argued for the first time, but it was not a terrible argument. When Lucy leaves the bathroom, she focuses on Paul. This causes her to recall something from the West Indies.

Lucy once knew Myrna, a girl with a cruel mother. Myrna was very small in all of her features. The fisherman for their families, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Mathew, would often fish



while Myrna and Lucy watched. But one day, Mr. Thomas fell overboard and drowned. Mr. Mathew began to cry. Myrna and Lucy walk home as Myrna is crying. Lucy felt little sorrow. Lucy didn't believe that there was a purpose behind Mr. Thomas's death or that he was going "to a better place."

When she told Myrna this, Myrna was furious. Myrna told her that Mr. Thomas had been manually stimulating her and then paying her. Myrna was sad because she would not receive any more money. Lucy, surprisingly, responded with jealousy. Why didn't Mr. Thomas choose her to put his middle finger inside of her? The two girls walked home quietly. Lucy wanted to ask more questions, but she was still jealous. And she couldn't stop thinking about it at night. This is of what Paul's hands reminded her.

Peggy and Lucy had stopped getting along. But they decided to start trying to find an apartment together. Peggy would no longer have to take the train and Lucy would prefer to come and go from Mariah and Lewis's apartment as she liked. Mariah was still kind to her, and often paid her more than they agreed to. Lucy then recalls her own au pair, Maude Quick. Lucy hated her. Because of the control Maude had over Lucy, Lucy began to resent her parents.

Mariah and Lewis were fighting more, but kept it quiet. Lewis no longer loved Mariah. And Mariah was usually crying when Lucy came in. One day, Mariah and Lucy were talking about Lucy's relationship with Paul. She told Mariah everything, especially about how their relationship was erotic and sometimes violent. Mariah then told Lucy that she and Lewis have terrible sex. Lucy didn't even know what that was.

A few days later, Lucy received a letter marked 'URGENT' from her mother. She did not open it. Instead, Lucy decided to buy a camera and became interested in photographs. At the camera store, Lucy met the owner and they decided to sleep together. She told him that he reminded her of her father. They later exchanged names, likes and dislikes, etc. He was born in Panama, his parents emigrated from Martinique and he was named Roland. She then left to see Paul and gave him a kiss when she saw him. He wondered where she was but was not suspicious; Peggy had called to ask where she was.

One day, when Lucy was caring for the children, she finds Mariah's eyes full of tears. The end had come, and Mariah apologized for Lewis storming out of the room when Lucy tried to take a picture of them as a family. Lucy decided that he hated Lewis for hurting Mariah. She would always take Mariah's side. Mariah tells her later that she is going to ask Lewis to leave the house; Lucy was fine with it.

During a later night, Lucy is lying in bed, admiring her pictures when Mariah knocks on the door. Someone had come to see her. Maude Quick was there, now grown up. She informed Lucy that her father had died a month ago. Lucy was shocked that Maude appeared pleased with herself. She tells Lucy that her mother is sad that she doesn't answer her letters. Mariah was still in the room and she held Lucy. Lucy was silent, on the verge of tears. She could neither cry nor talk. Maude laughed and told Lucy that she reminded her of her mother. Lucy replied by denying that she was like her mother



and that her mother never should have married her father, sacrificing her intelligence and her dreams. Maude wanted Lucy to go home immediately.

Lucy recalls that she knew little of her father's parents, and that her father told her little about them. She realizes she is still holding the letter and opened it. The letter told her things she already knew. Her mother wants her to come home, and her father had let her mother with nothing. He had no money. And her mother may be responsible for the debts her father had. Lucy found the money she was saving for renting the new apartment and sent it to her mother. Mariah sent double what she had already sent.

Lucy wrote her mother a cold letter and sent it, asking her mother how she could have married such a bad man; she also said that she felt betrayed by her mother. She then tells her mother the tawdry details of her life, to show her that she had become the opposite of her mother and that she would never come home again. Her mother replied lovingly, that she would always love her and always be her mother. Lucy burned the letter along with the others.

A few days later, Mariah and Lucy are standing together. Lucy had no father, and Mariah had no husband, since Lewis had left her. They were going to be divorce and then children were concerned. Mariah says she feels free, but Lucy knows this is an illusion. She tries to communicate this to Mariah, but she fails. After a few minutes of silence, Mariah asks Lucy why she doesn't forgive her mother. Lucy then remembered why she hated her mother; she had never told anyone why. After she was nine, her mother and father had three boys within five years; and they intended to send them all to college in England to become something great. But Lucy was left out and she felt that her mother betrayed her, starting to call her "Mrs. Judas."

Mariah hears Lucy tell this story. But Lucy chokes up and cannot speak. Mariah starts to tell her about great women in history, but Lucy couldn't tell her that those lives were impossible for women in her countries. Mariah tries to give her some feminist literature, but Lucy felt that the book was not representative of her situation. For the least ten years of her life, she had "been mourning the end of a love affair, perhaps the only true love in my whole life I would ever know."

Chapter 4, Cold Heart Analysis

The first part of Chapter 4 displays the details of Peggy and Lucy's relationship. Peggy and Lucy are opposites, but they tell each other everything. As best friends, they were happy, but over time their differences started to show. At a party one night, Lucy wants to have sex with a guy named Paul, who Peggy tried to discourage Lucy from hooking-up with because he was a pervert. But Lucy disregards Peggy's advice, and then Peggy gets insulted. They have their first fight, but their friendship survives it. It becomes clear that Lucy and Peggy's friendship is waning, but as with so many other things, Lucy doesn't mind. Peggy and Lucy were simply too different. For instance, Lucy discovers she loves a museum that Mariah takes her to, but Peggy hates the museum.



Lucy's experience with Peggy reminds her of an odd friendship she had back in the Caribbean with a girl named Myrna. They were in their early teens and would spend their days watching two adult fishermen, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Mathew, leave in a boat and return. Both men were very nice to them. But one day, Mr. Mathew returned without Mr. Thomas; Mr. Thomas had gone overboard and drowned. Myrna begins to cry, but Lucy, as usual, is indifferent. Myrna tells Lucy that Mr. Thomas used to pay her and stick his middle finger in her vagina. Myrna cried because his death meant she would stop receiving money. Lucy was furious that Mr. Thomas preferred Myrna to her, and this was all she could think of. She did not feel for Myrna, nor was she horrified by the event. She was simply jealous.

We see in chapter 4 that Lucy is consumed by jealousy and anger, but it is not entirely clear why until near the chapter's end. Lucy has ignored her mother's letters for some time. One day, her old nanny, Maude Quick, delivers one of her mother's letters to her. Lucy's father has died and her mother wants her to come home. She has no money at all and is left with her husband's debts. Lucy is furious and consumed with pain, and writes a nasty letter back to her mother blaming her for marrying her father and ignoring Lucy. Lucy flashes back to growing up with her mother and father raising her three little brothers and their planning to send the boys to college in England.

They had made no plans for her. Lucy's mother was intelligent and had sacrificed her intelligence to be with Lucy's father. But she had sacrificed Lucy's intelligence, too. Lucy was not good enough because she was a woman, and she bitterly resented her father and her mother for this. Her jealousy and rage throughout her life, as with Myrna, reflects this deep sense of under-appreciation and inadequacy. This is also the source of her inability to form close emotional attachments because her anger has developed into a biting cynicism that she uses to protect herself from pain. The death of Lucy's father is the climax of the book because it reveals the core mechanisms of Lucy's personality.



Chapter 5, Lucy

Chapter 5, Lucy Summary

It has now been a year since Lucy left home. No one had ever expected much of her at home, but the girl of whom little was expected was gone. The new Lucy was unfamiliar inside; she felt as if she was inventing herself. And she had little, no position, no money, only "memory," "anger" and "despair."

Lucy tells the reader that she was born on an island that was twelve by eight miles in size. And when she left at nineteen, she had never been to three-quarters of it. Her island was discovered by Columbus in 1493, but he only named it and never walked on it. Her life on the island was the result of British imperialism. And Lucy disliked the English, preferring to be ruled by the French. When Lucy started to menstruate, she was no longer a child. She felt alone and alienated from her past.

And there was a time when Lucy was nineteen, living with Lewis and Mariah as an au pair for their children. She recalls Mariah when she was happy, of sleeping with Hugh. She lived with Mariah and Lewis until Mariah found out that Lewis had fallen in love with Dinah. She left when her father died. She hadn't wanted to see her father again, and her wish came true. She actually felt guilty. Her mother's life had deteriorated in Lucy's absence. She was glad to not have seen those letters earlier; she could not have become who she is becoming now.

She tells Mariah that she is leaving, and Mariah is angry, reminding Lucy that she agreed to stay for a year. Mariah was hurt, and Lucy wanted to tell her that her situation is not unusual. Men had no morals; they needed laws instead. The holidays came; they felt like a funeral. Mariah and Lewis faked Christmas. And when the New Year came, Lucy was ready to leave; she had many more things than she once had. Mariah now speaks to her harshly and demanded that she follow arbitrary rules. Lucy left in a taxi, and Mariah did not even hug her.

The next day Lucy was in her own bed, bought with her own money. Peggy had found the apartment and they were still close friends. Yet they knew their differences were great. And they signed a two-year lease. Sunday came and Lucy heard church bells; she had not gone to church in a year. She wondered whether she still believed in God and knew she would not ask Him for anything, since she would not like his answer. Peggy was tired of living with her parents; she trivialized them. Lucy did not know whether to admire or pity her. She loved having a bathroom, but she had to share it with Peggy.

Lucy describes various features of her room, of objects that were given to her by others, or that reminded her of others. She had various official documents, several recording that she was born May 24th, 1949. Her full name was Lucy Josephine Potter. She hated all of her name - Potter, an English-Slave name, Josephine for Mr. Joseph, her mothers'



rich uncle. Lucy bothered her; she thought it was "without substance." She then decided she would take the name Enid, after an authoress named Enid Blyton. She told her mother that she would take the name Enid, but her mother hated it and was enraged. But Lucy did not give up the issue. And one day, she asked her mother why she was named Lucy. Her mother told her she was named after Lucifer because she was always a "botheration, even from conception. At that moment, however, Lucy felt that she knew who she was, a girl named after Lucifer.

Lucy gets out of bed and looks out the window. Peggy joins her. Paul came by in the evening and gave her yellow roses. He showed her a picture he had taken of her topless, and she realized then that he thought of her as a possession. She immediately started to grow tired of him. They had a dinner much of which Lucy regarded as false.

The next day Lucy started her new job. She had no idea what she would be doing; she would be a secretary for a man and receive a small salary. Peggy had shown her how to apply for such jobs. The job went fine and the days began to pass. Lucy was happy, living a life where few knew anything about her. Lucy's boss was named Timothy Simon and she called him Mr. Simon, despite the fact that he wanted her to call him Tim. He wanted to be friends, and he interested her. She was allowed by Mr. Simon to develop film in his darkroom. She kept taking photographs. And some days she would go home, and Paul would be there, even though she was largely indifferent to his presence.

Lucy was alone in the world. It did not make her happy, but it did bring her a certain degree of satisfaction; she felt that she could not reasonably expect to be happy. She had become friends with Mariah, who felt lonely, despite living with her children. Mariah decided she was leaving for a "place of uncommon natural beauty" where everyone used "peace" as a greeting. She was giving all of her things away. Mariah gave Lucy a notebook she bought in Italy.

They said goodbye, and Lucy did not know whether she would see Mariah again. At home alone one night, Lucy realized that both Paul and Peggy were out. She suspected that they were together, but she did not really care. She pulled out the notebook Mariah had given her and wrote the following: "I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it." Shame came over her and tears filled the notebook.

Chapter 5, Lucy Analysis

Lucy decides to leave Mariah and Lewis's apartment and find a place of her own. Mariah and Lewis are going through a divorce and Mariah is furious with her for leaving. But Lucy doesn't much care and realizes Mariah will get over it. Despite Peggy and Lucy's crumbling friendship, they get an apartment together. Lucy continues to have a relationship with Paul, but when she realizes that he sees her as his possession, she begins to lose interest. Lucy falls into a kind of depression, and despite getting a job, resists human contact. The children are out of her life, as are Mariah and Lewis.



Peggy and Paul are distant, despite their bodily presence, and her original family is absent. She resists making personal connections at work. Lucy is alone, but she is not entirely unhappy with this arrangement. Living a life of solitude and anonymity protects her from pain and suffering and confirms her cynicism, which is her defense mechanism against suffering. It also further deepens her inability to love and buttresses her sense of herself as seeing through lies and pretense.

But Lucy emphasizes that she feels like a new person, that she has given up on what came before, that she no longer knows who she is but is pleased with the opportunity to work herself out autonomously. Something about not being bound by expectations of a community pleases her. However, her solitude becomes difficult for her to bear. Despite not explicitly showing it, Lucy is in terrible pain. Lucy sees Mariah for the last time and receives a notebook from her; Lucy then goes home and wonders if Peggy and Paul are sleeping with each other. She is alienated from everyone and writes one line in her journal: "I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it."

Lucy's inability to love comes to a head; her detachment from intimacy with others, her resistance to form personal relationships; it is something she wants to give up. She aches for the ability to love, but her pain and rage prevent her from feeling it. Her complex relationship with her mother seems to have formed her in such a way as to place a major obstacle between her and forming genuine and deep personal attachments.



Characters

Lucy

Lucy Josephine Potter is the main character of *Lucy*. She grew up in the West Indies, on a small Caribbean Island eight miles long and twelve miles wide. Her mother and father were harsh with her and she grew up feeling unappreciated by her parents, who preferred to dream big dreams for their younger sons, but not for her, despite her intelligence and ability. At nineteen, Lucy decides to leave home to become an au pair for a well-to-do family in a large American city. At the beginning of the book, Lucy finds herself working for Lewis and Mariah, taking care of their four young girls.

However, due to the way she was treated by her parents, she is full of anger and bitterness, yet she also possesses an unparalleled ability to understand the character and emotional states of others. She is a biting cynic, but on many occasions this allows her to weather pain rather than be overwhelmed by it. *Lucy* is Lucy's story, the story of her growing up, facing her rage and anger, and taking control of her identity and personality. Her major turning point is when she learns her father has died. Her anger towards her mother is released, and afterward she falls gradually into isolation and depression. The general effect of the emotional constitution bequeathed to her by her parents' treatment of her is that she is unable to form deep and satisfying emotional connections with others. This is the central tragedy of the book.

Mariah

Mariah is Lucy's employer and perhaps the second most important character in the book. She is the main focus of Chapter 2. When Mariah is introduced to Lucy, Lucy finds her almost insufferable. Mariah is constantly happy, peaceful, excited and full of life. She loves the environment, is socially conscious and is eternally kind to Lucy, despite Lucy's biting and jaded personality. Lucy finds Mariah fascinating because she cannot understand how Mariah came to be such a happy and kind person. Mariah's inner life and motivations are completely opaque to Lucy, who cannot get over this fact. As time moves on, Lucy grows fond of Mariah and they become close, sharing their secrets and emotions together.

Mariah exhibits a certain naiveté, however. She cannot see, as Lucy can, that her friend Dinah is not a good person, that she is vain and envious of Mariah's life. Further, she seems unable to recognize that her husband Lewis has fallen out of love with her and has developed an emotional attachment to Dinah. She is completely blown away when she discovers Dinah and Lewis are having an affair. But Lucy saw all this. During the separation and divorce, Mariah is devastated, losing the spark that once made her so beautiful. When Lucy decides to leave, Mariah is furious, but Lucy knows that they will be friends again. The book ends with Mariah giving Lucy a notebook she bought in Italy;



Mariah then leaves for what appears to be a commune in order to change her life completely.

Lucy's Mother, Annie Potter

Lucy's mother, Annie, is the source of her rage and jealousy. Annie was intelligent but sacrificed it to be with Lucy's father. She also sacrificed Lucy's intelligence and abilities to the norms of her society.

Lucy's Father

Lucy's father was an awful man and irresponsible with money. He had over thirty children with numerous women and when he died he left Lucy's mother with nothing.

Lewis

Lucy's employer, the husband of Mariah. He makes Lucy laugh but she thinks he is a swine for cheating on Mariah with her best friend Dinah.

Peggy

Lucy's hip, mysterious best friend. The two are totally different which prevents their friendship from maintaining its initial deep quality.

Miriam

Miriam is one of Lewis and Mariah's four children; she is Lucy's favorite. Lucy loved her immediately.

Hugh

Lucy's first love interest in the United States. She finds him charming and loves having sex with him but never falls in love with him.

Paul

Lucy meets Paul at a party Peggy takes her to. Peggy thinks Paul is a pervert, but Lucy forms a relationship with him anyway. Their relationship is fun for a time, but Lucy never falls in love with him either.



Tanner

The boy with whom Lucy has her first sexual experiences. He was deeply affected by these experiences, but she was not, despite enjoying them.

Roland

The owner of a camera shop with whom Lucy cheated on Paul.

Mr. Mathew

One of two fishermen who fished for Lucy and Myrna's households back in the West Indies. He reports back to Myrna and Lucy that Mr. Thomas died after falling overboard during a fishing trip.

Mr. Thomas

Along with Mr. Mathew, the other fisherman for Lucy and Myrna's households. He used to give Myrna money to manually stimulate her (she was a young teenager at the time). When Lucy found out Lucy was incredibly jealous. She found out soon after Lucy and Myrna received news that Mr. Thomas had died.

Myrna

Myrna was one of Lucy's young friends back in the West Indies. Lucy was jealous that Mr. Thomas paid Myrna to stick his fingers in her vagina rather than Lucy.

Dinah

Dinah is Mariah's best friend but is also her husband Lewis's lover. Lucy dislikes Dinah, seeing her as fake, vain and envious of Mariah.

Mr. Timothy Simon

Lucy's employer in Chapter 5 of the book. He wants to be friends with Lucy, but she is uninterested.

The Maid

Lewis and Mariah's maid who doesn't much care for Lucy.

Maude Quick

Lucy's old au pair who informs her that her father has died. Lucy despised her.



Objects/Places

The West Indies

The series of islands in the Caribbean where Lucy grew up.

A Small West Indian Island

An unnamed island, ninety-six miles square, where Lucy grew up.

The Great Lakes' House

Lewis and Mariah's house on one of the great lakes, where Mariah, Lucy and the four girls spent the summer.

The City House

Lewis and Mariah's house in the large, unnamed American city. It is here that most of the book's events take place.

A Large American City

The large, unnamed American city where Lucy lives.

Lucy and Peggy's Apartment

The apartment that Lucy moves to after leaving Lewis and Mariah's house.

A Red Italian Notebook

The notebook from Italy that Mariah gives Lucy at the end of the book. In it, Lucy expresses her anguish over being unable to love.

A Camera

Lucy develops a fascination with photography and cameras.

The Great Lake

The lake where Lewis and Mariah's summer house was located.

Daffodils

The flowers Lucy learned about in school but had never seen. In some ways, daffodils were symbolic of the emotional life that Lucy could never have and the opportunities she would miss due to her ethnicity and sex.

Sex

A common activity of Lucy's, through which she derived much pleasure, but little intimacy.



Themes

Falseness

Lucy Potter has an angry, cynical and jealous personality due to her upbringing and mistreatment by her parents. But one advantage of possessing these personality traits is that she has a keen sense for the genuine and little patience for what she regards as falseness. Throughout the book, Lucy longs for genuine connection and loathes situations in which some express false intimacy with others. In one such case, Lucy observes Lewis licking Mariah's neck, and the two of them embracing. But she immediately perceived a profound distance between them, a distance she found shocking given their embrace. In another case, Lucy expresses disgust with Dinah (not to her directly) because Dinah is vain and hides her envy of Mariah's life, pretending to be kind and exciting.

In Chapter 2, which concerns Mariah, Lucy finds it incomprehensible that someone could be as happy as Mariah seemed to be. Lucy found her beautiful and full of energy; she was drawn to these features of Mariah, but not merely to try and participate in them, but also to attempt to destroy them. Throughout the chapter, Lucy resists Mariah's attempts to connect with her and deliberately recounts stories and makes comments to bring anguish and pain out of Mariah. This desire to tear Mariah dissipates when Mariah realizes her marital problems with Lewis. In one way, Lucy's hatred of falseness is a hatred for what she sees as people resisting the fact - obvious only to her - that life is painful and full of awful people, that life warranted her cynicism and anguish. Thus, she sees others as fake when they do not reflect an understanding of these facts.

Mother-Daughter Relationships

One theme of Lucy is the complexities and frustrations of mother-daughter relationships. Lucy's relationship with her mother is quite complicated. On the one hand, she admires and loves her mother. Her mother is strong, stern, intelligent, practical and talented. In some parts of the book, Lucy feels as if she is her mother living a different life at a different time. Yet later parts of the book emphasize Lucy's efforts to become different from her mother, to be her own person. Lucy despises two things about her mother - first, that she married her father and allowed herself to be taken advantage of by him. Lucy's father left Lucy's mother with nothing when he died and may have even stuck her with his enormous debts. Lucy is furious that a woman so smart and proud and dignified would allow such a pig to take advantage of her.

But the most damaging and painful thing Lucy's mother did to her was sell Lucy short in life. Lucy's mother and father had three sons starting when Lucy was nine. Lucy remembers hearing them speak of their dreams for their sons, to send them to England to become doctors or study at college. But Lucy's society in the West Indies did not allow for such dreams to be dreamed for women. Lucy's parents never bucked the



norms. And Lucy blames her mother for not standing up for her, for not recognizing her intelligence and defending her, dreaming for her. It is for this reason that Lucy left home to become an au pair, that she stopped responding to her mother's letters and that she responded not only with money, but with a hate-filled letter blaming her mother for her pain when her mother told her that her father had died.

The Inability to Love

Lucy's inability to love is the central theme of the entire book. We see from early on that Lucy has few emotional attachments with others and prefers being alone. It is not that Lucy loves solitude, but rather that she feels best when alone. However, she also fears that she will always be alone. It becomes clear throughout the book's development that Lucy has trouble forming deep emotional attachments to others. She takes a long time to warm up to Mariah and never comes close to falling in love with her two major love interests in the story - Hugh and Paul. Her friendship with Peggy is temporary, and Lucy recognizes that they have few common interests, and as such their friendship cannot be deep and lasting.

Lucy typically approaches attempts at intimacy with hesitancy. She does not express love through sex, despite finding it pleasurable. And when she finds Paul is in love with her, she withdraws. Even when Mariah tries to hug her, she pulls away. Lucy's cynicism and anger makes her appear indifferent to her inability to connect. Sadly, Lucy appears to some degree unaware of this inability. But at crucial points in the book, she is surprised by her lack of emotional attachment to others. The book ends with Lucy having the realization in full. Alone in her apartment, withdrawn from all of her major relationships, Lucy scrawls in a journal that Mariah gave her, "I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it." The problem for Lucy is that she can't.



Style

Point of View

Lucy is written from the first-person point of view. The speaker is Lucy Josephine Potter, a nineteen-year-old émigré from the West Indies in the Caribbean. The reader enters only into Lucy's thoughts, and the entire book is comprised of Lucy's thoughts, observations, recollections and experiences. The point of the view of the author is first that of an émigré. Lucy's home in the West Indies was a small island, eight miles long and twelve miles wide. By the time she left, she had not even traveled to three-quarters of it. Her perspective is that of a young, dark-skinned girl growing up in the climate of post-colonial British rule. She did not like British people, instead preferring to be ruled by the French.

When she reaches the United States, she feels insignificant. Everyone knows she is an immigrant, but no one knows where she is from, mixing all dark-skinned peoples together. Lucy's perspective is also that of an intelligent cynic. Lucy grew up undervalued by her parents, intelligent but whose intelligence was not valued because she was a woman. As a result, she has an incisive ability to understand the inner workings of others but often keeps her observations to herself. She will routinely comment on emotional features of other characters in the book, long before those characters realize those features for themselves (if they ever realize them). Her anger and jealousy pervade the book as well. Her point of view on life is starkly realistic, pessimistic and angry. She sees a stark, hollow world full of fake people engaged in fake actions.

Setting

The setting of the book is - at its broadest level - surprisingly nondescript. Lucy grew up on a small island in the West Indies, only twelve by eight miles, but it is never named. Lucy immigrates to a large North American city, unnamed also. Lewis and Mariah have a home in an unnamed location in the city. Lewis and Mariah's last name remains unknown. When Mariah takes Lucy and her daughters to their house at the Great Lakes, Lucy does not say where they went, nor does she name the lake where the house was located. Last names are rarely given. In fact, the book is more than halfway over by the time we learn Lucy's full name. Lucy never gives the exact year of the story either; however, we learn that Lucy was born in 1949. Since she is nineteen in the first half of the year, we know that she lives with Lewis and Mariah in the year 1969. She turns twenty during the year.

The temporal setting of the book, then, occurs over the entire year, throughout the changes of the seasons that Lucy has never encountered. On her home Caribbean island, they knew no seasons. For Lucy, the seasons are wonderful and to her represent a kind of cyclical nature to life. Most of the book is spent in Lewis and



Mariah's house or their summer home at the Great Lakes. Later, Lucy and Peggy find an apartment. Lucy often flashes back to her home in the West Indies, but these locations are left largely under described.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of the text reflects the personality traits of the book's main character, Lucy. As described elsewhere, Lucy is a nineteen-year-old émigré from the West Indies who had a rough childhood that left her feeling undervalued by her family. In the United States, she feels alienated from everyone and displays an inability to develop deep and satisfying emotional attachments with others. Thus, the language is not very complicated but contains a starkness and clarity uncharacteristic of a nineteen-year-old girl. Lucy, the reader comes to see, is very intelligent—Lucy mentions how often people note her articulate mode of speech.

She is clearly verbally talented in conversation; it also comes off in the book. But generally descriptions are kept simple, and conveying insights about persons of the deep purposes of Lucy's life events are the major focus. Thus, sharp, shorter descriptions are used but they retain a descriptive, emotional and full form. Beyond the sentence-level language, the reader also encounters a style that moves back and forth between Lucy's memories and experiences, but the language retains an important continuity. All her recollections and experiences are presented with a kind of detachment characteristic of an intelligent, cynical and depressed individual. The point of Lucy's prose is to convey stark reality in straightforward terms, without pretense, flourish or whitewashing anything.

Structure

Lucy is a novel, but is perhaps best described as a novella. The book is just over one-hundred and sixty pages. Its pages are not dense and contain crisp sentences and sharp descriptions. This is not taken to a Hemingway-type extreme, but it is nonetheless straightforward. The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter explains Lucy's first experiences in the United States and introduces the reader to her personality. The second chapter concerns Mariah and Lucy's fascination with Mariah, due to Mariah's inscrutably chipper constitution. Chapter 3 introduces and deepens the reader's acquaintance with the major characters and introduces others. It also contains reflections on Lucy's romantic and other relationships, and points out their tentativeness, as Lucy keeps her distance. Chapter 4 explores Lucy's life in more detail and brings the reader to see the source of Lucy's pain and cynicism at the climax of the book when her father dies. Chapter 5 leads Lucy into depression and withdrawal from all of her important relationships; the book ends with Lucy expressing anguish over her inability to love.

The structure of the book closely mimics the seasonal changes over the year. Chapter 1 opens in the winter, Chapter 2 in the spring, as Lucy becomes more comfortable in her



new life. Chapter 3 occurs during the summer, when Lucy is at Lewis and Mariah's summer house; whereas, Chapter 4 occurs in the fall. It signals the end of her brief but incomplete integration into a new social community. And Chapter 5 brings both the return of winter and of Lucy's isolation. It is also important that the reader be aware of the intra-chapter structure. It primarily aims to describe Lucy's experiences in the United States, but many events remind her of relevant events in her past, to which she frequently flashes back. Many parallels between her former and current life are drawn in this way.



Quotes

"It was my first day." (3)

"It was at dinner one night not long after I began to live with them that they began to call me that Visitor. They said I seemed not to be a part of things, as if I didn't live in their house with them, as if they weren't like a family to me, as if I were just passing through ..." (13)

"I had meant by telling them my dread that I had taken them in, because only people who were very important to me had ever shown up in my dreams. I did not know if they understood that." (15)

"It was not from feelings of love and longing that I did this; quite the contrary. It was from a feeling of hatred. There was nothing so strange about this, for isn't it so that love and hate exist side by side?" (20)

"Again I thought, How does a person get to be that way?" (26)

"Mariah, do you realize that at ten years of age I had to learn by heart a long poem about some flowers I would not see in real life until I was nineteen?" (30)

"All along I have been wondering how you got to be the way you are. Just how it was that you got to be the way you are." (41)

"Isn't it the most blissful thing in the world to be away from everything you have ever known—to be so far away that you don't even know yourself anymore and you're not sure you ever want to come back to all the things you're a part of?" (66)

"Everything remains the same and yet nothing is the same." (78)

"But here was a picture that no one would ever take—a picture that would not end up in one of those books, but a significant picture all the same." (80)

"But I was looking at ruins, and I knew it right then." (88)

"You are a very angry person, aren't you?' ... 'Of course I am. What do you expect?'" (96)

"This should have happened to me! This should have been me!" (108)

"Your mother is so sad you never answer her letters. Perhaps you never receive them." (122)

"On their way to freedom, some people find riches, some people find death." (129)



"For ten of my twenty years, half of my life, I had been mourning the end of a love affair, perhaps the only true love in my whole life I would ever know." (132)

"I was transformed from failure to triumph. It was the moment I knew who I was." (152)

"I was now living a life I had always wanted to live. I was living apart from my family in a place where no one knew much about me; almost no one knew even my name, and I was free more or less to come and go as I pleased." (158)

"I wish I could love someone so much that I would die from it." (164)

Topics for Discussion

Why does Lucy find Mariah so interesting?

How does Lucy react to Lewis's affair?

Why can't Lucy form a lasting attachment with Peggy? Why does their friendship wane?

Why can't Lucy use sex to express intimacy?

Why is Lucy such an angry, jaded person? What does her mother have to do with this?

How is Lucy like her mother? How is she unlike her mother?

To what extent is Lucy truly unable to love others? Why?

To what extent is the book about Lucy's ethnicity?