

Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore Study Guide

Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore by Robin Sloan

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Plot Summary

Clay Jannon is a recently unemployed, college graduate. He takes a job on the night shift of a mysterious bookstore called Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore. He must log the comings and goings of all patrons and has been instructed not to look in any of the books. At the urging of his friend Mat, Clay does look in the books and learns that they're written in some kind of code. He develops a 3D model of the bookstore, which contains the inventory. He meets Kat, an up-and-comer at Google, and they bond over the model and begin dating.

Clay inadvertently solves what's known as the Founder's Puzzle – the first obstacle a novice of the fellowship of the Unbroken Spine must complete. Penumbra, the eccentric owner of the bookstore, is unexpectedly pleased that Clay has looked in the books and solved the Founder's Puzzle so quickly. When Penumbra learns that Clay solved the puzzle with the aid of a computer, he rushes off to meet with Corvina, the First Reader of the fellowship, and advocate for the use of computers in decoding the mystery of the Manutius codex vitae, which the fellowship has been trying to solve for 500 years. Corvina refuses, stating emphatically that the use of modern technology will nullify the result of solving decoding the book as it is thought to be the key to achieving immortality.

Not easily dissuaded, Penumbra, Clay, Kat, and Clay's best friend Neel embark to solve the puzzle. Kat enlists the aid of Google and Clay sneaks into the Reading Room, a secretive, underground library where Manutius' codex vitae is kept. He scans the pages of the Manutius and also scans Penumbra's codex vitae. He is nearly found out, but saved from discovery by Edgar Deckle. With the scans from the pages entered into the computer, Kat begins the Great Decoding. Much to her humiliation, the decoding fails and it results in her relationship with Clay fading.

Penumbra, equally humiliated, has disappeared. Clay tries to find him to no avail. When he finally reaches out to Deckle, Deckle explains that while he knows where Penumbra is, he won't tell Clay until Clay is able to locate the original Gerritszoon punches that were stolen and disappeared years earlier. With the help of Oliver, the other bookstore clerk, and Oliver's friend Tabitha, Clay is able to get a lead on where the punches may have ended up. He travels alone to Nevada to collect the punches from an off-site storage facility in the desert. As he travels back to San Francisco, he notices something in the audio version of his favorite book: *The Dragon-Song Chronicles*. He learns that Moffat, the author, was a member of the fellowship and published his codex vitae as the third volume of the *Chronicles*. Clay discovers a clue to lead him to finding how to decipher the code. Clay decodes the Manutius codex vitae and presents it to his friends and the fellowship.

Penumbra comes out hiding. Clay reveals that the codex vitae lacks the key to immortality, but rather reveals that friendship is the truest gift. Corvina is stripped of his duties as First Reader and Deckle takes his place. Clay and Kat rekindle their relationship and Clay and Penumbra embark on a new business venture.



Section 1, Chapters 1-7

Summary

Chapter one opens with Clay Jannon on a book ladder describing the shelves. He quickly backs up the story and tells the reader that he is recently unemployed after the place where he was working – NewBagel – folded during the recession. A web designer, he was able to keep his MacBook and Twitter account, but received no severance. His friends (designers) have secured better, more high-profile jobs and Clay feels behind the curve. While out for a walk in San Francisco, where he lives, he spots a help wanted sign at Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore. He applies for the late shift and gets the job. The bookstore is narrow with a bell over the door. It's three-stories high with ladders. He meets Penumbra, an older man in a cardigan. During their initial chat, Penumbra asked clay to tell him about a book he loved; he picked the Dragon-Song Chronicles, which is his favorite book along with his childhood best friend Neel.

Chapter two begins a month into the job. Clay has become adept at using the ladders. He notes the lack of customers. He tells his friends about the quirks of the store and some come to visit. He tries to get them to buy something. A girl wanders in that he references as North Face because of her jacket. She's looking for a book on Steve Jobs, which they have. She returns a week later looking for a biography of Einstein, which they do not have. Clay jokes about the direness of book acquisition and customer satisfaction.

Clay decides to help out the store with marketing and begins using a Google advertising platform. He describes the inventory as being two bookstores: one stocks history, biography, and poetry; the other is filled with handmade books that a series of regular customers come to check out instead of purchase. He calls it the Waybacklist. The regulars have an identifying alpha-numeric code. Tyndall is described as coming in with great urgency, demanding a particular title. As he leaves he says: Festina Lente. There are three requirements to the job that involve punctuality, not reading the books, and keeping descriptive logbooks of those who come in the store.

Chapter three introduces Oliver Grone. He's tall and quiet and studying to be a museum curator and is knowledgeable of antiquities. Clay goes home to the apartment he shares with two roommates: Mat Mittelbrand and Ashley Adams. Mat makes models for ILM and Ashley works at a PR firm. May visits the bookstore and he convinces Clay to look in one of the books, which leads to opening others, and they all appear to have a matrix of glyphs in some kind of unidentifiable pattern. Federov shows up and they put the books away. They talk about how Federov used to work for HP. He leaves and Mat asks Clay if he likes Ashley romantically; Clay doesn't and Mat tells him that he's going to ask her out. Clay describes Mat in the logbook and wonders how he missed the connection between Mat and Ashley.



Chapter four is the first of three chapters named for the Dragon-Song Chronicles. It also introduces Clay's best friend Neel Shah. Neel wasn't popular and Clay helped him fit in; they also bonded over their shared love of the Dragon-Song Chronicles. Neel comes to the store and Clay laments that while Neel has been able to build up his company and make money, Clay continues to struggle. Neel tells Clay to find out how much it costs to become a member and he'll join. Penumbra tells him that he would have to sign a contract and "read deeply", but it costs nothing to join. Clay admits to Penumbra that he has looked in the books and Penumbra is pleased.

Chapter five finds Clay alone in the bookstore, not having seen a customer in a week. He checks his new favorite website: Grumble, which publishes pirated code for software, e-books and the like. He also has a map project that plots Twentieth Century science fiction. He uses Grumble's program Ruby to build a 3D graphic model of the bookstore. While he works on the model, Eric, sent on behalf of Corvina, enters and becomes agitated by some of the titles for sale, such as *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. He remarks that Clay doesn't know who runs the store and that he isn't even a novice. He tells Clay that Penumbra needs to get rid of the junk books. He leaves a parcel. Clay gives it to Penumbra in the morning. Clay didn't log the visit and Penumbra instructs him to do so at once. Penumbra explains that this is one of many bookstores around the world and Corvina oversees them all, but that he has never been to the bookstore or San Francisco in many, many years.

As chapter six begins, Clay asks Oliver if he's ever witnessed a delivery; he has not. He then begins to work on his 3D model and color codes the books Tyndall, Lapin, and Federov check out. A girl, Kat, wearing a red t-shirt with the word BAM! on it, comes in and looks around. She heard about the store on Google. She asks about his model and goes through the code. She asks if he's tried time-series visualization; he has not. She has to catch her bus, but offers to meet up and explain the time-series visualization. After she leaves, he Googles it and notices the similarity in the patterns of the three customers, as though they are solving the same puzzle.

Chapter seven is a brief chapter in which Clay and Kat meet. She wears the same red t-shirt as before. They eat at the Gourmet Grotto and talk about dating and immortality. They play Maximum Happy Imagination. Kay states that privacy and romance are new constructs. He shows her how he updated the prototype of the 3D model and she asks if there's more data to be included. He mentions the logbooks and she tells him about a sophistication scanner at Google.

Analysis

As the novel opens, the theme of old vs. new is evident. Clay has recently lost his job and applies for a new one. He's intrigued by the bookstore, but feels as though he's lacking. His friends have managed to obtain and keep better jobs, but Clay is willing to work. He isn't too proud to be working at a job that he may be over qualified for; instead he makes the best of it.



Clay notices that the bookstore isn't a traditional bookstore. The inventory is lacking what would normally be found in a bookstore, and the clientele is sparse. He tries to make the best of it, particularly when North Face comes in and asks for a title. This spurs him on to fill out the advertising platform on Google. His use of Google foreshadows how the company will come into play throughout the novel.

Festina Lente translates to make haste, slowly and is a phrase that will be repeated throughout the novel. It is used often as a greeting. As Clay begins to unravel the mystery of the bookstore, he feels a sense of urgency, and this urgency is likely shared by many of the others involved in the mystery. The idea that they are making haste slowly foreshadows that a long process awaits them. The others may understand the time involved, but this is all fresh for Clay.

Of the job requirements, Clay makes it a point to show up exactly on time and only leaves when Penumbra arrives and relieves him. Because Penumbra has instructed him not to open any of the books, he has, thus far, complied. It doesn't mean that he isn't curious. He is simply more concerned with keeping the job. This doesn't prevent Clay from asking questions though. He may not question what he's been tasked to do, but he does ask Penumbra what the customers are doing. Penumbra replies that they are reading. He says it with flourish and purpose as though it's the most important thing that they could do. This references the theme of literacy.

The theme of literacy is also evidenced by the introduction of Grumble's website. Clay turns to the website for software, which is made available for users without cost. While this type of piracy may be objectionable, and in certain cases, illegal, Grumble is symbolic of the freedom of knowledge. Cost shouldn't prohibit someone from learning and usage. He makes this available much as someone might purchase a book and lend it to others to read. Once he puts the information out there, he can't control who might gain access to it. He advocates for freedom of information. The software symbolizes the books and by making it available to masses, his website helps advocate literacy.

It is Penumbra who tells Clay that should Neel decide to become a member, he will be required to "read deeply". This demonstrates not only the theme of literacy, but the theme of relationships. An individual has the exact relationship he wants to have with a given text. Some may read solely for pleasure, others may read to look for deeper meaning and insight. Clearly, Penumbra is an advocate for the closer relationship with text.

The logbooks are labeled NARRATIO. These books contain descriptive detail. It's not necessarily about the names of the individuals, and given that Clay wouldn't always have that information, it works to track customers observationally. In an early encounter, Penumbra questions Clay on the amount of detail included for one of Tyndall's visits. He even wants to know the type of buttons on Tyndall's coat: jade. Clay also witnesses a delivery; this is something that Oliver has not experienced. It sets Clay's character apart. He's privy to something that isn't known by all and foreshadows his involvement.



Clay's relationship with his best friend Neel is introduced in this section. The two have remained close and while they have many shared experiences, where they have ended up differs. Neel is very successful in his job, while Clay struggles. While it may alter their individual perspectives, they are dedicated to each other, bonded by shared experiences. They represent the theme of relationships.

When Kat and Clay have dinner in the Gourmet Grotto, Kat suggests they play a game called Maximum Happy Imagination. It's a game in which the player looks ahead to the future, sans wars or poverty, and pictures the ideal, what inventions could make life easier, and how to make life better. It's a fantastical game that assumes that the player can move past the constructs of what life presently is, and by association, the bad elements that are part of it, such as war, famine, weapons. Clay struggles with it, indicating that he is very much a realistic. The game is Kat's idea and she it is something she enjoys playing. This demonstrates her character, not as unrealistic, but as someone who doesn't set limits on what is possible. She also discusses the possibility, and more importantly her desire, for immortality. This idealism and realism help balance each other and further demonstrate the theme of relationship. It also gives the reader the first hint of the importance immortality will play throughout the novel.

The reader is first introduced to the Dragon-Song Chronicles in this section. The chapter in this section is titled Dragon-Song Chronicles, Volume I. This gives the reader an indication that there will be more volumes, but also that the book must be of some significance to the story. Given that the title mentions a dragon, it is logical to think that a quest is involved in the story. For the purpose here, volume one is brought Clay and Neel together as children. It foreshadows that the two will be part of the forthcoming adventure to solve the mystery.

Kat's BAM! t-shirt is introduced along with her character. It's a defining element and symbolizes the energy she brings. She is a force to be reckoned with and the shirt foreshadows this. That she insists on wearing the t-shirt every day symbolizes the dedication. She openly admits that she chooses to wear the same shirt every day in order to simplify part of her routine, but it also indicates a constant in her life and references the theme of determination.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Penumbra ask Clay to tell him about a book he loves?

Discussion Question 2

What does Clay's book choice reveal about his character?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Penumbra instruct Clay to not open any of the books on the Waybacklist?



Vocabulary

toroid, gravitas, topology, algorithm, severance, interfaces, portfolio, thesis, delineating, prospectuses, vistas, raucous, euphemism, threshold, ominous, eclectic, cajole, decrepit, quarry, capricious, flourish, dossier, nefarious, curator, Ionian, djinn, topography, crenulations, provenance, sanctum, epicurean, viscous, incredulous, transgressive, glyphs, dissonance, nebula, superimpose, bibliophile, indignant, incurious, eccentricity, mottled, presumptuous, patron, samovar, dubious, malevolence, prototype, idioms, imperatives, grotto, irradiated, analogies, corpus



Section 1, Chapters 8-14

Summary

Chapter eight finds Clay sneaking an older logbook out of the bookstore. Penumbra interrupts and they talk about the bookstore and how young people prefer Kindles. Clay has one, but it doesn't hold a charge. He shows it to Penumbra and Penumbra comments on the typeface: the default font is Gerritszoon. Back at his apartment, Clay hasn't given up getting one of the logbooks. He talks to Mat who says he can build a replica to replace it in the interim.

In chapter nine, Kat invites Clay to a house party, but he can't go because he has to work. They set it up so that Clay can attend virtually via video chat. He gets jealous when Trevor, one of Kat's colleagues, interacts with Kat. Lapin arrives in the bookstore and has a peacock feather in her hat. Her book request takes longer than expected and when Clay returns to the party, he realizes that they've put him on mute. Kat eventually returns and takes the laptop into her bedroom and shows him around. He sees that there are multiples of the red t-shirt. They talk and she falls asleep next to the screen. He then gets the necessary photos for Mat to create a replica of the logbook.

As chapter ten begins, Clay and Kat have been spending more time together and three weeks have passed. Clay and Mat are creating the logbook replica. They need to replicate the Gerritszoon font, but it's a font he doesn't have and can't afford to buy, as it costs several thousand dollars. He decides to pirate it and turns to Grumble. The logbook replica finished, he takes it to the bookstore and makes the swap. When Penumbra arrives in the morning he asks Clay about getting a new computer for the bookstore. He indicates that Clay could use it to build a website for the store.

In chapter eleven, Clay goes to Google Headquarters as Kat's guest. He meets Finn, one of Kat's coworkers and they eat in the cafeteria. When he sees Kat talking to Raj at Google, he becomes jealous again. Raj explains Old Knowledge and New Knowledge (OK and NK). Kat explains the selection process for project manager. They go to the book scanner and meet Jad, who runs the scanner, which has spider-like arms that scan the book in a matter of minutes.

Chapter twelve finds Kat explaining to Clay that they will use Hadoop to process the scan. It's software that fields out portions of a project to many computers to process more efficiently. While they wait, they have sex. Afterwards, the results come back. Kat is excited because it worked. Clay goes to the bookstore and implements the new data into the 3D model. The model works through the pattern and ultimately reveals an image of a face that resembles Penumbra. Penumbra arrives and Clay's first reaction is to hide the image, but he decides to show it to him instead. Penumbra declares that Clay has solved the Founder's Puzzle and that the image is of the Founder, not him. Clay tells him that he solved the puzzle in a day with help from Google. Penumbra declares Clay has done something important.



In chapter thirteen, Clay goes to work the next night only to find the bookstore closed for the first time. He doesn't have a key. He waits around, gets a snack, and spots Lapin. He decides to follow her after she discovers the bookstore is closed. He goes up the narrow hillside staircase after her. He calls out and she invites him in for tea. She tells Clay that Penumbra has gone away. Clay shows her his Founder's Puzzle on his laptop. In turn, she shows him the work she's been doing. She divulges that she's a novice in a fellowship called the Unbroken Spine. There are three levels: novice, unbound, and bound and the solution to the Founder's Puzzle moves a novice to unbound.

Tyndall arrives and reveals that Penumbra has gone after being called by Corvina to come to the library. Corvina is angry and wants to burn Penumbra: his book, not the man. Clay suspects that he's gotten involved with a cult. Lapin and Tyndall don't know where the library is because they're just novices. At the bookstore, Oliver shows up and because they're locked out, they decide to try and get in via the fire escape. They enter through Penumbra's study on the second floor. There are older computers and a modem that an old phone receiver needs to be attached to. There's a logbook labeled PECUNIA, which hold ledger amounts for the Festina Lente Company. They also find a photo of an older man Al-Asmari (who originally owned the bookstore) and Penumbra and Corvina as young men. Clay finds an Amtrak confirmation; Penumbra is en route to New York City.

As chapter fourteen begins, Oliver is running the bookstore for a couple hours a day while Clay travels to New York to intercept Penumbra. He tells Kat and she doesn't think he'll be able to stop Penumbra, but she thinks it's worth going to try. She agrees to go with him under the guise that she's meeting the staff at the New York Google office. He goes to Neel for fund his trip. At Neel's office, he interacts with Neel's prodigies, including Igor. Neel's company, Anatomix, created realistic body software used primary in gaming application; it is noted for the being able to create realistic-looking breasts. Clay explains to Neel why he needs to go the New York. He convinces him that the adventure needed a rogue (Clay), a wizard (Kat), and a warrior (Neel). They plan how to find Penumbra because Penn Station is too big for them to know where to locate him. They try to find the Festina Lente Company, but have no luck. Using a picture of a hand/book symbol on the door of the bookstore, Kat runs it through Google street view to see if they can locate it anywhere in the city. While they're waiting for results, Kat tells Clay that a new project manager is going to be chosen and Raj put in a good word for her; it's selected with the assistance of an algorithm. They locate the building on Fifth Avenue, down from the Guggenheim.

Analysis

As chapter eight opens, the reader finds Clay making his first attempt at sneaking the logbook out of the store. He is interrupted by Penumbra and their conversation about the default font on the Kindle foreshadows the importance of the Gerritszoon font. This references the theme of old vs. new: the font is centuries old and is employed on a modern device. That Clay will try again at a later time to obtain the logbook also references the theme of determination.



The theme of relationships is further developed with Kat and Clay and the way they use technology to work around the obstacle of Clay's work obligations. As the scene progresses, the reader witnesses Kat drifting off to sleep in front of her computer screen. This demonstrates a level of intimacy in their relationship. While it differs from a genuine face-to-face connection, it helps further their relationship.

Clay and Mat work on the replica of the logbook. They use modern technology, including cameras, to create something that can pass for being older than it is. With regard to the pirated font, Clay realizes the work that goes into creating fonts and doesn't want to pirate it, but the expense motivates him to do so. This is a small betrayal that likely makes him more aware of the consequences of what he's doing, which sets up the betrayal he feels when he swaps the logbooks. Penumbra offers him an opportunity to purchase a new computer for the store and work on a website. Clay is happy to have the opportunity, especially considering that it's closer to what he specializes in. This does, however, deepen the feeling of guilt and betrayal by sneaking around behind Penumbra's back to steal the logbook. In addition to his own personal awareness, it demonstrates how the bond between Clay and Penumbra is deepening. Without it, Clay would be less apt to feel guilt.

It is during the trip to Google that Clay gets a firsthand explanation of the difference between old knowledge and new knowledge (OK vs NK). Old knowledge is what people have learned and know in the past and that accounts for the overwhelming majority of cumulative knowledge. New knowledge is how the majority of what's on the internet was learned within the last five years. This reinforces the theme of old vs. new, and also foreshadows what's yet to come with how the Manutius codex vitae is decoded. It is also through Clay's determination that he obtained the logbook, scanned it at Google, and then implemented the data into the 3D model. While Clay is initially hesitant to reveal to Penumbra what he's done, he can't help but do so. In part, this may help assuage the guilt he felt in betraying Penumbra because he has something legitimate to show for it. He's also curious about what it all may mean. Clay is initially under the impression that the image is actually of Penumbra, which likely leaves him more curious about it than if he understood that the image was of a man who died several hundred years earlier.

In chapter thirteen, Clay returns to the bookstore to find it closed. This marks a transition in the story. Clay has finished the one part of his entrance into the fellowship, but must wait to see what comes next. His curiosity is growing, and while he doesn't necessarily know what he's looking for, he is interested in the pursuit. This makes him very much like Lapin, Tyndall, and Federov, even if he doesn't know it. This makes his decision to follow Lapin after she discovers the bookstore is closed more intriguing. While Lapin and the others are following a guided path through the fellowship, Clay is finding his own way. It's in speaking with Lapin that he learns about the Unbroken Spine and that Penumbra has gone away. It's evident from this section that Tyndall and Lapin (and by association Federov) have a much different relationship with Penumbra than Clay. It is also at this point in the novel that Clay learns of Corvina's anger and the possibility that he will burn Penumbra. It is at this time that Clay becomes increasingly protective of Penumbra, demonstrating the level of their relationship. Clay doesn't fully



understand what's at stake or what is transpiring, but he senses that he must help his friend.

Upon his return to the bookstore, Clay and Oliver show, not only their dedication to the bookstore, but the determination to get in, in spite of not having keys to do so. When they arrive in Penumbra's office, they find the antiquated computer equipment. This is surprising to Clay, but it demonstrates Penumbra's relationship with electronics. He may not be tech savvy, but he has a baseline interest. In having the equipment, it shows that Penumbra is willing to learn; he can piece together old knowledge and new knowledge. Comparing what Clay has created with the 3D model, and both Kat and Neel's computer expertise to Penumbra's equipment clearly reinforces the theme of old vs. new.

In chapter fourteen, the reader witnesses further developments in the theme of relationships. Kat has decided to accompany Clay to New York, even if she doesn't think he'll be able to persuade Penumbra to not see Corvina. While she may be going as part of being a supportive girlfriend, she's equally interested in finding out what's really going on with the fellowship. Neel takes more convincing, and in order to do so, Clay relied on a familiar trope to lure him. He equates the trip to being a quest like in the Dragon-Song Chronicles, or other books of that nature. By appealing to Neel's level of literacy, he's able to tempt him into coming, and by extension, pay for the trip.

The group must employ technology to find the Unbroken Spine. Kat uses Hadoop to speed up a job that would normally take years, if one were left to search the buildings on their own. This use of technology combines the old of the city, with the new of the technology, reinforcing the theme.

Discussion Question 1

What does Clay's jealousy reveal about his character?

Discussion Question 2

Clay feels as though he's betrayed Penumbra. What implications does that betrayal put on their relationship?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Clay follow Rosemary Lapin?

Vocabulary

replica, chaperone, ponderous, transliterate, proscenium, savants, vellum, occult, eponymous, recumbent, acronyms, egalitarian, dapple, ubiquitous, palanquin, tandem,

palette, simulacrum, dereliction, furtively, scrim, buoyant, conspicuous, stalwarts, injunction, inscrutably, assimilates, de facto, consort



Section 2, Chapters 1-5

Summary

Chapter one opens with Clay in New York looking through Star Wars binoculars he borrowed from Mat, sitting with Kat. Clay and Neel have both been to New York, but this is Kat's first trip. She's also waiting to hear the selection of the new project manager. Clay spots a man he refers to as Round Nose who ends up going into the Unbroken Spine building. Others go in after him.

Kat is overwhelmed by the amount of people in New York in general. Neel asks her where she's from; she's from Palo Alto. They discuss the urban and suburban mindset. Neel leaves and goes to the Met. Kat and Clay stay, and that afternoon Penumbra arrives. Clay intercepts him. Penumbra tells him he's wrong about the burning and that he's here to talk to Corvina about using computers. Penumbra reveals that he has not one, but four e-readers and tells them to meet him at the Dolphin and Anchor. When Clay and Kat get there, order drinks, and Kat finds out she wasn't selected as project manager. Later, Neel and Penumbra join them. Penumbra explains that Corvina has grown more conservative and resists the use of computers. Penumbra then explains the fellowship.

Aldus Manutius printed the writings of the ancients (Sophocles, Aristotle, Plato, etc.) in the 15th Century. Manutius believed that the answer to immortality, among other ideas, was hidden in the writings of the ancients. When Manutius died, his tomb was filled with copies of the books he printed. After a wind blows against the door, his friends discover that there is no body in the tomb. He left behind a book called the CODEX VITAE (Book of Life). The book was encrypted and the key was given to his friend Gerritszoon. If the Unbroken Spine cracks the code, they believe that every member of the Unbroken Spine who ever lived will be brought back to life.

In chapter two the group goes to the Reading Room, which is beneath the Festina Lente Company. The company looks like an ordinary office with computers and phones and cubicles. Penumbra asks to see Deckle, who is in charge of Special Projects. Deckle is actually Round Nose and was once a clerk in the bookstore. He confirms that Festina Lente Company is a real company and that they profit off of licensing fees for the Gerritszoon font. More recently, the company has been earning from anti-piracy for e-readers. Deckle congratulates Clay, Kat and Neel for solving the Founder's Puzzle. Kat and Neel share a look, but go with it. He gives them all cloaks to wear into the Reading Room. They must also turn over their phones.

Deckle leads them to a staircase, motions and says: Festina Lente. The Reading Room is an underground cavern with tables and beams and bookshelves. It's also quite cold. Others in the room are also wearing the cloaks. They are told that they must never speak of the room or reveal its location to anyone. The shelves contain all of the books of the Bound and the original CODEX VITAE of Manutius. Only unbound and bound are



allowed to read it and it cannot be removed from the room. The logbooks are used to verify that an individual has earned their knowledge. Clay doesn't believe the immortality aspect and maintains the view of the fellowship as a cult.

Corvina approaches; his robe is different, more elaborate with red on it. He greets them coldly and finds them ill-prepared to be members and that it was Penumbra's responsibility to prepare them. Corvina wants Penumbra to come to New York permanently and shut down the bookstore in San Francisco. The bookstore will no longer be funded by the Festina Lente Company regardless of Penumbra's decision. Corvina leaves them and the group departs the Reading Room. Neel suggests they meet later at the Northbridge, the hotel where they're staying because Neel knows the owner. Before they leave, Clay notes that Corvina is also the executive chairman of the Festina Lente Company.

At the start of chapter three, it's raining and the group arrives at Northbridge with Clay referring to the group as the Rebel Alliance. They discuss the technology at Festina Lente Company, but Penumbra reveals that nothing is allowed in the Reading Room and that it took twenty years of debate to have electricity installed in the Reading Room. They scheme to get the CODEX VITAE to the scanner at Google or the scanner to the book; neither is possible. Clay remembers seeing a makeshift, cardboard scanner on Grumble. Since it's made from paper, it can get through the metal detectors unnoticed. They just need access afterhours. Deckle arrives and Penumbra convinces him to get Clay in. Clay reaches out to Mat to see about getting a laser cutter to build the cardboard scanner. Mat tells him to contact Grumbles. He posts on the community board and he and Kat further discuss the possibility of immortality. Kat reveals that she would go so far as to be cryogenically frozen in an effort to achieve it.

The next morning begins chapter four. Kat goes to the New York Google offices; Clay gets a reply from Grumble. Grumble is intrigued by Clay's declaration that this involves a publishing event bigger than Harry Potter. Grumble tells him to go to an address and ask for the Hogwarts Special, hold the shrooms. Clay and Neel pick up the box, which is labeled SPECIALIS REVELIO. They purchase a couple of cheap digital cameras. Back at Northbridge, Kat reveals that she's been made project manager as the list of project managers expanded. They go to the lobby bar to celebrate. Neel tells Kat that she should acquire Anatomix. Clay and Neel assemble the scanner.

Clay begins chapter five at the Reading Room after midnight with the understanding that he must be done before dawn. The space is completely dark and the headlamp he wears offers little light. He scans the Manutius and hears rumbling; worried at first, he determines it's the subway and continues scanning. Later, he searches for Penumbra's codex vitae. Before he can find Penumbra's, he locates one bearing the name Moffat – the author of the Dragon-Song Chronicles. He pulls the book; Moffat has been burned. He scans Penumbra's book and puts it back. The lights come on and he hides in what he thinks is a closet and Deckle finds him. The room is actually a printing room. He looks in a metal case and finds the Gerritszoon 3D letters. Edgar explains that they break the letters, but are unable to make new ones. Some in the fellowship believe that if their codex vitae is printed in a font other than Gerritszoon, it won't be valid.

Analysis

At the beginning of chapter one there is a direct pop culture reference to Star Wars. This happens again when he describes his group as the Rebel Alliance. Further, the author references Harry Potter, both as a publishing and cultural phenomenon, and as a bit of humor with the use of SPECIALIS REVELIO. These allusions give the reader cultural stepping stones to the mentality of people who maintain a specific interest. Of particular note, if one compares the impact of Star Wars and Harry Potter and the times during which they reached their initial audience, it reinforces the theme of old vs. new, as well as a different type of literacy: cultural literacy.

Neel and Kat discuss the difference between living in urban vs suburban environments. Neel and Clay have both been to New York, so they presumably have some idea of the bustle of the city, the energy, and what the crowds are like. Kat doesn't share this experience and is in awe of the amount of people in the city. Neel and Kat discuss the possibility of a model simulation of the city. Ultimately, Neel shuts down the conversation by claiming that Kat wouldn't struggle with it because not enough memory would be available; it simply wouldn't be possible to recreate the experience. Neel leaves them behind to go to the Met to look at statues. Here the reader can see a collision of old and new knowledge as well as understand the characters' relationship with their experiences.

Penumbra arrives and contradicts the information that Clay has about Corvina. He doesn't expect to be burned, but rather wants to discuss the possibility of continued use of computers in the decoding. Later Penumbra asks to meet with Clay and Kat and he reveals more about the fellowship and its connection to the possibility of immortality. Undoubtedly, this is of particular interest to Kat and will help motivate her to stay involved with the mystery. The reader learns that Manutius left behind his book of life, which foreshadows the result from decoding in later chapters.

In chapter two, the reader witnesses a continuation of the theme of old vs. new. The Reading Room, which is located beneath the Festina Lente Company, operates in a technology-free zone (sans lighting), while the company offices are what would be expected in the contemporary office, including phones, computers, and the like. The people who are involved with the fellowship are also obligated to keep secrets. No one can speak of or reveal the whereabouts of the library. This social contract indicates the type of relationship the fellows have with the fellowship.

Chapter two also further examines the theme of literacy. When Corvina approaches Penumbra, Clay, Kat, and Neel, he asks them specific questions, testing their literacy of the subject matter being studied. They lack the specific knowledge that Corvina deems necessary and he faults Penumbra for not preparing them properly, leaving them effectively illiterate to much of what is being studied in the Reading Room. Through his actions, Corvina reveals a propensity for literary elitism. He argues that one must have the appropriate background to be able to share in the fellowship. He also tells Penumbra that he's cutting funding for the bookstore. Corvina is deciding who should



and should not have the opportunity to learn. By shutting down the bookstore, he contributes to others' illiteracy. Clay also learns what the logbooks are for in chapter two. By including even the most mundane of details, the fellowship could track and confirm who was earning their place in the fellowship. It is a way to validate their research.

In chapter three, the group plots to either get the Manutius out of the Reading Room, which is near impossible, or get a scanner to it. The theme of old vs. new can be observed as the book and scanner are in contrast with each other. By chapter four, the ultimate solution is revealed to be a makeshift scanner made from cardboard. This scanner is symbolic of the old (cardboard) and new (cameras) working together for an achieved goal.

In chapter five, Clay descends into the Reading Room alone. While there is some discussion of whether or not someone should go with him, it's deemed the safest for him to go alone. Kat and Neel both have careers that could be greatly jeopardized by getting caught and possibly arrested. This is especially true now that Kat has achieved her status as a project manager at Google. The conditions in the Reading Room differ from Clay's expectations. Having already been in the room during daylight hours, Clay certainly understands that the room will appear different at night. What he isn't prepared for is the darkness and he finds this disorienting. He loses track of time, which leads to his being stuck in the room when the readers come in during the morning. But while he's in alone in the room, he goes beyond scanning the Manutius. He finds the Moffat codex vitae and discovers it has been burned. This foreshadows the importance that the Dragon-Song Chronicles will continue to have to the plot resolution. He also searches for Penumbra's codex vitae and scans it. This is not something he decides to do spur of the moment. He has premeditated scanning Penumbra's book. His relationship with, and need to protect, Penumbra continues to grow. While he resists the possibility of immortality following the decoding of the Manutius, he does understand the book as a way for Penumbra to achieve immortality. Fearing that Corvina will make good on the threat to burn Penumbra, he protects his friend by scanning the book. In doing so, he puts himself at risk and ends up staying longer than he should in the Reading Room. His efforts to protect Penumbra demonstrate his determination as well.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Penumbra tell Deckle that Kat and Neel also solved the Founder's Puzzle?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Clay view the fellowship as a cult?



Discussion Question 3

What does the fact that electricity for the Reading Room was debated for twenty years reveal about the fellowship?

Vocabulary

neophyte, flux, agog, surreal, boon, marginalia, inscrutable, sotto, egregious, crux, messiah, rapture, banality, ennui, lucrative, catacomb, terminus, dais, solicitous, strafes, patronizing, ultimatum, brindled, exorbitant, deluge, insurgency, schematics, circumscribing, entrepreneur, schisms, brevity, clandestine, wetware, euphemism, cryogenics, epoch, biometric, boon, derelict, squander, dubious, sidle, acquisition, spatial, espionage, inscrutable, semblance, hominid, luminescence, erstwhile, insignia

Section 2, Chapters 6-10

Summary

Deckle has given Clay a cloak to put on to blend in with the rest of the people in the Reading Room as chapter six begins. Corvina speaks to the group, revealing that Zaid's, a member, codex vitae has been submitted and that he is now bound. Three copies are made: one for the library and two for safekeeping that will be put in other bookstores. Corvina tells the group that Penumbra will be burned for his transgression of the logbook being made available for the public to see. The readers all get to work and Deckle motions of Clay to go. He meets Kat, Neel, and Penumbra at Northbridge and tells them about Zaid's ceremony, which Penumbra identifies as a binding. Kat uploads the scans from the Manutius. While they wait, Clay asks Penumbra if the Moffat in the Reading Room is the Dragon-Song author and Penumbra confirms it. He reveals that the third book in the series was actually Moffat's codex vitae and he was burned because he published the book.

The group returns to San Francisco in chapter seven. Clay learns that Ashley has turned Mat onto rock climbing. He gets his Moffat books and continues reading and comes across a character called Griffo and he connects it to Gerritszoon. He begins to take notes from the book with fresh eyes. He meets Kat for breakfast and her wardrobe has grown more professional, but he notes the red t-shirt peeking out from under her blouse. She talks about being project manager and the exchange of ideas during meetings. She pitches solving the Manutius puzzle to the group by claiming the fellowship is a non-profit trying to break a code. Kat now has Google's official backing to work on the Manutius project.

In chapter eight, Penumbra agrees to keep the bookstore running until it runs out of money. Clay starts an ad campaign to try and get more customers. He runs into North Face and tells her that they now stock the Einstein biography and she buys it. They continue to stock new books. Oliver reveals that he thought the mystery of the bookstore hinged on a drug ring. The group meets with others to start working on familiarizing themselves with the Waybacklist. Federov explains how the books work to the people from Google; Igor from Anatomix is also present. Clay tells Lapin and Tyndall what's happening and invites them to come and watch the reveal. Two weeks later, Kat has been working diligently on the Great Decoding and Clay notes that he doesn't see the t-shirt anymore. They meet for dinner and she tells him about the projects she's interested in at Google, in particular Google Forever, which focuses on life extension. Clay goes home alone because Kat has work to do.

Chapter nine begins on the night before the Great Decoding. At the bookstore, Clay searches the logbooks to see if he can find Moffat. He reads about how quickly Moffat worked through the Founder's Puzzle. Mat shows up to photograph the bookstore so he can recreate it. Neel shows up and helps with the photos. Clay hears the phone ring in Penumbra's office and goes to answer it; it's Corvina. He knows that the Manutius was



stolen; Clay argues the word choice. Corvina tells Clay that he has to stop Penumbra and that the failure to break the code will destroy him. The conversation ends and Clay considers what Corvina has said, but decides to help Penumbra instead of stopping him. The next morning Mat, Neel, and Clay go for breakfast, leaving the bookstore behind for the final time. Neel is impressed with Mat's work and Mat invites him to come to ILM to look at his other work.

The code breaking begins in chapter ten. The event is held at an amphitheater. Penumbra is there along with people from Google Forever. Penumbra introduces Clay to Muriel, who runs a goat farm and is a close friend of Penumbra's. The text of the Manutius is projected on large screens and the code breaking gets under way. Google's machines try different manners of using the data and nine thousand different ways in and they've gotten nothing. It continues and Clay wants Corvina to be wrong and the collective of Google to solve the puzzle. A countdown begins and for three seconds, nothing works – email, maps, search engines – because all of Google is working on the puzzle. It's the final moments and the end result is nothing. Kat is dejected. They consider possibilities as to why it didn't work, and Penumbra disappears.

Analysis

Deckle helps Clay at the beginning of chapter six. In doing so, his actions reveal his motivations. He doesn't help Clay in order to protect himself from being found out. He assumes the risk in order to further advance the fellowship. He sees merit in the use of computers and he trusts Penumbra's lead. Deckle and Clay share an unusual bond: they both have been a clerk for Penumbra. In considering that Penumbra has likely had many clerks over the years, he has found two men who have befriended him and taken risks because of him. This isn't something witnessed in all of his clerks, of course. Oliver, while a reliable worker, doesn't show the initiative or, more importantly, the curiosity to make that connection with Penumbra and become part of the fellowship.

After Deckle gives Clay the cloak, Clay witnesses a binding ceremony. This is the second time that Clay has been privy to witnessing something many don't – the first being the delivery at the bookstore. This is perhaps coincidence, or the limitation of the first-person narration where the reader must see everything through the main character's lens, but it is also possible that Clay witnesses both of these events as way to demonstrate his importance to the fellowship. He possesses interest in the fellowship, but he didn't actively join or sign a contract, as Penumbra indicated earlier when Clay approached him about Neel joining. In this way, Clay plays an integral role in the fellowship while remaining an outsider. This offers him a different perspective. Further, he is not burdened by obligations to the fellowship. Instead, he maintains his relationships with his friends and Penumbra.

After the Manutius manuscript is uploaded, the group returns to San Francisco, where a certain level of status quo is achieved. Clay finds that Mat now shares Ashley's interest in rock-climbing, which may indicate that Clay is out of place. What has transpired in New York differs greatly from his day-to-day life in San Francisco. Returning home he



learns how life continued while he was gone. It separates him slightly from his old life, and this is symbolic of the holding pattern the Manutius is now in. Kat is preparing for the Great Decoding, but it's not time to put it in action just yet. Clay ends up re-reading the Dragon-Song Chronicles. Knowing now that the third book is actually Moffat's codex vitae, he is able to consider it with a fresh perspective. This alters Clay's relationship with the book; it's no longer just the series of books that bonded him and Neel.

Kat becomes increasingly dedicated to her job. While she and Clay remain in the relationship, her position as project manager, as well as the responsibility of decoding the Manutius, are changing their relationship dynamic. Clay observes throughout the novel the constant presence of the BAM! t-shirt, but now notices that her appearance is growing more professional and that the t-shirt is disappearing. This becomes a metaphor for the trajectory of their relationship.

Since Corvina stripped the bookstore of its funding, Clay, with Penumbra's permission, tries to generate new business. He is determined to make it work and does see some progress. While it's not an overwhelming success, it gets him through the interim and can be considered a metaphor for this transitional period. Also during this time, others are being prepared for the decoding. Representatives from the fellowship and Google are being taught about the code. Teaching them reinforces the theme of literacy. Further, the theme of immortality reemerges as Kat reveals her new pet project at Google: Google Forever.

In chapter nine, Clay continues his research into Moffat. He looks for him in the logbooks and is able to uncover passages about him. Clay is getting closer to solving the puzzle, even if he doesn't realize it. His relationship with Moffat's books is leading him to the answer. It is during this time that Mat and Neel work to photograph the bookstore because Mat wants to recreate it. This prepares the reader for the closure of the bookstore, foreshadowing how it will change into something new.

Clay receives a phone call from Corvina pleading with him to stop the decoding. While this may outwardly seem like a desperate attempt by Corvina to stop the decoding, it actually reveals another layer of Corvina's relationship with Penumbra. He has known Penumbra long enough to anticipate how Penumbra will react if it fails. It's possible that he's genuinely interested in his friend's well-being and he uses this sentiment to try and persuade Clay to stop it. Yet, because of Corvina's previous actions, it cannot be ruled out that Corvina is using his relationship with Penumbra to protect the fellowship. As Clay considers the possibilities of what he should do, he begins to understand more of his own motivations. Following Corvina's advice means that no one should ever try anything new. While new may not always signal progress, at least in a positive sense, there is merit in trying and exploring new ideas and new methods. Clay knows that he must help Penumbra, not solely for Penumbra's benefit but to resist the status quo.

The Great Decoding takes place in chapter ten. Through all their hard work and determination, the decoding is a failure. There is a limit to what technology can achieve, and it is apparent here. They consider possibilities about why it didn't work, but they are merely conjecture and don't offer a workable solution. Penumbra disappears, as would



be expected given Corvina's earlier remarks. But it's Kat that takes the biggest hit. She doesn't have a vested interest in the fellowship, but given her admiration and dedication to Google, combined with her persistent interest in immortality, this devastates her. He breaks down her relationships with Clay, with Google, and with how she grapples with her own mortality.

Discussion Question 1

Why was the fellowship so angry with Moffat that they burned his codex vitae?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it important to keep the bookstore running after Corvina strips its funding?

Discussion Question 3

What are the implications of Kat's (and Google's) failure to decode Manutius?

Vocabulary

fortitude, carabiner, agility, folio, desultory, hubris, concise, preamble, motes, fruition, sarcophagus, holograms, blitzkrieg, iterations, roulette, pensive



Section 3, Chapters 1-6 & Epilogue

Summary

Matropolis, Mat's latest model, is underway in the living room at the start of chapter one. Clay has purchased the audio books of the Dragon-Song Chronicles for Neel, but they are on cassette tapes. Clay listens to them in order to convert them to an mp3. He thinks about Penumbra, who has disappeared without a trace. He tries locating him online, contacting Muriel, and then he considers decoding Penumbra's codex vitae. He texts Kat who refuses. Since the failure of the Great Decoding, Kat has thrown herself into her work. As he listens to the audio book, he notices a line that he doesn't recognize from the books. He checks the date of production on the tapes and it was shortly after Moffat's problems with Unbroken Spine. He thinks it must be connected and opts to reach out to Deckle. He sends Deckle a letter and Deckle replies via email and suggests a video chat. During the chat, Clay sees Deckle's daughter in the background. He knows about what happened with the Great Decoding and reveals that Penumbra held the key to the Moffat codex vitae. Deckle knows where Penumbra is, but won't tell Clay. He offers to trade for the information, however. He wants Clay to locate the original Gerritszoon punches that were stolen. Clay decides to try and find them, but knows the task is large. He asks Oliver for help since he specializes in antiquities. He explains to Oliver that there is a punch for each letter that to cast the characters; they're carved from hard metal. Oliver tells him that he needs the Accession Table.

Chapter two begins with Clay meeting Oliver's friend Tabitha Trudeau who is the director of the California Museum of Knitting Arts and Embroidery Sciences, CalKnit for short. Tabitha has access to the Accession table, which is a database that tracks museum artifacts all over the world. If the Gerritszoon punches exist in a museum, the database will have a record of it. He searches the database to mixed results and refines his search. A group of first graders are on a field trip to the museum and finally Clay asks one of them how they would find a needle in a haystack to which the girl responds that she would "ask the hays to find it." He changes his search parameters and locates contact information for the artifact. He calls the facility and speaks with a woman names Cheryl. The artifacts are in an off-site storage facility in Nevada. Clay tells her that CalKnit just got a grant from the Neel Shah Foundation and that they'd like to exhibit the Gerritszoon punches. He borrows Neel's care and heads to Nevada.

Chapter three finds Clay arriving at the storage facility. He passes through metal detectors and meets Cheryl. Clay goes into the storage facility to get the pieces; the company can't pack and ship them for him because the museum is unaccredited. There are shelves of boxes and canisters and they're all moving; the shelves move perpetually. The shelves come to a halt and he starts checking the labels. He finds the Gerritszoon punches.



Chapter four begins with Clay filling out paperwork for Cheryl and heading back to San Francisco. He listens to the Dragon-Song Chronicles audio book on the drive. He hears a piece of dialogue that matches Penumbra's speech pattern. He rewinds and listens again. It isn't a new part like before; he remembers this being in the original text of the book. Listening to it he realizes that Penumbra has already achieved a type of immortality in the book. He realizes that Moffat figured out the answer to the puzzle and hid it in his codex vitae, and subsequently in his third novel. He gets home and asks Mat if he has a microscope; Mat gives him a large magnifying glass and Clay studies the punches.

Chapter five takes place at Pygmalion. Clay has emailed Deckle to come to California to get the punches if he wants them. Clay is making a presentation and invites his friends and the fellowship. Corvina demands the Gerritszoon punches; Clay tells him to have a seat. Deckle arrives and Clay speaks with Lapin. She asks if he's going to go work in the library in New York. He tells her he isn't interested. Penumbra arrives. Clay runs to greet him and Penumbra admits that he felt foolish after the decoding failed and that it was the reason he ran off.

Clay takes his place in front the audience and begins a slide show. He gives background on Gerritszoon's life and his friendship with Manutius. Clay declares that he has decoded the Manutius' codex vitae and reveals that if there is a secret to immortality, it doesn't exist in the Manutius codex vitae. Corvina storms out; Penumbra tells him to keep going. Clay reveals that the book is about Manutius' life and how Gerritszoon and Manutius met in Venice. He compares printing in the 15th century to the internet and the problems it poses. Manutius details the shady deals he made to be the one to print the classics exclusively. The assumption was that Gerritszoon got the key to Manutius' codex vitae, but Gerritszoon actually was the key. He shows a magnified portion of one of the punches and the tiny notches in the metal are the key. He details how all the iPhones and Word programs come with Gerritszoon as default, and lists others who use the typeface. The message has been hiding in plain sight. The message is: Thank you, Teobaldo. You are my great friend. This has been the key to everything.

Chapter six takes place after the presentation and the audience is leaving. Kat is disappointed in the findings; she wants more and the note isn't the type of immortality she wants. She leaves. Penumbra learns that Deckle put Clay on the path to find the font punches. Penumbra asks Deckle to look after Corvina after this disappointment. Clay gives Deckle one hundred copies of the decoded book in the original Latin and tells Penumbra that they're print on demand. Penumbra is disappointed because he knows his codex vitae will surely be burned now. Clay reveals that he scanned the book the night in the Reading Room and gives him a USB drive containing the scans. Penumbra asks if Clay would like to help him solve more mysteries; Clay is interested.

What follows is a brief epilogue giving information on where the characters all end up. Clay and Kat rekindle their relationship and Kat will acquire Neel's company Anatomix and rebrand it Google Body. Kat does well at Google and still wears her red t-shirt. Neel acquired the film rights to the Dragon-Song Chronicles. Corvina burns Penumbra's



codex vitae, which the fellowship doesn't approve of and strips him of his status. They keep him as CEO of Festina Lente Company, but Deckle becomes the new First Reader. Clay and Penumbra establish a new fellowship called Penumbra, which is a consulting company for blending books and technology. Ashley quits the PR firm and turns the bookstore into a climbing gym. Clay writes and publishes a novel about his experience.

Analysis

As section three begins, it is a time for the characters to rebuild, which is why it is apt that the first thing referenced is Mat's model: Matropolis. If Mat can build something so elaborate out of nothing, then all is not lost.

Clay has, inadvertently, ended up listening to the Dragon-Song Chronicles on audio tape, which harkens back to the theme of old vs. new. He has to listen in order to transfer them to mp3 files. The tapes become a surrogate friend for him; Penumbra has disappeared and Kat has thrown herself into her work, unofficially ending their relationship. When he hears a line in the audio tape that he doesn't remember from the book, he verifies it with the book. It's a natural assumption to think that Moffat planted the line to call attention to it. Because of this, Clay opts to reach out to Deckle. Of all the ways he could communicate with Deckle, he opts to send him a letter, complete with parchment paper; it's very old-fashioned. In sharp contrast, when Deckle replies, he does so via email, and takes it further by suggesting they video chat. Deckle is clearly a man who has embraced modern technology and reveals more about why he risked so much to aid in their quest.

Deckle, of course, knows where Penumbra is and uses this knowledge as a bargaining chip with Clay. Whether it's something he's pursued and failed, or perhaps Penumbra has offered the suggestion is unclear. The reader has no way of knowing how this suggestion came to be because of the first-person narrative. This remains Clay's story and he must further the action. The request to find the Gerritszoon punches, however, seems challenging for Clay. It's not something he can puzzle through on his own. Much as Kat helped to suggest scanning in more data to the 3D model, which led to his solving the Founder's puzzle, Clay needs to ask for outside expertise. He turns to Oliver because, while he wouldn't have knowledge of the Gerritszoon font, or even that particular time period (his specialty is in antiquities), he does know how to go about looking for something such as the punches. He puts Clay in touch with Tabitha, a friend from Berkley, and introduces him to the Accession Table.

Clay meets with Tabitha at CalKnit and the use of a knitting museum as a symbol of knitting the plotlines together is somewhat obvious. The scenes in the museum also introduce a group of first graders. While Clay struggles to find the right method of searching for the punches, he turns to one of the children for advice. Here, the theme of old vs. new is reinforced. A child gives Clay the right perspective that allows him to search successfully for the punches.



Clay drives to Nevada to get the punches, but it's not until he gets home that he begins to understand that the punches may be the key to decoding the codex vitae. His conversation with Cheryl in the storage facility revealed her thoughts on how the contents will always be important to someone; it's just a matter of finding the right someone. Because of this, Clay begins to understand the relationship of the punches to the greater mystery.

In chapter five, Clay reveals how he decoded the Manutius codex vitae and what its meaning is. While it doesn't offer anyone immortality, it demonstrates the importance of the relationships people foster throughout their lives. Manutius trusted Gerritszoon with the key to his codex vitae and in decoding it revealed a true friendship between the men. That the mystery of the codex vitae has persisted for five hundred years, demonstrates that the men managed to achieve a type of immortality through their relationship with each other.

As the novel concludes, Kat is understandably disappointed and leaves. She turns her back on the relationships she's developed with Clay, and by association with Neel and Penumbra. She reacts from a place of emotion. It also demonstrates how Kat has likely pursued the decoding as a way to live out the game of Maximum Happy Imagination; now she is left with reality and it's not what she pictured. As the epilogue reveals, Kat and Clay give their relationship another go and Kat continues with her work. While by the time Kat got to the Great Decoding, her BAM! t-shirt had disappeared, but in the epilogue it returns. Kat has re-established the relationship she had with herself and is happier for it.

Clay and Penumbra seek to continue the work they've collaborated on. While it may not have the same intrigue as solving the Manutius codex vitae, it demonstrates the importance of the relationship the men have fostered as well as the importance of continuing literacy. Penumbra is understandably upset that his codex vitae is ultimately burned. During their discussion, Clay reveals that he scanned Penumbra's codex vitae while he was in the Reading Room. He offers this bit of immortality to Penumbra and it becomes a symbol of their enduring friendship.

After Clay's presentation, he offers copies of the decoded codex vitae to Deckle. He understands that while he has decoded it to the best of his ability, and translated the Latin via Google, there may be benefit in having a greater, more accurate representation of the work. Clay presented the codex vitae with a functional literacy, but in keeping with Penumbra's advice, they must continue to read deeply.

Corvina is ultimately stripped of his duties as First Reader, but kept on as CEO of the Festina Lente Company. While Corvina may have held back the fellowship from making progress, he helped the company grow. It is possible that if Corvina hadn't burned Penumbra's codex vitae that he would have been able to stay on as First Reader. However, it's more likely that his role would have changed regardless of the burning. The decoding changes the dynamics of the fellowship and Corvina's relationship with the fellowship surely has changed.



It is also noted that Ashley took over the bookstore and transformed it into a climbing gym. In the post-decoding world, the bookstore is no longer necessary. The fellowship isn't locked in secret. It's fitting for the bookstore to become something that teaches endurance, perseverance, and strength. This reinforces the theme of determination and reflects the journey the characters have taken.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Moffat include a different line in the audio version of the Dragon-Song Chronicles?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it important that Clay is responsible for decoding Manutius?

Discussion Question 3

How has Clay and Penumbra's relationship evolved over the course of the novel?

Vocabulary

annex, circadian, missive, epistle, festooned, pirouette, kinship, taxonomy, posterity, inert, corrode, lanyard, maelstrom, trajectories, undulating, aesthetic, annealed, gullet, cataclysmic, incantation, deign, ligature, colophon, inimitable, epilogue, barrow



Characters

Clay Jannon

Clay Jannon is a twenty-something college graduate in need of a job. His previous employer folded. When he sees a help wanted sign at the bookstore, he applies and gets the job. He is aware that he is underemployed, but is grateful to have a job and wants to do well.

Forward-thinking, he takes the initiative to build a website/database for the bookstore. This begins his journey to understanding the bookstore, Penumbra, and ultimately the Unbroken Spine fellowship.

He lives with two roommates in San Francisco: Mat and Ashley. He begins dating Kat Potente. They meet in the bookstore and bond over the computer program Clay uses to set up the database. He goes to Kat for help in solving the mystery.

His best friend is Neel Shah, who is an entrepreneur. When Clay needs funding for his journey, Neel is his benefactor. They've been friends since grade school when they bonded over the Dragon-Song Chronicles series.

Clay's personality is determined, but he maintained humility. His sense of humor is revealed throughout the narration. He can be sarcastic and self-deprecating.

Mr. Ajax Penumbra

Mr. Penumbra owns the 24-hour bookstore where the inciting action takes place. An older man, he wears glasses and a scarf and maintains an intimidating, if not playful, air of mystery. He hires Clay and puts him on the night shift.

While the state of the bookstore may lead the reader to view Penumbra as a Luddite, he is open to new technology. The technological pieces in his office include an older model PC. He also sees merit in an older model Kindle and a prototype for a new reading device. When Clay reveals what technology has yielded with the computer program and the scanner at Google, Penumbra advocates for technology to be used to solve the Manutius puzzle.

This causes issues with his old friend Corvina; they have known each other since they were young men, as is evidenced by an old photograph of them. The two men quarrel and Corvina threatens to burn Penumbra for his actions. When the episode at Google fails, Penumbra goes into hiding, primarily out of embarrassment.

He befriends Clay and they work well together.



Kat Potente

Kat works at Google and is obviously quite tech savvy. Ambitious by nature, she is methodical in her approach to work and believes in the far-reaching capabilities of technology, in particular Google.

She is excited when she becomes one of the project managers at Google, but also shares in the excitement in what Google can contribute to the Manutius puzzle. She believes Google will be able to solve it and feels the disappointment deeply when it doesn't.

While she is in a romantic relationship with Clay, her primary attachment is to Google. Further, she is preoccupied, not only with the idea of, but with the possibility of achieving immortality. Her pet project at Google is Google Forever, which researches the possibility of immortality.

After the failure of cracking the Manutius code, Clay and Kat indirectly break up; she quits returning his texts. They eventually make another go of the relationship at the conclusion of the novel.

She wears a bright red t-shirt with the word BAM! on the front. Even as her character's wardrobe evolves from casual to more professional attire, she continues to wear the shirt.

Neel Shah

Neel and Clay have been best friends since the sixth grade when Neel was ostracized and Clay helped him to socialize. They originally bonded over their shared love of the Dragon-Song Chronicles.

He is an entrepreneur whose software company is worth several million dollars. The company creates realistic-looking bodies in video games. Because of his success, Neel is able to fund Clay's efforts to solve the Manutius puzzle.

He accompanies Clay on the trip to New York City, and ultimately ends up selling his company to Google after a deal is arranged with Kat.

Edgar Deckle

Deckle is in charge of Special Projects at the Festina Lente Company and guardian of the Reading Room. He was once Penumbra's clerk at the bookstore. He helps make the arrangements for Clay to get in the Reading Room after hours to scan the MANVTIVS. He also helps Clay get out undetected the following morning when Clay has stayed too long. He gives Clay a cloak so that he will blend in with the others. After Corvina is stripped of his title, Edgar becomes the new First Reader.



Marcus Corvina

Corvina is the First Reader of the Unbroken Spine. He and Penumbra were friends in their youth, which Clay discovers after finding a picture of them when they were young in Penumbra's office. His approach is rigid and is described at one point as being a cross between Nosferatu and a Marine Corps drill sergeant. He rejects technology in helping to solve the Manutius puzzle. He believes that unlocking it is the key to immortality and he doesn't want to risk that by taking a chance with computers. He threatens to burn Penumbra and ultimately does so. After Clay solves the riddle, Corvina is relieved from his duties at First Reader. He is stripped of his title after burning Penumbra's codex vitae, but remains the CEO of the Festina Lente Co.

Rosemary Lapin

Lapin is one of three regular customers at the bookstore. Her number is 6YTP5T. She is a novice in the fellowship, which Clay learns about after following her home one night. She has a small apartment that smells vaguely of pot. It sits at the top of a narrow, hillside staircase.

Maurice Tyndall

Tyndall is one of three regular customers at the bookstore. His number is 6WNJHY. Clay considers him the strangest of the three: always excited and shouts the book he needs the moment he enters the bookstore. Clay suggests him to replace Edgar as guardian of the Reading Room.

Mat Mittelbrand

Mat is one of Clay's two roommates. He works for Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) and builds models for special effects. He helps Clay create a replica of one of the logbooks. He ends up dating Ashley.

Ashley Adams

Ashley is Clay's other roommate and Mat's girlfriend. She is a PR executive who quits to open a rock climbing wall in the remnants of Penumbra's old store.

Federov

Federov is one of the three regular customers at the bookstore. His number is 6KZVCY. He's Russian and used to work at HP. He bonds with Clay after Clay discloses he used to use an HP calculate, and Federov worked on the model's predecessor.



Oliver Grone

Oliver is tall with curly hair. He is the other bookstore clerk and works the evening shift.

Grumble

Grumble is a computer programmer that makes code available online. Clay uses his code to build the 3D model of the bookstore. He later helps Clay obtain a scanner to sneak into the Reading Room.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Bookstore

The bookstore symbolizes the old way of storing and retrieving knowledge.

Google

Google is modern way of storing and retrieving knowledge. Its volume symbolizes the vast amount of information available.

Gerritszoon

The Gerritszoon font symbolizes the key to unlocking the Manutius puzzle.

The Logbook

The logbook symbolizes the way humans collect knowledge. The detail included in the logbook can differ from the data collected online. It is collected through the eyes of person rather than interpreted by a machine.

Cloaks

All who enter the Reading Room are required to wear a long, dark cloak. This symbolizes the unity of the group. Additionally, the cloaks do not have hoods. So while the bodies are made to look similar, the heads (brains) retain their individual identity.

Burn

The penalty for those who have been deemed to have violated the fellowship is to have their entry into the library burned. This symbolizes the destruction of their immortality.

Kat's T-shirt

Kat wears the same t-shirt every day. She claims that it helps simplify one part of her morning – it's one less thing for her to do. It's a uniform she gives herself and symbolizes a constant in her life that regardless of what changes, the t-shirt remains the same.

Mat's Model

The model symbolizes that even the most elaborate creation can be destroyed.

The Dragon-Song Chronicles

The three Dragon-Song Chronicles books symbolize the levels of the Unbroken Spine: Novice, Bound, and Unbound.

Google Forever

Google Forever is the program Kat is most interested in at work. It symbolizes the quest for immortality and that while immortality may not be achievable, the quest for it will go on in perpetuity.

Settings

San Francisco

The American city where Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour bookstore is located.

Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore

An unusual bookstore, narrow in scope, with tall ladders to get to the books. It is three stories high and sells only a small portion of books, such as the Dragon-Song Chronicles. They also sell postcards. The store has regular, but very few customers, who check out books that appear to be written in code.

New York City

The American city where the Reading Room is located.

The Reading Room

An underground shelter where the Bound and Unbound conduct their research. There are many bookshelves, tables and chairs. No phones or electronics are allowed. It is where Clay sneaks in to scan a copy of the MANVTIVS and Penumbra's entry.

Consolidated Universal Long-Term Storage LLC

Consolidated Universal Long-Term Storage LLC is the artifact storage facility in Nevada where Clay locates the original font types for Gerritszoon.

Clay's Apartment

Clay shares an apartment in San Francisco with Mat and Ashley. It's a small, three-bedroom apartment.

Rosemary Lapin's Apartment

Lapin's apartment is a small space at the top of a narrow staircase. It smells faintly of pot.

Google Headquarters

A vast campus in Northern California where the Book Scanner is housed. Kat works there. It includes a cafeteria that features a line for employees in which the food contains specific supplements and a line for guests, which does not.



Themes and Motifs

Old vs. New

The theme of old vs. new is evidenced throughout the novel. During one of their first conversations, Clay and Kat discuss OK vs. NK (old knowledge vs. new knowledge). This compares what people used to know to what is known now.

The bookstore is filled with old books. Clay creates a program to build an interactive database for the bookstore. This combines old technology – books – and new technology – computers.

This comparison is further developed during discussions between Penumbra and Corvina. While at first glance Penumbra may seem reluctant to embrace technology, it is revealed that Penumbra does have an interest in technology. He has an old computer in his office and uses a Kindle as well as a new prototype of a screen reader.

Penumbra's perceived reluctance to technology stems from the influence Corvina holds over the fellowship of the Unbroken Spine. When Clay cracks the code to become Unbound with the aid of a computer, Penumbra advocates for computers to be used to help solve the Manutius puzzle. Corvina refuses and puts Penumbra on notice, threatening to burn him. Corvina believes that to solve the puzzle and subsequently bring Manutius and the rest of the Bound back to life and/or grants them immortality it must be completed with the tools available during Manutius' lifetime. Using computers is tantamount to cheating.

Kat and the collective at Google do attempt to solve it through modern technology. They are unable to solve it. They discover the limitations of their capabilities. It is not until Clay discovers the original fonts that the code is able to be cracked. This demonstrates how both old and new knowledge has value and relevance.

Determination

Throughout the novel, the theme of determination helps drive the actions of the characters. When Clay is first introduced, he is unemployed and determined to find a new job. While the job at the bookstore may not be what his education and experience has prepared him for, he is dedicated to the job, and to keeping it. He is puzzled by the state of the bookstore, its minimal patrons, and near non-existent sales. He begins to try and make sense of it. Each bit of information leads him to trying to figure out the rest of the mystery.

Clay also shows determination in finding a way to get a copy of the MANVTIVS. Additionally, he wants to get a copy of Penumbra's entry in the Reading Room. Later, when Penumbra has been fled following the failure of the Google experiment, Clay is



determined to locate him. He tries to find him, but ultimately, when he feels he's solved the puzzle does he lure Penumbra out of hiding.

Corvina demonstrates his determination in how he operates the fellowship as First Reader. He is adamant that computers not be employed in the quest to solve the puzzle. He resists Penumbra's attempts to include technology in the solution, including threatening to destroy Penumbra's contribution.

Neel and Kat also exemplify the theme of determination. Neel is a successful entrepreneur. He's made his fortune and helps to fund Clay's attempts at solving the puzzle. Kat is both dedicated and focused on her job at Google. She is determined to succeed and see projects through. She advocates for the power that Google has and wants to see it work to solve the Manutius puzzle. She is interested in and wants to believe that the Google Forever project will eventually unlock the key to immortality. She is also determined to become a – and later does so – project manager at Google.

Immortality

The theme of immortality is evidenced throughout the novel. It is introduced early on during the discussion between Clay and Kat during their de facto first date. While discussing her interests, Kat discloses that immortality is of particular interest to her. With all the knowledge in the world, she can't imagine not knowing things and wants to be able to live as long as possible to experience as much as she can. As the novel progresses, the depth of Kat's interest in immortality continues to be revealed. Her pet project at Google is Google Forever, a life extension project. Further, when Clay decodes Manutius' codex vitae, she's disappointed in it not being the key to immortality; she doesn't think it's enough.

The fellowship of the Unbroken Spine is built on the promise of immortality. Solving Manutius' codex vitae is thought to be the key to granting past and present members of the fellowship immortality, including bringing the dead to life. Corvina, a believer, thinks that any approach to solving the puzzle that doesn't include materials available during Manutius' life will result in the destroying the chance for immortality.

Ultimately, Clay's revelation is that friendship is the key to life. Through this, friendship can offer a type of immortality. Because of Gerritszoon's devotion to his friend Manutius, Manutius has achieved a type of immortality. His codex vitae is still being read and studying five hundred years following his death.

While Corvina and others may be disappointed that the codex vitae didn't reveal the key to eternal life, the books they have put in the library offer them a type of immortality. If Manutius thought the ancient Greeks knew the secret to immortality, he gave them that opportunity by printing their works many years later. Manutius understood that printing the works of the past and preserving them for future generations offered the ancients immortality.



Relationships

Throughout the novel, many different relationships are explored. Clay and Penumbra's relationship begins as one of employer and employee. Over time, the two men become closer. Clay offers Penumbra the opportunity to solve a life-long, and ultimately a centuries-long, puzzle. Their friendship grows over the course of the novel, though it is not without a few bumps. Penumbra doesn't disclose to Clay why he leaves after Clay solves the Founder's Puzzle and later, after the Great Decoding fails, Penumbra disappears without a trace.

Clay and Kat develop a romantic relationship over the course of the novel. While the initial attraction builds on the 3D model that Clay developed of the bookstore, they do progress in their relationship. While Kat is very career-driven, Clay is focused on solving the puzzle. He is interested in work, but not to the extent that she is. While they are respectful of each other's relationship with their jobs, it is Kat's failure, or rather Google's failure, to solve the Manutius codex vitae that drive them apart. They don't officially break up, but it's not until the epilogue that the two begin to rebuild their relationship.

Clay remains close to his childhood best friend. Neel has been a part of Clay's life since the sixth grade. While their lives have taken different career trajectories, the two remain devoted to each other. Clay knows that he can rely on Neel, and the reader gets the impression that Neel assumes the same.

The relationship between Deckle and Clay isn't a traditional one. While they don't know each other well, and only meet through the fellowship, they have a shared past. Both worked for Penumbra as clerks in the bookstore. When all else fails, Clay reaches out to Deckle to find Penumbra. Penumbra's whereabouts remain Deckle's secret, but Deckle also recognizes that Clay may be able to do something that could lure Penumbra out of hiding: finding the Gerritszoon punches.

Penumbra and Corvina have a long history together. While they are assumed to have been friends since they were young men, the two have grown apart. They both remain a part of the fellowship, but their approach to how the fellowship should be conducted differs vastly. Regardless of their differences, both men recognize what will hurt the other (Penumbra learning that computers aren't the answer and Corvina learning that the solution to the puzzle doesn't involve immortality), and reach out to others to try and protect and/or help them through their difficulties.

Literacy

It is clear from the outset of the novel that the author is an advocate for books. Through that the reader can trace the theme of literacy throughout the novel. The bookstore is featured prominently and Clay notes that the inventory is peculiar. The store doesn't stock many familiar titles. Rather, once he looks inside some of the books in the



Waybacklist, Clay discovers that it's not just about recognizing the book titles. He must find a way to understand and read the books that appear to be in code.

When Eric drops off a new title at the bookstore, he demands that Clay tell Penumbra to get rid of the novels, such as *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Eric dismisses the value of books that aren't on the approved reading list. This is a metaphor for required reading. While what is on the list has merit, it is the act of reading that is the most important aspect. Penumbra understands this, which is why he includes the other titles.

Manutius printed the works of Ancient Greeks. He did so in order for his contemporaries, and likewise, people going forward, would have access to their thoughts and ideas. This ensures that people can be literate in multiple time periods.

Kat is well-versed in computer code. While Clay has some understanding, he doesn't have the fluency that Kat does. It is her understanding of the code that enables them to track down the Unbroken Spine and intercept Penumbra, and later make an attempt to decode the *codex vitae*. Grumble is also an advocate for shared literacy. He publishes pirated code for others to use on his website, so that monetary constraints don't prohibit people from gaining knowledge.



Styles

Point of View

Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore is told from the first-person narrative of Clay Jannon. He is a twenty-something, college graduate who has lost his job and is determined to keep the one he gets at Mr. Penumbra's bookstore. He is somewhat disenfranchised and is looking to find a purpose.

The perspective is overtly youth-oriented. This helps to reinforce the theme of old vs. new that can be traced throughout the novel. Because of Clay's age and gender, the perspective is also decidedly masculine. Clay notes the body types of the women he meets, notable Ashley, North Face, and Kat. The tone is not overtly misogynistic, however. He demonstrates respect for Kat, her career, and her intellect.

This is Clay's story and he is decidedly the hero of it. He drives the action to save the bookstore, find Penumbra, intercept him in New York, and solve the Manutius puzzle. It is a puzzle that he is able to solve after people have failed for hundreds of years. While his initial efforts to solve the puzzle rely on assistance from others, he ultimately solves the puzzle on his own.

All the supporting characters are viewed through Clay's perceptions. He demonstrates some insecurity with regard to his relationship with Kat, and his inability to find a successful job, particularly in comparison to his friend Neel.

Language and Meaning

The novel is conversational in tone. Clay maintains a friendly rapport with the reader and offers insight as one would if one were telling a friend. The tone is inclusive and shifts to an more incredulous outlook at times as through the narrator is letting the reader know in on a "you're not going to believe this" perspective.

Some dialogue is indirect. This often occurs when Clay is having a conversation with someone, most notably with Kat. He wonders about something in his internal monologue and the other character response to the question at hand. It gives the reader a sense that while Clay has many questions about what is transpiring overall, he isn't questioning what's happening.

Federov's dialogue is spelled phonetically to indicate his accent. This technique is repeated with Igor. For Penumbra's dialogue, it is the tone and speech pattern that is distinctive. It is slightly more formal, but includes a touch of whimsy. The speech pattern is distinctive enough for Clay to identify Penumbra in a section of The Dragon-Song Chronicles.

Structure

The novel is divided into four sections: 1. The Bookstore, 2. The Library, 3. The Tower, and 4. Epilogue. The chapters within the sections are not numbered, but rather titled.

Section one includes the following chapters: The Bookstore; Help Wanted; Coat Buttons; Matropolis; The Dragon-Song Chronicles, Volume 1; Stranger in a Strange Land; The Prototype; Maximum Happy Imagination; The smell of Books; The Peacock Feather; Make and Model; The Spider; The Founder's Puzzle; Why Do You Love Books So Much; Empire.

Section two includes the following chapters: The Library; The Strangest Clerk in 500 Years; Codex Vitae; The Rebel Alliance; Pop-Up; The Black Hole; Binding; The Dragon-Song Chronicles, volume 2; The Ultimate OK; The Call; A Really Big Gun.

Section three includes the following chapters: Little Bits of Metal; First Grade; The Storm; The Dragon-Song Chronicles, Volume 3; The Pilgrim; Fellowship.

Section four is a brief epilogue which provides a look into how the characters continue on after the conclusion of the primary story.

The story is linear and does not employ flashbacks. Clay is in every scene. It is through his perspective that the reader learns about the other characters.



Quotes

But a buck every few hours doesn't pay my salary. I can't figure out what does pay my salary. I can't figure out what keeps this bookstore in business at all."

-- Narrator (Section 1, Chapter 2 paragraph 6)

Importance: Clay tries to figure out how the bookstore runs; his concern isn't so much about the bookstore as it reflects his concern for being able to keep the job.

I set my chin in my palm and count my friends and wonder what else is hiding in plain sight."

-- Narrator (Section 1, Chapter 3 paragraph 111)

Importance: Clay ponders the reveal that Mat is interested in dating Ashley, a possible relationship pairing he didn't even consider.

I know there are more bookstores – libraries? – like this, but I still don't know what "like this" means. I don't know what the Waybacklist is for."

-- Narrator (Section 1, Chapter 6 paragraph 8)

Importance: Clay is becoming increasingly frustrated with the mystery of his surroundings; his urge to understand it begins to drive his actions.

The buzz about Google these days is that it's like America itself: still the biggest game in town, but inevitably and irrevocably on the decline."

-- Narrator (Section 1, Chapter 11 paragraph 2)

Importance: It's a brief moment of social commentary outside of the general action of the plot. It also foreshadows the battle between Corvina and the old way and Clay and Penumbra with the new way.

Go home. Whether you understand it or not, you have done something important today."

-- Mr. Penumbra (Section 1, Chapter 12 paragraph 42)

Importance: This is Penumbra's subtle way of encouraging Clay without revealing too much.

I am a novice in a fellowship known as the Unbroken Spine. It is more than five hundred years old." Then, primly: "As old as books themselves."

-- Rosemary Lapin (Section 1, Chapter 13 paragraph 44)

Importance: This is Clay's first indication of what the mystery may entail.

The Unbroken Spine. It sounds like a band of assassins not a bunch of book lovers."

-- Narrator (Section 2, Chapter 1 paragraph 4)



Importance: Clay is trying to make sense of what's he's learned about the fellowship. It also serves as evidence for the use of humor throughout the novel.

I feel a little whirl of dislocation – the trademark sensation of the world being more closely knit together than you expected.”

-- Narrator (Section 2, Chapter 2 paragraph 23)

Importance: This helps to make the coincidence of piecing together the fellowship relatable to the reader.

This is a cosmic entity from which no matter or energy have ever escaped, and I am about to step straight into it.”

-- Narrator (Section 2, Chapter 5 paragraph 8)

Importance: Clay is about to enter the Reading Room at night for his covert mission. It speaks to how expectation and reality differ.

We break letters but we can't make new ones. We lost the originals. One of the great tragedies of the fellowship.”

-- Edgar Deckle (Section 2, Chapter 5 paragraph 90)

Importance: Edgar unknowingly reveals to Clay the key to solving the puzzle.

But what I'm really interested in,” Kat says, “is Google Forever.”

-- Kat Potente (Section 2, Chapter 8 paragraph 56)

Importance: Kat represents modernity and her primary focus is in a program that seeks to find the key to immortality; this demonstrates the universality of the quest for immortality.

Like I said, everything's a treasure to somebody. But a lot of times you can't find that somebody.”

-- Cheryl (Section 3, Chapter 4 paragraph 16)

Importance: Cheryl may not understand the significance of everything maintained in the storage facility, but she knows that the importance of an item is directly proportionate to the person who wants and/or needs it.