

The Many Lives & Secret Sorrows of Josephine B Study Guide

The Many Lives & Secret Sorrows of Josephine B by Sandra Gulland

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Contents

The Many Lives & Secret Sorrows of Josephine B Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part I, Mademoiselle.....	4
Vicomtesse.....	7
Madam.....	10
Citoyenne.....	13
La Merveilleuse.....	17
Characters.....	22
Objects/Places.....	25
Themes.....	27
Style.....	29
Quotes.....	31
Topics for Discussion.....	32



Plot Summary

Rose is given a gift of a book to be used as her diary on her fourteenth birthday. She despairs because she is not yet betrothed and the family's financial situation makes it unlikely that she will become so. The island of Montinico where Rose's family lives is a haven for voodoo and Rose, consulting a fortune teller, learns that she is to marry unhappily and to become queen. Rose is punished for seeking the fortune teller and her sister Catherine later seeks out the same old woman who tells Catherine that she will die before her next birthday. The girls return to school but are soon sent home because Catherine is ill. She dies as predicted.

Soon after Catherine's death, Rose's aunt Desiree sends word that the son of a French Marquis, a boy named Alexandre, wants to marry Catherine. Rose's father, Joseph, sends word of Catherine's death and proposes Rose's name instead. Alexandre's father agrees that his son will marry one of Joseph's daughters—Rose or Manette—and leaves the choice of which up to Joseph. Rose's mother, Claire, cannot bear the thought of sending the youngest daughter, Manette, and Rose makes the trip. Alexandre is handsome and sought after, and soon agrees that he will marry Rose. The couple have a son, Eugene, followed soon after by a daughter, Hortense. Alexandre's infidelities drive a wedge between the couple and he soon orders Rose out of his house so that she is living in a convent. Alexandre eventually relents and Rose is able to live where she chooses though she does not live with Alexandre.

Alexandre and his brother, Francois, are soon embroiled in the politics of the day and Alexandre is promoted quickly while Francois is forced to leave the country after a failed attempt to rescue the King. With that defection, Rose knows that the entire family is being scrutinized. Alexandre is later arrested and Rose is arrested soon after. The guillotine is put to constant use and many are beheaded. Rose's time in prison is filled with dread of having her name called on the next list to be summarily tried and beheaded. Alexandre begins an affair in prison and Rose, tired of the situation, soon finds comfort in the arms of another military man, Lazare Hoche. Lazare's name is called and he is believed dead, though he later emerges and says that he was held in a dungeon and never taken for trial. Alexandre is soon beheaded and Rose's name is called, though she is too ill to stand trial and escapes death until the time comes when many—including Rose—are released.

Rose begins life without any real means of support, borrows from some and even briefly goes into a profiteering scheme in order to support herself and her family. During this time she faces near poverty conditions while trying to keep up appearances and maintaining a home for her children. It is in this situation that she meets Napoleone Buonaparte though a mutual acquaintance, Deputy Barras, who is important in the new government of France. Barras tells Rose that Napoleone will go far in his career and urges that she marry him while telling Napoleone that marrying Rose will gain him an appointment as head of the Army of Italy. Rose finally gives in to the marriage but comes to question the motives of both herself and Napoleone until he professes his love for her and urges her to look inside herself at the woman she is destined to be.



Part I, Mademoiselle

Part I, Mademoiselle Summary

The story opens on June 23, 1777, in Trois-Ilets, Martinico, with a diary entry by Rose, who will later become Josephine Bonaparte. In the first chapter, titled, "In which I am told an extraordinary fortune," Rose explains that she is writing in a diary given to her by her beautiful Aunt Desiree, her father's sister who lives in France. Rose bemoans the fact that on this, her birthday, she is thirteen and that there is no hope of a suitor to marry her. Rose goes on to describe her family's situation, her two sisters named Catherine and Manette, her grandmother who lives with the family, the poor relationship between her parents and the presence of voodoo and superstition at her home. The slaves are largely responsible for the superstitions and Rose's mother fights diligently against it, trying to keep her children free from the effects of the slaves' beliefs. With a slave named Mimi, Rose slips away to see a fortune teller of sorts. The woman tells Rose that she will have an unhappy marriage and that she will one day be queen.

In the next chapter, "In which I am punished," Rose is approached by Father Droppet who reminds her that she will soon need to make a decision regarding her life, referring to the possibility that she might enter the convent. Rose says that she cannot face that possibility. Rose might have escaped unpunished by her mother except that her young sister, Manette, follows and later tells their mother. Rose insists that Manette had not wanted to go along and that she had gone alone, keeping Mimi from punishment though Rose is fastened up in the cellar for eight days and nights. It is while she is enduring this punishment that Rose discovers that her sister Catherine slips away and sees the old voodoo woman as well. Catherine's fortune is blunt - that she will die "before her next birthday."

In the next chapter, "In which the mysteries have their way," Rose is awakened on August 21 by her father, Joseph, who has a new horse. The two go riding in the early morning together and Rose tells him that she was punished. She discovers that he has heard of the fortune that she will be queen. On September 16, Rose and Catherine have returned to school but are now leaving for home because Catherine is very ill. Days later, Catherine is worse and Rose asks Mimi to go for a voodoo cure for Catherine, which she does. On October 16, Rose awakes to find that Catherine has died.

In the next chapter, "In which I suffer a bitter disappointment and hope is offered anew," Rose's Uncle Tascher arrives on January 3, 1778, with news that Desiree's godson, who is son of a marquis, seeks a bride. He had wanted Catherine but with Catherine's death, Joseph wonders if the boy might consider Manette instead. Claire objects that Manette is too young and Rose desperately wants to go. Joseph says that the prospective groom wants someone young and biddable and fears Rose too near his own age to fit that requirement. The young man, Alexandre, is denied access to a "fortune" until he marries and Joseph believes that he might be willing to marry Rose to get past that



requirement. On June 24, Joseph writes to Desiree saying that Manette cannot marry Alexandre and suggesting Rose.

In the next chapter, "In which I fall in love," Rose learns of a new family on July 19, 1778, including a young boy named William Browder. Over the coming months, Rose and William encounter each other frequently, kiss often and profess themselves to be in love. In the next chapter, "In which I am betrothed," Rose learns that Desiree has answered Joseph's letter and says it does not matter which daughter he brings, but that he has to act soon. Alexandre's father, the Marquis, says that he will trust Joseph's judgment as to which daughter is most suitable for the role. On April 11, the bans are read, joining Alexandre-Francois, Chevalier de Beauharnais and Marie-Joseph-Rose de Tascher de la Pagerie. On June 23, Rose turns sixteen. On July 16, Joseph finally borrows enough money for the voyage that will take Rose and Joseph to France, though Claire predicts the trip will kill Joseph. On July 29, Rose learns that the slave Mimi will be going with her. On August 11, the family travels to Fort-Royal where Uncle Trascher lives and from which Joseph and Rose will depart for France.

Part I, Mademoiselle Analysis

Rose's mother, Claire, exacts the punishment for Rose having seen the voodoo woman who told her fortune. However, she seems reluctant to have to impose such a harsh punishment. As Rose is preparing to go to the cellar, Claire gives her a cross on a chain to wear, saying that Rose will "need" it for strength. It seems that Claire truly has the best interests of her children at heart—a fact that even her husband realizes though the two parents have vastly different ways of showing their love and concern. Claire cannot stand the thought of giving up Manette to a marriage in France and it seems she would have felt the same about Rose except that Rose has desired to go to France long before the marriage is proposed.

The presence of voodoo in Rose's life is accepted as a matter of fact by many. Rose tells about fortune-telling cards she was given as a gift and her own efforts to read those. When Catherine's life seems to hang in the balance, Rose tries to read her sister's fortune and the death card arrives, prompting an end to the session. Catherine seems to fully believe that she will die because it is foretold to her through the voodoo woman. Rose sends Mimi for a cure or a charm against Catherine's death but not until Catherine seems near death herself. It seems that if Rose had truly believed in the fortune, she would have done something much earlier but there is no mention of that. Another interesting aspect of this is seen when Rose and Mimi arrive in France. Mimi is reluctant to enter a particular gate because she fears the statue of the goddess at the entrance. Rose seems unconcerned about Mimi's fears and shoves her through, saying that there is no voodoo in France.

The relationships in this story become a theme early in the book. Rose watches as her mother and father have an unhappy marriage and at one point goes so far as to say that her mother hates her father. Joseph is unfaithful and goes so far as to have an illegitimate child by another woman, probably about the time Rose is married. Rose's



husband will put her through similar heartaches. The reader must remember that the book, though a fictional account, is based on fact. These illegitimate children do exist and in most cases the scorned wives become a major source of support for the children. It is noted that Rose provides a dowry for several of her husband's illegitimate daughters and that she and Desiree provide for another while the child is growing up.



Vicomtese

Vicomtese Summary

In the chapter titled, "In which I come to the Old World," Rose and her father arrive in Brest, France, on October 12, 1779. Joseph is ill and his coughing prompts the proprietor of the first hotel where they stay to insist he leave. Rose says she would prefer to be somewhere else and they move to the Hotel Graves. They are visited on October 22 by a cousin, Laure Longpre, who knows Alexandre. The next chapter, titled "In which I am introduced to my fiancé," includes the arrival on October 27 of Rose's Aunt Desiree, who is Joseph's sister. Her first words to Joseph, issued upon her arrival, are an insistence that he not die. Rose has a new gown her mother ordered for her but Desiree dismisses the gown as out of fashion. She also changes Rose's make-up, saying that Alexandre will "never" marry her if she looks like that on their first meeting. On October 28, Desiree has Joseph give her formal permission to arrange the marriage and Rose knows it is in case her father dies. Rose is taken with Alexandre's appearance on their initial meeting and he seems to accept her. On October 30, the subject of debt is mentioned and he says that "if" he marries Rose, money will no longer be a problem for him.

The next chapter is titled, "In which I come to my city of dreams." Rose arrives in Paris and finds it crowded and dirty. She meets Alexandre's father, Marquis de Beauharnais, who asks Alexandre if he is "content" with Rose, and he answers that he is. On November 20, Rose writes that she has been sick and that Desiree puts it down to homesickness, a fact Rose does not deny. She says she has started a portrait of William but is having trouble remembering his face. On November 27, Rose and Alexandre go to a party at the home of his brother, Francois. Francois's wife, Marie, is expecting a child, having recently had a child die.

In the next chapter, "In which I am married and learn the facts of life," Rose prepares for her wedding on December 14, 1779, at Noisy-le-Grand. She has an elaborate hairdo and is bled "just enough to give me a pale complexion." That night, Rose and Alexandre go to bed and she has little information to prepare her for what is to come. He asks if she would prefer to wait and she agrees, but he ignores the answer and they have sex. On February 29, 1880, Marie gives birth to a daughter who dies after only a week. On June 23, Alexandre says that he is to return to his regiment. Rose discovers she is pregnant and receives a letter from Alexandre, but loses the baby about a week prior to her September 14 entry.

In the next chapter, "In which I am too much alone," Rose meets Marie's mother, Fanny, on November 7. She is a writer and urges Desiree to get Rose out more. Fanny says that it is obvious Rose is miserable, a point Rose does not deny or confirm. On November 9, Rose goes to Fanny's "salon" where she meets several new people, including a man who tells her that she is "intoxicating." On November 13, she attends a meeting of ladies associated with the Masonic Lodge and learns a secret sign that she



is told will bring instant help no matter where she is. On November 18, she attends a theatre performance with Fanny and declares herself in love with plays.

On December 7, Rose learns that Alexander is returning home but he stays only four days. In the chapter titled "In which I become a mother and discover a terrible truth," Rose writes on January 28, 1781, that Marie has given birth to a daughter, Emilie, and on February 19, writes that she is again pregnant. On February 28, she receives a letter from Alexandre, urging that she be careful and avoid situations of high emotion, such as the theatre. On April 15, Rose writes that the Queen is expecting another child as well. On September 3, in Paris, Rose gives birth to a healthy boy. Alexandre arrives home and names the child Eugene.

On October 23, Rose tells Mimi of a dream in which Alexandre tells her she is not his wife. Mimi reveals that Alexandre has a mistress, Rose's cousin Laure Longpre, and that she and Alexandre have a son. Joseph urges Rose to "accept" Alexandre's shortcoming on this point but she says she sees too much—his hand on the breast of a chambermaid and the stockings he obviously keeps as trophies. When she confronts Alexandre about it, he assures Rose that she is his wife but adds that Laure is "the woman I love."

In the next chapter, "In which I come to the end of my endurance," Joseph prepares to leave on December 31, 1781, and urges that Rose return to Martinico with him. He leaves on January 19, 1782. On July 25, Alexandre returns to Paris and tells Rose that he has broken off the affair with Laure. On September 1, Rose is again pregnant. Two days later, Alexandre says he has applied as an "aide-de-camp" of the governor of Martinico. Rose protests that Eugene is too young to travel and Alexandre says that he does not believe it to be safe for either her or Eugene. On September 7, Rose wakes to find Alexandre has left in the night without saying good-bye. Three days later she discovers that Laure has gone with him.

On April 10, 1783, Rose gives birth to a daughter, earlier than expected but the child lives. Fanny names the girl Hortense and Rose says she is too tired to object. The child is taken just days later to a wet nurse because Rose is unable to feed her. On June 30, the Marquis, upon learning that Alexandre is running wild in Montinico, writes to the King demanding that Alexandre be arrested. Desiree manages to retrieve the letter before it is sent. On September 2, Rose receives a letter from Alexandre. He demands that she leave his house, accuses her of affairs and says that Hortense is not his child.

Vicomtese Analysis

Rose makes the comment that there is a woman in Brest, France, who demonstrates "fashion tricks," including using small pieces of material cut into shapes to cover pockmarks. Rose says she tries this on her own pockmarks, indicating that she has had and survived smallpox. She does not make a great many references to her appearance other than how she uses make-up, the fashions in clothing and hair styles.



Rose and Alexandre attend the party hosted by Francois and Marie and it is there that Rose first begins to realize that all the young ladies admire Alexandre. It is unclear why he did not choose one of the many young admirers in France as his bride since he did not seek someone with a dowry or a title. It is also at this party that Rose sees Alexandre and his brother Francois arguing over politics. This will become a major issue for the family because the two men have different ideas and these ideas will grow farther apart as the country undergoes change. The rift will hurt the family as well.

From the earliest letters from Alexandre to Rose, it is obvious that he is unhappy with her on several levels. He criticizes her letters, saying that she has to work on proper form, grammar and penmanship, without paying any attention to the substance of her letters. He also instructs her on what to read, apparently hoping that she will expand her mind intellectually. Alexandre will continue in this vein over the course of his life with Rose. Much later, he will tell her that he has written a pamphlet specifically for women, written on a lower intellectual level than most political writing. On the surface, this seems incredibly chauvinistic but it also seems possible that Alexandre is pushing Rose to further her education because he believes in her ability to learn. He says that, unlike some people, he believes women have the ability to reason. While he goes about it wrong and greatly damages his relationship with Rose, his intentions may very well have been honorable. However honorable, at one point Rose becomes so "distressed" that she stops writing altogether and has Desiree write for her. When Alexandre finds out this ploy, he is very angry. In 1781, Desiree hires tutors and everyone begins correcting Rose in an effort to eliminate this problem.



Madam

Madam Summary

Rose moves to a convent on October 29, 1783. On November 1, she has an argument with the Marquis, Alexandre's father, who has taken her side in the situation and objects to her moving out. Rose believes there to be no option available to her, that the law is on the side of the husband, but is "touched" by the Marquis' stand. On December 2, she has a conversation with Desiree about the situation. Rose says that she plans to sue for a legal separation from Alexandre because she fears the impact living in a convent will have on Hortense and Eugene. She does file the petition but is warned that it might take an entire year for the order.

On February 23, 1784, Fanny asks Rose to accompany her to visit Marie who has had yet another child die, her third. Marie's surviving daughter, Emilie, returns to the convent to stay with Rose and her children in order to give Marie time to recover from the grief. Emilie stays only a short time but becomes incredibly attached to Eugene during that stay, and he to her. Hortense turns a year old and Rose learns from the wet nurse that Alexandre has paid in advance for her care, relieving Rose of that financial burden.

On February 4, 1785, Rose returns to the convent to learn that Eugene is missing. She finds a note indicating that Alexandre has taken him. When Rose confronts Alexandre, he says that he will not have Eugene raised "in a house of women," but refuses Rose's request to be allowed to live somewhere else. Rose is granted a hearing but learns that it will be a month before a court decision is made as to Eugene's fate. The following day Rose learns that Laure Longpre, Alexandre's mistress, has married a man named General Dillon. On March 3, Alexandre comes to the convent and tells Rose that he realizes he has made mistakes and wants her forgiveness. The abbess of the convent believes it to be a ploy aimed at garnering favor in court. Alexandre says he will give Rose whatever she wants and in return he wants custody of Eugene upon his fifth birthday.

In the next chapter, titled "In which ill fortune plagues us," Desiree sells the house at Noisy-le-Grand and moves with the Marquis to Fountainbleau. Desiree says that Alexandre talks with fondness of Eugene. In July, Rose goes there to visit. On May 4, 1786, a woman named Madam Croy tells Desiree and Rose that Alexandre has fathered an illegitimate child by Madam Croy's daughter, a married woman with three children of her own. The woman says that her daughter plans to put the child in foster care and asks for money to help pay for the care to ensure the child's safety. On May 6, Alexandre returns home. He does not deny his involvement but says he has already given the woman money that she was supposed to use to "resolve the situation."

Rose and Desiree learn that the plantation of Rose's family has been making a profit though Rose has not been receiving any payments. In the next chapter, "In which I return home," Hortense and Rose begin the trip to Montinico on July 3, 1788. On August



12, Rose and Hortense stop at a church upon their arrival and Hortense, responding to her mother's question, says she had prayed that Alexandre would love Rose. In the next chapter, "In which the storms rage," there is unrest on the plantation and an incredible storm on August 17, 1788. On February 16, 1789, Rose learns that much of the plantation's profits have gone to pay for her father's gambling debts while the rest have paid off poor business decisions on her father's part. He also paid for an illegitimate child, another daughter, just four years earlier. Rose sends a message to an accountant for help with the plantation's books and another to William Browden, her childhood sweetheart. In the next chapter, "In which I confront the past," William arrives and tells Rose that he is now married, though they obviously still care for each other.

In the next chapter, "In which two worlds claim my heart," Rose receives a letter from Desiree and learns that both Alexandre and his brother Francois have been elected to the Estates General. She receives another letter from Desiree noting that Fanny's son, Claude, has become father to a daughter and urging Rose to send "condolences." In February of 1790, there is unrest on the island. Mimi loses the baby she is carrying and refuses to be returned to her role as Rose's maid, choosing instead to be sent to work in the fields. Rose's mother Claire says that Mimi should be sold because an unhappy slave is a dangerous thing. In the next chapter, "In which we flee under canon fire," Rose does not want to leave her mother with her ailing father and sister but Claire insists that she leave before the island is completely blockaded by invading English ships. Claire persuades her by saying that she wants Rose to be safe and does not want to bury yet another daughter. By this point it is obvious that Manette is near death, as is Joseph. Rose manages to slip away to a waiting ship with the help of her uncle and knows that she will never see her father or sister alive again.

Madam Analysis

While Rose hates the idea of being forced to live in the convent, she soon comes to realize that it is nothing like she expected. It actually turns out to be a turning point in her life because it is here, among women who do not belittle her for her mistakes, that she becomes an "avid student." Looking at the coming year of Rose's life, it seems obvious that she is a much better person for her time in the convent. It seems likely that Rose's future success can be attributed to her changing attitudes and the self-esteem that she builds while in this situation.

An interesting scene takes place when Rose confronts Alexandre about another illegitimate child he has apparently fathered. Alexandre does not deny his role, does not apologize for the situation, but tells Rose that he will not stand by and allow her to "lecture" him. When he moves to walk out of the house, Rose relents, saying that Hortense and Eugene want to see their father and will be sad if he does not stay. She promises not to mention the woman or the child again so that Alexandre will remain. This says a lot about the temperaments of both Alexandre and Rose—he still selfish and caring little for the feelings of others and she concerned so much for her children that she will endure his behavior without complaint.



Rose's financial situation is a constant problem for her. She has no visible means of income but continues to have financial obligations. She takes on the role of providing care for Alexandre's illegitimate children though she is often forced to borrow money in order to pay for her own upkeep and that of her children. She apparently retains a part of the holdings of her family but is told each time she asks for money that there is none to be had. On May 27, 1787, Rose and Desiree learn that the plantation has been making money and Rose now has no idea why her father is refusing to forward her rightful share. Rose would likely have tried to correct the situation by mail because she does not want to be separated from Eugene for so long and knows Alexandre will not allow her to leave with the boy. However, Desiree insists that she go, citing the fact that they are both in dire need of money to meet their debts. Rose's financial situation will continue to be in question for years to come. She will often borrow from friends with no idea how she is going to pay it back and will eventually resort to profiteering in order to make some money.

The footnotes of the book include a great many historically accurate details. For example, when Desiree tells of the birth of Claude's daughter and urges Rose to send her condolences that the child is a girl, the footnote associated with this section indicates that Napoleon—the man Rose will eventually marry—will later adopt the girl. The child will be married well and will become a duchess.



Citoyenne

Citoyenne Summary

The chapter titled "In which I am reunited with my son" begins in Toulon. Rose writes on October 29, 1790, that she is back on dry land and will not be ready to sail again soon. The trip overland back to Paris is rough and at one point the coach overturns. When someone questions her politics, Rose does not know what to say but is heartily welcomed by her fellow travelers when it is learned that she is Alexandre's wife—now an official known as "deputy" in the new government. Rose goes to the school where Eugene is studying and is dismayed that he does not recognize her after the extended separation and equally upset that she does not feel anything maternal when she sees him. The feelings last only moments before the two are clinging to each other.

In the next chapter, "In which I discover my husband a changed man," Rose finds Alexandre fully immersed in the politics of the country and among those calling for the election of the clergy who will then be government employees. Hortense is unwilling to have anything to do with her father, a fact that seems to hurt Alexandre and which Rose assures him is temporary though she is not sure. Rose becomes friends with a woman she calls Princess Amalia and Amalia's brother, Fredrick. There are plans for a reception at Fanny's though there is little domestic help because of the political revolution. The next chapter, "In which I suffer a great loss," begins on December 1, 1790. Rose and the children read a great many articles which Alexandre has written or in which he is quoted. Alexandre is now camped with the military as a leader and the children follow his progress on a map. On December 31, 1790, Rose learns that her father has died.

In the next chapter, "In which Alexandre is a hero," Alexandre is named president of the National Assembly. The King and Queen of France are believed to have escaped the palace with their two young children and there are some who refer to Eugene as the "dauphin," a term that means "future king." In the late summer of 1791, Rose moves in with a Creole woman at Rue Saint-Dominique in Paris. The woman has a daughter named Lucie who is twelve. On September 1, Rose writes that she has hired a scullery maid named Agathe Riblé. On September 14, the King swears allegiance to the new government. On March 15, 1792, Rose learns that Manette has died. Alexandre returns home on April 21 and brings her a puppy, a pug Rose names Fortune.

In the next chapter, "In which we are at war," the country is in turmoil and Rose notes on April 23, 1792, that there is a new curfew in effect. People of Rose's class are being watched carefully. Alexandre's letters are to be burned in order to keep them from falling into the hands of those seeking to overthrow the government. On July 19, Paris is under siege and supplies are low. In the next chapter, "In which I take desperate measures," Rose is visited by the Comtesse de Montmorin, a woman she has met at various functions. The Comtesse says her husband has been imprisoned and asks Rose to use her social connections to intervene on his behalf. On September 4, Rose learns that those in the prison have been killed though she had pleaded for the Count's release.



She also learns that Princess Amalia and Fredrick are planning an escape to England and asks them to take Hortense and Eugene with them.

In the next chapter, "In which I become a good Republican," Hortense and Eugene return on September 16. Amalia says that the children were ordered back by Alexandre and that she and Fredrick had not been willing to leave the children to return on their own. Alexandre is furious, telling Rose that the situation in Paris cannot be so dangerous that she would need to send the children away and that them leaving could indicate a lack of loyalty on his part. On September 26, Rose learns that Marie is divorcing Francois on the basis of their differing political views. On October 4, Amalia and Fredrick again attempt to leave the country, this time because of Rose's intervention on their behalf. They are detained yet again and Rose feels guilty, believing that they would have been safely away to English soil by now if not for her insistence that they take Eugene and Hortense on their first attempt. Eugene is serving as an apprentice in a joiner's shop when Alexandre requires that Eugene join him at the front.

In the next chapter, "In which we grieve for our King," Eugene is enrolled at the College National, described as a "revolutionary boarding school." Rose employs Marie de Lannoy, a former aristocrat who can read, as tutor for Hortense. Rose declares that Lannoy's "arrogance brings out the revolutionary spirit, even in me." Agathe routinely visits the guillotine. On December 26, the King's trial begins and Rose learns that Francois has tried to free the King and has now fled. Francois' act means the entire family is under greater suspicion. Fanny tells Rose that she is going into hiding. On January 17, Rose writes that the King has died.

In the next chapter, "In which my husband's star rises and falls," Alexandre is named commander in chief of the Army of the Rhine. Rose says she should be proud but is only frightened. Over the coming months, Rose writes letters of appeal and makes contacts on behalf of many, seeking freedom for those imprisoned and mercy for those facing a death sentence. On June 25, 1793, Rose learns that Alexandre is being considered for Minister of War, a role she believes will result in his eventual death. A man Rose encounters frequently, Deputy Tallien, says that Alexandre's request to resign his command is prompting some to say that he might be a traitor to the government currently in command. Lucie is pregnant by another man but the man she is betrothed to agrees to marry her anyway. On August 21, Alexandre's resignation is accepted but he is treated as a criminal. Word is quickly spread that Alexandre has been "spending time with whores when he should have been preparing for battle." Rose is aware of these stories and others of Alexandre's exploits. Alexandre arrives unexpectedly at Rose's house but is aware that he is being followed and that the terms of his resignation require that he not be in Paris. Before Alexandre and Rose have time to talk, authorities arrive and he races out the back door.

In the next chapter, titled "In which I try to escape Paris," Eugene returns home on October 4, 1793. Rose and the children are now living in Croissy. On October 17, the Queen is guillotined. On November 2, Marie is arrested and Rose goes the following day to see her, taking Emilie with her. On November 10, Rose prepares to return to Croissy from Paris but Emilie refuses to leave Paris while her mother remains in prison.



On January 18, 1794, Rose, having learned that Emilie's appeal for her mother was denied, returns to Paris. There she encounters an old friend, Deputy Barere, who warns her that she must be careful about her pleas. Barere says that he has family members in prison as well and that he is incapable of helping either them or Marie. On March 4, Eugene brings the news that Alexandre has been arrested.

In the next chapter, "In which I go to the aid of my husband," Rose goes to Luxembourg Palace which has been converted into a prison. Alexandre says the food is good, the treatment good and that "all the best people of Paris" are incarcerated there. On March 15, another of Rose's acquaintances, Deputy Tallien, has returned to Paris though he says he has actually been "recalled" to the city. He admits to Rose that he has fallen in love and that the woman has betrayed him, prompting the current situation in which he is in danger. The woman's name is Therese Cabarrus, and Rose realizes that she met her at least once in years past. Rose goes to see Therese and discovers that she returns Tallien's love and that she had not spied on Tallien but had been trying to ferret out a spy. On April 19, Rose is arrested.

In the next chapter, "In which my husband and I are reconciled," Rose is taken to prison but requests that she be moved to Carmes where Alexandre is now being held, despite the reputation of that prison as a hellhole. On April 23, Rose writes that Lannoy has brought Eugene and Hortense to visit their parents, now both held in Carmes but that there is a "new rule" and the children will not be allowed to visit again. Rose worries about the children but when clean linens begin arriving with lists of what is contained in the package, Rose recognizes the writing—one day Hortense's writing and the next Eugene's. The children are alright. On April 28, Rose's dog Fortune slips into the prison and she finds a note from Eugene under the dog's collar. On another day, Rose writes that she and Alexandre have "reconciled."

In the next chapter, "In which my worst fear is realized," Rose discovers that Alexandre is carrying on an affair with another woman in the prison. Rose begins an affair of her own with a soldier named Lazare Hoche. On May 17, Rose learns that Lazare's name has been called among those to be tried, typically meaning he is to be executed. On July 21, Alexandre's name is called. In the next chapter, "In which Death calls and I listen," Rose is ill and learns that her name has been called but she has been spared, apparently too ill to go to trial. When she is better, she is warned not to get out of bed or she might be sent to trial.

Citoyenne Analysis

As always, Rose's financial situation is tenuous during her trip back to France. She was unable to take money from her family's plantation endeavors and has borrowed money and a gun from the ship's captain.

The political aspects of the story are complex with France facing serious upheaval as the ruling class face the hatred of the poorer class. The revolution seems inevitable when considering the fact that the rulers have flouted their opulent lifestyles while



families live in abject poverty. It is a situation that replays itself over history. It is also inevitable that the political situation will be tumultuous over the coming years as the classes seek to establish a government that responds to the needs of the people while allowing an upper class that seems to always survive to some degree. The people who deal with the emerging situation are always in danger because those vocal about their political affiliations are the first to be executed when another political power emerges. At one point when Alexandre is named as the head of the new government, Eugene is called the dauphin—or child who is next in line for the throne. Children are usually not safe from political situations and Rose is correct to worry about Eugene's safety in this political climate.

Agathe is shy and unsure of herself when she comes into Rose's employ but soon comes to believe that because of the overthrow of the government that she is liberated and beyond Rose's control. Rose believes Agathe is spying on her but cannot bring herself to fire the servant, apparently believing it would make her look guilty. At one point, Rose learns that there is a pamphlet being circulated that indicates a plot to assassinate "the good citizens of Paris." Rose believes the pamphlet to be a lie but seems to hold at least some slight fear that it is not. Later in the month, Agathe is thrilled to relate the story of a man who is guillotined but says that the crowd was angry that the death occurred too quickly.

There is an interesting series of scenes in which Rose is either delirious or having some sort of vision. She writes that she has the "vision of a cat" because of the fever of her illness and that she goes down a hall surrounded by spirits that caress her. The spirits guide her to a stone and when she turns it over, she finds Alexandre's name written on a list of the dead. Later Rose is told she will not be needing her bedding, a statement that makes her roommate and friend begin to cry. Rose hears a voice that instructs her to "remember what I said," indicating that it is the voice of the fortune teller from Rose's childhood. The voice reminds her that she is to be queen and when Rose says these words out loud, the woman grows fearful, prompting Rose to promise the woman a position as lady-in-waiting. The entire scene has an unrealistic air to it, likely an effort to set it apart from the facts of the story and to make the reader aware that the section is meant to be interpreted as a vision of sorts.



La Merveilleuse

La Merveilleuse Summary

The chapter titled "In which I walk among the living and the dead" begins July 28, 1794, with Rose writing of her grief for those who have died and the fear among those who are fully aware of the threat of the guillotine. On August 6, Rose is released and learns that Amalia has escaped to Germany and Fredrick has been guillotined. She goes to Fanny's house and learns that Fanny was present at Alexandre's execution, Fanny saying that she had thought Alexandre should not die alone. Eugene soon reveals that he is being called "the son of a traitor." In the next chapter, "In which ghosts come to life," Rose writes on August 10, 1794, that she reconnects with Aimee, a woman who was imprisoned with Rose, and that they share the "shame of the survivor." Later Rose encounters Tallien, who signed the order releasing her from prison. He is with Therese and Fanny refers to them as the "new King and Queen" because of their elevated roles in the new government. Therese sees Rose and invites her to visit. Over the coming days, the prisoners continue to be released but Rose cannot secure Marie's release. She then discovers that Lazare Hoche was not executed after all.

In the next chapter, "In which I must bid farewell to those I love," Lazare Hoche says that he was held in a dungeon for a while before a guard came and simply ordered him out. He flirts with Rose but she is initially unsure, noting that the world outside prison is different from the world where their affair began. She quickly gets past that and they begin where they left off in prison. On August 19, Rose learns that Lazare is to leave the city and will be spending time with his wife, Adelaide. Lazare proposed to take Eugene with him as an apprentice and Rose agrees. In the next chapter, "In which friends comfort and distress me," Rose learns more about the political situation as it relates to the "boy" being held captive as the heir to the throne. There are some who believe that the child is not really the son of the King and others who believe the boy's life in grave danger. Tallien and Therese are revered in public, obviously adored, a fact that Rose says makes her proud and fearful. Lazare writes that Eugene will be "a good soldier" and ends his letter with "I do love you."

In the next chapter, "In which I am witness to a wedding," Rose goes to Barras with another plea for Marie's release. While Barras says he can do little, an aide assures Rose that Marie will be released the following day. On November 14, Therese suggests that Rose could help Lazare further his career and urges Rose to consider marriage, citing the need to do so for the sake of Hortense and Eugene. On November 16, Lazare returns and assures Rose that Eugene is well, adding that he has become fond of Eugene. On December 20, Rose learns that some believe the child being held as heir to the throne is a fake and that the real heir has been murdered. On December 26, Therese and Tallien are married and Rose believes Therese's heavy makeup is designed to cover a bruise.



In the next chapter, "In which I learn the true value of friendship," Rose writes on January 2, 1795, of her new role in life; she spends evenings at various events, exerting pressure on behalf of others through her social contacts. She notes that during these events it is difficult to believe that there are people in the streets, starving to death. On January 12, Rose writes that she has earned some money through speculation. It is during this time that Rose invites her friends back to her humble living quarters and agrees to begin a weekly "salon," inviting in various contacts for an evening at her home. The event is called Chez Rose. On February 5, Rose is granted access to her former home but finds vandals have ruined the house and destroyed most of the property. She locates Alexandre's will only to find that she is left with nothing, Alexandre having provided for yet another illegitimate child instead.

In the next chapter, "In which I am warned," Lazare writes that it may soon be legal to pray. On February 21, freedom of worship is granted to all of France. In March, Rose becomes the person planning events for Deputy Barras, a task she says she enjoys because of the freedom to spend as much money as she requires. On April 1, there are riots and the Assembly is attacked. Rose learns that there is a new twist in story of the child being held as heir to the throne. She is told that the boy now being held is actually a sick child who was in the hospital, and that it would be "convenient" if the child everyone thinks to be the heir were to die. In the next chapter, "In which a child is born and a child dies," Rose is summoned to Therese's house for the birth of a girl, Thermidor Rose, on May 17, 1795. On June 8, Rose learns that a short time after the death of the physician charged with overseeing the boy believed to be heir to the throne, the boy himself had died. The following day there is a law that allows restitution to victims of the recent violence. On June 13, Rose learns that Barras played a role in the situation involving the death of the boy believed to be heir to the throne, though the child who died was actually a deaf mute who had been near death at the time of the switch. Barras says that the real heir's uncle, in his effort to secure the throne for himself, had paid for the boy's death some time earlier but that the child had died naturally of a fever before a plot to kill him could be carried out. Barras tells Rose that the real question is not whether he did kill the child, but whether he would have, and assures her that he would have.

In the next chapter, "In which intrigue is the rule of the day," Rose learns that England is about to attack and orders Eugene returned home before the fighting can begin. He returns but is angry at having missed the action. On the anniversary of Alexandre's death, Rose presents Eugene with his father's sword. A group of men who had surrendered to the French are executed. Tallien, who had promised safety for the men, votes to execute. Lazare, who had taken the surrender, is very angry.

In the next chapter, "In which I am introduced to a strange little man," Rose is with Therese on August 6, 1795, when Barras arrives with a man introduced to Rose as Napoleone Buonaparte. On August 9, Rose learns that Napoleon, who is called "the Corsican" by most of her circle of friends, has proposed to Therese. Therese says that she refused and suggested Rose instead, a statement that Rose is not convinced is the truth but cannot be certain is a teasing remark. Barras tells Rose that they must keep an



eye on Napoleone and asks if Rose has discussed his political leanings. Rose says she believes he envisions himself a leader rather than a follower of any political arena.

In the next chapter, "In which I find a home," Rose decides to lease a house on the slopes of Mont-Martre. She calls the house "Chantereine." She hears from Lazare who warns that letters are not secure and that she is to communicate with him through Barras. In the next chapter, "In which we are at war again," Barras tells Rose on September 28, 1795, that there are some who believe that the country can only be at peace again with a monarchy. Napoleone is assigned a position dealing with maps and Barras tells Rose that she should invite him to her home. She does but he almost immediately ferrets out the information that she was encouraged to do so and accuses her of being paid for it. In the next chapter, "In which my heart is broken," Rose and several others go out in the streets and discover that many citizens have been murdered in what is being called a slaughter. She learns that it was Napoleone who ordered that the canon be fired on the city.

On October 12, Rose is ordered to turn over all weapons to the government. Eugene refuses to give up his father's sword and is told that he can apply to Napoleone, now Military Governor of Paris, for an exception. The following day, Napoleone comes to Rose's door and tells her that Eugene may keep the sword. He then tells her his story of the attack against the citizens. On December 9, Rose visits Barras on behalf of yet another friend. Barras is now one of five directors in charge of the country. Barras tells her that he wants her to marry Napoleone. She says that Napoleone is said to be impoverished but Barras says that Napoleone will be rewarded financially and given a military command if he agrees to marry Rose. When Rose objects, Barras says that it is time she marry and points out that he is, in effect, giving her a dowry. On December 22, Rose admits that she cannot consider Napoleone because of her love for Lazare but learns that Lazare has fallen in love with another woman and that his wife is expecting a child. That evening, Rose grants Napoleone's request to come to visit. In January, Rose makes an effort to arrange for Hortense to become better acquainted with Napoleone and they attend a party together. On January 21, Hortense pleads with Rose not to marry Napoleone and she promises that she will not.

In the next chapter, "In which I must decide," Napoleone proposes and Rose tells him that she will give an answer in two weeks. When he insists on one week, she says that the answer will be no unless he can wait. On February 8, Rose says that she has given Napoleone her answer. In the next chapter, "In which I have cause to regret," Eugene is "philosophical" over her decision but Hortense, crying that Rose has betrayed her, refuses to leave her room. On February 20, Lazere arrives, accuses Rose of having had an affair with his footman and tells her that Napoleone is an opportunist who does not care for Rose but wants only the reward of the command he has been promised. Rose later learns that Napoleone has been to see her banker and the man says that Napoleone had thought her wealthier than she is. When Napoleone arrives at her house, she tells him the engagement is off and he leaves. She notes that there are tears in his eyes and says there is no satisfaction in her decision.



In the next chapter, "In which we begin again and yet again," Napoleone arrives at Rose's house on February 23, 1796. He tells her that he had initially planned to marry her for the advantages of that marriage, but that he has fallen in love with her. He says that he went to see her banker in an effort to find a reason not to marry her, because he fears the height of the emotion he feels for her. On March 2, following his announcement that he is marrying Rose, Napoleone is promoted to commander of the Army of Italy. When Rose goes to sign the marriage contract, her attorney advises her against it, saying that she is gaining nothing from the marriage. Napoleone overhears and is not angry but tells her that time will prove the attorney incorrect. Napoleone is late to the ceremony which takes place on March 9.

La Merveilleuse Analysis

The relationship between Lazare and Rose is complicated by the fact that they began their affair in prison where both had expected to die at almost any time. Also, Lazare is married. Rose will later say that she believes Lazare truly loves his wife, though she does not explain how he feels about her nor how he could carry on an affair if his love were true. The reader should keep in mind the context of the story and the fact that affairs were apparently accepted as normal during this time, at least to some degree.

The continued upheaval in the government is a problem for the country and those trying to exact change. An example of this is seen with the number of military leaders who are executed if their military campaigns fail to produce the desired results, regardless of the reason. Another example is in a letter from Lazare to Rose, in which he notes that the peasants of the country want to worship as they please and that his men are charged with stopping specific types of worship. Lazare writes that it is impossible to legislate faith, a sign that he realizes that this is never going to be a successful endeavor.

On the surface, the idea of Chez Rose—the weekly salon being hosted by Rose—is ridiculous considering her financial situation. However, it is really quite brilliant because all her wealthy friends provide food and beverage for the event and it creates a situation for Rose to further her political and social contacts. This means that Rose has access to plenty of food and likely is able to provide more food for her family than she would otherwise have. Another interesting fact arises here that initially has Rose uneasy; she has been spending evenings at the homes of her friends without bringing any of them back to her home. She has likely become comfortable with at least some of these people and one evening impetuously invites several of them back to her home—a very humble dwelling by the standards of her friends. There, her friends learn that she is living in near poverty without sufficient supplies of wood to even heat her few rooms. She tries to explain the lack of heat by saying that wood is in short supply and one of her friends says that she should have mentioned this to him. A large supply of wood is delivered just days later.

The moral decay of the people of the time is seen through the eyes of Rose as she watches her friends. Therese is obviously pregnant but is often seen wearing light clothing that is apparently see-through. There are constant references to sexual

encounters, though at least one of Rose's friends senses her unease in these conversations.

Destiny is a recurring theme throughout the story, seen most prevalently in the life of Rose but also in Therese's life. Therese tells Rose that she consulted a fortune teller and is certain that she is destined to marry Tallien. She says that the fortune teller's prophesy includes the fact that Therese is bound to pay the price for the marriage. Rose asks why she would go through with it if she believes the fortune-teller's words but Therese says that she believes she is part of a greater plan and has no choice in the matter. Rose sees signs of abuse early in the relationship but Therese says only that she is destined to be the restraining power in Tallien's life.

The emerging relationship between Rose and Napoleone is interesting in that he is obviously offering proposals to every woman he thinks would make a suitable match, often with money as the motivation. Despite this, he is also apparently interested in Rose as a woman and a potential match though it seems likely that this is at least partly because of Barras's offer. Rose discovers that Barras has told Napoleone that he is suitable for a major military command but that he is not fully trusted because he is not French, and that this might be overcome if he agrees to marry a Frenchwoman. Rose's name has been suggested to Napoleone and Barras tells Rose that he has given her a dowry, referring to his promise that Napoleone will gain a military command as her husband. Rose will later tell friends that she and Napoleone talk about an array of topics, including science, and Rose is apparently impressed that Napoleone is interested in so many subjects. An interesting aspect of their relationship is that Napoleone asks for Rose's full name and she tells him that Joseph, after her father, is part of her name. He asks if her father was a good man and Rose, apparently unable or unwilling to share her true opinion of her father, says that he was. It is this that prompts him to begin calling her Josephine despite the fact that Rose says she will not be called Josephine. The night of their marriage, Napoleone tells her that she is lacking in self-esteem. He says that she does not "believe in Josephine," indicating that in his mind, the name is synonymous with his ideal of her.



Characters

Marie-Joseph-Rose de Tascher de la Pagerie.

Known as Rose, she is fourteen as the story opens and bemoaning the fact that she has yet to be offered a marriage contract. Rose is a passionate young woman, filled with ideas and hopes for her future happiness. Fearing that the happiness might be illusive, she seeks out a fortune teller who predicts that Rose will wed but not happily, and that she will someday be queen. Seeking out the fortune teller earns Rose the anger of her mother and days in the cellar, but she holds to the idea of her future greatness. Rose soon learns what the prediction of an unhappy marriage means and finds herself married to a young man who cannot be faithful and who is constantly involved in affairs and fathering illegitimate children. Rose considers her father's urging to return to her home but remains in France and soon gives birth to two children, Eugene and Hortense. Rose's temperament is such that she cannot give in to Alexandre's philandering but also cannot ignore her love for the father of her children. She is destined to remain unhappy as his wife but unwilling to break their bond, even when it becomes acceptable to seek divorce. She does seek legal separation but it seems that this is done because she wants to have some control over her own life without being forced to obey Alexandre's every command. When she is arrested and would likely have been held at least for a period of time in a rather posh prison setting, she instead seeks transfer to a horrible place in order to be with Alexandre only to find that he is unfaithful to her even when both are facing death.

Alexandre-Francois, Chevalier de Beauharnais

A young Frenchman who agrees to marry Rose, mostly so that he can gain control of his inheritance which is being held in trust until his marriage. Alexandre is selfish and self-centered, at least partly because of the excessive amount of attention he is given by members of the opposite sex. Alexandre is seldom apologetic for his actions and never seems willing to give in to Rose's demands, tears or pleas. On the rare occasion he does seem to do so, it is usually because he is either seeking something from her or making a public play that he will not honor later. Alexandre fathers several illegitimate children and seems to be uncaring of their welfare or condition, leaving it to Desiree or Rose to provide for the children. There is a point in time at which Desiree says that Alexandre talks with affection of Hortense and Eugene but this seems to be a phase that passes quickly. Alexandre seems to have a calling for politics though he also seems to play whatever role is fashionable or desirable at the time. An interesting point is that most people are apparently unable to see through his guises and he is promoted quickly among the ranks of those in power. Alexandre is arrested soon after his resignation from military power and held in prison for some time before being executed.



Napoleone Buornaparte

The Corsican who arrives in France and soon becomes a regular feature at the social gatherings attended by Rose. Napoleone had apparently proposed to several women before being offered the command of the Army of Italy on the condition that he marry Rose. When Rose threatens to call off the engagement, Napoleone admits his love for her and promises to care for her. He is late to his own wedding and Rose would have left except for the urging of friends to wait for him. Napoleone calls her Josephine, equating the name with the ideal he senses is possible.

Laure Longpre

Cousin of Rose's family, Laure visits Rose and her father soon after their arrival in France. Much later, Rose learns that Laure is Alexandre's mistress and bears him an illegitimate child.

Hortense

Rose's daughter and younger of her two children by Alexandre, Hortense is unpredictable in her actions. Rose notes that Hortense is easily frightened and fears what might happen if she bucks the ruling conventions of the day. When Rose takes Hortense to a party hosted by Deputy Barras, Hortense is initially excited but then angry because Barras had been among those in power when Alexandre was killed.

Eugene

The oldest of Rose's living children, Eugene is born to Rose and Alexandre after a miscarriage. Eugene is not overly interested in studies or traditional education but is enamored with skills, including woodworking and soldiering, and is apparently adept at both. Eugene accepts his mother's announcement that she will marry Napoleone Buornaparte.

Catherine

Rose's younger sister, Catherine slips away to hear the fortune teller's words after Rose is punished for doing that very thing. It seems likely that this says something about Catherine's personality—her need to both correct situations and to enjoy life. Rose notes that life at their school would have been unbearable except for Catherine's fun-loving presence. Catherine learns from the fortune teller that she is destined to die before her next birthday and does.



Manette

Rose's youngest sister, Manette is initially chosen to marry Alexandre but that spot is eventually given to Rose because their mother objects to the union based on Manette's young age. Manette is very ill when Rose returns home and dies in 1792 after Rose's return to France.

Emilie

Daughter and only surviving child of Marie and Francois, she is the niece of Rose and there seems to be an affection between the two as Emilie grows up. When Marie is imprisoned, Emilie goes with Rose to visit her.

William Browden

The young man Rose meets prior to her engagement to Alexandre, William swears his love for her. When they reconnect years later, William is in the military and tells Rose that his love for her has not diminished. He sends a message that seems to be an effort to begin an affair with her but she does not respond.



Objects/Places

Trois-Ilets

Where Rose and her family live when she is a child.

Brest, France

Where Rose and her father arrive in France.

Hotel Graves

Where Rose and her father stay upon their arrival in France until he is able to travel.

Noisy-le-Grand

Where Alexandre and Rose are married and where Desiree lives for a period of time.

Fountainbleau

Where Desiree and Alexandre's father move after the sale of Noisy-le-Grand.

Rue Sant-Dominique, Paris

Where Rose moves after Alexandre is named president of the National Assembly in 1791.

Luxembourg Palace

The estate that is turned into a prison and where Alexandre is initially held.

Carmes

Where Alexandre is moved after being held for a period of time in Luxembourg and where Rose requests that she be held in order to be with Alexandre.

Chez Rose

The weekly salon event held at Rose's small home during 1795.



Chantereine

The name Rose gives to her home on the slopes of Mont-Martre.

Salon

A name given to weekly social events held in the late evening for the wealthy of France during a period of political unrest in the country.



Themes

Belief in Destiny

Rose is surrounded by fortune tellers and other mystical beliefs as a child and this is likely at the heart of her belief in destiny as it is foretold during her childhood. Rose, apparently fearing that she will never be married, seeks out the services of a fortune teller and is told that she will be unhappily married but will later be queen. On several occasions she laughs at the prophesy but apparently believes in it to some degree, especially when her marriage to Alexandre is so unhappy that it apparently fulfills the first part of the prophesy. Another person impacted by this theme is Rose's younger sister, Catherine. Catherine visits the same fortune teller who says that she will die before her next birthday. Catherine does fall mysteriously ill and does die within the appointed time, apparently in keeping with her destiny. It is unclear just how important a factor destiny was in Catherine's death and it seems possible that she fell ill because of the prophesy rather than because of any real illness. The theme occurs again in the life of Rose's friend, Therese. Therese says that she believes herself part of something bigger than herself, some larger plan, and marries a man who is abusive early in the relationship because she believes it to be her destiny.

Coming of Age

Rose ages physically over the course of the book by almost two decades but also ages emotionally and comes to have self-esteem in abundance. Another important aspect of Rose's coming of age is that she is so willing to put the needs of others ahead of herself. This coming of age theme is seen most prominently during the upheaval in the French government. Rose steps out of her role as a young woman willing to do whatever her husband orders and society dictates. While Rose is living in the convent, she discovers that she has a passion for learning and sets out to do so. In addition to book learning, she also pays more attention to the manners and etiquette which will stand her in good stead as she seeks to advance her cause before the members of the new government. When so many are imprisoned, Rose cultivates friendships and pleads the cases of many who seek to leave the country, the release of loved ones from prison or the commutation of death sentences. Rose does all these things though she herself is facing the constant threat of poverty and the demands of running a household alone. Despite the fact that she has obviously made progress on this front, Rose has some growing up to do and it is Napoleone who points out to her that she does not yet fully believe in herself.

The Need for Love

Rose is obviously seeking a romantic love from the time of the first diary entry when she is just fourteen. She says that she hopes for marriage but it seems likely that she is



actually looking for love. Her willingness to fall in love with William is evidence of that fact, though Rose is more than willing to leave him for what she believes to be her destiny as a wife in Paris. Rose, upon meeting Alexandre, is anxious to begin her life as his wife and expects that she is going to have his undying love though he is obviously not nearly as intense in his affection for her and continues to have affairs at every opportunity. This need to be loved is seen in the prison setting when the prisoners are beset with fear of being executed or of having their loved ones sent to the guillotine at any moment. With this fear constantly at hand and faced with Alexandre's obvious affair with another woman, Rose's need to be loved sends her into the arms of another man. Rose is on the verge of breaking off her engagement with Napoleone until he swears his love for her. An interesting aspect of this theme is that Napoleone is willing to marry Rose though Rose says she does not love him.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in first person from the viewpoint of Marie-Joseph-Rose de Tascher de la Pagerie, known in this story as Rose but known historically as Josephine. The perspective is limited to Rose's point of view. Aspects of the story that do not happen within Rose's view are presented as conversations with other people or through letters. The letters are a major part of the story and are an important way of presenting information. For example, it is through a letter that Rose learns of Alexandre's movements during his time in the military. The letters also provide information on the relationships of the characters. For example, while Rose is visiting her parents, she receives letters from her son, Eugene. The letters are written in a child's hand from a child's perspective but clearly present the idea that he misses his mother and is looking for a way to reunite with her. The fact that the perspective is so completely limited is appropriate to the style and the presentation of the story. The story is presented through both dialogue and narrative, both appropriate and believable. The point of view accurately reflects the themes of the story, including the coming of age theme. Through Rose's own words, the reader sees her maturing emotionally.

Setting

The book is set in France in the latter part of the 1700s. The setting is historically accurate and makes the story more believable. The fact that the story has an historically accurate setting may make the reader put more credence in the story than warranted and the reader should keep in mind that the author does take some liberties. There are several specific settings that are described to a greater degree and these settings are equally believable. For example, Rose describes the prison where both she and Alexandre are held. The descriptions are not overly detailed and the reader may actually wish for more. Rose moves to an array of places in France during her time there and there are often few details for some of those settings.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straightforward manner, though there is some superfluous language, especially in the letters. The majority of the words used should be familiar to a reader with an average reading level. There are some complex ideas and events presented, typically related to the political and social aspects of the story and the time frame. The political dealings of the people becomes complicated and some readers may not fully understand the importance of these ideas. For example, the King and Queen are beheaded and their son, heir to the throne, is held for a period of time in an apparent effort to use the child as a pawn in the political scene.



Since the story is written as a diary, the writing tends to have a disjointed feel that makes it somewhat difficult to track in some instances. The diary entries are interspersed with letters from several people related to Rose's life. The diary entries have a less formal tone than the letters from Alexandre, while the letters from Eugene have a childish tone and the letters from Desiree are more focused on societal dictates.

Structure

The story is presented as a diary which makes it somewhat disjointed, especially when there are short entries. Despite this, there is a story line that flows well and most readers will find themselves caught up in the events. The book is divided into five sections. These are titled Mademoiselle, Vicomtesse, Madam, Citoyenne and La Merveilleuse. These generally describe the status of Rose during the period of her life included in that section. For example, the first is during her time as a young "mademoiselle" and ends with her marriage. The section titled Vicomtesse includes the diary entries following Rose's life soon after the marriage that gave her that title. The section titled "Citoyenne" is related to Rose's life during a time of particularly violent political upheaval in which the people are required to give up their titles in favor of the general "citoyenne."

The sections are further divided into chapters that are titled but not numbered. The titles each begin with the words "In which," indicating this is the chapter in which some particular event occurs. The titles offer a glimpse into what is going to occur during the chapter. The chapters are further divided into small sections presented as diary entries. Most are dated, though there are few that are noted as "undated."



Quotes

"You will be Queen, she said." In which I am told an extraordinary fortune, p. 9.

"(I let Monsieur de Beauharnais win.) He is so educated and so talented, I am in awe of him." In which I am introduced to my fiance, p. 62.

"The Marquis has received several letters regarding Alexandre's dissolute behaviour in Martinico, where, he has learned, his son drinks, gambles and consorts publicly with a number of women (not only Laure), oblivious to the disgrace to the family name." In which I come to the end of my endurance, p. 105.

"I had falsely assumed I would no longer be affected by Alexandre's reprehensible behaviour. I was mistaken." In which ill-fortune plagues us, p. 122.

"Only I had changed—thinner, dressed in elegant silks and lace, wearing a bonnet that hid the sadness in my eyes." In which I return home, p. 131.

"I have worded it simply so that a woman might understand, for I am not of that group that believes women incapable of abstract reasoning." In which two worlds claim my heart, p. 154.

"A wise woman does not allow her husband's amusements to disturb her, a wise woman closes her eyes. In allowing her husband his freedom, she dominates him!" In which I suffer a great loss, p. 191.

"Harsh words, but reality must be respected. And the reality of my father's life was: he suffered, he achieved nothing." In which I suffer a great loss, p. 195.

"Agathe came back from market today flushed with excitement. She'd seen a man's head cut off—by guillotine." In which I take desperate measures, p. 214.

"We had been lovers, true—but in that other world, that world of shadow and desperate need. Out here, the rules were different; everything changed." In which I must bid farewell to these I love, p. 312.

"You must understand: governments come and governments go but the bureaucracy stays the same." In which I am witness to a wedding, p. 329.

"Why do you insist on calling me Josephine?" In which I am courted, p. 402.



Topics for Discussion

Describe Rose. How does her childhood impact her life? What is the destiny that is predicted for her?

Describe Alexandre. What is it that immediately attracts Rose to him? Is this attraction returned? What is it about Alexandre that makes him a poor husband? What is Rose's reaction when she learns of his many affairs?

Who is Catherine? Who is Manette? How do their lives impact Rose? Describe Rose's relationship with these two girls and other members of her family. What aspects of Rose's personality are at play in these relationships? Defend your answer.

Who is Lazare Hoche? What is his role in Rose's life? Compare Rose's affection for Lazare with that she holds for Alexandre, and for Napoleone. How do the three men impact Rose's life?

Destiny is an important theme throughout the book. Name two people besides Rose who are influenced by the idea of a predestined future. What is the result of the faith of these people in destiny?

Compare Rose's dreams of a life in France to the reality. What does her time in prison do to her personality? She describes a feeling of guilt for having survived. Is this feeling common? What other situations in history have prompted this same feeling of guilt?

Napoleone almost immediately begins calling Rose "Josephine." What is the significance of his use of this name? What does he mean when he says that Rose does not believe in Josephine?