

Nobody's Fool Study Guide

Nobody's Fool by Richard Russo

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Nobody's Fool Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Wednesday, pp. 1-36.....	5
Wednesday, pp. 36-73.....	7
Wednesday, pp. 73-111.....	9
Wednesday, pp. 111-147.....	11
Thursday, pp. 147-183.....	13
Thursday, pgs. 183-221.....	14
Friday, pgs. 221-260.....	16
Friday, pgs. 260-297.....	17
Friday, pgs. 297-334.....	19
#10 Tuesday, pgs. 334-370.....	21
Wednesday, pgs. 370-407.....	22
Wednesday, pgs.. 407-439.....	24
Thursday, pg. 443-474.....	25
Friday, pgs. 475-510.....	26
Friday, pgs. 510-549.....	28
Characters.....	30
Objects/Places.....	33
Themes.....	35
Style.....	37
Quotes.....	39
Topics for Discussion.....	41



Plot Summary

Nobody's Fool by Richard Russo is a book about the people in a small village named New Bath. New Bath is located in the Adirondacks in upstate New York. The town is popular and prosperous in the 1800s and well known for their mineral waters. A big resort hotel is built and the town competes with Schuyler Springs, a few miles away, for the resort business. Then the mineral waters of New Bath dry up and all the business go to Schuyler Springs. Economically, New Bath stagnates and the small town waits two hundred years for economic revival.

Donald Sullivan, or Sully, has lived in New Bath all of his life, like most of the other residents. He is divorced from his wife Vera and is on partial disability due to a knee injury. He does not have much money and has been denied total disability. Despite his lawyer's advice, he decides to return to work and does odd jobs for Carl Roebuck, the owners of the Tip Top Construction Company. Sully has a strange relationship with Carl; the two rag each other constantly. They also have a game of stealing Carl's snow blower from each other.

Sully lives at the house of Miss Beryl People, a widow in her eighties. She was the eighth grade teacher until she was forced to retire. Her husband was the high school football coach and Sully was his favorite student. This made their son, Clive Jr., jealous until he protested and had Sully banned from the Peoples' house. This was a grudge that Clive Jr. was to carry into adulthood, especially since Sully rented the upper floor of Miss Beryl's house. Sully is still coming in between Clive and his mother from Clive Jr.'s point of view.

Sully is basically a loser. He cares little about material possessions and just survives. He is not interested in bank loans or in reading his mail. He has strange relationships with people, yet most of the townspeople like and trust him. He has a side kick named Rub Squeers who works with him and is usually at his side. Rub is resentful of Sully's son, Peter, when Peter separates from his wife and comes to live in New Bath and work with Sully. Sully rags at Rub just as he rags at others. The townspeople seem to accept the ragging as part of Sully's personality.

The book is the story of a few weeks in the lives of Sully and the other townspeople as they wait to see if the big economic boom in the form of a theme park arrives. When the deal falls through, Clive Jr. disappears and life goes on as usual in the small town. The reader will enjoy this slightly humorous novel.



Wednesday, pp. 1-36

Wednesday, pp. 1-36 Summary

New Bath is a village in the Adirondacks between New York City and Montreal. The main street is known as Upper Main which is a tree-lined street that runs for three blocks. In the 1800s, the town had been a resort with people coming for the healing mineral waters. Big resort hotels were built and the town prospered. By 1868, the mineral springs begin to dry up while their rival, Schuyler Springs, continues to thrive. The Sans Souci hotel in New Bath burned in 1903. It is believed that the owner, who died in the fire, started the fire to collect the insurance. New Bath is still waiting for an economic revival in 1984.

Miss Beryl awakens on the morning before Thanksgiving wondering when the rotting tree limbs will fall on her house. She is in a better financial position than most of the other Main Street widows who take in boarders to help cover their expenses. Her son, Clive Jr., is president of the North Bath Savings and Loan and heads a group of investors interested in trying to bring a theme park to New Bath. He does not like his mother having Donald Sullivan as a boarder. Miss Beryl suspects that her son is more interested in the real estate value of her house than in her own well-being. She does not let him know her financial position.

Sully, the boarder, awakens and comes downstairs. He puts his boots on while telling Miss Beryl that she is talking to herself. She enjoys these morning chats with Sully. She tells him that she is not planning to go on vacation this year and that she and Mrs. Gruber plan on attending a buffet at the Northwoods Motor Inn on Thanksgiving Day.

As Sully walks out of the house, he meets Rub Squeers and tells him that he plans on returning to work with his injured knee instead of continuing his rehabilitation training. The two men walk to Hattie's Lunch for coffee. Sully talks to Hattie and her daughter Cass. He correctly assumes that Rub wants to borrow twenty dollars. He gives him ten.

Wednesday, pp. 1-36 Analysis

This section introduces the setting for the novel and some of the characters. The small Adirondacks village of New Bath is prosperous in the 1800s until the mineral spring waters dry up. Then it loses its status as a popular resort and becomes a small New York town that is waiting for an economic revival.

Some of the townspeople are introduced and the reader learns some of the details of life in the small town. Many of the houses on Upper Main are owned by widows, like Beryl Peoples, who rent rooms to men who help with the chores and help defray expenses.



The reader learns of Miss Beryl's relationship with her son, Clive Jr. Neither trusts one another much and knows much about the other's financial position. He seems more interested in the real estate value of her house than in her well-being.

Donald Sullivan is Miss Beryl's tenant. He is on temporary disability and is attending college classes as part of this rehabilitation training. He has made the decision to return to work and discontinue his rehabilitation education. He makes this decision without consulting his lawyer or doctor.



Wednesday, pp. 36-73

Wednesday, pp. 36-73 Summary

Sully discusses his knee condition with Cass and Rub. His request for total disability was denied. The judge told Sully to register at the college for the next term. Cass offers him a job at the restaurant. Sully does not think it is a good idea and leaves to shovel the snow at Miss Beryl's house.

Sully does not want to work for Carl Roebuck again but goes to his office where the secretary Ruby says that Carl does not want to see him. Then Carl calls out that he has a job for Sully. Sully wants the money that Carl owes him and Carl claims he will not pay for shoddy work. Sully is sent to pick up cement blocks that were delivered to the wrong location. He decides to work alone to see how his knee hold up. After an hour, he decides that his knee is okay but notices his truck tilting from the weight.

Mrs. Gruber wants Miss Beryl to attend a supermarket grand opening with her. Miss Beryl will pick Mrs. Gruber up in one half hour. When Mrs. Gruber leaves, a young woman with a child arrives looking for Sully. Miss Beryl tells here Sully is not home and allows her to use her phone. She tells Miss Beryl that Sully has been having an affair with her mother. Miss Beryl allows them to go into Sully's flat and leaves with Mrs. Gruber.

Sully's truck is stuck in the mud and he begins walking back to town. A green Gremlin stops to pick him up. He at first does not recognize the woman. She tells the kids to move over for Grandpa. The woman is his son's wife Charlotte. His son Peter is also in the car.

When one of the kids hits his injured knee, he instructs his son to pull into the IGA parking lot and he gets out of the car. Peter follows him and Sully shows him his knee and tells about the injury. Peters tells him that he failed to get tenure and is not having much luck in the job market.

Sully goes to Carl Roebuck's house and talks with his wife Toby. She tells Sully that Carl does not live there anymore. The problem is Carl's affair with Ruby. She will not give Sully a check for the money Carl owes him but agrees to drive him downtown.

Wednesday, pp. 36-73 Analysis

More information about Sully is learned in this section. He goes to see his former boss for money that he is owed and agrees to move some cement blocks for him. He decides to do the job alone without Rub. He seems to need to prove to himself that he can still work with a bad knee.



The reader also learns that Sully has a family. He is apparently divorced from his wife. His son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren pick him up while he is hitchhiking back to town. He does not seem to have much contact with them and does not even recognize his daughter-in-law, Charlotte, or know the names of his grandsons.

When Sully goes to the Roebuck house, the reader learns that Sully is envious of Carl. He not only covets some of Carl's physical belongings, he also covets Toby, Carl's wife.



Wednesday, pp. 73-111

Wednesday, pp. 73-111 Summary

Toby drives Sully to the OTB, most of the men there are retired and are betting on horse races. Sully places his bet and sees Carl Roebuck as he walks out of the OTB. Carl stops to say hello to Clive Peoples. Sully walks into Rub and tells him that they have work. They take Bootsie's, Rub's wife's, car from the Woolworth parking lot.

The temperature has dropped so they drive the truck out of the mud. As they finished the second load, Carl arrives. He wants Sully to work the next day, which is Thanksgiving. He agrees to pay them time and one half. When Carl leaves, they finish the job. Rub wants to stop and eat but Sully says no.

Sully remembers Carl's father, Kenny, whom he had worked for. When Sully's residence burned from a cigarette he had left lit, Kenny told him about the vacant flat at Beryl's and gave him five hundred dollars to buy clothes and furnish the apartment. Afterward, Kenny came over to visit. Sully finds it hard to believe that Kenny has been dead for twelve years.

Sully returns home and showers after work. Miss Beryl is waiting with his mail when he goes downstairs. He rarely reads his mail. She tells him about the woman who came and he knows it was Ruth's daughter.

Sully leaves the house and goes to the White Horse Tavern. He sees Carl and Wirf there and goes on to Jerry's Pizza where he talks to Vince, the owner. Ruth comes in and tells him that Wirf is looking for him. They heard that he quit college. She also knows that he was seen with Toby. Sully orders linguine when Wirf comes in. They talk about his case and his return to work. He tells Sully not to officially withdraw from his classes. Wirf tells him to stretch it out by taking incompletes and to have more x-rays of his knee. Sully agrees just to quiet Wirf.

When Wirf leaves, Ruth sits down with him. They have been having an affair for more than twenty years. They talk until Zack, Ruth's husband arrives. When Ruth and Zack leave, Vince asks if Sully is having an affair with Toby. He says no and Vince says she has someone in the next town, Schuyler Springs. Sully says he does not think so.

Wednesday, pp. 73-111 Analysis

Sully seems to lead a strange existence. He has been having an affair with Ruth for more than twenty years and he talks with her husband Zack at the restaurant. He basically has no bills so he rarely looks at his mail. He retains Wirf as his attorney in his disability case but then disregards his advice. Sully agrees to take incompletes in his courses and to have new x-rays taken just to shut him up.



Ruth seems to know that he saw his son and that he rode into town with Toby. Vince asks if he is having an affair with Toby and says that he heard that she was having an affair with someone in the next town. North Bath is a small town and everyone seems to know who is doing what. It does not seem to be a town where people have many secrets.



Wednesday, pp. 111-147

Wednesday, pp. 111-147 Summary

The interstate highway basically by-passes North Bath so The Horse is one of the few restaurants that is open year round. Many others are open only for the racing season. The Horse staff and clientele also change for those two months. After those two months, the locals appear again. Tiny Duncan, the owner of The Horse, is another local who thinks of moving to Florida.

Sully is at The Horse with Vince and Wirf. Wirf is Tiny's best customer and Sully is upset that Tiny never buy rounds for the regulars. Sully is angry in general and at no one in particular. Sully and Wirf pay their bill and leave.

Sully goes to the Roebuck house to borrow the snow blower since he knows he has to shovel at Beryl's house before leaving for work. When he enters his apartment, he finds Carl asleep on the couch.

The next morning Carl is surprised when he sees what Sully's knee looks like. They agree to meet at the donut shop where Carl will pay Sully his wages for the day before. After snow blowing the snow, Sully needs pain killers but the drugstore is closed for Thanksgiving, as are the other places of business. He meets Rub at the donut shop and buys him a donut since Bootsie took all of his money. He sees the druggist who gives him some pain killers.

Sully walks in on Ruby and Carl at the office. Carl pays him. Rub and Sully go to sheetrock the house. While they work, the pain in Sully's knee intensifies till his whole leg hurts, but he does not want to take any pills until they finish working. When they finish, they arrive at Rub's house to find Bootsie angry because the turkey is burned. She is upset that Rub had to work on Thanksgiving. Sully declines to eat with them.

Miss Beryl and Mrs. Gruber eat their Thanksgiving dinner at noon at the Northwoods Motor Inn. Miss Beryl drives to the restaurant on the outskirts of Albany. When Miss Beryl arrives home, she finds Clive's car in front of her house.

Wednesday, pp. 111-147 Analysis

Sully does not want to have more problems with Carl over unpaid wages. Before he sheetrocks the house, he finds Carl at his office and demands his wages for the previous day. He finds the druggist and obtains pain killers for his knee but he does not take them, in spite of the intense pain, while he is working. This is a smart move since the pills could have caused drowsiness. Sully does not seem too worried about the damage he might be doing to his knee. He needs money and he is earning it the only way he knows how to. He does not think about why they told him not to do physical labor with his knee condition. Sully refuses to have Thanksgiving dinner with Rub and

Bootsie. He says he will go to his ex-wife's for dinner but then tries to talk Ruth into bringing some turkey to his house. He could have planned ahead and bought some food, but he did not.



Thursday, pp. 147-183

Thursday, pp. 147-183 Summary

Vera, Sully's ex-wife, lives in a house on Silver Street with her husband, Ralph Mott. Her son Peter and his family spend Thanksgiving there. She does not want Sully to appear, even though Peter had invited him. While doing the dishes, Peter tells Vera about the problems he and Charlotte are having and that they will be leaving in the morning. While talking, Peter notices Sully's truck in front of the house. Sully has fallen asleep. He is groggy from the pain killers. Peter calls for an ambulance when he finds his father sleeping in the truck.

Once inside the house, Sully talks to Vera's father and Peter goes to supervise the boys' baths. Charlotte has gone out. He and Charlotte will separate after the holidays. Peter wanted to make the trip to his mother's to get away from his mistress, Deidre, so he could think things out. He calls her while the boys are bathing. Peter tells her that he wants to end their relationship and that they will talk about it when he arrives home.

A commotion in the bathroom gets the attention of the adults. Peter's older son Will has retaliated against his younger brother's cruelty. Will decides to climb out the bathroom window and run away. During the commotions, Sully leaves. While driving, he finds Will hiding in the bed of the pick up truck. The boy announces that he is going to live with Sully. He takes the boy to a restaurant on the interstate for ice cream and calls Vera to tell them where Will is. Sully talks to his grandson of his dreams of living with his father after the divorce, away from Wacker.

When they leave the restaurant, Sully discovers that his truck is out of gas. Ralph comes to pick up Will and brings five gallons of gas for Sully. After Ralph leaves with Will, Sully returns to the restaurant to eat.

Thursday, pp. 147-183 Analysis

This chapter reveals more information about Sully's family. He has never been close to his son and rarely visits him after Vera's marriage to Ralph. Vera tries to keep Peter separated from his father because of her own hang-ups. Sully's visits are usually the result of Ralph's promptings. Sully and Ralph seem to have a good relationship and Sully genuinely likes Ralph. Sully seems to be a loner who keeps people at a distance.

The problems in Peter's family become evident in this section. He and Charlotte plan to separate after the holidays. When Peter calls his girlfriend, he tells her to prepare for the end of their relationship. He seems to suddenly take his responsibilities as a father more seriously. Perhaps he will try to work it out with Charlotte.



Thursday, pgs. 183-221

Thursday, pgs. 183-221 Summary

When Sully arrives home, Carl is in his apartment. They talk and drink. Carl says that he hopes he does not end up like Sully. He throws a wad of bills at Sully and tells him to buy a new couch. Sully refuses the money and says he will get what Carl owes him when Carl is sober.

Sully goes to The Horse and finds that Ralph delivered a platter of turkey dinner for him. He also finds that a man called Miles Anderson called him about a job. Wirf arrives and Sully gives him the turkey dinner platter and then calls Miles Anderson. Anderson bought a house that he wants to run as a bed and breakfast and wants Sully to work on it. They agree to meet in the morning. Wirf tells him not to get caught working. Sully does not tell him that he might already have been caught.

Clive is at his mother's house. He has brought with him a woman named Joyce who is asleep in the guest bedroom, as Clive and his mother talk. Clive says that he and Joyce are engaged to be married. Miss Beryl thinks that Clive is trying to put her in a nursing home and that Joyce has something to do with it. She does not like Joyce and Clive has to ask his mother to stop glaring at her. In addition, Miss Beryl's prized Queen Anne chair breaks while Joyce is sitting in it.

Clive again brings up the subject of selling the house and having Sully move. She says she does not want Sully to move. He is someone whom she can rely on.

Miss Beryl sees Hattie wandering around in her housecoat. When Sully appears, Miss Beryl sends him to pick up Hattie, whom he says he will return to her home. Clive and Sully return Hattie to Cass then Sully confronts Clive about his unauthorized entry to Sully's apartment.

Thursday, pgs. 183-221 Analysis

Carl and Sully have a strange relationship. Carl refuses to pay Sully for work he performed, yet he stays with Sully when Toby locks him out of the house. The fight over wages is a game with them; that becomes obvious when Sully refuses the wad of bills that Carl throws at him. Sully says he will get the money owed him when Carl is sober.

Sully will lose his disability benefits and his battle with the insurance company if he is found to be working. Wirf warns him about this although he does not tell him about the man who visited Carl, asking questions about Sully.

Miss Beryl is surprised by Clive saying that he plans to marry Joyce. She does not like Joyce but says if Joyce makes Clive happy, then it is okay with her.

The reasons for Clive's animosity toward Sully becomes known. In high school Sully was one of his father's favorite students and spent a lot of time in the Peoples' home until Clive protested. Clive felt that Sully was an intruder in his family just as he does now. This is why he does not want Sully living at his mother's house. He is still trying to expel the intruder of his childhood.



Friday, pgs. 221-260

Friday, pgs. 221-260 Summary

Sully and Rub go to the donut shop where Sully sees Carl. Sully wants to be paid for his work, especially now that his truck will not start. Carl pays him and lets him borrow his El Camino. He goes to Harold's Automotive World to look for a truck. Harold has Sully's truck towed to his garage so he can see what is wrong with it.

Rub and Sully go to meet Miles Anderson about the renovation job. Sully sends Rub to buy hamburgers while he waits. Sully looks over the house and decides there will be enough work for him and Sully until spring. When Rub returns without the goods, they drive away, since Miles Anderson did not appear for their meeting.

Miss Beryl is in a grumpy mood as she visits with Mrs. Gruber. She is thinking about Hattie and is convincing herself that Clive is concerned with her welfare. She begins to think that he is correct in wanting her to sell the house which is why she is in a bad mood. She tells Mrs. Gruber about Clive's plans to marry Joyce. Beryl wants to know how Mrs. Gruber knows the woman's name is Joyce and realizes that the woman lied to her about not reporting to Clive.

Ruth is with Sully at a motel for the first time in months. He has proposed marriage and she is thinking about it. They discuss Sully's money problems and then talk about Ruth's children. They part with cross words.

Back at The Horse, Rub tells him that Carl is there and that Miles Anderson called. Sully goes to the back room to play poker. Miles Anderson calls three more times before Sully talks to him. They agree to meet the next morning and Sully returns to his poker game.

Friday, pgs. 221-260 Analysis

Miles Anderson does not show up for the meeting about the house renovation. They agree to meet the next morning. Anderson says he is a university professor.

Miss Beryl is correct in her suspicions about Mrs. Gruber spying on her and reporting to Clive. She knows now that Mrs. Gruber lied to her. She is thinking about her discussion with Clive about selling the house. Seeing Hattie wandering around in the cold spooks her. She realizes that Mrs. Gruber lied about talking to Clive when Mrs. Gruber slipped and knew the woman's name was Joyce.

Both Ruth and Sully are happy to have resumed their physical relationship. They seem to have communication problems concerning Ruth's daughter and part on bad terms.



Friday, pgs. 260-297

Friday, pgs. 260-297 Summary

Sully loses between three hundred fifty and four hundred dollars in the poker game. The job with Miles Anderson is now more important to him. He needs money badly now since he has to buy a truck.

Smelling fish, Miss Beryl goes into Sully's apartment. She finds that Clive is correct about all of the cigarette burns. She cannot locate the fish smell and then feels guilty for invading his privacy. She then makes a list of things that she will never do based on her son's urgings and decides she will consult the list every time she sees herself giving into Clive.

Miss Beryl finds she has a visitor—Janey and her daughter Tina. Miss Beryl serves them a plate of cookies. Janey uses the phone and then hides her car.

Wirf tells Sully that he has a bad liver and does not have more than a few years to live, if he changes his habits. If he does not, he will only have a few months. As Sully is walking out of the door, he bumps into his son Peter.

Before Janey returns, her husband Roy drives up in front of the house. Tina recognizes her father and says "Daddy." Roy takes his rifle from the car and fires. Miss Beryl calls the police as Roy shoots out the windows in her neighbor's house. The police arrive as Janey and Roy are fighting. He hits her with the rifle.

Sully learns that Charlotte takes two of the boys and leaves for their home in Morgantown, leaving Peter and Will behind. She has had a fight with Vera. Sully and Peter eat at the bar with Wirf. As they leave, Sully smells the strange odor at the door that he has noticed before.

Sully slips the Roebuck Doberman some of his pain killers imbedded in ground beef. He and Peter return to the Roebuck house to steal the snow blower again.

Friday, pgs. 260-297 Analysis

Sully loses between three hundred fifty and four hundred dollars in the poker game. He now regrets having played at a time when he needs money so badly. He also regrets mouthing off to Miles Anderson because it could have cost him the house renovation job. He resolves to keep his poker playing under control.

Miss Beryl regrets her decision to inspect Sully's apartment. She makes up a list of things she will never agree to do at Clive's urgings again, should she feel herself giving into him. If she ever feels herself slipping, she will read the list.



Peter feels that Vera is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. She is under a lot of pressure and has a big fight with Charlotte who takes the two youngest kids and leaves for home, leaving Peter and Will behind.

Peter and Sully steal the Roebuck snow blower again. The snow blower is becoming a game between Carl and Sully by Sully's own admission.



Friday, pgs. 297-334

Friday, pgs. 297-334 Summary

Sully shows Peter the house his father owned. Sully owes back taxes on the property that he has never paid. He tells Peter that he could pay the back taxes and sell the property. Peter does not have any money and wants to work with Sully during his semester break. Sully then drives Peter to Vera's house. They put the snow blower in Ralph's garage. Sully tells Peter to take the El Camino back to West Virginia with him.

When Peter drives Sully home, they find the dead deer in the snow with a note from the police department not to remove it. Sully knows he has problems which will be worse in the morning, but he figures he will somehow work it out.

The economic picture for the village is not looking as good as they had hoped. The hotel that was supposed to open might not. The rivalry between North Bath and Schuyler Springs continues.

Sully goes to work at Hattie's after the cook quits. He needs the money. He has worked out a deal with Harold for a truck and will plough snow. It has not snowed so he will not be able to make the first payment but he knows that Harold will understand. He works the breakfast shift which leaves the rest of the day to work on the Anderson house or do jobs for Carl. Peter and Rub are working on the house.

At first Sully is opposed to Will being at their work site but now he enjoys having the boy around. He has not seen Ruth in several weeks since Janey was injured. He was not there when Ruth needed him and she let him know it.

Sully now has two weeks to find a place to live since he told Miss Beryl he would move by the first of the year. They are all blaming him for what happened so he decides he will move. Toby, now back with Carl, says Sully can stay at their house until he finds a place. Carl has some friends at City Hall check the status of the house that Sully owns. He also tells Sully that Toby is pregnant.

Friday, pgs. 297-334 Analysis

Sully is very liberal with Carl's belongings. His son Peter needs help and Sully does not have any money to give him so he tells him to take Carl's El Camino back to West Virginia. He does not ask or tell Carl. He just tells Peter to take the car. When he is home, he realizes that he is in a bad situation that will be worse in the morning. He has no plan but figures he will work something out.

Miss Beryl is very shaken by the shooting in front of her house. She thinks it is time to start listening to her son, in spite of the promise she made herself earlier in the day.

Even though she does not like losing Sully as an ally, she feels that he is the proverbial branch that is poised to drop on her.

Sully decides to move so as not to cause anymore problems for Miss Beryl. He figures if he is not there, there can be no more incidents like the shooting incident. He knows that she is very shook up from the incident. Toby, who is reconciled with Carl and pregnant, offers him a room at their house until he finds a place. This is another twist in the strange relationship they have.



#10 Tuesday, pgs. 334-370

#10 Tuesday, pgs. 334-370 Summary

Miss Beryl is thinking of the day Sully told her that he was moving out. She has not been the same since then. Sully is around less now that he is working at Hattie's and she misses their morning chats. The doorbell rings and Miss Beryl finds Ruth and Tina there. Ruth introduces herself and thanks Miss Beryl for calling the police the day of the shooting. Miss Beryl tells Ruth that Sully is moving and that she will miss him. When they leave, Miss Beryl and Mrs. Gruber go out for lunch.

Carl, Sully and Will go to look over the house on Bowdon Street, which was Sully's. They break a window to unlock the door but Will is afraid to go in.

Rub and Peter are working on the Anderson house. Sully tells Rub about Carl's plan for tearing up the hardwood floor of the Bowdon house and using it in the lake camp home they have. The men return to the Bowdon house. Carl says that there is a lot of furniture in better condition than the furniture in Sully's apartment. Sully will let Carl have the hardwood floor for free but he has to pay them for the labor. They agree on eleven hundred dollars.

The men go to The Horse for lunch. Sully learns that someone has contracted to purchase the Bowdon Street house for back taxes. If Sully pays the back taxes within a month, then he owns the house. The amount of the back taxes is over ten thousand dollars. Vera, Sully finds, is jealous over his relationship with Peter. Before returning to work, Sully tells Peter to go talk to Vera. She is upset over a phone call she received from West Virginia.

They find a car on top of the tree stump at the Anderson house. Clive was giving Joyce a driving lesson and they are now waiting for a tow truck, which arrives.

#10 Tuesday, pgs. 334-370 Analysis

Miss Beryl has not been the same since the shooting incident and the two weeks since Sully told her he was moving. She will miss him and knows that things will not be the same.

Sully takes an interest in his house because Carl wants the hardwood flooring moved to his lake house. They find that the house has been sold for back taxes unless Sully can pay the more than ten thousand dollar tax bill.

Vera is very upset about Peter working with Sully. Apparently, she does not want them to be close. She is afraid that Peter might become like Sully and begin adopting his habits.



Wednesday, pgs. 370-407

Wednesday, pgs. 370-407 Summary

Sully finds out that he has been caught working. He was videotaped loading concrete blocks and they figure that it was the man in the dark car that had been asking questions about him. There is the possibility that the state may sue to recover the benefits but Wirf does not think they will.

Miss Beryl awakens thinking she has the flu. She feels guilty about Sully and is not happy about Joyce. Mrs. Gruber told her the story about the driving lesson. She makes a cup of tea and sits down to watch the snow. She does not respond at first when Sully comes downstairs. He finds her covered with blood. She insisted it is just a nosebleed and he stays with her until she is better, which makes him late for work at Hattie's.

Sully finds that the diner will be closed the week between Christmas and New Years. Cass has decided to put Hattie into a nursing home and asks Sully if he can work extra hours the next week.

Will knows that his grandmother Vera is very upset. Peter announces that he does not intend to finish his last semester of teaching and might stay in North Bath and work with Sully. Ralph tells Peter that he and Will can stay as long as they want. Peter tells Ralph how he met Deidre, who keeps phoning the Motts. Charlotte and the two boys are living in Ohio with her parents. There is really nothing to go back to in West Virginia.

After Sully finishes his duties at Hattie's, they stop at the OTB to place their bets and Sully picks up some more pain killers. Jacko, the druggist, tells Sully how his staff caught Vera shoplifting.

At the house on Bowdon, Rub tells Sully that Peter is at the Anderson house with Miles Anderson. Carl's dog is inside the house on Bowdon where the men are working on removing the hardwood floor.

Miss Beryl went to a doctor in Schuyler Springs since her own doctor would have reported her visit to Clive. He talks to her about living alone and says he thinks she suffered a mild stroke and will have more.

Wednesday, pgs. 370-407 Analysis

Sully made his decision to work instead of pursuing the disability claim, once he was rejected for total disability. He learns from Wirf that he had been caught working and videotaped loading cement blocks. They should have paid more attention to the man who had been asking questions about him. But Sully had made up his mind by that time.



Vera is not taking the situation well, especially the fact that Peter may stay and work with Sully. This has always been her biggest fear and it is now coming true. She stays locked in her bedroom.

Peter does not see any point in returning to West Virginia. There is really nothing there for him except his last semester of teaching and bills. Charlotte and the two younger boys have moved to her parents' house in Ohio and Peter does not want anything to do with Deidre. He does not seem very interested in finding another teaching position although he is young enough to do so.

Sully plays games in his relationship with Rub. He treats him very badly, like making him stay outside in the cold. Yet, Rub, thinks Sully is his best friend. Rub is resentful of Peter and Wills' presence and the fact that Sully gives most of his attention to Peter and Will. Rub is a little old for this kind of behavior.



Wednesday, pgs.. 407-439

Wednesday, pgs.. 407-439 Summary

After lunch, Ralph comes to talk with Peter who leaves with him. That leaves Rub alone with Sully. Sully let sRub ramble on about his wishes and fantasies. While Rub is talking, Sully remembers back to his childhood when the parish priest died. He remembers being at the funeral with his father, Big Jim. They went into the rectory and afterward, to the bar.

Peter returns in the late afternoon bringing a six-pack of beer. Peter tells him they still have the job at the Anderson house, in spite of Sully's absence when Anderson arrived unexpectedly. Sully tells Rub to go home. After a few minutes of Sully's ragging at him, Rub says he quits and throws a can of beer through a window and departs.

Peter and Sully leave to find Rub. Rub is crying while he is walking home and does not want to face them. The pick-up truck is on the sidewalk following Rub. A police cruiser pulls into a driveway blocking Sully's path. The officer threatens to arrest Sully when Sully warns him to move the car. Officer Raymer fires a warning shot. Sully gets out of the truck and punches the officer. By this time, Rub is gone.

Peter and Sully pick up Toby to show them where the lake camp is so they can unload the wood. Carl arrives and calls Sully a fugitive and asked why he punched Raymer. Sully says that Raymer drew a gun on him. Carl says that Sully keeps ragging at people and that is the cause of his problems. Carl says he will visit him everyday in jail.

Peter and Sully are at The Horse at midnight. Wirf says that there is a warrant for Sully's arrest. Sully tells Peter to have Rub help him finish the floor on Bowdon and let the Anderson house go until after the holidays. Wirf says it will take a week to get Sully out of jail.

Wednesday, pgs.. 407-439 Analysis

Rub enjoys his afternoon with Sully, without Peter. When Peter returns, Sully tells Rub to go home. Rub finally has it with the whole situation and says that he quits and leaves. He does not like having Peter around. He cries as he walks home, not acknowledging Peter and Sully following him in the truck. He is hurt by the way Sully treated him. Sully does not give in to authority easily. He has a running battle with Officer Raymer over parking at the OTB. When Raymer blocks his path on the sidewalk and fines a warning shot, Sully punches him and leaves. He knows he will face the consequences but this does not worry him, even when he learns that there is a warrant for his arrest and that it will take Wirf a week to get him out of jail.



Thursday, pg. 443-474

Thursday, pg. 443-474 Summary

Clive finds out that the theme park deal has fallen through. He is driving down the streets and has an accident with a vehicle driven by Rub Squeers, who is working in his family's trash removal business. They assure Clive that they will take care of the damage to his car.

Sully spends six days in jail and wins over two hundred dollars playing cribbage with the police. He and Wirf attend Hattie's funeral. They stop by Miss Beryl's and then go to buy socks before going to the funeral service. They talk to Cass who says Peter is doing a good job filling in for Sully.

Janey is recovering from her injuries. Since Roy is in jail, they have moved their trailer to Bath and located it in the yard of her parents' home. Ruth's husband, Zack, is living in it.

Clive is driving around in the middle of the night. He has made a series of credit card purchases. Joyce is waiting for him and their weekend in the Bahamas but he goes in the other direction. He has decided not to marry Joyce and is fleeing. He is currently in Pennsylvania and accumulating speeding tickets. Clive gets off the interstate and speeds along the side roads.

Thursday, pg. 443-474 Analysis

Clive is feeling like a failure. The theme park deal has failed and he knows that he will not get Sully out of his mother's house. Sully is in jail and there is no way he can move by the first of the year. His mother was right about the theme park and he was wrong. Clive is fleeing from Bath at a high speed; he has accumulated three speeding tickets. The failure of his big business deal causes some thing in him to snap. He leaves Joyce behind who is waiting for him and a weekend in the Bahamas. He is in a self destructive mood given his high rates of speed and reckless driving.

Ruth has also made some changes in her life. Her husband, Zack, is living in the trailer in the yard. She has ended her physical relationship with Sully and is trying to get Janey to go to work.



Friday, pgs. 475-510

Friday, pgs. 475-510 Summary

Sully, Wirf and the police attend a meeting in the judge's chambers. Wirf advises Sully not to speak unless he is asked a direct question. The judge does not want the case to go to trial and points out that Officer Raymer has a bad record and that Wirf will file countersuits. Sully and Raymer are asked to step out into the hall. Sully offers to buy Raymer a cup of coffee but he refuses the offer. Peter and Will come into the room as Sully and Raymer are talking.

Peter has been in Morgantown settling his affairs and has just returned. They tell Sully that Wacker is in the hospital having his tonsils removed.

After the proceedings are settled, Wirf takes them to see an apartment which is on the second floor. The apartment is smaller than the one at Miss Beryl's and further away from the places he frequents.

Peter tells him that he placed the trifecta bet that Sully wanted while he was in prison and that Sully won more than three thousand dollars. Peter and Sully then begin moving into the new apartment and place another bet at the OTB.

Sully talks to Cass who tells him that Zack is living in the trailer and not in the house with Ruth. Cass is going to Colorado and Ruth will probably take the apartment behind the diner. Cass tells him that it is over between him and Ruth, who is there. Cass leaves, and Sully and Ruth talk. Ruth has bought Hattie's from Cass.

Sully goes to visit Rub and Bootsie and finds Rub alone in a half empty apartment. Bootsie has been arrested and all of the stolen merchandise seized. Sully tells Rub to come to work with him. Sully tells him that Peter is his son and that he, Rub, is his best friend.

Rub and Sully go to the Mott's house where Peter and Ralph are loading the U-Haul. Vera causes a scene and Sully tells her she is nuts.

Sully takes Rub home and then returns to see if Peter needs help. There is a small crowd down the street in front of the house where Vera grew up. Vera is inside tearing up magazines. Sully slaps her and she begins to cry. They are able to lead her from the house and to a waiting ambulance. Peter goes to the hospital with her while Sully and Ralph return to the house.

Friday, pgs. 475-510 Analysis

Sully's life is changing, much of it due to the presence of Peter. He feels bad that he cannot help Peter much with his problems, but Peter is there to help him. Sully has the



truck to pay for and he wants to pay Wirf for his services. Peter is a good hard worker and better at the jobs than Sully is. Sully has to admit this to himself.

Peter makes up with Rub. Bootsie has been arrested for all the stealing she did and Sully finds Rub alone in the half empty apartment. Sully tells Rub that he wants him to come back to work with him. When Rub is not happy about Peter still being there, Sully explains that Peter is his son and that he, Rub, is his best friend.

Peter's moving out of Vera's house and in with Sully is too much for Vera to bear. They find her in the house her father used to own, tearing up the occupant's magazines. She is hospitalized. She has barely been coping with the situation and having Peter move in with Sully is more than she can handle.



Friday, pgs. 510-549

Friday, pgs. 510-549 Summary

Sully goes to The Horse and begins drinking beer. He is drinking after taking pain killers. His knee is throbbing and the scene with Vera has drained him. Wirf arrives and sits next to him. Carl comes in with a young woman whom he introduces as Deidre. Carl is drunk even though it is only one in the afternoon. They have a fight.

Miss Beryl drives to Schuyler Springs without Mrs. Gruber. She refused to allow Mrs. Gruber to come with her, no matter how much she begged. People, including Joyce, have been calling all morning looking for Clive. All of the calls indicate that Clive is ruined. Miss Beryl is driving to Schuyler Springs to pick up her Queen Anne chair.

Ralph and Will walk in on a game of strip poker. Ralph tells Sully that Peter is unloading the U-Haul at the apartment. When the game ends they sit at a table in the restaurant and have sodas. Sully knows that Deidre is his son's ex-mistress.

Peter has just about finished unloading the U-Haul by the time Sully arrives. Sully helps carry in the desk and tells Peter that Deidre is with Carl. Sully is in a good mood because of his win on the horses and at poker. He falls asleep and when he awakens, he finds Toby helping Peter unpack. Apparently, Toby went to Morgantown with Peter. Now Carl is parked across the street. Sully says he will talk to Carl and Peter tells him not to.

Peter says that Vera is due to be released the next day and that her father is also in the hospital.

Sully finds Carl in the car with Deidre. He tells Carl not to go to Peter's apartment and then drives to Rub's house, becoming lost and disoriented before arriving. Rub has a swollen eye, complements of Bootsie who was out on bail. Sully tells Rub to meet him in the morning and goes on to The Horse. He gives Wirf five hundred dollars. Wirf tells him that Miss Beryl paid the back taxes on the house on Bowdon and that Sully owns it. There is already an offer of twenty thousand dollars for the house. The offer is from the Sans Souci hotel which built a road on part of Sully's property. Wirf tells Sully to sell the property and pay back Miss Beryl.

Miss Beryl awakens at two in the morning to the sounds of a chain dragging across the floor. She finds the Doberman in the hallway. Sully is outside fixing the porch rail. He sits down to talk to her. In his own way, he thanks her for what she did.

Friday, pgs. 510-549 Analysis

The situation with Vera takes its toll on Sully. He takes a pain pill and is sitting in The Horse drinking beer. Carl arrives, drunk, with a woman named Deidre, and they get into



a fight. Carl blames Sully for his problems and it is too much for him since he has just come from the scene with Vera.

Sully learns from Wirf that Miss Beryl paid the back taxes on his house and that he can sell it for twenty thousand and repay the ten thousand to Miss Beryl.

For Sully, things work out once he is out of prison. He wins on the horses and at poker, as well as with the house. He can now help Peter and Will if they need help He will also be there for Miss Beryl now that Clive is gone.



Characters

Donald Sullivan

Donald Sullivan, known as Sully, rents the upper floor of Miss Beryl's house. His knee was injured at work and he is receiving partial disability and enrolled in a rehabilitation training program. The sixty year old man decides he will quit the training and return to work since he does not want to work on air conditioners. He is divorced from Vera and has a son Peter who is married to Charlotte. They have three sons who are Sully's grandchildren. He does not even know their names when he sees them. Sully has been having a relationship with Ruth for more than twenty years. They stopped seeing each other when her younger son saw them together overnight but they are still good friends and talk whenever they can.

Sully does not care much for material possessions but needs money to live on. Sully inherited a house from his father but he never lived in it or paid the taxes on it. After the shooting incident in front of Miss Beryl's house, Sully decides that it is best that he move and gives his notice. He becomes closer to his grandson Will who is staying in North Bath with his father while working on the Anderson house renovations. Eventually, his son and oldest grandson move to North Bath and he becomes close to them. He, Peter and Rub work together. After he serves six days in jail, his life changes. He has his family, more money and Miss Beryl, who is like a mother to him.

Beryl Peoples

Beryl Peoples is an eighty year old retired school teacher and a resident of Bath. She lives in a house of Upper Maine. Miss Beryl is a widow with a son named Clive. Her husband Clive has been dead for more than twenty years, but she still talks to him. She makes no distinction between giving verbal responses to what she thinks and what she hears.

Financially, she is in a better position than her friends since she has her late husband's pension and her own; however, she has Donald Sullivan as a boarder, much to her son's dismay. Miss Beryl does not trust her son and does not let him know her financial status. She still drives at her age even though she does not like to. She begins to wonder if she is becoming paranoid when she thinks Clive is asking her friend questions about her. She is also fearful that her son is trying to put her in a nursing home and thinks that this is his purpose when he brings Joyce to her home. Joyce turns out to be his fiancé. When she is frightened by the shooting, she decides to take Clive's advice about selling the house, but when his theme park deals falls through and he disappears, she changes her mind. She feels that Sully is more of a son to her and pays the back taxes on his house. Beryl has always relied on him because he has always been there for her.



Clive Peoples Jr.

Clive Peoples Jr. is the son of Miss Beryl. He is the president of the North Bath Savings and Loan and is heading a group of investors to bring a theme park to Bath. He is forty-five years old. Clive is not trusted by his mother who feels that he is always trying to tell her what to do financially and is more concerned with the real estate value of her house than with her own welfare. Clive is secretly jealous of Sully and wants his mother to have Sully move. His mother relies more on Sully than on him. He feels that the only two people in Bath that do not recognize his importance are Sully and Miss Beryl. He considers both of them to be his opponents even though he knows that they will never hurt him. It upsets him that his mother does not trust him no matter what he does to gain her trust. She never asks his advice or turns to him for help. He has always craved his parents' affection, especially his father's. Sully was one of his father's favorite students and Clive always resented this. Sully dated Joyce in high school. When he became engaged to Joyce and brought her to meet his mother, he knows that she did not approve of Joyce, even though she tells him to do whatever makes him happy. Clive is known as The Bank to the town locals. When his theme park deals falls through, Clive flees.

Peter Sullivan

Peter Sullivan is the son of Sully and Vera. He is married to Charlotte and has three sons, Will, Wacker and Andy. He also has a mistress named Deidre. A history Professor at West Virginia State, he fails to receive tenure. When Charlotte takes the two younger children and leaves him, he decides to move to Bath and work with Sully. He is involved with Toby Roebuck at the end of the book.

Carl Roebuck

Carl Roebuck is the head of Tip Top Construction. He is thirty five years old and married to Toby. He is having an affair with his secretary Ruby and his wife locks him out of their house. They live in a Victorian house on Glendale. His many affairs continue, even when Toby is pregnant. At the end of the book, he is carrying on with Deidre, Peter Sullivan's former mistress.

Rub Squeers

Rub Squeers is a friend of Sully's. He often works with Sully who pays him. Rub is married to Bootsie. Rub often borrows money from Sully. He does not have a job and the only income he receives is from Sully. When Peter stays in Bath and works with Sully and Rub, Rub is resentful of Peter and the attention that Sully gives him.



Toby Roebuck

Toby Roebuck is the wife of Carl Roebuck. She is considered to be the best looking woman in town. She is aware of her husband's infidelities and locks him out of their house, which is on Glendale. At the end of the book, she is pregnant by Carl but is with Peter Sullivan.

Ruth Donnelly

Ruth, who is married to Zack, has been Sully's lover for more than twenty years. She works at the IGA and at Jerry's Pizza. She eventually breaks off her affair with Sully and separates from Zack. She buys Hattie's Lunch when Cass decides to move to Colorado.

Abraham Wirfly

Abraham Wirfly is the local attorney. Known as Wirf, he represents Sully, Miss Beryl and others in the town. He is one of Sully's companions at The Horse and arranges the deal for the house on Bowdon Street for him.

Vera Mott

Vera is the ex-wife of Sully and is married to Ralpy Mott. She blames Sully for all of her problems.



Objects/Places

Bath

Bath is a village in upper New York in the Adirondack Mountains.

Miss Beryl's House

Miss Beryl's house is located on Main Street in Bath.

Hattie's Lunch

Hattie's Lunch is a diner in Bath.

The White Horse Tavern

The White Horse Tavern, known as The Horse, is a restaurant-bar in Bath where many of the locals gather.

Jerry's Pizza

Jerry's Pizza is an Italian restaurant in Bath.

The Roebuck House

The Roebuck House is a three story Victorian house on Glendale Street in Bath.

The Mott House

The Mott House, where Sully's ex-wife Vera lives, is located on Silver Street in Bath.

Bowdon Street House

The house on Bowdon Street is where Sully grew up in Bath.

Schuyler Springs

Schuyler Springs is a town a few miles from Bath.

Apartment off South Main

The apartment off South Main is found by Wirf. Peter and Will move into it.



Themes

Survival

The story told in *Nobody's Fool* is the story of survival. The setting of the novel is a small town in the Adirondacks in upstate New York. The town is waiting for an economic boom that will provide jobs and money for the area. Until then, the people, like Sully and Rub, must survive. Some people in the town have their own businesses that provide them with a living. Carl owns a construction company, Harold owns the automotive store and there are three restaurants and the donut shop. The town is not prosperous, but people survive.

Rub and Sully do not have regular jobs. They work at odd jobs mostly provided by Carl Roebuck. Sully also works at Hattie's diner for a while. Sully is receiving temporary disability benefits but loses them when he is caught working. He needs money so he begins doing odd jobs for Carl.

Some of the men of the town do not have jobs but have working wives. Rub's wife works at the Woolworth's and Zack's wife works at the IGA and at Jerry's Pizza.

Many of the houses on Upper Main are owned by elderly widows who have small pensions. Most have to take in borders to make ends meet.

The situation in Bath is representative of the situation in many small towns. People are just making ends meet.

Sully's Relationship with Rub

One of the pervading themes of the book is Sully's relationship with Rub. Sully is very mean to Rub and basically treats him like an old rag. He frequently makes Rub wait out in the cold. This happens several times at Hattie's diner and also when Sully is talking to Will in the car and does not let Rub in. Many times Sully just dismisses Rub when he is finished with him which is what causes the situation that results in Sully's arrest. Rub is used to having Sully to himself and telling him of his hopes and dreams. Sully just ignores him and considers his chattering as background music. When Peter comes to work with them, Rub is very resentful of the attention that Sully pays to his son and the time he spends with him. This is what leads to the scene at the Bowdon House where Sully is taking his son to the Roebuck's lake camp and tells Rub to go home. Rub throws a beer can through the window and quits.

Sully takes Rub for granted because he is always there. Peter points out how mean Sully is to Rub but Sully does not see it and always belittles Rub. He does not consider Rub's feelings and when Rub keeps saying that Sully is his best friend, Sully asks him what makes him think that. Finally, Sully explains to Rub that Peter is his son and that



Rub is his friend. There is room in his life for both of them and Rub has to accept this fact.

Relationships - Miss Beryl, Clive Jr., and Sully

Another theme of the book is the relationship between Miss Beryl, Clive Jr., and Sully. Miss Beryl and her son, Clive Jr., do not trust one another. As a banker he is always giving her financial advice that she ignores. He wants her to evict Sully and she will not. He wants her to rely on him but she will not because she does not trust him. She relies on Sully to help her and to do things for her, which grates on Clive.

Clive's resentment of Sully goes back to their childhood. Sully was a favorite of his father's, the high school football coach, and spent a lot of his time at the Peoples' house. Clive considered Sully to be an intruder in his family and finally protested and succeeded in having Sully banned from the house. Now, many years later, Sully is again in his mother's house and is viewed as an intruder by the insecure Clive. He is still battling Sully for his mother's affection just as he has done all of his life. Sully basically does not have any use for Clive, who he refers to as The Bank, but he is fond of Miss Beryl, as she is of him. When Clive's theme park deal fails, he cannot face his mother or others and disappears, not knowing that his mother paid the back taxes on the Bowdon Street house to help out Sully.



Style

Point of View

Nobody's Fool by Richard Russo is written in the third person point of view. The narrator of the story is the author Richard Russo who tells the story of events in the lives of people in the small upstate New York town of Bath. The use of the third person allows the author to provide the necessary background information for the story. The author can give descriptions of the area, the characters and events as well as providing the necessary historical background information that gives the reader a better understanding of the story.

The use of the first person point of view limits the reader to events that involve the narrator only. The knowledge of the reader is limited to the knowledge of the storyteller and in a novel such as Nobody's Fool, the reader might miss a lot. This is why the use of the third person is appropriate for this type of novel.

There is plenty of dialogue between the different characters in the novel. This allows the reader to come to know the various characters and to see how they interact with one another. The reader can then form his/her own opinions about the different characters.

Setting

The setting for most of the book is the small town of Bath. Located in the Adirondacks in upstate New York, the small town had been the site of mineral water 1800s. When the mineral waters dried up, so did the economic fortunes of the town, which lost ground to its rival Schuyler Springs, located several miles away. Various settings in Bath provide the setting for the action of the novel. There are many scenes at Miss Beryl's house on Upper Main. The eighty year old widow rents the upper floor to Sully. Many of the houses on Upper Main are inhabited by widows who take in borders.

There are three restaurants and a donut shop in the town. Hattie's is where Sully and many of the locals go for coffee and breakfast. Sully even works there for several weeks. Jerry's Pizza is where Ruth works and is usually frequented by the young people of the town. The White Horse Tavern is the place where many of the locals congregate for lunch and dinner. There is a bar there and many of the men play poker in the back room.

Other houses in the town are also the site of the novel's action. The Roebuck house is the setting for many scenes when Sully visits. The Mott house of Silver Street is where Sully's ex-wife lives with her husband Ralph. The house on Bowdon Street is where Sully grew up and where they tear up the hardwood floor. Down the street is the house that Miles Anderson has Sully, Rub and Peter renovating. Peter moves into an apartment near the IGA, off Main Street.



There are few scenes outside of the Bath area; at the end, Clive, Jr. is driving in Pennsylvania.

Language and Meaning

Nobody's Fool is written in everyday English, which makes the book fast reading and easy to understand. There is no flowery language or hidden meanings in any of the passages. There are no foreign language terms or accented speech for the reader to try to figure out. There are no awkward terms or phrases for the reader to stumble over.

The language and meaning of Nobody's Fool are appropriate to the story of the novel. The use of everyday English adds to the realism of the story. The characters all talk just as people do in everyday life and this makes them more real for the reader. It also makes them more likeable.

The reader will have no problems with the language of the novel. There may be a few words that the reader wants to look up but there is no place in the novel where the reader will be confused about the author's meaning. It is very clear, which is why the novel is such easy reading. The reader will enjoy the novel for just this reason.

Structure

The structure of the novel is a little fussier than it needs to be. The story is divided into three parts. Part 1 covers more than half of the book and describes life in the small New York town. Part 2 covers the changes that begin to take place in Sully's life. In Part 3, Sully's life changes for the better. This part ends with Clive's disappearance. Within these parts, there are chapters that are titled with some of the days of the week. They are Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday and span a several week period.

These headings basically function as a reference point for the reader. There are breaks within each chapter as the story shifts to a different character or scene. The story basically reads as a continuum from the first page to the last page and it is not always easy for the reader to keep track of the time.

There is no Table of Contents in the book or pictures, sketches or maps. There are several sentences about the author.

The structure works well for the book and the story that the author tells.



Quotes

In any case, the town of North Bath, now, in the late autumn of 1984, was still waiting for its luck to change. There were encouraging signs. A restored Sans Souci, what was left of it, was scheduled to reopen in the summer, and a new spring had been successfully drilled on the hotel's extensive grounds. And luck, so the conventional wisdom went, ran in cycles. (Wednesday, p. 9)

Half the town's been meaning to leave. They don't, though, most of them. (Wednesday, p. 38)

Hell, at twenty, he'd been ready to junk everything and start over too. But now, at sixty, he was less willing to throw things away that could be patched together and kept running for a few more months. He wanted to keep going forward, not stop and turn around and analyze the validity of decisions made and courses charted long ago. (Wednesday, p. 77)

And Clive Jr. was her son, her own flesh and blood, and there was no reason to believe that his protestations of concern for her well-being were other than genuine. Her suspicions were paranoia, pure and simple. (Wednesday, p. 146)

Vera was able to identify this fear because she shared it. She had always carried with her the knowledge that Sully possessed the power to destroy them all, possibly through carelessness, perhaps even through misguided good intentions. (Thursday, p. 149)

"Don't worry," Sully said. "I'll get what you owe me. I'll get it when you're sober, too. This way you'll be good and pissed off." (Thursday, p. 184)

But six months always seems a long way off to Sully, who was by and large an optimist and who always concluded that in six months he'd be better off than he was now for the simple reason that he couldn't be any worse off. He was almost always wrong, of course, in both the result and the reasoning. (Friday, p. 227)

"Tell me again how this is your own snow blower we're stealing," Peter said. Sully had explained to him on the way that 'in a sense' the snow blower was really his, because the man who owned it also owed Sully some money and wouldn't pay. Sully'd already stolen the snow blower once, and this Carl Roebuck guy had stolen it back. This was kind of a game, apparently. (Friday, p. 293)

The situation he would awaken to in the morning was dramatically and demonstrably worse than it had been in recent memory. His magnanimous gifts to Ralph and Peter represented not solutions but the deepening of his personal dilemma. Still, he felt an unreasonable surge of sleepy confidence that he would figure something out. (Friday, p. 305)



"I'm going to miss him. Clive Jr., star of my firmament, is convinced he's a dangerous man, but he's wrong. Donald is careless, but he's always been his own worst enemy." (Tuesday, p. 342)

Whenever Ruth was angry at Zack, Vera at Ralph, Toby Roebuck (and all the other women in Carl's life) at Carl—these women were all apparently satisfied to vent their fury on Sully if he happened to be handy, as if he embodied in concentrated form some male principle they considered to be the cause of their dissatisfaction with their own men. (Wednesday, p. 379)

"You're the one that's the boss, not him," Rub said, his purpose, as always, a simple indication of loyalty to Sully, which he would have liked, just once, to be returned. (Wednesday, p. 417)

True, Sully'd promised to be out by the first of the year, but then he'd gotten himself thrown in jail, which meant the first would be impossible, and Clive Jr. realized now that Sully would never be gone, not really. He'd not only wanted Sully out of his mother's house, but out of her affection, outside the circle of her protection, so that Sully could at last complete the task of destroying himself, a task begun so long ago and drawn out far too long already. (Thursday, p. 449)

Jail had been an odd, unexpected release from anxiety and expectation. If he wasn't making any progress toward resolving his various financial and personal headaches, neither was he making them worse, and nobody could justifiably expect much of him, at least until he got out again. (Friday, p. 486)

But since getting out of jail this morning, Sully had been pursued by the strange sensation that everything had changed, that the rules of existence had been subverted somehow while he was away. Even the fact that his luck had changed contributed to this somewhat otherworldly feeling, as if he'd returned to a place he no longer knew. (Friday, p. 537)

Topics for Discussion

What is the economic history of Bath? What are its residents waiting for?

How did Sully become injured? What problems is he having with his disability claim?

What is the cause of Clive's animosity toward Sully? How did it begin?

Why does Sully decide to move out of Miss Beryl's house? What incident brought it about?

Discuss Sully's relationship with Carl Roebuck. What is strange about their relationship?

Evaluate Rub's reaction to Peter and Will. Why does Rub want so much of Sully's attention?

What does Miss Beryl do for Sully? Why? What does Wirf demand of Sully?