

The New York Trilogy Study Guide

The New York Trilogy by Paul Auster

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Plot Summary

The New York Trilogy by Paul Auster consists of three exciting detective stories: City of Glass, Ghosts, and The Locked Room. Each is a thriller that is brilliantly written and sure to hold the reader's interest. Auster's writing style raises the mystery to a new level, with constant plays on words.

The three books are not independent, as Auster says in the next-to-last chapter of the book. The three books involve writers and detectives and in each case the main characters more or less switch places and take on each others roles, in a manner of speaking. The main character loses himself in a psychological tangle which may be called a breakdown of sorts.

In City of Glass the main character, the writer of detective novels, receives a phone call in the middle of the night which results in him taking on the role of a detective trying to save the life of a man who was the subject of an experiment as a child. The writer, Daniel Quinn, becomes the subject of an experiment at the end with another writer looking for him. He is helpless to walk away from a case that was a set up.

Ghosts is another detective story with a man named White hiring a detective named Blue to watch a writer named Black. Both Black and Blue are driven to the brink of insanity with Black doing nothing but reading and writing and Blue not dealing well with the boredom and inactivity associated with the assignment. Blue is also caught in the trap and unable to walk away from the situation until the very end.

In The Locked Room, the writer becomes trapped in the situation by his childhood friend, Fanshawe. The writer takes on the task of reviewing the works of the missing Fanshawe. He becomes obsessed by the search for Fanshawe and finally realizes the wisdom of his wife's words that Fanshawe has to be dead in order for their marriage to survive. When the writer let Fanshawe with his life, he let the craziness in. He manages to walk away from the craziness after having a breakdown. When he is contacted by Fanshawe, and given a notebook he destroys it, refusing to allow the craziness back into his life.

All of the psychological twists the Auster uses add a new dimension to the mystery novel as the real mystery is what is going on inside the main characters and the struggle that is taking place within them. The author states the City of Glass, Ghosts and The Locked Room are all the same story. Each one represents a different state of awareness since the main character becomes trapped in the situation. The character doesn't escape in the first case, but does in the other two.

Readers of mystery novels will find this book to be very interesting. The novel is relatively easy to read, as the reader follows the struggles of the main characters. It is recommended reading for those who like unusual kinds of mystery novels.



City of Glass, Chapter 1-2

City of Glass, Chapter 1-2 Summary

The New York Trilogy by Paul Auster consists of three exciting detective stories: City of Glass, Ghosts, and The Locked Room. Each is a thriller that is brilliantly written and sure to hold the reader's interest. Auster's writing style raises the mystery to a new level, with the constant play on words.

City of Glass begins with a wrong number phone call in the middle of the night. Quinn didn't pay much attention to the call. As a mystery writer, he had a lot of time for other things and liked to walk around New York. Walking brought him peace of mind. He now writes mystery novels under the pen name William Wilson. His latest novel was completed two weeks earlier and he was now relaxing when the phone call came, asking for Paul Auster of the detective agency. It was a wrong number and Quinn went back to sleep. The stranger calls again the next night and again several days later. Quinn decides to play the role of Auster and asks the caller what he wants. The caller says that someone is trying to kill him and that he needs help. He knows who is trying to kill him but doesn't know where the man is. They schedule a meeting at ten the next morning.

In Chapter Two, Quinn gets up the next morning, eats breakfast and goes out, not sure of where he is going. He arrives at the address the caller had given him and finds a woman, Virginia Stillman, the wife of the caller, Peter. She leaves him in the living room and goes to find her husband. Peter Stillman appears, dressed completely in white. He introduces himself and says that Peter Stillman is not his real name. Stillman babbles more or less about not remembering his real name or much of his past. He talks in a babbling, rhyming poetic way that makes little sense. Peter is not right in the head.

Peter babbles on and on and says that it is his father who will try to kill him. He tells his story in his own way about how he had been mistreated and abused by his father. When Peter is finished telling his story, he ends the visit. Quinn sits there quietly, saying nothing.

City of Glass, Chapter 1-2 Analysis

Quinn writes mystery novels under the pen name of William Wilson. He does not admit to being a mystery writer or William Wilson, preferring to keep both a secret. Quinn is more or less detached from William Wilson and works and hides behind the pseudonym.

When Quinn begins to receive phone calls asking for Paul Auster and his detective agency, Quinn decides to play the role and schedules a meeting with a man who feels someone is trying to kill him. Quinn is not a detective and can't provide the man with



protection and shouldn't have misrepresented himself. He still shows up at the Stillman apartment, presenting himself as Paul Auster and listens to Peter's story.

Peter had been abused by his father and obviously has psychological problems. He babbles in a sing-songy poetic manner and tells Quinn that his father will try to kill him. Peter comes from a wealthy old Boston family and Peter had received his father's money when the father was institutionalized. He has a strange life with a wife who takes care of him but won't have sex with him. She finds and pays for prostitutes for him but she sleeps with other men.

Quinn is not a trained detective and should not have presented himself at the Stillman apartment as one. The Stillman's should have asked to see some kind of credentials so they would have known that he wasn't who he said he was, unless that was part of their plan.



City of Glass, Chapter 3-5

City of Glass, Chapter 3-5 Summary

Quinn is not aware of how long he listened to Peter Stillman, but eventually Virginia enters, turns on a light and leads Peter off to his nurse. Quinn says they hired him for a job and he is willing to help. He plays the role of a detective. Virginia goes on to explain some of Peter's story, explaining that Peter's father was a Harvard educated professor who taught at Columbia until Peter was two. He kept Peter locked in a dark room for nine years calling it an experiment after he quit his job. Peter was discovered when there was a fire at the house and his father was hospitalized as insane. The father will be released the next day. Since he had written Peter a threatening letter when there was talk of releasing him two years earlier, Peter and Virginia are concerned for Peter's safety.

Virginia wants a daily report from Quinn. She wants the elder Stillman followed so she knows where he is. She was referred to Paul Auster by Peter's nurse's husband. They discuss Quinn's fees and Virginia gives him an advance. Quinn could never cash the check because it was made out to Paul Auster. Virginia kisses him goodbye and he agrees to call her the next evening.

In Chapter Four, Quinn thinks of the various experiments that he has heard of that involved trying to keep children from learning to talk. Most learned some sort of speech. Quinn wants to help Peter because of the son he has lost, whose name was also Peter.

Chapter Five has Peter hiring a taxi and returning to his own home then decides to eat out for dinner. He walks to the Heights Luncheonette. As he eats, he and the counterperson discuss baseball as they usually do. Before leaving, he buys a red spiral notebook to use for the Stillman case. He returns to his apartment and studies the picture of the elder Stillman that he had received from Virginia. He sits and thinks about the case, reviewing the facts that he knows. He wonders about Virginia's reasons for marrying Peter and whether or not she is conspiring with Peter's father. The chapter ends with Quinn using Peter's phrase that his name is Paul Auster and it's not his real name.

City of Glass, Chapter 3-5 Analysis

Quinn continues to play the role of Paul Auster, even quoting a fee for his services and accepting a check as an advance. He knows he can never cash it so he can't be held for impersonating the real detective. However, he agrees to follow Paul's father, keeping Virginia aware of his actions. Perhaps if Quinn had been working on a book he wouldn't have become involved in this charade, but he has time on his hands since he finished his latest novel two weeks earlier. He doesn't say why he is doing this but does say that it is not for the money. In the next chapter Quinn reveals that he wants to prevent the



elder Stillman from hurting Peter in memory of his own dead son. This is his motive for taking the case. He wants to help; his son's name was Peter.

Quinn prepares for the work and buys a red notebook to use. He takes a serious approach, intending to do the job he has been hired to do, even though he doesn't have the training, license or experience.



City of Glass, Chapter 6-7

City of Glass, Chapter 6-7 Summary

The next morning, Quinn goes to the Columbia library to read Stillman's book. The book is about Paradise Lost and the Tower of Babel. Much of what he reads is about the use of language and how there is a difference in the meaning of worlds in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. The theory is that if the language could be reversed, then the fall of man could be reversed and innocence could be achieved. Quinn finishes his reading and leaves the library.

Chapter Seven has Quinn arriving at Grand Central well in advance of the arrival of Stillman's train. He studies the train station and learns the layout so he does not lose Stillman. He feels like a different person as Paul Auster and tries to view things as the real detective would. At times he has to remind himself to do so. Quinn finds a seat in the waiting room. He sees a girl reading one of his books and sits there looking at her until she finally asks him why. Quinn asks how she likes the book and what her opinion is. He doesn't tell her that he is the author. He walks away at the end of the conversation.

Quinn positions himself near the gate where Stillman's train will be. He thinks he will be able to spot the man and identify him from his eyes. The train arrives and the passengers begin to flow through the gate. Quinn watches for Stillman and finally spots the man he believes to be Stillman. Quinn follows Stillman out to the street where the man stops and another man appears that could be the twin of the first. He is better dressed. The two men walk away in opposite directions making Quinn frantic because he didn't know who was who. He follows the second man, then changes his mind and follows the first man. He follows him on the subway and the IRT train to 96th Street to the Hotel Harmony. Quinn waits two hours but the man doesn't reappear. He phones Virginia with his daily report and then goes to his apartment.

City of Glass, Chapter 6-7 Analysis

Quinn does his research on the elder Stillman. He goes to the Columbia library and reads Stillman's book. He is looking for whatever information he can find on the man. He also arrives early at the train station so he can study the layout. He doesn't want to lose Stillman once he arrives.

Quinn feels that he is a different person when he is pretending to be Paul Auster. He actually feels better than he does when he is himself. Quinn feels that he has a purpose continues in his role as Paul Auster, following a man he thinks is Stillman to a cheap hotel on 96th Street. He doesn't know for sure that the man is Stillman.



City of Glass, Chapter 8

City of Glass, Chapter 8 Summary

Quinn positioned himself outside of the hotel for the next few weeks. The old man went out every day at eight and walked around, carrying a carpetbag. As he wandered, he would pick things up off the ground as place them in the bag and then write in a red notebook, similar to the one that Quinn carried. Stillman didn't seem to do anything else. He spent hours in Riverside Park and stopped occasionally for meals. Stillman didn't appear to have any purpose, other than what he was obviously doing. If this was true, following him was a waste of time.

Too alleviate the boredom, Quinn begins to record Stillman's movements in greater detail. This meant he spent more time in looking at his notebook and could possibly lose Stillman. He continued to report to Virginia every evening. Quinn thinks a lot about Virginia and the possibility of romantic involvement with her. After two weeks he tells Virginia that the old man is no danger to Peter and he wants to end the surveillance. She does not accept this and asks him to continue for a few more days just to be sure. Quinn says he will do it only if he can talk to Stillman.

That night Quinn looks over his notes for the first time since he began following Stillman. He doesn't feel that he has learned any useful information about Stillman. Quinn begins to draw maps of the man's daily wanderings. The wanderings of the first three maps spelled the word "owe." He discerned other letters from the wanderings of other days and came up with the letters "OWEROFBAB." If he had kept detailed records of the first four days, he figured the tracings would have been "The Tower of Babel." He wonders if Stillman planned his wanderings. This would seem to indicate that Stillman planned to harm Peter but he had to remind himself that the letters were his won interpretations. He saw what he wanted in the shapes.

City of Glass, Chapter 8 Analysis

Quinn spends two weeks following the old man, who does nothing but walk around the area, picking up junk and discarded items, and recording the information in a red notebook. Quinn feels that he is performing adequately in his surveillance. He doesn't think Stillman knows that he is being followed and is sometimes so bored that he has to remind himself to be Paul Auster in order to remain focused. He didn't have any past or bad memories as Paul Auster, but he did as Daniel Quinn. Pretending to be Auster was an escape for him.

Quinn's lack of training as a detective is obvious. He doesn't even look at his notes for the first thirteen days. When he does and maps the old man's wanderings from his detailed notes, he discerns the letters "OWEROFBAB." He doesn't know what the tracings are from the first three days because he didn't keep detailed records. Quinn



feels that this could mean that Stillman could really intend to harm Peter, even though he had told Virginia that he didn't think so and wanted to end the case. He also considers the fact that the letters are his interpretation of the shapes. They looked like letter to him. The reader must wonder if Quinn would have come up with this interpretation if he hadn't read Stillman's book.



City of Glass, Chapter 9

City of Glass, Chapter 9 Summary

Quinn first talks to Stillman in Riverside Park. He just sat down next to him on a bench, still hiding behind his Paul Auster Mask. He introduces himself as Quinn and Stillman begins to list all of the words that rhyme with his name. They talk about worlds and Stillman talks about his work and projects. His current project holds the key that will lead to many great discoveries. He is currently collecting data. His work is very important and he is only laying the foundation for others to follow in putting the world back together. Stillman tells Quinn that he is working on inventing a new language that is appropriate for the new reality. Current words are not an adequate expression of reality. Stillman explains how he collects items and gives them new names but refuses to tell Quinn what any of the words are.

Quinn follows him again the next day to the Mayflower Cafe for breakfast. The old man does not remember him so he introduces himself as Henry Dark. Stillman says that he made up the name Henry Dark and explains that he did it to protect himself. H.D., he explains, came from Humpty Dumpty. Stillman draws parallels between the fallen egg and the fall of man.

Quinn meets Stillman again that afternoon in Riverside Park and the old man again does not recognize him. This time he introduces himself as Peter Stillman. The old man says that that is his name and asks if he is his son, so Quinn plays that role. They talk and the old man tries to give his son some advice about what he has learned from his own experiences. He says he will be able to die happy now.

The next morning Quinn waits for the old man, but he does not appear. He finally enters the hotel and tells the clerk that he wants to leave a message for Peter Stillman and finds the old man has checked out. Returning to his apartment, he calls Virginia with the information. She thinks the old man talked to Peter on the phone earlier in the day. He says he will call her every two hours.

City of Glass, Chapter 9 Analysis

Quinn does it his way, as he had told Virginia he would. He approaches Stillman and talks to him. The old man plays with the name Quinn, saying words that rhyme with it. At the next two meetings, he presents himself as Henry Dark and Peter Stillman. The old man does not appear to recognize Quinn, who plays the role of his son. He does not appear angry at his son and talks about giving advice, like never lying. He says he is happy that his son is fully recovered and doing well and that he can now die happy. The next day, Quinn learns that the man is gone having checked out of the hotel the previous evening.



Stillman doesn't appear angry at his son. He presents himself as scatterbrained but the discussion about George Washington and lying might indicate that he knew Quinn wasn't his son. However, he never asked Quinn any questions about his purpose. Even Quinn wonders if the man has been putting on an act.



City of Glass, Chapter 10-11

City of Glass, Chapter 10-11 Summary

Quinn knows he has lost Stillman and has no way of finding him. He decides to visit Paul Auster. There is no detective agency with that name in the phone book but he does find a listing for a man with that name. Quinn does to the apartment on Riverside Drive and introduces himself as Daniel Quinn and finds that Auster is familiar with some of his works.

The Paul Auster he found is a writer, not a detective. Quinn tells him the entire story. Auster says he probably would have done the same thing given the circumstances, making Quinn feel better. Quinn gives Auster the check and Auster says he will cash it for him. Auster wonders why his name has been involved in the case. The two men discuss Auster's work over lunch. He is currently writing about Don Quixote and they discuss how Cervantes tried to hide the fact that he was the author of the Quixote was doing an experiment to see what people would accept.

Auster's wife and son arrive home, making Quinn think about his own past. The boy's name is Daniel and his wife's name is Siri. Quinn leaves.

Chapter Eleven opens with Quinn walking home from Auster's apartment. He decides he can walk away from the case and ignore the situation. However, he finally decides to call Virginia and tell her his decision, but the line is busy and it remains busy for the rest of the evening. It was busy the next day and he spent most of the day walking around the city. He had written in the notebook for two hours the night before and wrote on and off during the day. Quinn was now writing about what he say while walking. He writes about the vagabonds.

Virginia's phone is busy every time Quinn tries to call, meaning he cannot tell her that he is quitting. Fate was keeping him tied to the case. Quinn walks to the Stillman's building and posts himself across the street, where he can watch the building.

City of Glass, Chapter 10-11 Analysis

Quinn's purpose had been to protect Peter and he though he could learn the old man's intentions by watching and talking to him. Now he has lost the man. When he decides to consult the real detective, he finds that the only Paul Auster listed in the phone book is a writer. He talks to the man about the situation and he says he would have done the same thing as Quinn did in the situation. Auster says he will cash the check for Quinn. Quinn does not consider telling Virginia the truth, even though he says he is concerned about Peter's safety. He really does not know what to do.



A lot of Quinn's actions can be blamed on the hurt he still feels from the loss of his wife and son. He feels the pain when he meets Auster's wife and son, and leaves the apartment as soon as possible.

Quinn decides he can walk away from the case and thinks of going to Paris. This seems to be his way of dealing with things. When he finally decides to call Virginia, he finds the line busy the whole evening and the next day. He finally decides that he has an obligation to protect Peter and positions himself across the street from the Stillman's building.

City of Glass, Chapter 12-13

City of Glass, Chapter 12-13 Summary

Quinn remained in the alley watching the building for weeks, watching the coming and going of the different people. He never saw the Stillmans yet he ate and slept minimally to maintain his vigilance. During the course of the experiment, he adjusted his eating and sleeping habits, as well as his living habits. He remained hidden the entire time and avoided people as much as possible. Quinn spent a lot of time studying the clouds. Eventually, his three hundred dollars ran out by the middle of August. It had been two months. He finally leaves the alley.

While walking, he sees his image in a storefront glass and realizes he has turned into a vagabond. He fell asleep in the park and awoke the next morning. When he calls Auster about the money, he finds out that Virginia wrote a bad check. There was no money. Auster tells him that there is no Stillman case. It is over. The elder Stillman committed suicide. When he calls Virginia, he finds that the number was disconnected.

When he returns to his apartment, he finds that the furniture isn't his. The woman, a nurse, arrives home, sees him and screams. She has been living there for a month. She was told that the previous tenant had disappeared. He finally leaves and goes to the Stillman's empty apartment where he bathes and sleeps. He thinks about his life and remembers the books he has written, and mentally says good bye to William Wilson. Quinn falls asleep and when he awakens, there is a tray of food on the floor. He eats, not thinking to look at where the food came from. He writes in the notebook until he falls asleep. When he awakens, the scenario repeats itself. Then he begins to think about the events of the past several months. As time goes on, the periods of light grow shorter until the light is there only long enough for him to eat a mouthful of food. He realizes that Quinn is coming to an end.

Auster describes the situation to a friend of his, the author of the story. He has become involved in the case of Quinn and doesn't know what to do. He can't find Quinn or Virginia Stillman. They finally go to the Stillman's apartment where they find Quinn's red notebook. There is no indication of where Quinn is.

City of Glass, Chapter 12-13 Analysis

Quinn spends several months in the alley. He has become a vagabond himself. Auster has a hard time convincing him that the case is over. The elder Stillman killed himself and there is no trace of Virginia and Peter. Quinn figures that it is the end for himself. It no longer matters what happens to him.

The experiment turns Quinn into a vagabond. He has no place to go but to the Stillman's apartment. The experiment continues there in terms of light and darkness. Quinn gives up and doesn't care anymore. He makes no attempt to see where the good

comes from or to leave the apartment. The cycle continues as Auster and his writer friend look for Quinn.



Ghosts, pgs. 154-184

Ghosts, pgs. 154-184 Summary

Ghosts is the second part of the trilogy and it involves a play on words with colors. Blue was trained by Brown and is now running the organization. A man named White hires Blue to follow Black. Blue accepts the job without asking many questions, because he needs the work. There is an apartment across the street from Black's that White has rented for Blue to live in. Blue accepts a five hundred dollar cash advance from White.

The case begins on February 3, 1947 and will continue for years, but Blue does not know this. He packs his things and goes to the apartment in Brooklyn Heights. It is completely furnished, including clothing. He locates Black's apartment across the street and sees the man writing in a notebook. Blue records the information in his own notebook. As the hours go on, he wishes that Black would go out but Black sits and reads or writes. Blue doesn't like sitting still.

Black goes out the next day and Blue follows and waits as Black does his grocery shopping. Blue does his own shopping and returns to the apartment. Because of the snow, it is difficult for Blue to see into Black's apartment. Blue passes the time reading detective stories. Even though Black's routine doesn't change for the first few days, Blue worries about him slipping out while Blue is sleeping, but he has to sleep sometime.

Blue does not like the inactivity. In watching Black read and write, he is watching himself. He makes up stories about Black and White in order to help pass the time. Blue doesn't know the real story because he didn't ask. He is cut off from his fiancée and knows their relationship will be affected, but he doesn't call her. Blue writes his reports on schedule and sends them to White. As time goes on, he fights the urge to make up details.

Blue follows Black across the Brooklyn Bridge to a bookstore. Both buy books. Blue follows Black to a midtown restaurant where he meets a woman. She cries during the meal. When they leave, he sees the woman to a taxi.

Ghosts, pgs. 154-184 Analysis

Even though Blue finds many strange things about White and the details of the case, he accepts the job. He does not worry about any of these things thinking all he has to do is follow the subject and make his reports. He is not used to inactivity and is very bored. His reports appear so dull that he considers making up some details, but decides against it.

When Blue follows Black to a mid-town restaurant where he meets a woman, Blue begins to think that the case might be a marriage case. Much of Blue time is spent



trying to figure out what the case is all about. He never asked nor was given any details and it is his fault for not asking. He fantasizes about different scenarios in his boredom.

Blue is letting his relationship with his fiancée deteriorate. She knows he is working on a case. He thinks about her a lot, but does not call her, knowing that their relationship will suffer.



Ghosts, pgs. 185-210

Ghosts, pgs. 185-210 Summary

After seeing the cab off, Black walks around then takes a cab home. Blue is upset feeling he should have followed the woman. He finds his first paycheck from White in the form of a postal money order. There are no comments about his reports so he assumes that White is satisfied. Black's routine continues, with Blue sending in his reports and receiving payment in the mail. Since Black's routine doesn't vary, Blue knows he can go out at times and Black will still be sitting at this desk.

Blue writes a letter to the retired Brown, telling him about the case. Brown's reply does not contain any advice about the case and when he finally calls his fiancée, there is no answer. He figures he will call again. Blue begins to go out more by himself leaving Black unobserved, so sure is he of Black's schedule. In May, he starts attending ball games and soon goes out to bars in the evening, spending time with a tart named Violet.

Blue begins to read *Walden*, the book he observed Black reading, but he can't finish it. Instead he goes out and wanders around. While he is out, he sees his fiancée with another man and he realizes that she will never marry him. He confronts her, and she begins to scream at him until she is led away by her escort. After the encounter, he returns to the apartment. When he sends his next report he adds that Black appears to be sick and could be dying.

Blue observes the post office box that the report is sent to, waiting to see who comes for it. At noon, the box is emptied by a man wearing a mask. The man runs out of the post office and boards a bus before Blue can catch him. The next payment from White is accompanied by a comment about ending the funny business. Blue begins to feel that maybe White is really after him and not Black. Black and White might be working together. What has really happened is that Blue is inactive. He begins to wonder if Black is paid by White to sit there and read. Blue lets his mind consider different possibilities.

By the summer of 1948, Blue begins to wear disguises to talk to Black. He dresses as a bum and Black tells him he looks like Walt Whitman and then talks about the poet and other writers. He introduces himself and Blue gives his name as Jimmy Rose. The two part.

Ghosts, pgs. 185-210 Analysis

Blue does not know what to do about the case. He cannot handle the boredom and inactivity. When he writes to Brown about the case, Brown's response does not contain any advice. Blue feels all alone, knowing that there is now no one that he can turn to. He begins to feel sorry for himself.



Since Blue is so unhappy with the case, it is logical to ask why he did not quit. He loses his fiancée and is not fulfilling his end of the deal with White. Blue watches his life fall apart and does nothing to prevent the situation.

Blue begins to find White to be more of a subject than Black is, especially when he sees his mailed report retrieved from the post office box by a masked man. He begins to feel trapped by White and blames him for his predicament. Deciding he has to do something, he disguises himself as a bum so he can talk to Black. Blue has a need for information about Black and can learn nothing from just observing him. The disguise is beyond the scope of the duties defined for him by White.



Ghosts, pgs. 211-232

Ghosts, pgs. 211-232 Summary

Blue is happy that he talked to Black but feels that he didn't really learn what he wanted to learn. He wonders if he should include the meeting in his report to White. He decides not to mention it. His next paycheck includes a comment asking why he lies.

Blue follows Black to the Algonquin Hotel the next evening. Blue joins him at his table and eventually they begin to talk over drinks of Black and White on the rocks. Even though he feels sure that Black knows who he is, he introduces himself as Snow, an insurance salesman from Kenosha, Wisconsin. Black says that he is a private detective who has been working on a case for over a year and he is very bored. The guy just sits in his room all day and writes. It is so boring that he is thinking of quitting. Black knows his subject is sitting at home writing. A tear runs down Black's cheek, and he excuses himself and doesn't return.

Blue returns to the apartment. Black eventually returns to his apartment. Blue begins to play word games with color, naming different items that are each color, until he falls asleep. The next morning he dons another disguise, that of a Fuller brush man, and goes over to Black's apartment. Black lets him in. Blue looks around the apartment while selling Black a toothbrush and a hair brush. Black says he is a writer. An hour later, Blue is back in his own apartment.

When Black goes out at night three days later, Blue for the first time, considers walking out and not returning. Blue begins to feel fear for the first time. He runs over to Black's apartment and picks the lock. As he enters the apartment, he loses consciousness. When he regains consciousness, he takes the papers and returns to his own apartment to read them. They are his reports to White. He starts to laugh and throw the papers around the room. Blue remains in the room for several days and doesn't bother to file his report to White. After several days, he looks out the window and sees Black sitting outside on the stoop. As he looks at Black, he realizes that he is looking at himself.

That night he goes over to Black's apartment and finds him wearing the mask and holding a gun. They talk and Blue tells him that he is out of his mind. He fights Black for the gun, beating him in the process. Blue takes the manuscript and returns to his room to read it. In the morning he puts on his hat and walks out.

Ghosts, pgs. 211-232 Analysis

After his omission of his discussion with Black, Blue's check comes with a note commenting about his lying. This seems to confirm Blue's fear that White and Black are working together, but he doesn't opt out at this time. He continues to follow Black. He sits with Black at a hotel bar and is told that Black is a detective that has been working on a very boring case for over a year. He is thinking of quitting.



Black and Blue have mentally beaten each other up for over a year. Blue never finds the reason why White hired him or why Black received the reports Blue filed. Both consider suicide and killing the other. Blue has to know what it is that Black has been working on for the year and finally takes the manuscript. He stays up all night reading it and walks out when he finishes, never going back to see if Black was alive.



Locked Room, Chapters 1-2

Locked Room, Chapters 1-2 Summary

The Locked Room is the third part of the New York Trilogy. The author begins by talking about his boyhood friend named Fanshawe. They were close as children and then went their separate ways when they grew older. One day the author receives a letter from a woman named Sophie Fanshawe, who was Fanshawe's wife. Her husband has disappeared and they thought he was dead. This was seven years ago.

Sophie said her husband went to New Jersey to visit his mother and did not return. She found that he had never arrived at his mother's house. After two weeks, she contacted the police and then hired a private detective named Quinn, who worked on the case for five or six weeks before giving up. After the birth of the baby, she accepted the fact that Fanshawe was gone. Fanshawe had been a writer but was never interested in publishing. They had made a deal that if he didn't try within a year, she should deliver all of his manuscripts to the author to see if they were worth publishing. He would receive twenty five percent of the earnings if they made any money. If he thought the manuscripts were worthless, Sophie was to destroy them. He accepts the project and it takes them an hour to pack all of the manuscripts in two large suit cases.

In Chapter Two, the writer admits that he had always felt that Fanshawe was better than he was. The writer and others used to follow Fanshawe's actions when they were kids. They had lived next door to one another, had been born in the same week and had grown up together. Fanshawe had started writing stories in grade school. He was in the sixth grade when he wrote his first short detective novel and when he was sixteen, his father was diagnosed with cancer. Fanshawe became the strong one in the family and basically responsible for his younger sister. Fanshawe never showed his own suffering, but tried to spend as much time as possible with his father. His father died one of the few times that he and the writer went out for a ride.

Locked Room, Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The author finds himself contacted by the wife of his old childhood friend, Fanshawe, saying her husband had disappeared. He is asked to determine if the missing man's manuscripts are worth publishing. He feels overwhelmed by the responsibility and wonders why Fanshawe chose him because it places him in an awkward position of deciding whether Fanshawe's life and work is worth while. At the same time, he is flattered at being chosen and accepts the project.

Most of the first two chapters involve the writer remembering things from their childhood. They had been next door neighbors who were born during the same week. They had been very close as they grew up. Fanshawe began writing in grade school and the writer and the other kids were in awe of him. This is one of the reasons why the

writer feels honored to review Fanshawe's work. The writer was famous for his reviews and articles but had always been afraid to try a novel. He feels that the fact that Fanshawe chose him to review his work is an honor and will allow him to redeem himself in his own eyes.



The Locked Room, Chapters 3-4

The Locked Room, Chapters 3-4 Summary

The writer procrastinated beginning the review of Fanshawe's work. After several days, he began to organize the materials and he organized it in chronological order. After a week, he asks Sophie to dinner. The writer tried to keep the conversation on a business level concerning the works of Fanshawe. Sophie says that she trusts him to make the proper decisions concerning Fanshawe's work. She is happy to leave all the details to him.

The writer contacts an editor at one of the large publishing companies. The editor, Stuart Green, had been school friend of his and Fanshawe's. He turns over Fanshawe's big novel, *Neverland*, and two weeks later Green says he is impressed by the book. His company agrees to publish the book. The writer also arranges to have some of the plays produced. Even though he receives twenty five percent of the money, he is motivated by Sophie and his desire to become romantically involved with her.

Sophie treats the writer to dinner and the theater on his thirtieth birthday. At the beginning of Chapter Four, the writer says he spent the night with Sophie and after this began to spend more and more time at her house. When *Neverland* was published, the reviews and sales were good. Then Green tells him about a rumor that the writer himself was really Fanshawe. At first he laughs but then realizes that he can write books in Fanshawe's style.

One day he receives a letter from Fanshawe, thanking him for all he had done. He does not want to be found and wants Sophie to divorce him and marry the writer. Fanshawe says he will kill the writer if the writer managed to find him. The letter isn't signed, but the writer is certain that it is Fanshawe's handwriting.

It becomes clear to the writer that Fanshawe had planned the whole scheme. He doesn't tell Sophie about the letter, but asks her to marry him. They marry in November.

The Locked Room, Chapters 3-4 Analysis

The writer kept putting off the review of Fanshawe's writings. He kept finding other things to do. He was afraid he would be disappointed. He was still overwhelmed by his capability to destroy. Fanshawe had trusted him completely. He would not have to face the issue as long as he kept the suitcases closed. Their boyhood rivalry had returned to the writer and he was afraid that Fanshawe would be better than him. When he finally began to organize Fanshawe's works, it was because he wanted to see Sophie.

When a rumor circulates that the writer is really the author of *Neverland* and that there is no Fanshawe, the writer sees how easy it would be for him to write future books as Fanshawe. When he receives the letter from Fanshawe, he does not discuss it with



Sophie, but follows Fanshawe's directions and marries Sophie. Even though Fanshawe had told him not to discuss the letter with Sophie, the writer should have told her about the letter. She has a right to know that the father of her child is still alive, but she doesn't, so she divorces Fanshawe and marries the writer.



The Locked Room, Chapters 5-6

The Locked Room, Chapters 5-6 Summary

The writer, now Sophie's husband, moves his family to Riverside Drive. He feels secure with Sophie and feels that even the return of Fanshawe could not part them. However, he never stops thinking of Fanshawe and the danger. They are living off the income from Fanshawe's writings. There is a schedule of publication dates for the various works so they have more than enough money to live on. He finds that he can't write when he tries to and he made many excuses to himself.

Stuart Green again mentions the rumor that the writer is really Fanshawe. They decide that the writer will write a biography of Fanshawe to appear after all of Fanshawe's works have been published. He decides to write a fictional biography.

Chapter Six opens with the family traveling to New Jersey to visit Fanshawe's mother. It is a tension filled visit. In spite of this, she agreed to help him with the biography. He is alone in Fanshawe's room, which is just as it was when he was a child. In addition, there were photos, school records and letters. He decides to photocopy the letters and returns the following week to do so.

After photocopying the letters, he returns to Jane Fanshawe's house for lunch. She drinks too much and begins to talk about the past. She talks about both of her children. The writer also stumbles back into the past thinking of many childhood memories. Both drink too much and that led to a sexual experience between the two. During the experience, the writer realizes that he wants to kill Fanshawe and that he will find him and do just that. He is home in time for dinner.

The Locked Room, Chapters 5-6 Analysis

The writer slacks off on his own work after his marriage to Sophie. They are living nicely off of the income from Fanshawe's works. Fanshawe is always on the writer's mind. He never told Sophie about the letter but feels he is secure with her, even if Fanshawe appeared. In some ways he wants to forget about Fanshawe, but then is backed into a corner to write Fanshawe's biography.

His sexual encounter with Jane Fanshawe brings up all of his feelings of hatred for Fanshawe. He wants to find and kill Fanshawe. It is Fanshawe that got him into this mess and with the writing of the biography, the writer's got in deeper and deeper. Fanshawe is a threat to him and he needs to eliminate the threat.



The Locked Room, Chapter 7

The Locked Room, Chapter 7 Summary

Since the writer is hiding facts from Sophie they live in tension and begin to frequently quarrel. The problem was the biography. He doesn't tell her that he is using the book as a way to find Fanshawe. Sophie argues with him about writing the book and he takes the opposite position to be contrary. He works on reading all of the letters, trying to place names with faces. Fanshaw's letters refer to various jobs that he has held in the different places he traveled to. After leaving Paris, he went to the country where he lived alone in solitude. This is when he matured as a writer. Fanshawe came back to the United States in the fall of 1972.

The writer interviewed people who had known Fanshawe when he attended Harvard. He found Paul Schiff whose father had helped Fanshawe secure a job on an oil tanker when he decided to leave Harvard. He bumped into him again four years ago in New York City. They exchanged phone numbers but Fanshawe never called him. The writer talked to others who remembered him, like Otis Smart and Jeffrey Brown. He listens to their stories and comments but doesn't find what he is looking for and he spent months looking.

The writer is about to leave for Paris to do more research on Fanshawe when Sophie decides she wants to throw out Fanshawe's things that were taking up room in a closet. She wants to get rid of everything but her husband wants to keep the books and papers. Sophie begins to cry and tells him that Fanshawe has to be dead if their marriage is to survive and he keeps trying to bring Fanshawe back to life. He wants her and the baby to go to Paris with him but she won't. She says that they are coming to an end and that she wonders if he will come back.

The Locked Room, Chapter 7 Analysis

The writer's deceit causes stress in his marriage as he and Sophie begin to squabble. He knows that his life is coming apart but is helpless to stop it. He blames it on the biography. He becomes obsessed with Fanshawe and the biography. Sophie wants him to quit but he doesn't and he doesn't understand the reason for his obsession or what he hopes to accomplish by confronting Fanshawe. He can't explain his actions to Sophie because he doesn't understand them himself. He ignores the visions he has of killing Fanshawe because he doesn't think he really wants to kill him.

One of their quarrels is over Fanshawe's belongings that are stored in a closet. They need the space for storage and Sophie wants to give everything away. Her husband says that she can only give away the clothing, that he wanted the books and papers. Sophie accuses him of trying to bring Fanshawe back to life. She tells him that their marriage can't survive unless Fanshawe is dead. She knows that Fanshawe is coming

between them and she doesn't know his real purpose or that Fanshawe is still alive. He never told her about the letter or that he is trying to find Fanshawe.



The Locked Room, Chapters 8-9

The Locked Room, Chapters 8-9 Summary

The writer continues his investigation in Paris, even though his French isn't very good. He was able to locate some of the people who knew Fanshawe. He finally admits that he is pretending to write a book and decides that it is time to drop the charade. He can't find what he is looking for and there are no clues that will lead to Fanshawe. One woman, Anne Michaux, accidentally mistook him for Fanshawe and this disturbed him. The writer leaves Paris for the country where he finds some people who remembered Fanshawe.

The writer finds that he has not really been looking for Fanshawe but running away from him. Fanshawe now existed in a locked room in his mind. After reaching this conclusion, he returns to Paris but doesn't want to go back to New York. He is lost for about a month. He is gone, just as Fanshawe is.

One night, he drinks too much at a Paris bar and walks up to a man calling him Fanshawe. The man says his name is Peter Stillman. When Stillman leaves the bar, the writer follows him. When he tackles Stillman, they fight and the writer is knocked unconscious. He spends the next three days backed in his hotel room and then wires Sophie that he is coming home.

Chapter Nine tells what happened after he returned to New York. He and Sophie were separated for about a year. They had another baby in 1981 that they named Paul. They never talked about Fanshawe and the writer returned the advance money for the biography. They earned their own income, placing the money from the Fanshawe works into a trust fund for the children. He never told Sophie about the letter he had received. Then, in spring 1982, another letter arrives requesting a meeting in Boston on April 1. He makes up a story to Sophie and leaves for Boston and makes his way to the address given in the letter.

He hears the man's voice and is told not to use the name Fanshawe. Fanshawe won't let him in the room and says he has a gun pointed at him. Fanshawe tells him that Quinn was following him and found him twice. Fanshawe had kept moving, around and begins to tell the writer about New Mexico and Arizona. This is where he learned about his book being published, a book which he claims was garbage.

His real reason for having Sophie show the manuscript was to find a new husband for her. Fanshawe never thought his books would be published. He is now using the name Henry Dark. He asked the writer to come to Boston because he felt he owed him an explanation for what he did and gives the writer a red spiral notebook. Fanshawe tells him not to tell Sophie. It is his last day, since he has ingested poison.

The writer looks through the red notebook while waiting at the train station. He tears the pages out and throws them into a trash can, as the train leaves.

The Locked Room, Chapters 8-9 Analysis

When the writer realizes that the biography he is working on is a charade and he decides to drop it. He realizes that the whole thing is a charade and that it is over. He can't find Fanshawe and he has lost himself as do the characters in *City of Glass* and *Ghosts*. The author claims that each is the same story but each represents a different stage of his awareness. The real story is the struggle, not the words.

The writer had a breakdown in Paris. His obsession with Fanshawe drove him to it. When he returned home, he put Fanshawe out of his life. He stopped working on the biography and returned the advance money. Only with Fanshawe out of their lives did he and Sophie have a chance. He never told Sophie the truth about the letter and his search for Fanshawe.

When the letter arrives from Boston, the writer went to the address. He knew it was Fanshawe. The man said it was his last day but he wanted the writer to know what had happened. The writer looked through the red notebook Fanshawe gave him, then tore out the pages and threw them away. He doesn't want to get involved in the craziness again.



Characters

Writer (The Locked Room)

The person referred to as the writer is the narrator and main character in *The Locked Room*. Educated at Columbia, he had grown up with Fanshawe in New Jersey but hadn't seen him for more than ten years when he received a letter from Sophie Fanshawe. He was being asked to review Fanshawe's manuscripts to ascertain if they were worth publishing or not. He himself was a writer and mostly published articles. He had always been afraid to attempt a novel. The writer is about thirty years old at the time. Since he was always afraid to try anything ambitious, Fanshawe he given him a chance to redeem himself in his own eyes. He agrees to accept the project.

The writer is attracted to Sophie. In fact, he is more interested in Sophie than he is in the writings of her husband. Eventually they marry, even though he never tells her of the letter from Fanshawe. As things progress, he gets in deeper and deeper and his hatred of Fanshawe intensifies to the point where he wants to kill him. He spends years searching for Fanshawe, has a nervous breakdown in Paris, and separates from Sophie for a year. They get back together, have another baby and keep Fanshawe out of their lives. When the writer is summoned to Boston by Fanshawe, he goes, but destroys the red notebook before leaving Boston. He does not let Fanshawe and the craziness back into his life again.

Daniel Quinn (City of Glass)

Daniel Quinn is thirty five years old and a widower. Both his wife and son are dead. He writes mystery novels under the pen name of William Wilson at the rate of about one per year. Since each novel took about six months, he had plenty of time for other things like opera, baseball and walking. When he was younger, he published both of poetry and had also written plays, critical essays and worked on translations, but he has no interest in that kind of writing now. Quinn keeps the mystery writing and William Quinn a secret.

Quinn has no recovered from the death of his wife and son, even though it has been five years. He has stopped wanting to be dead but he is not really happy to be alive. He spends a lot of time reading, especially mystery novels. When he receives the numerous calls for Paul Auster, he misrepresents himself as the detective and accepts the case to follow the older Stillman and to try to keep him from killing Peter. He feels like a different person as Paul Auster, a person who can do some good.

Quinn becomes the subject of an experiments that turns him first into a vagabond and then into a captive. His disappearance is investigated by Auster and a writer friend. The only thing they ever find is his red spiral notebook.



Sophie Fanshawe (The Locked Room)

Sophie Fanshawe lives in Chelsea. Her husband had disappeared without a trace, and she has contacted his childhood friend, a writer who lives in New York City. She tells him the story of her life with Fanshawe, how he never worked and how they lived off her salary. Her baby, Ben, was born several months after Fanshawe's disappearance. Sophie was the breadwinner in the family, having worked as a music teacher. Sophie is in her mid-twenties. She had been born in Minnesota and had come to New York eight years ago. She divorces Fanshawe and marries the writer. They have a son named Paul.

Fanshawe

Fanshawe was a childhood friend of the writer. He married Sophie, wrote a number of books, plays and poems, but never published anything. One day he disappears and is presumed dead. His works are published by his childhood friend, the writer, who also marries Sophie. After six years, during which he has been traveling, he summons the writer to Boston. He won't let the writer see him, but tells him the reasons for what he did. He has taken poison.

Peter Stillman (City of Glass)

Peter Stillman is the father of the younger Peter. He was from a wealthy Boston family, educated at Harvard, and had taught at Columbia until he resigned. He was institutionalized for the experiment he conducted on his son. When released, he returns to New York where he is followed by Quinn until he checks out of his hotel late at night. He apparently kills himself by jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge.

Peter Stillman (City of Glass)

Peter Stillman is the man who kept calling Quinn asking for the Paul Auster Detective Agency. He is a poet who babbles in terms of poetry and says he is not right in the head. Peter feels his father will try to kill him. Peter had inherited his father's money after the father was hospitalized. He is from an old Boston family. Peter was hospitalized and Virginia had been his speech therapist.

Blue (Ghosts)

Blue is the head of the organization having taken over from Brown. He is hired by White to follow a man named Black. Blue is engaged to be married. He moves to the apartment in Brooklyn Heights, that was rented by White for Blue to use.



Virginia Stillman (City of Glass)

Virginia Stillman is the wife of Peter Stillman. She was a speech therapist when she met him. She hires Quinn to protect her husband.

Jane Fanshawe (The Locked Room)

Jane Fanshawe is Fanshawe's mother. She has known the writer all of his life and agrees to help him write the biography of her son.

Paul Auster (City of Glass)

Paul Auster is a writer, not the detective that Quinn thought he was. He is married to Siri and has a son named Daniel. Auster becomes involved in the search for Quinn.

Ben Fanshawe (The Locked Room)

Ben Fanshawe is the infant son of Sophie and her missing husband.

White (Ghosts)

White is the man who hires Blue to follow Black.



Objects/Places

Quinn's Apartment

Quinn's apartment is located in New York City.

Stillman Apartment

The Stillman apartment is located on East 69th Street in New York City.

Heights Luncheonette

The Height Luncheonette is located across from Quinn's apartment and is a place where he frequently eats.

Columbia Library

The Columbia library is in New York City and is where Quinn Goes to read Stillman's book.

Grand Central Station

Grand Central Station is the train station in New York City.

Paul Auster's Apartment

Paul Auster's apartment is on Riverside Drive.

Brooklyn Heights

Brooklyn Heights is the site of the apartment that White rented for Blue. Black lives across the street.

Algonquin Hotel

The Algonquin Hotel is located in Manhattan.



Chelsea

Chelsea is the area of New York City where Sophie Fanshawe lives.

Riverside Drive

Riverside Drive, in New York City, is the street that the apartment of Sophie and Ben is located on.

New Jersey

New Jersey is where Fanshawe and the writer grew up and where Jane Fanshawe lives.

Paris, France

Paris is the capitol of France where the writer goes to research and look for Fanshawe.

Boston, Massachusetts

Boston is a city in Massachusetts where the novel ends, when the writer meets Fanshawe.



Themes

Manipulation

One of the most prevalent themes of the book is that of what can be called manipulation. The main characters are manipulated into a situation in which they become trapped and are somewhat helpless to escape from. In *City of Glass*, Daniel Quinn can't walk away from the Stillman case. By the time he does, it is too late and he becomes the subject of the experiment itself. In *Ghosts*, Blue doesn't walk away from his assignment of following Black. It costs him his fiancée and almost his sanity. In *The Locked Room*, the writer becomes trapped in his search for Fanshawe, in spite of his wife telling him to stop working on the biography.

The assignments become craziness for all three of the men. Each is manipulated into the situation by circumstances. Quinn had time on his hands since he was in between novels which is how he became involved in the Stillman case. Blue needed the money and accepted the job from White without asking many questions. The writer in *The Locked Room* wanted to prove that he was better than Fanshawe. He was basically manipulated into marrying Sophie.

The individuals were not strong enough to break out of the situation they became entrapped in before it took its psychological toll. Quinn basically became a psychological vegetable; Blue's life was wrecked and he lost his fiancée; the writer was saved by his wife who said Fanshawe had to be dead if their marriage was to survive or he might not have broken out.

Obsession

Obsession and loss of self is also a prevailing theme of the novel. In each case, the main character becomes obsessed with the case and loses his perspective to the point where they are cut off from most human contact and can't help themselves. Quinn lives in a garbage dumpster for several months, so obsessed is he with the Stillmans. When he runs out of money, he has no place to go but the Stillman's apartment where the experiment with darkness takes place. By that time he is helpless.

Blue becomes obsessed with Black and his work. The job results in boredom and inactivity for him which he can't handle. At the end, he has to know what is in the manuscript Black has been working on and breaks in to steal it. He walks out, leaving Black injured on the floor.

In *The Locked Room*, the writer becomes obsessed with Fanshawe and finding him. The obsession continues until he has a breakdown in Paris. The obsession was represented by the biography he was ostentatiously writing, and continued until he gave up writing the biography. He had a wife to help him break the obsession.

All three characters dealt with the obsession in different ways but all had problems dealing with it.

Searching

Another theme of the book is that of searching. Searching is a usual part of a detective novel but it goes further than that in the New York Trilogy. The characters are searching for something within themselves. Quinn is trying to escape the hurt and misery of the death of his family. He is mentally searching for a place where he can be without the mental pain. Blue is searching for a reason for his following Black. He was given no reason and asked for none when he accepted the case. This causes him to go to Black's apartment looking for a reason. The writer is searching for Fanshawe and a reason for his childhood behavior. He was trying in awe of Fanshawe and now was trying to prove that he was better than Fanshawe. He had to let go of Fanshawe in order to break out of the craziness.

The searching led to the psychological problems for the characters who all had relatively normal lives until the cases began. The only way to save themselves was to give up the search. Two of them were able to do this. All had problems during the course of the story and Quinn was not able to break out of it by the end of the story.

Style

Point of View

The book is written from the first and third person points of view with the author, Paul Auster, being the narrator. The *Locked Room* is written in the first person point of view with the writer being the main character and narrator. This means that the reader is only knowledgeable of events that take place in the presence of the narrator but the first person is an appropriate choice for the situation.

Both *City of Glass* and *Ghosts* are written in the third person point of view with Auster being the narrator. There is plenty of dialogue between characters so the reader sees them interact. More importantly, the reader is allowed to study the thought processes of the main characters to see what and how they are thinking. The author tells the reader these things and provides information about the character's actions and the details of the setting. The use of the third person works well for both of these parts of the trilogy.

Setting

The setting for all three parts of the trilogy is New York City, as given by the name of the book, the *New York Trilogy*. In *City of Glass*, there are scenes in Quinn's apartment, and also the Stillman apartment on East 69th Street. Quinn eats at the Heights Luncheonette where he buys the red spiral notebook. He spends time at the Columbia library where he reads Stillman's book. Grand Central Station is where Quinn meets the elder Stillman and then begins following him around the Harmony Hotel area. There is also a scene in Paul Auster's apartment on Riverside Drive where Quinn goes when he is looking for the real detective.

Most of *Ghosts* takes place in Brooklyn Heights where Black and Blue have apartments located across the street from one another. There is also a scene at the post office and at the Algonquin Hotel, where Blue follows Black to.

The *Locked Room* begins in the Chelsea area apartment of Sophie Fanshawe. After she and the writer marry, they move to an apartment on Riverside Drive. There are also scenes in New Jersey where Fanshawe's mother lives. The writer also travels to Paris and other parts of France looking for Fanshawe. The book closes with the setting being in Boston, where the writer meets Fanshawe. The final scene is at the train station.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of the book are usually clear and easy to understand. There are some words that the reader may want to look up depending on the strength of his vocabulary.



The meaning can be a little confusing at various parts like with the Peter Stillman dialogue in *City of Glass*. He speaks in thyme. There is a lot of play on words in *City of Glass* with a lot of rhyming of words with both the elder and younger Stillman. In *Ghosts*, Blue balls asleep playing a game with colors and naming all the items he can think of that are certain colors. However, the language fits the kind of novel that Auster has written and more or less show the psychological state of the characters.

There are some foreign language terms and sentences that are not defined but will not hinder the reader.

Structure

The structure of the novel varies. Both *City of Glass* and *The Locked Room* have chapters. *Ghosts*, the shortest part of the trilogy, does not. This fits the stories and the style of writing, even though it makes it awkward from an organizational point of view. Each of the chapter divisions, where used, tell a complete part of the story.

There is a Table of Contents that shows the length of each of the three parts. There is no index and no need for one. In *City of Glass*, there are some illustrations showing the plots of the elder Stillman's wanderings. This allows the reader to see how Quinn plotted the wanderings of the elder Stillman and came up with the letters. It also allows the reader to draw his own conclusions as to whether or not Quinn was forcing the issue of the letters.

The structure chosen by Auster works well for the novel. In many ways, the structure is a part of each story. The lack of chapters in *Ghosts* emphasizes the boredom and inactivity of Blue. This effect would be missing if another structure had been chosen.

Quotes

It was a wrong number that started it, the telephone ringing three times in the dead of night, and the voice on the other end asking for someone he was not. Much later, when he was able to think about the things that happened to him, he would conclude that nothing was real except chance. But that was much later. In the beginning, there was simply the event and its consequences. Whether it might have turned out differently, or whether it was all predetermined with the first word that came from the stranger's mouth, is not the question. The question is the story itself, and whether or not it means something is not for the story to tell. (City of Glass, Chapter 1, pg. 1)

Yes, yes though Quinn as he examined the check, everything is tip-top. He was pleased with his own cleverness. The check, of course, was made out to Paul Auster, which meant that Quinn could not be held accountable for impersonating a private detective without a license. It reassured him to know that he had somehow put himself in the clear. The fact that he would never be able to cash the check did not trouble him. He understood, even then, that he was not doing any of this for money. He slipped the check into the inside breast pocket of his jacket. (City of Glass, Chapter 3, pgs. 36-37)

As he wandered through the station, he reminded himself of who he was supposed to be. The effect of being Paul Auster, he had begun to learn, was not altogether unpleasant. Although he still had the same body, the same mind, the same thoughts, he felt as though he had somehow been taken out of himself, as if he no longer had to walk around with the burden of his own consciousness. By a simple trick of the intelligence, a deft little twist of naming, he felt incomparable lighter and freer. At the same time, he knew it was all an illusion. But there was a certain comfort in that. He had not really lost himself; he was merely pretending, and he could return to being Quinn whenever he wished. The fact that there was now a purpose to his being Paul Auster - a purpose that was becoming more and more important to him - served as a kind of moral justification for the charade and absolved him of having to defend his lie. For imagining himself as Auster had become synonymous in his mind with doing good in the world. (City of Glass, Chapter 7, pgs. 61-62)

It was all a question of method. If the object was to understand Stillman, to get to know him well enough to be able to anticipate what he would do next, Quinn had failed. (City of Glass, Chapter 8, pg. 80)

"Lying is a bad thing. It makes you sorry you were ever born. And not to have been born is a curse. You are condemned to live outside time. And when you live outside time, there is no day and night. You don't even get a chance to die." (City of Glass, Chapter 9, pg. 102)

"No," said Auster, who had listened attentively to Quinn's monologue. "If I had been in your place, I would have probably would have done the same thing." (City of Glass, Chapter 10, pg. 113)



The last sentence of the red notebook reads: "What will happen when there are no more pages in the red notebook?" (City of Glass, Chapter 13, pg. 157)

First of all there is Blue. Later there is White, and then there is Black, and before the beginning there is Brown. Brown broke him in, Brown taught him the ropes, and when Brown grew old, Blue took over. That is how it begins. The place is New York, the time is the present, and neither one will ever change. Blue goes to his office every day and sits at his desk, waiting for something to happen. For a long time nothing does, and then a man named White walks through the door, and that is how it begins. (Ghosts, pg. 159)

This brief scene, so unexpected and devastating, turns Blue inside out. By the time he regains his composure and manages to return home, he realizes that he has thrown away his life. It's not her fault, he says to himself, wanting to blame her but knowing he can't. He might have been dead for all she knew, and how can he hold it against her for wanting to live? Blue feels tears forming in his eyes, but more than grief he feels anger at himself for being such a fool. He has lost whatever chance he might have had for happiness, and if that is the case, then it would not be wrong to say that his is truly the beginning of the end. (Ghosts, pg. 196)

That's just the point, answers Black. I don't even have to bother anymore. I've been watching him for so long now that I know him better than I know myself. All I have to do is think about him, and I know myself. All I have to do is think about him, and I know what he's doing, I know where he is, I know everything. It's come to the point that I can watch him with my eyes closed. (Ghosts, pf. 196)

It seems to me now that Fanshawe was always there. He is the place where everything begins for me, and without him I would hardly know who I am. We met before we could talk, babies crawling through the grass in diapers, and by the time we were seven we had pricked our fingers with pins and made ourselves blood brothers for life. Whenever I think of my childhood now, I see Fanshawe. He was the one who was with me, the one who shared my thoughts, the one I saw whenever I looked up from myself. (The Locked Room, Chapter 1, pg. 235)

Perhaps that was inevitable; perhaps I needed to be a little mad in order to get started. Given the strain of reconciling myself to the project, it was probably necessary for me to equate Fanshawe's success with my own. I had stumbled onto a cause, a thing that justified me and made me feel important, and the more fully I disappeared into my ambitions for Fanshawe, the more sharply I came into focus for myself. This is not an excuse; it is merely a description of what happened. Hindsight tells me that I was looking for trouble, but at the time I knew nothing about it. More important, even if I had known, I doubt that it would have made a difference. (The Locked Room, Chapter 3, pg. 273)

There was never any question of telling the truth. Fanshawe had to be dead, or else the book would make no sense. Not only would I have to leave the letter out, but I would have to pretend that it had never been written. I made no bones about what I was planning to do. It was clear to me from the beginning, and I plunged into it with deceit in



my heart. The book was a work of fiction. Even though it was based on facts, it could tell nothing but lies. I signed the contract, and afterwards I felt like a man who had signed away his soul. (The Locked Room, Chapter 5, pg. 291)

Everything had been reduced to a single impulse: to find Fanshawe, to speak to Fanshawe, to confront Fanshawe one last time. But I could never take it farther than that, could never pin down an image of what I was hoping to achieve by such an encounter. Fanshawe had written that he would kill me, but that threat did not scare me off. I knew that I had to find him - that nothing would be settled until I did. This was the given, the first principle, the mystery of faith: I acknowledged it, but I did not bother to question it. (The Locked Room, Chapter 7, pg. 317)

The end, however, is clear to me. I have not forgotten it, and I feel lucky to have kept that much. The entire story comes down to what happened at the end, and without the end inside me now, I could not have started this book. The same holds for the two books that come before it, City of Glass and Ghosts. These three stories are finally the same story, but each one represents a different stage in my awareness of what it is about. I don't claim to have solved any problems. (The Locked Room, Chapter 8, pg. 346)



Topics for Discussion

Why does Quinn misrepresent himself as Paul Auster and accept the Stillman case?

Since Quinn is untrained and unlicensed, as a detective, how does he approach and handle the case?

How is Quinn the subject of an experiment?

Why does Blue accept the job from White? What is the purpose?

Why do Black and Blue think about killing each other and themselves?

What were the writer's reasons for reviewing and helping to publish Fanshawe's works?

Does the book indicate a stance on the moral issues and consequences of lying and deceit?