

The Orchardist Study Guide

The Orchardist by Amanda Coplin

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



Contents

The Orchardist Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Pages 1 – 101.....	5
Pages 102 – 190.....	9
Pages 191 – 272.....	14
Pages 273 – 362.....	17
Pages 363 – 426.....	21
Characters.....	24
Symbols and Symbolism.....	29
Settings.....	32
Themes and Motifs.....	34
Styles.....	40
Quotes.....	41



Plot Summary

“The Orchardist” is a historical novel by Amanda Coplin set between the 1890s and early 1900s in the Pacific Northwest where an orchard owner attempts to care for two young runaway teenage prostitutes and their baby. The man who owns and largely operates the orchard, William Talmadge, is a man of forty who has led a difficult life. His father was killed in the 1850s in a mining accident. Talmadge, his mother, and his sister moved to the land near the town of Cashmere, Washington afterwards. There, they begin orchards. Talmadge’s mother dies, after which Talmadge nearly dies of smallpox, followed by his sister’s sudden disappearance. Lightly disfigured and prematurely aging, Talmadge revels in the tranquility and solitude of his orchards.

One day, two pregnant girls in their early teens show up at the property. Talmadge begins leaving food for them, and fixes up an old cabin for them. In town, he learns their names are Della and Jane, and a man named Michaelson is looking for them. Very slowly, the girls become trusting of Talmadge, though they keep their distance. Talmadge asks his friend and midwife, Caroline Middey, to examine the girls. Talmadge himself tracks down Michaelson near a town called Ruby City, where he runs a brothel which includes even children. Michaelson himself is an opium addict. Talmadge is disgusted and returns home.

Jane and Della both give birth. Della’s baby does not survive. Jane’s baby does. Talmadge helps to nurse both girls back to health. When Michaelson comes looking for the girls with two armed men, Jane and Della attempt suicide by hanging from an apple tree. Jane is successful; Talmadge catches Della before she can fall all the way. Talmadge then pays Michaelson for the girls. Michaelson and his thugs leave, and Talmadge buries Jane. Della struggles thereafter with being a mother to the baby girl, whom she decides to name Angelene after one of Talmadge’s sisters.

When Della ultimately offers herself sexually to Talmadge, Talmadge respectfully and gently declines. Della becomes obsessed with the horses that are brought onto the property each year by a group of Indians Talmadge has been friends with for years. The Indians are horse-wranglers and thieves, and they help Talmadge tend to his orchards during harvest in exchange for use of his land. Della decides to travel with the Indians to auction each year, even though Talmadge opposes this. He is worried about being too strict and forbidding with Della after everything Della has been through.

Finally, Della stops returning to the orchard. Years pass. Talmadge feels as if he has lost his sister all over again. He becomes the primary caregiver for Angelene. As Della travels around, taking on work beyond horses, she drunkenly stabs a man during a card game at a lumber camp. While in the town of Chelan, she learns that Michaelson is in jail. She turns herself in for the stabbing, claiming to have killed the man. She desires to get close to Michaelson in jail in order to kill him. It becomes her purpose.

Talmadge learns of Della being in jail. By now, Angelene is fourteen and learns of Della and her past. Though Angelene understands Della’s past must have been difficult, she



cannot forgive Della for abandoning Talmadge and the orchards. Talmadge works to get Della freed from jail, but Della continues to resist all attempts. When Talmadge concocts a plan to help Della escape, Della refuses. She and Talmadge are both captured before the attempt can even be made. Talmadge is sentenced to three years in jail, but is let out after fourteen months for good behavior, publicity around the reasons for the escape, and because he is caring for a minor girl. Della is given ten years.

Angelene, meanwhile, has kept company with Caroline, and tended to the orchards. Angelene understands the orchards are home. When Talmadge returns home, they both return to orchard-tending. As the years pass, Talmadge ages faster, growing weaker and less capable. Angelene begins caring for Talmadge, continuing to do so until he dies. She gives Della the news in jail. Della reveals Michaelson has died on his own. Angelene herself remains in the orchard until the age of twenty-five. She returns twice to visit. Both times, the orchards are run-down and are not kept up with by their current owners. Angelene sometimes dreams of Della, Jane, and Talmadge happily living in an orchard in Heaven, and knows they will be waiting for her to one day join them.

NOTE: Due to the structure of this novel, this study guide specifically refers to the 2012 Harper Perennial Paperback edition of "The Orchardist" by Amanda Coplin. The study guide is divided into sections according to page numbers in that edition, and the quotes are noted accordingly.



Pages 1 – 101

Summary

Part I - William Talmadge has aged prematurely, and seeks solace in the quiet of his orchard of apples and apricots. He is an unattractive but kind and gentle man who focuses most of his time on tending to the orchard, during which his mind wanders to the past. He travels into town to sell the fruit he grows, where a customer points out two scraggly and pregnant teenage girls watching him. Talmadge falls asleep at his stand, during which time a boy awakens him to tell him the girls have stolen fruit, but Talmadge does not pursue them.

Talmadge reflects on coming to the valley past the Cascade Mountains in the summer of 1857 with his mother and his one-year-younger sister, Elsbeth, after his father died in a mine collapse in Oregon Territory. They settled in an abandoned mining camp near Peshastin Creek and the town of Icicle. The camp featured two diseased Gravenstein Apple trees. The seeds were used to begin an orchard. The area was visited by traveling Indian horse wranglers, including from the Nez Perce tribe. Talmadge and his family became friends with the Indians, including a boy named Clee who never spoke. Talmadge and Elsbeth could not figure out why.

Talmadge's mother died of respiratory disease in 1860. Talmadge nearly died of smallpox in 1864, which left him horribly scarred. Elsbeth disappeared in the woods one day after wearing a new blue smock, and was never found. Clee later found her bonnet. Clee himself had lost family to war in the 1850s. After a raid on his village where he saw his mother taken, he never spoke again.

In his early forties now, Talmadge's orchards have grown to twenty-five acres, and he hires out the Indian wranglers to help tend them. He sees the pregnant girls in his orchard, and leaves them food in his cabin while he works. In town at the café, the owner, Weems, speaks to Talmadge about a trade of fruit. Weems reveals a man is looking for the two pregnant girls. On the way home, Talmadge visits with Caroline Middey, a midwife and friend who tended to Talmadge's mother as she died. Caroline cautions Talmadge over what trouble the girls might be into.

The girls return once more. Talmadge feeds them, though they eat alone. In town, he learns the man looking for the girls – sisters Jane and Della – is named James Michaelson. He is offering \$100 apiece for their capture. The girls visit once more, and he feeds them again. Asking after Michaelson in Okanogan, locals tell him they aren't a party to him. He is directed to the land beyond Ruby City. He finds Michaelson's property, and learns from a boy there that the girls tried to burn the barn down. He discovers quickly that Michaelson, an opium addict, runs a brothel for very young girls. Talmadge pretends to be in the area for hunting, saying he is from Oregon.



Back home, Talmadge leads the girls to the old original mining cabin where he sets the place up for them and cooks them a meal. They continue to keep their distance and sleep outside in case a quick escape is needed. Della is happy to have some peace, having been on the road with Jane for two months after escaping Michaelson to birth their babies safely away from him. The cabin seems too good to be true. Talmadge does not seem a threat to them, but they cannot rule it out. Della slowly begins to warm to him, and Talmadge tells her about honeysuckle and tending to the trees. Jane is still very untrusting, and fears that Michaelson may come for them.

Talmadge leaves old girls' clothing for them, leading Della and Jane to speculate as to who they previously belonged. Caroline Middey examines the girls to see about their health. Jane reflects on the death of her mother, and how she and Della were first sent to Louisa Glassley's camp in Tacoma where they were forced into prostitution. Caroline gives the girls a black kitten. The girls go through Talmadge's things when he is not around, and discover their names, along with Michaelson's, on a piece of paper. Jane decides they must leave the valley, but on the way, Della goes into labor. Clee and the horse-wranglers bring the girls back to the cabin. Caroline is sent for.

Talmadge fills Clee in on his travels to Ruby City and his encounter with Michaelson. Both girls end up giving birth after Caroline arrives. Talmadge is ordered to help Jane deliver. Jane is untrusting, but has no choice in the matter. He cleans the newborn girl. Della's baby is stillborn. Caroline works to ensure the surviving baby will feed from both Jane and Della. Della worries about the stitches she has received following injuries in delivery. In town, Talmadge learns that Michaelson has been looking for him. Caroline Middey suggests telling the sheriff. Talmadge agrees, but does not do so, thinking that Michaelson may be able to claim the baby.

Michaelson and two other armed men appear, having learned from someone in town about the girls. Michaelson demands their return, and is delighted to see Jane appear in the orchard. He asks about the babies. Talmadge insists there isn't a baby. The girls climb a tree and attempt to hang themselves. Talmadge catches Della as she falls, but Jane falls to her death. Talmadge offers to pay Michaelson and his men for the girls. While Michaelson does not like the idea, one of the two men with him accepts. When they leave, Talmadge retrieves the baby, whom the girls have hidden up near the old cabin.

Part II – Jane is buried. Talmadge, Caroline, and Della discuss naming the baby. From his family Bible, Talmadge reads the names of his mother's sisters, including Angelene, which Della decides to use because it resembles her own mother's unremembered named. As Talmadge works, he keeps Angelene close by. Della sometimes helps out in the orchards. As the weather grows cold, she takes to sleeping in the toolshed. In the spring, Talmadge begins work in the orchards, and the Indians arrive with horses. Della takes an interest in the horses, wanting to know where they come from. Della wonders what she will now do next in life, especially without Jane.



Analysis

“The Orchardist” is a historical novel by Amanda Coplin set between the 1890s and early 1900s in the Pacific Northwest where an orchard owner attempts to care for two young runaway teenage prostitutes and their baby. When the novel begins, William Talmadge is surprised by two pregnant teenage girls who steal fruit from him, and then appear on his property. A journey of sorts has begun – for Talmadge and for the girls. Here, the theme of journey will become central to the novel, along with the theme of family.

Della and Jane – the teenage girls – have physically journeyed far to escape Michaelson and the brothel he runs. Michaelson is a despicable and disgusting character, forcing children into the sex trade. Della and Jane, both very young teenage girls, are pregnant – probably at Michaelson’s hand. The girls are skittish and untrusting of Talmadge. Though they very slowly warm up to him, they always keep their distance. Their journey, they figure, is not necessarily over. The girls want to be somewhere in peace to raise their babies.

Literarily, journeys are not always merely about traveling, but about what is learned and understood along the way. The girls – brutalized and kept prisoner against their will – are understandably distrustful by instinct. The only love they have is shared between themselves. Their own mother is long dead. They must survive or die. There is no other option for them. Yet, it is from these positions that the girls must journey, moving from a place of such distrust and cruelty, to one of acceptance, security, and trust. It will not be an easy journey.

Though Talmadge himself is not traveling anywhere at first – feeling a sense of home and belonging to the land (and through him, the theme of belonging becomes established) – he will be taking a moral and emotional journey as he seeks to care for the girls, and seeks to right the wrongs that have been done to them however he may do so. The time with the girls – and with Jane’s baby – will change his life in unimaginable ways.

His desire to care for the girls and to give them a home comes about for two reasons. First, he is still deeply troubled by his sister’s disappearance, and wants no more harm to come to Della and Jane. Second, he is lonely to some degree, and human companionship has moved his heart. The theme of loneliness can also be seen through Talmadge. Though Talmadge enjoys solitude, it doesn’t mean he is not lonely. He is clearly lonely, having lost his entire family over the course of a few years, and having lived for decades without them.

Talmadge’s attempts to earn the trust of the girls comes about the way the horse wranglers attempt to break in a horse, or like the process in which a wild animal is tamed. Talmadge slowly earns some minuscule amount of trust on the part of the girls by feeding them, providing them things, and by not forcing them into anything against their will. However, the survive-or-die mentality of the girls takes hold when Michaelson



appears. Jane commits suicide; Talmadge stops Della from killing herself. Jane's journey has ended in death, but Della's journey has ended in life.

This is an important symbolic occurrence because it demonstrates that Della still has a shot at life –vas does Jane's baby. It should likewise be noted by the reader that it is Talmadge who personally helps Jane to previously deliver her baby. This is done when Jane is at her most vulnerable, when there is no one else who can actually help her. That Talmadge is responsible for the safe birthing of the baby also symbolically bonds Talmadge with the baby, something which will come to be tremendously consequential by the end of the novel.

The reader should likewise note that the death of Jane is deeply troubling to Talmadge. Talmadge is forced to relive his past once more. Jane represents someone he could not care for, someone he could not save, someone he could not tend to. Indeed, that Talmadge himself is an orchardist – tending to fruit trees as though they were children – speaks volumes about his nature. He is instinctively a parental figure. To lose a tree is heartbreaking, but to lose a child is devastating. It becomes all the more important to Talmadge to do right by Della therein. It also becomes especially important for Talmadge to help raise the baby girl correctly.

Discussion Question 1

After the girls steal from Talmadge at the market, they both appear in his orchard. Why do you believe the girls chose Talmadge's orchard as the place to go, even after they have been caught stealing from him?

Discussion Question 2

Caring for Della and Jane becomes especially important to Talmadge. Why is this so? How does this matter in conjunction with his own past?

Discussion Question 3

How do Della and Jane react to Talmadge's overtures, including food and shelter? Why do they react this way? Do you believe their reaction is understandable? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

elephantine, preoccupation, dubious, confluence, ailing, begrudge, tincture, intuited, amenable, reticent, wolfishly



Pages 102 – 190

Summary

Part II (continued) – Della watches as Clee and the other wranglers work the horses. She becomes fascinated by the horses. She begins to dream of the horses, of freedom, and begins to dream that she herself is a horse. Clee begins to give her riding lessons. All of her talk about the animals worries Talmadge. Accompanying Talmadge into town for market, Della sees her reflection in a store window, and can see Jane in her reflection. Della also comes to be confused by Angelene, feeling love and motherly instincts for her, but also feeling afraid and as though the baby is a chore - not hers.

Della begins to break in a gelding. She longs to go with the wranglers to auction. The following spring, she takes up her case with Talmadge, who says the wranglers don't want young female company. Caroline contends that Della will do what she wants anyways, but her asking Talmadge is a show of respect. He tells Della, in two years when she is eighteen, he will buy her a gun, a saddle, and everything she needs for riding if she only waits. Della appears naked in his room one night, ready to have sex with Talmadge, but he refuses her. She spends three nights in the woods after that, but does not appear to be bothered by the rejection.

Ahead of schedule, Talmadge has a rifle specially made for Della. He teaches her how to hunt, but she becomes very upset after killing a buck. He goes on to buy her riding and hunting accessories, including a knife which he advises her to sleep with under her pillow. Finally, Talmadge allows her to go on with the men to the auctions. Caroline notes how deeply Talmadge has come to care for Della. She tells Talmadge that Della doesn't belong to him, knowing that he worries for Della the way he worried for Elsbeth. Caroline encourages Talmadge to focus on caring for Angelene, which he does.

Della and Angelene grow very close, but in the months that Della is gone to the auctions, Angelene forgets Della. Della works hard to grow close to Angelene again, and introduces the growing Angelene to the horses. Over time, the more Della is away with the horse men, the more distant Angelene grows from her. Talmadge alternates between being glad to have Della around, and wanting her to leave, worried her restlessness and pain might somehow infect Angelene.

Finally, Della leaves indefinitely. Angelene herself has come to accept Della as something not right, as something disturbing a peaceful existence whenever the men and horses show up. Angelene sees how Talmadge watches for Della. It does not make her feel sad for Talmadge, but makes her angry at Della for staying away.

Part III – Della has her picture taken at a carnival. The picture is intended for a sweetheart, and Della wonders what Clee's picture might look like. Angelene goes exploring in Talmadge's closet, and looks through old photos. She accidentally spills tea on them, and confesses what she has done to Talmadge. Talmadge is unhappy,



reprimands her, and tells her to ask next time and he'll show her the photos. He worries because a conversation about her mother, his family, and his past cannot be long off. Talmadge and Angelene have their picture taken in town a week later.

When Angelene turns nine, she is given a quarter-acre of the orchard to tend on her own. She is thrilled. She is also thrilled to learn that Della does not have a plot of her own. She decides to grow a cherry tree, a peach tree, and pumpkins. When Angelene wins a prize for a pumpkin in the County Fair, a photo is taken of her. She hears a woman calling her "that whore's girl". She asks Caroline about whores, and Caroline does her best to gently and vaguely explain it. Caroline cautions Angelene not to tell Talmadge what they have been talking about.

In school, Angelene comes to love both geography and reading. She also delights in drawing and taking down notes on things learned in a little notebook given to her by Talmadge. She spends three nights a week with Caroline to attend school north of Cashmere. She loves when Talmadge tells her to study, for it makes her feel as if she is doing something right. As she reads about Rapunzel, Angelene wonders if she herself is pretty and strong. She begins to grow a little restless from routine, but feels better busying herself in work. Caroline reminds her that many people have it worse, and she should not complain and be grateful for what she has.

Meanwhile, after Della gets drunk one night, the men tell her never to do it again or she will not be welcome with them. As months pass, Della loses track of time and begins to forget things from the past. She battles fever. She goes on to work with other groups of men so that she does not have to leave. She can sense when the current group of men begin to have sexual desire for her, and leaves before anything can happen.

Taking harvesting work during picking season, Della befriends a girl her age named Margaret Peabody, called Maggie P. Maggie is very talkative, which annoys Della sometimes. Maggie explains her family wants her to attend stenographer school, but she cannot resist the call of working the land. Della heads west to work in a canning factory. She also takes on work in a lumber camp. She begins to save money earned from gambling at cards with the other workers. Her employment ends when she drunkenly cuts a man for laughing at her after teasing her during cards. She takes to living off the land, and is briefly seen by Cleo near Coeur d'Alene. Della dreams of Michaelson's throat being cut.

In July, Talmadge, Angelene, and Caroline attend the plant sale and carnival in Malaga. They sample apples and other fruits, listen to music, and enjoy the carnival acts. Talmadge worries about the increasing need for mass-production in farming. As he ages, he begins to tire more frequently. He also feels dishonest when he makes a lot of money for selling to a distributor rather than merely at market. For Angelene's twelfth birthday, Talmadge brings her to Olympia on the train. She enjoys the trip but longs for home.



Analysis

As the novel continues, Della's obsession with the horses should be noted by the reader. Like an abused animal, Della continues to resist most attempts at being won over, and only marginally comes to trust Talmadge. She sees in the horses kindred spirits: imprisoned, but fighting to break free, fighting to be free, fighting to live for themselves. The wildness of the horses resonates with the wildness that Della has become.

The greatest act of trust between Talmadge and Della comes when Della advances on Talmadge sexually. The very thing which Della has fled from – sex – is something she is now willingly offering Talmadge. Talmadge rejects the advance in a moment of understanding, and in the idea that he considers her only a child needing love and care. Della is not bothered by the rejection, but is somehow almost even comforted by it. This establishes a stronger, though still tenuous trust between the two.

It is decided between Della and Talmadge that the baby girl will be named Angelene. Angelene is a name similar to the one that Della and Jane's mother had, and is the name of one of Talmadge's own sisters. Here, a sense of family is established, and the theme of family becomes important to the novel. The name of Angelene becomes symbolic of the establishment of something akin to family, though at the moment, the family is dysfunctional.

Della herself recognizes this dysfunctionality. She alternates between feelings for baby Angelene, and considering Angelene a chore that is not her responsibility. Part of this comes from the fact that Della is still so young, and part of it comes from the fact that Della is like an untamable horse. She begins to travel with the men to the auctions – and eventually disappears for good.

Meanwhile, Talmadge comes to raise Angelene essentially alone. As Angelene grows, she looks at him almost as a grandfatherly figure. She loves Talmadge deeply. She respects and appreciates how he cares for her even though she is not his blood, and dislikes Della for ever having left Talmadge alone. It is a grudge that Angelene bears against Della for many years. Angelene herself is happy in the orchard, feeling a sense of belonging and home. She knows Della could have had the same, but has chosen to reject it.

Della's goal, apart from wandering, is unclear. It is clear, however, that she is still on a journey begun when she and Jane escaped from Michaelson. What the end destination is, physically, and what the end destination is in terms of character, are as of yet unclear. At the same time, Angelene is also on her own journey as she learns about the past, learns about Talmadge, and begins to understand who she is and what she is all about. Talmadge's gentleness and his love for her have allowed her to grow well – much like the trees in the orchard. Indeed, there is great import in Angelene's receiving a plot of orchard to do with as she will. She delights in what Talmadge delights in: growing, nurturing, and tending.



Like all young people, Angelene experiences some restlessness in routine – but she never loses sight of the blessings she has been given. She will not squander what has freely been offered her the way that Della rejected everything Talmadge had offered her. This is important in two ways. First, it is readily apparent that Angelene has had a different childhood than Della or Jane. It is perhaps true that Angelene is a little too quick to judge Della without fully understanding the past. Second, it is also true that Angelene, though quick to judge, may be correct in her observations of the situation. She has every right to dislike and disapprove of Della for leaving Talmadge after Talmadge had given her the home to start all over again.

Della's journey, meanwhile, takes her across the Pacific Northwest. She takes on work considered to be that of a man – including at a lumber camp. She begins to assume practices associated with only of men –such as heavy drinking and smoking. In many ways, Della is reflective of changing times, but her decision to associate with males, behave like males, and live largely like males, demonstrates something changed in her. Before, men took advantage of her at their will. Now, she runs with them, and will not allow them to take advantage of her. She is developing a strong sense of self-reliance and independence that she did not have before. However, she is still seeking on her journey: she is still looking for something. She is looking for what will finally allow her to belong.

The reader should note that Della's dreams are of significance. Becoming obsessed with horses, Della dreams about them, and dreams that she is a horse. The horses become symbolic of freedom to her. After dreaming about horses, she leaves with horse-wranglers. She makes her dreams come true. Late in this section of the novel, she dreams of slitting Michaelson's throats. That Della makes her dreams come true serves as an omen for Michaelson.

Discussion Question 1

Angelene dislikes and disapproves of Della rejecting everything that Talmadge has offered her at the orchard. Why? Do you believe Angelene is justified in her opinion of Della's leaving? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you believe that Della offers herself sexually to Talmadge? Why does Talmadge turn her down? What happens as a result?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Della reject a chance at home, at belonging, and at family with Talmadge and Angelene in order to go off with the horse wranglers? Can Della be faulted for her decision? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

incredulous, bewildered, consternation, deficit, ensconced, predilections, qualm, aloof, monosyllabic, inquisitive, vulnerability, visage, verbosity



Pages 191 – 272

Summary

Part III (continued) – Christmas comes on. Della is taken in by three nuns who own a cabin that serves as both hospital and outpost for people traveling through the high mountain passes in the Cascades. Also at the cabin are a man with a broken leg and a young woman who has miscarried on her way to her husband in Seattle. Della moves on with a group of mountaineer salesmen. In a town in the Methow Valley, she sees Michaelson under arrest. He is being sent to Chelan. All of the locals are happy to see this happening. This makes her reflect on how Jane's plunging from the tree years before was no accidental, but suicide with the hope of peace in Heaven.

Della decides to go to Chelan. She goes to the prison and tells the guards she is turning herself in for killing a man. Talmadge, meanwhile, learns that Della has been seen in the nearby Yakima Valley. Caroline tells him not to go after her, that if Della wants to see him, she will.

Part IV – Angelene happily continues tending to her plot, adding new plants as the years pass. Talmadge seeks out Emil Marsden, known as "The Judge" even though he is only a lawyer. Talmadge and the Judge have been acquainted for years, the Judge helping Talmadge keep a hold on his property boundaries. Talmadge now asks for help in composing a last will and testament, and in finding out where Della is. Talmadge does not want her brought back or disturbed, but just wants to know that she is alright.

The Judge later finds out that Della is in jail in Chelan after turning herself in for murder, though the murder has not been proven. Talmadge relates this to Caroline. Talmadge wants to make Della heir to the land so that she will finally belong somewhere, and so Angelene will be cared for in the future. Angelene does not like talk of death, or last wills. Talmadge decides to go and see Della in jail.

In jail, Della learns that Michaelson is in need of an operation. Della intends to kill him first. During an attempt she is apprehended and put into solitary confinement. Talmadge is refused visitation. At the boarding house where he stays, he asks the landlady to take down a letter to Della, saying he will come back to see her. The Warden impresses on Della the importance of allowing Talmadge and the lawyer to help her. At home, Angelene is grateful to have Talmadge back.

Avoiding the law, the wranglers come early to the orchard. Talmadge fills in Clee on Della's situation. Talmadge worries that Angelene will one day take off, too. He hopes she will become an orchardist, but understands orchards may not be her future. Angelene wonders about the auctions, but Talmadge tells her they are no place for a girl, and that he should have known it a long time ago.



Talmadge gathers gifts, including candy and magazines, to bring to Della on his second visit. Caroline warns Talmadge to make sure he has a superior gift for Angelene. Talmadge agrees – and also fills in Angelene on the truth about Della being in jail. Angelene does not appear to like the idea that Della may come to live with them eventually. Caroline opposes this idea, thinking Talmadge should just cut free of Della. Blood, she tells Talmadge, means nothing.

A new guard named Frederick comes to work at the jail. Talmadge travels to Chelan by train, and meets with Della. She looks weathered and lean to him. He gives her the gifts, and tells her that if there is anything else she needs, to tell him. Della tells Talmadge she doesn't need anything from him. It hurts Talmadge but he also knows better, that Della does need something from him, though they don't know what yet.

Analysis

As the years pass in this section of the novel, Angelene sets down more roots into the orchard symbolically through her planting of new trees and plants. She is clearly marking out her home, and feels a sense of belonging to the land – just as Talmadge hoped she would. The theme of belonging is incredibly important here.

Angelene even becomes somewhat defensive of her home as well when the idea that Della might come and live with them takes hold. Angelene has nurtured and tended to and made herself a home – and Della would be a disruption to it. Angelene has embraced what Della has rejected, so Angelene dislikes the idea of Della's potential return.

Talmadge himself hopes that Angelene will come to belong to the orchard, and the orchard to her. He recognizes that this may not be her future, but also understands how important a sense of belonging is to a human life. He understands this deeply as an orchardist: a tree cannot properly grow without secure ground beneath it.

Likewise, a girl cannot properly grow without security and belonging – and it is clear that Talmadge is succeeding beyond expectations with raising Angelene. Here, the theme of family becomes especially important as Angelene considers Talmadge and Caroline to be family. They may not exactly be grandparents, and they might not be blood, but they are nevertheless still bound by a common loyalty and love for one another.

Talmadge hopes that Della might be bound to the land by his last will and testament, and so will have a sense of belonging which she clearly lacks. Talmadge, though Della has clearly rejected his way of life, still seeks to care for her like any normal parent. Angelene is embittered about this.

To her, Della is slapping away Talmadge's outstretched hands, whereas Angelene herself has always been holding Talmadge's hands. Della has rejected family and belonging, and Angelene believes that Della must now deal with her own choices. Indeed, Angelene begins to become jealous at how much Talmadge is doing for Della,



even while Della is in prison. Even Caroline argues against Talmadge continuing trying to help Della.

Della's journey, meanwhile, takes her to Chelan, where she learns that Michaelson is being imprisoned and is suffering from some kind of disease. Della decides to turn herself in for killing a man at the lumber camp. It is a strange decision. Having run away from the relative freedom and security of the orchard, she has willingly put herself into jail – the ultimate abrogation of freedom. Having fled from Michaelson, she is now deliberately following him. Michaelson becomes an obsession for Della much the way the horses were previously an obsession for her.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Angelene appear to be so hostile to the idea of Della potentially returning to the orchard? Do you believe Angelene is justified in these feelings? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

In many ways, the raising of Angelene can be, and is compared to the growing of an orchard tree. Do you believe this is a fair comparison? Why or why not? What similarities and difference exist between the two?

Discussion Question 3

Despite the misgivings of Angelene and Caroline Middey, Talmadge continues to try to help Della. Why do you believe this is so? Can Talmadge be faulted for caring too much? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

viridescent, lethargic, inscrutable, myriad, inscrutable, resplendent, clement, imperative



Pages 273 – 362

Summary

Part IV (continued) – Della remembers the first time she ever saw Talmadge, thinking he looked alone. Della's cell is then searched, and several makeshift weapons are found. Traveling home, Talmadge is amazed that it only takes one day by train to travel home. He knows the world is changing. He wonders why anyone would want to be in jail, and believes Della would not attack a man at the jail without cause. At the orchard, Caroline explains to Angelene that the reason Della is in jail is because she stabbed someone.

Angelene bathes and puts on a dress for her fourteenth birthday. Talmadge compliments her, causing her to blush. Caroline arrives to bake a strawberry cake. The wranglers are invited up for food to celebrate Angelene's birthday. Caroline asks Angelene if she feels like the young woman she is becoming. A wrangler who has found Della's old rifle sells it to Talmadge to give to Angelene. Angelene is thrilled with the rifle. She is also thrilled to receive a set of hide curing and flint knapper's tools from Caroline. She is also very happy to receive a carved pencil box. Angelene holds Talmadge happily, and tells him about a new kind of apple she wants to plant.

Angelene, though she knows the rifle belonged to Della, is still happy with it. She only wishes that Talmadge would tell her more about Della. He regretfully does, and directs her to the tree where Jane hanged herself. She climbs the tree to see where her mother had hanged herself, and then climbs back down.

At jail, Frederick discovers Della has a bottle, but refuses to take it from her. She demands to talk to Michaelson, and demands Frederick arrange it. Michaelson tells Della that he is a changed man, that he is a man of God now. Della, crying, screaming, and bloodying her face on the cell bars, insists she is going to kill him. She is put into solitary confinement. Talmadge is shocked to learn of this, and comes to realize just who it is that Della has been after.

Talmadge convinces her to come out of solitary confinement, and she says she will tell the Warden the truth about everything. After learning about what kind of man Michaelson is, Frederick later agrees to help Della with her plan if the plan is good enough. Talmadge, meanwhile, speaks with the Judge about getting Della moved elsewhere.

Angelene and Caroline prepare and can vegetables. Angelene cuts her palm while working, and is bandaged up by Caroline. Upon his return home, Talmadge is considerably weaker. Angelene worries about his age and his health. He fills Angelene in on Della's actions in jail. He notes how she is becoming more and more a woman each day. He invites her to see Della in Chelan. She accepts, only if she can purchase a hat at the lady's apparel store before they go. Talmadge readily agrees. With the train closed due to a rockslide, Talmadge and Angelene will take the wagon.



It takes three days by wagon to reach Chelan. At the last minute, Angelene does not go into the courthouse with Talmadge. She says she is just not yet ready. Della can see Angelene through the windows. Talmadge explains to Della that she has to behave, so they can get her out of jail. Della begs for another week of time, but she knows Talmadge will probably go to the Warden sooner. Talmadge then leaves, and brings Angelene to the massive lake by the town. They eat ice cream and watch a steamboat on the water. Talmadge later learns from the Judge that Angelene is to be sent to Walla Walla, but he argues that he simply wants to get her out of jail altogether.

Angelene begins to worry for Talmadge's health back home. He sleeps, works, and eats less and less. She worries as Talmadge and Clee go up in the canyon all day. She learns that Talmadge and Clee will be going to Chelan when all the men in the orchard leave. Talmadge knows he has neglected Angelene, and will make up for it when he returns. He also has to make things right with Della, knowing he should have been stricter with her years before.

Della learns from Frederick that Michaelson is to be transferred to a hospital in Seattle. He says he will be working the morning of the transfer, and will unlock her door – but what she does beyond that is up to her. In a box that contained gifts for Della, she discovers a single apple seed.

When Talmadge arrives in Chelan with Clee, he is stunned to see that Angelene has taken the train and beaten him in. She wants to help Talmadge with whatever he is planning. Talmadge explains that Della is sick, but that Angelene can't help. He lays down for a nap, and Angelene lays down with him. He then goes to meet with the Warden, who will allow Talmadge a supervised visit outside of jail with Della. Talmadge later tells Angelene the plan: Clee will create a diversion at the lake, allowing Della to hide on the steamboat which will bring her to the small town of Stehekin at the top of the lake where men will be waiting with horses.

Talmadge allows Angelene to participate in the plan limitedly, hiding away supplies on the steamboat. Clee, meanwhile, purchases a number of horses to be picked up the following day. That night, he has a young wrangler steal the horses. The next day, Talmadge and Della head to the lake, trailed by Officer Wallach. Talmadge encourages Della to accept his help, and to just let Michaelson die on his own. Angry, Talmadge tells her that Angelene will need her when he dies. He tells Della she is still very young, and has her whole life ahead of her.

A shot rings out on the beach. A crowd gathers. Wallach handcuffs Della before going to investigate. Talmadge covers the cuffs on Della with his flannel shirt. He then buys tickets for the steamboat, and brings Della onboard. She says she doesn't want to go. Suddenly, the police arrive for them.



Analysis

As the novel continues, Della has determined both the extent and purpose of her journey: to kill Michaelson. Her journey of transformation as a person is still underway – but the courage she has gained, and the independence she has managed, all speak to the solidifying of her character to some degree. However, the reader should note that Della’s desire for revenge – the killing Michaelson – will seemingly come to be the ultimate objective of Della at the expense of everything else. Life cannot solely be defined by death and tragedy, Talmadge knows – and so he endeavors to continue to attempt to help Della.

Talmadge’s reasons for continuing to try and help Della can only properly be understood in light of the themes of belonging and family. Talmadge considers Della family, and wants to help her in ways he could not help her when she was younger. Regret fuels Talmadge, here: regret that he was not stricter and stronger with Della. Della needed to be tamed, not set free. The freedom Della has pursued is not a just kind of freedom, but a self-destructive kind of freedom. Talmadge has prevented Angelene from following in Della’s footsteps, but now hopes Della will turn around before it is too late. The scene where Angelene cuts her hand while working when Talmadge is away is a physical manifestation of the emotional wound of jealousy she has received.

Though Angelene herself is now growing into young womanhood, Talmadge still sees her as a child. The giving of Della’s rifle to Angelene on Angelene’s fourteenth birthday might at first sight be a strange or thoughtless gift – but it is full of symbolic importance. It demonstrates that Angelene has more or less taken Della’s place. It demonstrates that Talmadge grudgingly accepts that Angelene is growing, though she remains a child in his eyes – for no real child would be given a rifle. It also demonstrates how powerful the past remains – to Talmadge and to Angelene.

Angelene still continues to feel jealous of Della despite her wonderful birthday, and despite the importance of the rifle being given to her. She has come to understand that she belongs, so to speak, not only to the land but to Talmadge as well. She begins to see herself not merely just as a granddaughter figure, but as an equal to Talmadge. She takes the bold step of meeting him in Chelan without his knowledge. Family truly matters to her – including the sense of belonging. Only later on does Talmadge come to see this, and notes how Angelene is becoming more and more a woman each day.

Talmadge’s own journey now involves frequent traveling. Angelene and Della have become his children in many ways – and so he endeavors to ensure they are both able to live life securely and comfortably. Angelene has clearly turned out well – and her responsible nature guarantee she will do well in life. Della is still a different story, however, as she continues to exercise her freedom in a self-destructive way. She is willing to destroy her own freedom to destroy Michaelson. Talmadge is willing to risk his freedom to save Della.

Talmadge’s journey – thematically – has demonstrated many things, and helped him to grow in important ways. He now knows he is not beyond hope or love – both things



given to him by Angelene. He knows that loneliness does not have to be a part of solitude. And he knows he is capable of holding a family together, no matter how unconventional and disconnected that family might be with regards to certain members. Angelene and Della have enriched Talmadge's life immeasurably, both in these understandings and in that they have given him something to live for beyond memory and apple trees.

Interestingly enough, as Angelene learns about the history of her mother and her Aunt Della, she seeks out the tree where Jane hanged herself. Angelene's climbing up, and climbing down from the tree may seem a strange, perhaps even surreal and morbid exercise, but it has great symbolic importance. Angelene's safe return to the ground is a departure from history, a changing of the future. It is Angelene consciously deciding not to be her mother, consciously deciding to live differently than her mother died, and how her aunt now lives.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Angelene become so jealous of Talmadge's efforts to help Della? Do you believe Angelene is justified in feeling this way? Why or why not? How does Talmadge attempt to compensate for the jealousy? Why? Is he successful? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Talmadge give Angelene Della's old rifle? What is symbolized in this gift? How does Angelene respond? Why?

Discussion Question 3

What does Talmadge belatedly realize about his raising of Della? What does he plan to do as a result? How does this compare to his raising of Angelene? How has Angelene herself turned out in contrast to Della?

Vocabulary

fibrous, rivulets, equidistant, verify, tessellation, appraised, beseeching, perfunctorily, amiably, nonchalant



Pages 363 – 426

Summary

Part V – Della knows the attempt to escape was tempting, but she could not go somewhere which would bring her farther away from revenge on Michaelson. As she waves to Clee, a guard struggles with Della. Talmadge intervenes on Della's behalf, and is shot. Clee and Angelene rush to Talmadge from the crowd of onlookers that has gathered. Angelene has watched everything unfold. Clee is arrested. The police contend that Della was trying to pull away a gun from an officer, causing the shooting which grazed her arm and hit Talmadge. Talmadge is given a reduced sentence of fourteen months in jail; Clee is given two years. Della is given ten in Walla Walla.

As details around the case – specifically of Della's past with Michaelson – become public, the public sides with Talmadge. Caroline divulges the details of Jane's suicide to the Judge. The press gets wind of this too. Talmadge's own background is pulled up – including the disappearance of his own sister. The law might be the law, most people contend, but why Talmadge and the others had acted as they had can be understood. Angelene and Caroline watch Della's transfer from Chelan.

Part VI - When they return home, Caroline and Angelene discover the orchard needs much work. A man brings the horse that Talmadge gave Clee money to buy for Della in Stehekin. The horse is given to Angelene. Talmadge is released after nine months for good behavior. She is amazed by how well Angelene has kept up with the orchards after her return. He apologizes for hurting her. She says she could never leave home with everything she has there.

When Talmadge and Angelene return to town to sell fruit, people are cautiously friendly at first. They also continue to visit Caroline in town. Talmadge does his best to reorient himself to life in the orchards. They reluctantly destroy a part of the orchard because it has become too much to handle. Angelene takes on work at the distributor's office doing packing. The job lasts only two weeks.

Talmadge sends Angelene to visit Della with a peck of apricots. She explains to Della that Talmadge was released early. Della regrets not having cooperated with Talmadge. Angelene's anger toward Della has subsided, objectively considering how much Della must have suffered. Della reveals that Michaelson has since died. Della doesn't feel anything at all because of it. Della tells Angelene that Jane always said her daughter would be better than everyone put together. She tells Angelene her mother was right, and is glad Angelene has a good life. Angelene continues visiting over the next few years.

Clee returns home after his prison term is up, to his many children. One daughter longs to go wrangling with him. Della later dies instantly of a broken neck following a fall from a building under construction as part of a prison-work project. She had not been



wearing a safety harness like the others. Her body is buried next to Jane's. That night, Angelene breaks out in hysterical tears, wanting to know where Della's things have been sent. She snuggles up in bed with Talmadge, who assures her they will write for Della's things.

Part VII – Angelene takes comfort in solitude working in the orchard, but also in Talmadge's company. She knows Talmadge's health is failing, and that Caroline is almost eighty. With them gone, the kind of solitude she knows she will have terrifies her. As Talmadge becomes bedridden, she spends all the time with him she can, caring for and tending to him. Talmadge reminds her he was there when she was born. He later dies when Angelene is tending to the orchard.

Part VIII – When she is twenty-five, Angelene sells the land to a young family, and leaves town. She returns three years later for Caroline's funeral, and discovers the land in bad shape and the cabin empty. Five years later, she discovers the place being tended to only a little better by a black man whose boss lives in Spokane. Some of the orchards have been destroyed; the others are not kept well. She visits the graves of Talmadge, Jane, and Della. Some nights, Angelene dreams of all three alive and happy – and with Talmadge waiting for her to one day reach him.

Analysis

As the novel concludes, Della's journey also comes to a close. She will be in prison for the next ten years of her life. She realizes now how her single-mindedness in her desire to kill Michaelson has led to misfortune for the one person who has stood by her side no matter what – Talmadge. Only too late does Della realize she should have listened to Talmadge sooner – both about her life, and about Michaelson. However, not all hope is lost. Though Talmadge is dead, and though Della still has years left in jail, what her life becomes once she gets out will be totally up to her once more. Unwittingly, jail has given her another chance at life. However, her death in a construction accident – or so Talmadge is told – eliminates any such chance. It is likely that the accident was actually suicide.

Michaelson's death also has an unexpected effect on Della. Interestingly enough, the reader should note that Della feels nothing when Michaelson dies – not joy or anger or sadness or anything. This demonstrates that killing Michaelson gave Della a false sense of purpose in life. She was not meant to live to kill somebody else, but meant to live for herself.

Angelene herself is clearly poised to do well in life. Her upbringing, despite some minor twists, has been stable and loving, thanks to Talmadge. Her future, at least for several years after Talmadge's death, is the orchard. She loves the solitude of the place, but also loves human company. She is much like Talmadge. She loves him and his company – and worries about being alone, about true loneliness, when he dies. By the age of twenty-five, Angelene will leave the orchard for a new path in life.



Interestingly enough, the reader will reflect on the beginning of Angelene's own life here. It was Talmadge who personally helped bring Angelene into the world. In the circle of life, and in the nature of human existence, it is Angelene who cares for Talmadge as he leaves this life. After Angelene leaves the orchards behind, she returns twice – once for Caroline's funeral, and once just to see how the orchard is getting along. The orchard, both times, is run-down and lonely. It is clear that the orchard cannot truly survive without Talmadge. Angelene herself has survived because of Talmadge, unlike the orchard.

Angelene herself comes to love and respect Della by the end of the novel. She cries hysterically after Della is buried, climbing into bed and holding onto Talmadge for comfort. Della's death is one more link to the past that is severed. When Talmadge dies, there is nothing truly holding Angelene to the land anymore: Talmadge was her root to the place. Heartwarmingly, Angelene's dreams at the end are of a functioning family-like unit between Talmadge, Della, and Jane. They are all happy in her dreams, and it is clear the dreams are a vision of Heaven. She takes comfort in the fact that Talmadge, Della, and Jane are all very happy – and are awaiting for Angelene to one day join them.

Discussion Question 1

In the end, Angelene appears to forgive Della for the past, so far as crying hysterically about Della's things after Della dies. Why does Della's death upset Angelene so much?

Discussion Question 2

Following Talmadge's death, Angelene stays on to care for the orchard for several more years, yet by the age of twenty-five, she leaves. Why?

Discussion Question 3

When Michaelson dies, Della is surprised by the fact that she feels nothing as a result. Why is she surprised? Why does she feel nothing? What does this say about her purpose, and her assumed purpose and journey?

Vocabulary

salacious, abhor, lurid, inimitable, zenith, ambiguous



Characters

Talmadge

William Talmadge is an orchardist who is 40 years old when the novel begins. He is one of the principal characters of the novel, and is distinguished by his kind, gentle nature, by his ability to nurture, and by his sense of loss. In the 1850s, following the death of his father in a mine in the Oregon Territory, Talmadge, his mother, and his sister, Elsbeth, leave for Washington State. There, they settle into an old mining camp with two diseased apple trees. From these trees, they grow an orchard. Talmadge's mother later dies. Talmadge himself nearly dies of smallpox, which leaves him disfigured. Elsbeth disappears one day, never to be seen again. It is a traumatic experience for Talmadge, who seeks refuge in solitude and the orchards, though he is terribly lonely.

Everything changes for Talmadge when Jane and Della steal fruit from him, and then appear in his orchard. Talmadge has an almost natural instinct for nurturing, and he begins to care for the pregnant teenage runaways as much as they let him. He learns the girls are former prostitutes, having been forced into the sex trade against their will by a man called Michaelson. Talmadge himself later helps to bring Jane's baby, Angelene, into the world. When Michaelson comes looking for Jane and Della, Jane hangs herself, but Talmadge stops Della from doing the same. He pays Michaelson off to leave Della alone. Talmadge goes on to continue to care for Angelene and Della. He wants them to feel as if they belong somewhere.

Talmadge worries about being too strict or controlling with Della after everything she has been through, so he lets her travel to auctions with the horse-wranglers. When Della stops coming back, it is like Elsbeth has disappeared all over again. Talmadge is heartbroken. He continues to care for Angelene, raising her like a granddaughter. He is aided by his friend Caroline Middey, who gives Angelene a womanly influence. Years pass. When Talmadge learns that Della is in jail, he does his best to intercede on her behalf, yet she rebuffs him every single time. Talmadge wants badly to make things right for Della, but Caroline tells the stubborn Talmadge that Della may be beyond help. The interest Talmadge pays to Della causes Angelene to become jealous, for which Talmadge later apologizes.

Ultimately, Talmadge is imprisoned for trying to help Della escape. When he returns to the orchard, Angelene is thrilled to see him. The two spend the next few years working in the orchards once more, though Talmadge's health is by now rapidly declining. Angelene cares for Talmadge as he dies, and remains on in the orchard after he is gone. Angelene later dreams about Talmadge in Heaven.



Della

Della Michaelson is the younger sister of Jane, and is a pregnant teenage runaway when the novel begins. After the death of their mother, the girls are shuffled around until they ultimately come into possession of Michaelson near Ruby City. There, they are forced into sex work by Michaelson, being prostituted out to other men and sexually used by Michaelson at will. Jane and Della become pregnant and manage to escape, determined to raise their babies somewhere peaceful and away from the horrors that have been done to them. Della looks up to Jane, and dutifully follows her sister wherever she goes. They end up as residents in Talmadge's orchards.

Della's baby does not survive birth. When Michaelson comes for Jane and Della, Jane convinces Della they should hang themselves instead of going back. Della is unsuccessful in her attempt, as Talmadge catches her when she falls. Talmadge pays Michaelson for Della, and comes to do his best to raise Della and the baby, whom Della decides to name Angelene. Della alternates between feeling motherly affection for Angelene, and feeling as if Angelene is a chore that is not her responsibility. Della becomes obsessed with horses for their sense of freedom, and begins traveling to horse auctions. Eventually, she stops coming back.

Della travels throughout the Pacific Northwest, working on various odd jobs from handling horses to harvesting. She eventually comes to work at a lumber camp where she drunkenly stabs a man for mocking her during a game of cards. She flees and later discovers that Michaelson is in ill-health, and is being jailed in Chelan. Della turns herself in for murder at the lumber camp (though the man did not die), so that she may have a chance to kill Michaelson. Killing Michaelson becomes her sole goal in life, even if it means her own. She cannot be swayed, even by Talmadge. During an escape attempt, Della drags her feet, causing Talmadge to be arrested. Della herself is given ten years for the attempt, and sent to Walla Walla.

She later feels nothing when Michaelson dies of his own accord. Likewise, she regrets having caused Talmadge so many problems, and regrets refusing to escape when given the chance. She is visited several times by Angelene. Della later dies during a prison-work project. Though Talmadge is told it was an accident, it is likely that Della committed suicide by hanging.

Angelene

Angelene is the daughter of Jane, and the niece of Della. She is also something of a granddaughter to Talmadge, the man who is primarily responsible for raising her when she is born with his help. Angelene grows up feeling safe, secure, and loved by Talmadge, to whom she is unfailingly loyal and kind. She falls in love with tending the orchard because of him, and wants to do everything just like him. She is thrilled when she receives her own section of the property to do with what she will, and she is happy with the praise and compliments she receives from Talmadge.



Arlene resents Della's departure from the orchard, though she understands Della's past. She holds a grudge against Della for turning her back on what could have been her home, and on Talmadge's kindness. Angelene herself will not make the same mistakes as Della, and will certainly not commit suicide like her own mother. She grows closer to Talmadge as he ages and she becomes a young woman. She takes on more responsibilities in the orchard, and supports (although jealously) Talmadge's efforts to get through to Della. She watches the failed escape attempt unfold, and happily welcomes Talmadge home when he is released from prison.

She and Talmadge spend a few more years together tending to the orchard until Talmadge becomes bedridden. Learning that Della probably committed suicide, she tells Talmadge that Della died accidentally to spare him more heartache. She spends much of her time tending to both Talmadge and the orchard until Talmadge passes away. She remains on at the orchard until the age of 25, when she leaves. She later comes back twice, once for Caroline's funeral, and once to visit the graves of Talmadge, Della, and Jane. Each time, the orchard is run-down, and it saddens Angelene. As the novel closes, she dreams of Talmadge, Della, and Jane in Heaven.

Jane

Jane Michaelson is a young, pregnant, teenage runaway when the novel begins. She is the older sister of Della. After the death of their mother, the girls are shuffled around until they ultimately come into possession of Michaelson near Ruby City. There, they are forced into sex work by Michaelson, being prostituted out to other men and sexually used by Michaelson at will. Jane and her sister become pregnant and manage to escape, determined to raise their babies somewhere peaceful and away from the horrors that have been done to them.

Jane and Della steal fruit from Talmadge, and later come to inhabit his property. They very slowly warm to him, though they mainly keep their distance. He provides them with meals and shelter, though the girls sleep outside in the event of needing a quick escape. The girls go into labor around the same time. Only Jane's baby survives, but she does not name the baby girl. Despite the trauma she has been through, Jane maintains a deep religious faith in Heaven and in better times. She convinces Della that if Michaelson should ever come for them, they should hang themselves first. When Michaelson does appear, Jane successfully hangs herself. Della is stopped by Talmadge.

Caroline Middey

Caroline Middey is a close friend of Talmadge. An American Indian, she works as a midwife and natural healer, and becomes something of a grandmotherly figure and womanly influence in Angelene's life. Caroline is practical and quick to the point in all that she does. She admonishes Talmadge on his incessant attempts to help Jane, and reminds him not to neglect Angelene in the process. Caroline herself teaches Angelene



many important trades, skills, and techniques, which range from canning and preserving to flint knapping. Caroline becomes a good friend to Angelene as well, keeping her company when Talmadge is in prison. Caroline ultimately dies in her eighties.

Clee

Clee is a horse-wrangler and member of the Nez Perce American Indian tribe. He is a lifelong friend of Talmadge, and has many wives and children of his own. Clee spends much of the year seeking out and selling horses, and spends the autumn helping Talmadge to harvest the orchards. Clee later voluntarily becomes a part of the plot to help Della escape prison. When Della holds up the attempt, Clee is arrested and sent to prison for two years. When he serves his sentence, he returns home to his family.

The Judge

Emil Marsden, known locally as The Judge, is a good, honest, and decent man and lawyer who has long been friends with Talmadge. Talmadge has often employed the Judge to delineate his property boundaries. In the present, he employs the Judge to help him secure Della's release from jail.

Michaelson

James Michaelson is the primary antagonist of the novel. He is a drunkard and drug-addict, with opium being his preferred substance. He also owns and operates a brothel near Ruby City which specializes in young teen girls and female children. Talmadge, visiting the place during the novel, is repulsed by it. Michaelson not only prostitutes out the females in the house, but also sexually uses them at will. He comes looking for Jane and Della, having impregnated them, and allows Talmadge to buy the girls from him. He is later arrested, and dies in prison due to an unknown but deadly illness.

The Warden

The Warden, never named, runs the courthouse jail in Chelan, Washington. He is a kind and patient man who does his best to help Della, believing more harm than good is coming of her being in jail. He does his best to work with Talmadge, likewise, to find a way to get Della out of jail, but is ultimately unsuccessful in doing so.

Elsbeth Talmadge

Elsbeth Talmadge is the younger sister of Talmadge. She is younger by one year, is sweet, gentle, and pretty. Following the death of their parents, Elsbeth and Talmadge are the only family each other has. One day, Elsbeth simply disappears from the property, and is never heard from again. The disappearance haunts Talmadge until his

dying day. He hopes that no harm has come to her, and hopes that she is happy wherever she is. Elsbeth's death in large part influences Talmadge's desire to care for Jane, Della, and Angelene – and to give them a home where they feel they belong.



Symbols and Symbolism

Orchard Trees

The twenty-five acres of orchards are full of various trees, including apple and apricot. They have been largely grown and tended to by Talmadge, and are harvested in the fall by Clee and his men. Talmadge delights in tending to, and nurturing the trees to productive health. All the trees can be traced to two diseased apple trees found on the property when Talmadge, his mother, and his sister first came to live there. The two diseased trees symbolically and ominously represent Della and Jane, who will arrive at the property diseased in a way. The trees, like the girls, are not savable – but the product of the trees, the apples, grow great orchards. The product of the girls – Angelene – thrives. Orchard trees are likened to human lives: they must be carefully tended, guarded, and guided in growth.

Horses

Horses are ridden and stolen by Clee and his men. They serve to be the main source of transportation for many people through much of the novel. In the novel, Della feels a kindred spirit in the horses, admiring them for their wildness and envying them for their freedom. Della herself feels like a captured horse, and even dreams of being one. Horse auctions initially draw Della away from the orchard, and ultimately help to draw her away for good.

Angelene's Cut Hand

Angelene accidentally cuts her hand while she is working with Caroline to prepare and can vegetables for the late autumn, winter, and spring ahead. Angelene receives the cut while working when Talmadge is away. It is symbolic of a physical manifestation of the emotional wound of jealousy she has sustained based on all of the attention and gifts given to Della by Talmadge.

Della's Old Rifle

Talmadge has a rifle specially prepared for Della, which she uses to go hunting for a brief amount of time. She becomes troubled by the killing of a deer – a wild, free creature – and so no longer hunts. The rifle is abandoned, found, and later sold back to Talmadge. Talmadge then gives the rifle to Angelene on her fourteenth birthday. Despite appearances, the rifle is not a thoughtless or tactless gift. It means a lot to Angelene herself, and also comes to symbolize several things: that Angelene has more or less taken Della's place, that Talmadge grudgingly accepts that Angelene is growing, and it demonstrates how powerful the past remains – to Talmadge and to Angelene.



Angelene's Plot of Land

A plot of land totaling a quarter of an acre – with four apple trees – is given to Angelene when she is about nine. Angelene is thrilled to have a piece of the property all to herself to do with as she will. She loves and emulates Talmadge, and at once sets to work tending to the trees, and putting in new kinds of plants and small crops. The plot of land connects her to the property, gives her a sense of purpose, and gives her a sense of belonging – all very important things for her development.

Talmadge's Last Will and Testament

A last will and testament is composed by Talmadge with the Judge's help when Angelene is a young teenager. Talmadge leaves everything to Della and Angelene in his will. He wants them to be provided for when he is gone, and wants them – especially Della – to feel she has a place where she belongs. Angelene is upset by the will, less so by the fact that Della is included, but by the fact it forces her to talk about Talmadge's death. Fortunately, Talmadge still has several years to live after the discussion.

Ropes

Ropes are used by Jane to fashion two nooses from which the girls seek to hang themselves from an apple tree when Michaelson arrives to recapture them. While Jane successfully commits suicide, Talmadge manages to catch Della before her drop is completed. Years later, Della is killed in a prison-work project at a construction site. Talmadge is told by Angelene and Caroline that Della was killed during an accidental fall in which she was not wearing a safety rope and harness, her neck breaking and causing instantaneous death. The reader can surmise that Della actually hanged herself with the rope meant for a harness.

Angelene's Hat

A hat is purchased by Talmadge for Angelene at the women's apparel store in Cashmere before they travel to see Della in jail. Angelene desires the hat not only because she wishes to keep up with modern style and wants a good hat for traveling, but because she wants to express to Talmadge that her desire for a hat is far different than Della's desire for a men's hat. Angelene, unlike Della, will not be running off.

Trains

Trains come to the Pacific Northwest in force by the late 1800s. They are reflective of the changing times. Within a few years, they are a staple of everyday life, opening up travel and new markets for farmers and orchardists. The trains allow for distribution of fruit, and mean massive profits for Talmadge, which make him uncomfortable. Talmadge



and Angelene travel by train on a few occasions to visit Della, though Talmadge prefers to travel by horseback or wagon. By horse or wagon, the journey to Chelan is three days. By train, the journey is made in less than one. Angelene uses the train to beat Talmadge to Chelan when Talmadge determines to help Della escape.

Gravestones

Gravestones are used to mark the bodies of Talmadge, Jane, and Della on the upper ridge of the canyon above the orchards. The gravestones become a fitting epithet to the orchard, which itself is slowly dying from not being kept up. The last time that Angelene returns to the orchard, it is to visit the gravestones of her loved ones. The gravestones then do not merely come to represent the earthly remains of her loved ones, but of the closing of a chapter in her life.



Settings

Cashmere

Cashmere, Washington, is a small town near the 25-acre property owned and overseen by Talmadge. Cashmere, and its surrounding environs, are full of mountains, valleys, and canyons, among which orchardists thrive. The area is famous for apples and apricots, and these are sold each week at market in Cashmere. Cashmere itself is a friendly town where everyone seems to know everyone, and which begins to steadily expand when the railroad comes through. The railroads mean new markets for farmers and orchardists, who make much more money by selling their produce to distributors. It is to Cashmere that Jane and Della first come and steal fruit from Talmadge's stand, only later to appear on his property outside Cashmere. Caroline herself makes a home in the town limits, and often hosts Talmadge, along with Angelene later on, overnight.

Chelan

Chelan, Washington is a bustling town on the southeastern end of Lake Chelan. It is noted for its connection as a rail stop, and being the origin of a steamboat which traverses the length of the lake. It also appears to be the seat of government in the area, as Michaelson is transferred there to the courthouse jail to await trial or his next move. When Della learns that Michaelson is being sent to Chelan, she herself travels there and turns herself in for murder to position herself close to Michaelson in order to kill him. Talmadge and Angelene come to visit Della in Chelan several times, the last of which is a failed escape attempt that leads to the arrest of Talmadge.

Oregon Territory

Oregon Territory – later the State of Oregon – is the original home of Talmadge and his family. There, his father is killed in a mining accident which results in Talmadge, his mother, and his sister Elsbeth traveling over the Cascades and into Washington State, where they settle near Cashmere. Oregon is full of many sad memories for Talmadge, and he does not return to Oregon in his life.

Walla Walla

Walla Walla, Washington is a major city and location of a strong prison where Della is ultimately sent for ten years due to her escape attempt. She is visited in Walla Walla several times by Angelene. There, Angelene learns of Michaelson's death. It is also later in Walla Walla that Della becomes a part of a prison-work project in construction, where she dies presumably as a result of suicide.

Ruby City

Ruby City is a small, out-of-the-way town to which Talmadge travels to find Michaelson to see what he is about. Just north of the town, Michaelson runs a brothel which forces young teen girls – some even children – to prostitute themselves. Michaelson himself regularly sexually uses the girls, including Della and Jane. It is from Ruby City that Della and Jane flee. Talmadge himself, upon learning what Michaelson does, is rightfully disgusted.



Themes and Motifs

Family

Family is an important theme in the novel “The Orchardist” by Amanda Coplin. Family, thematically, involves the mutual love, loyalty, compassion, and emotional, physical, and even spiritual support between individuals who may or may not be blood-related, but who still act in accord with the traditional family unit. In the novel, family appears as both an incredibly important, positive, and successful thing, and as a failure or something lacking in other parts.

Talmadge, when the novel begins, is a man without a family. He revels in his solitude in his orchards, though he is lonely and sad about the past. His father was killed years before in a mining accident in the Oregon Territory. Talmadge then moved with his mother and sister, Elsbeth, to land near Cashmere, Washington, to begin an orchard farm. Soon after, Talmadge’s mother dies. His sister later disappears, the exact cause and nature of the disappearance never known. As a result, Talmadge has only himself.

Jane and Della are the only family each other has at first. Their mother dies when they are young. They are thereafter shipped around until they come under the control of Michaelson near Ruby City, who forces them into prostitution as a very young age. The sisters take strength in one another, and pregnant, escape. They travel far and wide, only ever relying on each other until they ultimately steal from Talmadge. They can sense sadness and loneliness in Talmadge, and later come to inhabit his property. There, they are fed and tended to, though they keep their distance.

Both sisters give birth within minutes of one another. Barely a teenager, Della’s body is unable to handle the birth, and her baby is stillborn. Jane, only slightly older, gives birth to a baby girl who is later named Angelene. The sisters are cared for in a very fatherly way by Talmadge, who becomes the source of help they both need and reject. The girls make a pact to hang themselves should Michaelson ever come back – a clear failure of family on the part of Jane, who instigates death over survival. Jane is successful in her attempt; Della is not.

As time passes, Della grows closer to Talmadge, though she does still largely keep a distance. She likewise alternates between motherly concern for Angelene, and feeling that Angelene is a chore that is not her responsibility. The name of Angelene is taken by Della for the baby, for it reminds her of her mother’s own forgotten name, and is the name of a sister of Talmadge’s. Later, Della’s sexual advance on Talmadge is rebuffed, leading to greater trust between the two, and sealing a family love rather than anything else between them.

Talmadge worries about being too strict with Della after everything she has been through. The result is Della running away once again. Talmadge becomes the primary caregiver for Angelene, whom he raises to the point where she emulates him and loves



him unconditionally. The two delight in one another's company and loyalty. They become something of a grandfather-granddaughter team, doing everything together from tending to the orchard to going to market.

Talmadge successfully raises Angelene in a way he was never able to help Jane, Della, or Elsbeth. Likewise, Caroline becomes a grandmotherly figure and womanly influence on Angelene, creating something of a complete family between her and Talmadge. Caroline teaches Angelene everything from domestic skills such as canning and preserving to flint knapping. Between learning from school, Talmadge, and Caroline, Angelene is a wonderfully well-rounded and well-brought-up young woman.

Della, however, continues to be problematic. Talmadge still considers Della family. He goes above and beyond to continue to help her, even when she is imprisoned. He risks his own freedom to help her escape – an attempt foiled by Della's stubbornness. Only belatedly does she realize what she has lost by turning her back on Talmadge. Angelene has long been angry with Della for having turned her back on a chance at family – something which Angelene only forgives Della for by the end of the novel. Indeed, the final dream Angelene has in the novel is of Jane, Della, and Talmadge in Heaven as a happy family, happily awaiting Angelene to one day join them.

Belonging

Belonging is an important theme in the novel "The Orchardist" by Amanda Coplin. Belonging, thematically, involves one or more characters feeling as though they are needed, loved, accepted, and/or belong in a place. Such a sense of belonging gives them a sense of purpose, safety, security, and confidence. The need for such belonging in the novel deeply affects many of the characters in different ways.

Talmadge has a strong sense of belonging, almost to the point of it being a religious faith. He feels as if he belongs to the land, belong in the home he has made in the orchards near Cashmere, Washington. His roots are in the soil, and everything he does in life is related to that sense of belonging: his raising, nurturing, and tending of the apple and apricot trees that he grows. This gives him a sense of confidence and purpose in life.

He recognizes that Della and Jane themselves do not have a sense of belonging to anyone or anywhere. Since being children, they have essentially been on the run. The girls themselves are indeed looking for somewhere to call home to raise their babies, but they are so untrusting and so abused that they cannot find such a place. They have the chance with Talmadge. Both girls reject it: Jane hangs herself fearing a return to Michaelson; Della later runs away from the orchards.

Talmadge understands that Della, especially, needs a sense of belonging. She continues to travel like a nomad around the Pacific Northwest, picking up jobs as she goes. Writing her into his will, Talmadge hopes that by giving her land upon his death, he will help to give her roots.



Meanwhile, Angelene has been raised well by Talmadge. She is happy and confident in who she is, and feels as if she truly does belong – to the land, and with Talmadge. Her sense of belonging to and with Talmadge is actually threatened by Della, who Angelene sees as a disruption to peace. Angelene's loyalty rests first and foremost with home – with Talmadge and the property on which she lives.

Della's erroneous sense of purpose – she comes to believe that her life is dependent upon killing Michaelson – also erodes her desire to belong anywhere. Michaelson's ultimate death leads to Della feeling nothing – neither joy nor anything negative. Indeed, she recognizes that she has turned her back on a chance at happiness and belonging with Talmadge. It is something she'll never have another chance at after Talmadge dies.

Loneliness

Loneliness is an important theme in the novel "The Orchardist" by Amanda Coplin. Thematically, loneliness involves not only being alone, but feeling alone – unloved, without companionship, without anyone to comfort, take care of, or to be cared for by. Loneliness appears in the novel in different ways for different people.

Apart from the migrant American Indian horse-wranglers that encamp on Talmadge's property seasonally, Talmadge lives alone miles from town on 25 acres of land. He revels in the quiet and the solitude, appreciating the tranquility of the place. Talmadge is, however, lonely. While he can appreciate being alone, he suffers from loneliness. He has suffered from loneliness since the disappearance of his sister decades before, which compounded the sense of loss and loneliness felt after the death of their parents.

Loneliness is among the many reasons that Talmadge decides to care for Jane, Della, and Angelene. He recognizes that they, too, are alone in the world, and have seen more than their fair share of suffering. Interestingly enough, though Jane and Della are cautiously and tenuously trusting of Talmadge, they trust him even that much in part because they recognize that he is sad and lonely.

The girls themselves, apart from each other, are alone in the world as well. Their mother is dead and they have no other family to turn to. When Jane commits suicide, a sense of loneliness pervades every moment of Della's life through running away. The loss of Jane troubles Della deeply, and it adds to her decision to leave.

Angelene grows up with Talmadge as something of a granddaughter. She understands him as family, and understands that he is her rock. He has always been there for her, and always cared for her. For this, she is incredibly grateful. As the novel draws to a close, and Talmadge's health weakens, Angelene herself reflects on her present situation. She and Talmadge are often alone, but they are alone together.

Angelene loves the solitude and quiet of the orchards, the same as Talmadge – but she has always had Talmadge nearby to seek out for company and for kindness. She realizes how lonely she will feel when he dies. Whereas Talmadge has been able to



fight his way through his loneliness, Angelene is ultimately unable to handle her loneliness.

She stays on in the orchard for years after Talmadge's death, until the age of 25, during which time she finally leaves. The place is too sad for her anymore, and she is too lonely. This loneliness follows her through life. Her dreams of Talmadge, Jane, and Della happy in Heaven, waiting for her to one day join them, speaks to a sense of completeness and belonging with them – the opposite of loneliness.

Freedom

Freedom is an important theme in the novel 'The Orchardist' by Amanda Coplin. Freedom, thematically, involves being able to make one's own decisions and to take one's own paths in life. Freedom appears in the novel in various ways, including as something denied, something misused, and something genuinely used.

In the novel, for much of their lives, freedom is denied to Jane and Della by Michaelson. After the death of their mother, and without family or loved ones to take them in, Jane and Della are shuffled around until they end up under the control of Michaelson. Michaelson strips away their freedom by forcing them into the sex trade. The girls, both minors, have no say in the matter. Michaelson forces himself on Jane and Della sexually as well, giving them no choice in the matter, and taking away their freedom.

Jane and Della later escape to freedom. For the next several months, they are absolutely free as they travel across the state of Washington, ending up in Cashmere, and later on Talmadge's property. Jane and Della have never before experienced such freedom, and they do not want to lose it. Jane and Della would rather die than lose their freedom to Michaelson, so desperate are they to make their own choices and decisions. This also explains, in part, their reluctance to get too close to Talmadge, for he has the power to take away their freedom.

When Michaelson comes to the orchard, Jane uses her freedom to commit suicide. It can be argued that using freedom to end freedom is not only illogical and immoral, but irresponsible as well. This misuse of freedom guarantees that Jane will not have any freedom on Earth after hanging herself. Della's freedom is preserved only because Talmadge manages to catch her when she tries to hang herself. As a result, Della has the opportunity to change her life for the better.

The reader will remember how Della senses kindred spirits in the horses brought to Talmadge's lands. She sees the horses as symbols of a kind of wild freedom, of being unbound by man or circumstance. She even dreams of being a horse. They awaken in her a desire to remain transient, to keep moving, to never be tied down. She goes away each year to auction with the wranglers, and later leaves for good. She uses her freedom to travel throughout the Pacific Northwest, taking on odd jobs as she goes.

Her desire for freedom becomes derailed when she becomes obsessed with killing Michaelson. She resists attempts at escape to freedom made by Talmadge in favor of



jail – a place she is arguably even less free than she had been years before with Michaelson – in order to kill Michaelson. Only when Della is imprisoned for ten years in Walla Walla does she recognize the freedom she has given up.

Angelene, however, is a different story. She recognizes that, apart from tranquility and solitude, the orchards offer freedom for her. Though she feels she belongs with Talmadge, and feels rooted to the Earth, only briefly does she tire of routine. She understands that she is essentially free to do what she wants. Just because she is in the same place and does the same thing each year – tending to the orchards – does not mean she cannot call her own shots in life.

Rather, the self-sufficiency and independence that Talmadge has earned, and that Angelene is a successor to, guarantees freedom by not having to rely on anyone else, or being subject to their whims. Indeed, there is a tremendous symbolic importance to Angelene climbing the tree her mother hanged herself from – and then climbing back down. Angelene will not misuse her freedom or repeat the mistakes of the past.

Journeys

Journeys form an important theme in the novel “The Orchardist” by Amanda Coplin. Thematically in literature, journeys are not always merely about movement and travel, but are about transformation, change, and recognition within the individual. This is certainly the case when it comes to several of the characters in the novel, as their journeys form and are formed by the overall plot, different situations, and their encounters with others.

Talmadge, though he only travels frequently later in the novel, begins a journey when Jane and Della come to steal fruit from him. He is lonely and removed from the world when the novel begins. He dwells on the death of his parents and the disappearance of his sister. He believes that the orchard is the only true purpose in his life. But Jane and Della change all of that. They give Talmadge a renewed sense of purpose – of seeking to care for and help people who need it desperately. He applies the same kind of gentle nurturing given to the orchard to the girls, and later to Angelene. Long regretting not being able to better care for his sister (though her disappearance is arguably beyond his control), Talmadge is given three more chances to do better.

Jane and Della themselves are also on a journey. It is a journey that transcends the escape from, and travel away from Michaelson. Having been brutalized for years as forced prostitutes, Jane and Della trust no one besides themselves. They are flighty, suspicious, and wild. They prefer to sleep outside, for example, to make escape easier should it become necessary. They sense sadness in Talmadge, which is why they first steal from him and later appear at his orchards. They only tenuously come to trust him, keeping their distance. However, that they even trust him to such a slight degree indicates tremendous transformation given their recent past.



Ultimately, Jane commits suicide by hanging when Michaelson appears on the property. Her transformation is complete in that her journey away from Michaelson has led to death. Della is saved by Talmadge, and given the chance to complete her journey in life. Della warms up to Talmadge over time, even seeking to sleep with him at one point. Though Della comes to trust Talmadge – a total transformation from how she first appeared in the orchards – she will not be bound by anything or anyone.

She leaves with the wranglers, ultimately taking on various other jobs as she travels throughout the Pacific Northwest. It is clear that her constant nomadic movements mean she is seeking something – but what is not known. The reader will remember that Della begins to partake in practices associated with only men at the time – such as heavy drinking and smoking. Her decision to associate with males, dress like males, behave like males, and live largely like males, demonstrates something changed in her. Before, men took advantage of her at their will. Now, she runs with them, and will not allow them to take advantage of her at all. She develops a strong sense of self-reliance and independence that she did not have before in this way.

Della comes to believe her purpose in life – what the journey has led to – is the killing of Michaelson in revenge. Della's plots all fail, and she only belatedly comes to regret her choices. Her journey did not have to end at the prison-work project construction site, but could have continued without ever having gone to prison in the first place. Della's journey to death, however, along with Jane's own journey to death, serve as important models of how not to live to Angelene. Angelene herself will not repeat the mistakes of her mother and her aunt – and this is symbolically represented in her climbing down from the tree where Jane hanged herself years before. It prepares Angelene for her own future journeys in life.



Styles

Point of View

Amanda Coplin tells her novel “The Orchardist” in the third-person omniscient perspective. The third-person omniscient perspective allows Coplin to do two primary things. First, it allows her to examine the lives of multiple characters in the novel, including primary, secondary, and even tertiary characters. For example, while much of the novel focuses on Talmadge, Della, and Angelene, other sections are devoted to Caroline and to Clee. This allows for greater personal depth among characters, and in the plot. Secondly, the omniscient aspect of the narrative allows the reader great insight into characters and their actions, when other characters are themselves not aware of everything going on. The reader is given something of a bird’s eye view of events as they unfold, and of the words and actions of each of the characters.

Language and Meaning

Amanda Coplin tells her novel “The Orchardist” in language that is simple but poetic, and heavily symbolic. The simple nature of the prose reflects the fact that the characters themselves are relatively simple and ordinary people, though their circumstances are not always ordinary. Talmadge is a simple orchardist; Jane and Della are pregnant teenage runaways. The poetic aspect of the prose serves as a reminder to the reader – and reflects the understanding of the characters themselves – that beauty can be found in the simplest and darkest of times. Della, for example, finds a kind of peace among the wilderness of the Pacific Northwest, while Angelene finds beauty and tranquility among the orchard trees. Tremendous symbolism can also be found in the language and situations Coplin writes – varying from the two original diseased orchard trees (representing Jane and Della in a kind of symbolic foreshadowing) to Della’s obsession with horses (sensing kindred free and wild spirits in them).

Structure

Amanda Coplin divides her novel “The Orchardist” into eight main parts, with each main part being further subdivided into unnumbered, untitled vignettes. The length of the parts, and of the vignettes, vary. Some parts (such as Part VIII) are only a few pages long, while others (such as Part IV) exceed 150 pages. Some vignettes are only a few sentences long, while others form chapter-sized chunks of each part. The structure of the novel gives the plot a sense of fluidity, as if time itself is transient. Only vague references are ever made to precise dates and times, and the lack of titling of vignettes gives the novel a sense of continuous movement – reflective of the journeys undertaken by Talmadge, Della, and Jane.



Quotes

Who has a childhood, she often said, in these parts?

-- Caroline Middey (Section 1, Part I, page 22 paragraph 1)

Importance: Speaking to Talmadge, Caroline underscores the sad truth of living in the rural Pacific Northwest. Few children have a real childhood, as life from an early age is dependent upon hard work and survival. There is little time for fun and games of youth. Jane and Della especially, however, have had a difficult time, being barbarically forced into prostitution at so young an age.

It was vulgar, he thought, to shoot a deer in the orchard.

-- Narrator (Section 1, Part I, page 26 paragraph 2)

Importance: Talmadge, observing deer in his orchard, knows that others will shoot deer in their orchards. But Talmadge himself will not. Talmadge's observation is heavily symbolic: The deer are not actual deer, but are Jane and Della. As thieves, most others would turn them in. Talmadge will not. Like deer, Jane and Della appear in his orchard – but need far more than just an apple or apricot. They need to be loved and cared for, not cast out or arrested.

By the time Cleo was finished the horse was shivering, brimming with wildness just contained. Its flesh, and the air around its flesh, was primed with the energy of corroded nerves, of that which could not be dominated having miraculously been dominated.

-- Narrator (Section 2, Part II, page 103 paragraph 3)

Importance: Della watches with great interest as the wranglers work on their horses. Della comes to sense a kindred spirit with the horses – fellow wild beings seeking freedom. Della becomes obsessed with horses, even dreaming that she is one eventually. The horses desire to run rather than being constrained and broken; Della, too, desires to run rather than being confined to any one place.

She was Angelene's aunt, but Angelene did not understand what that meant exactly. In the grain of Angelene's life Della was the one thing going in the opposite direction; she didn't fit. She was always there, the odd detail agitating an otherwise serene existence.

-- Narrator (Section 2, Part II, page 130 paragraph 2)

Importance: From an early age, Angelene realizes that Della doesn't fit into the orchard. Angelene recognizes that Della disrupts the atmosphere of the orchard, and is not a true part of things. Only later will she come to realize that Della has consciously and willingly rejected everything Talmadge has offered, and Angelene will grow to resent and dislike Della for throwing away such gifts.

Mostly she learned from watching him. She watched him in everything he did; she was his shadow in the trees.

-- Narrator (Section 2, Part III, page 145 paragraph 4)



Importance: As Angelene grows, she comes to love and admire Talmadge greatly. She sees him as something of a parent and a role model, and desires to emulate him. She learns from him in the orchards, and seeks to do the things he does. She recognizes that he is a good and gentle man, and aspires to be a good and gentle woman. She becomes his shadow – his protégé.

His naming her as heir to the land would tie her to a place in the world. Criminals by and large were vagrants, drifters (weren't they?): they certainly did not own land. As a legal landowner, she would come back to that place that claimed her. Her tie to the land would be official, it would be written down.

-- Narrator (Section 3, Part IV, Page 220 paragraph 8)

Importance: No matter how far gone Della is, Talmadge still desperately fights to make sure she'll have a home and a place to belong – even though Della continues to reject everything. He hopes that by writing Della into her will, it will help to tame her, to give her a new trajectory in life. Angelene is fiercely opposed to this, and resents that Della should be given anything after having rejected everything.

But he would try to tell her eventually that it was all right to leave. There was the possibility, he reminded himself, that her future did involve the orchard, and that her choice to remain there was made not out of fear of the outside world but rather a knowledge and willful rejection of it.

-- Narrator (Section 3, Part IV, Page 252 paragraph 3)

Importance: As Angelene continues to grow into a young teenager, Talmadge face some difficult truths. He knows he has raised her well, and he knows that she loves the orchard – but he also knows it may not be her future. He knows that he has given her all he can, but her freedom is her own to do with as she will. This is an incredibly important, and haunting understanding. If Angelene ever leaves, Talmadge knows, at least it will not be the same way as Della or Elsbeth.

Blood, you speak of! Blood means nothing –

-- Caroline Middey (Section 3, Part IV, Page 262 paragraph 3)

Importance: Speaking to Caroline of his plans to help Della belong, and to ensure that Della cares for Angelene when he is gone, Talmadge speaks of blood being important. Caroline counters, correctly in this case, that blood means nothing. Della has already proven this by leaving. Talmadge has already proven it by caring for Angelene as if she were actually blood, which she is not. Nevertheless, Talmadge continues to hope.

Della had her reasons, he believed, for everything.

-- Narrator (Section 4, Part IV, Page 278 paragraph 5)

Importance: Learning that Della is in jail, and knowing that Della has resisted all attempts at help, Talmadge instinctually knows that there is something else going on. Della, despite her wildness, has her reasons for everything she does. What that



reasoning is in her present place in jail is not known – but Talmadge endeavors to find out. This reveals that Talmadge still cares for Della, wants to help her, and respects her decisions – even though he may not agree with them.

We do not belong to ourselves alone.

-- Caroline Middey (Section 4, Part IV, Page 355 paragraph 5)

Importance: Late in the novel, Caroline Middey makes an important assertion while thinking about Talmadge's desire to continue to help Della. She understands that no person truly belongs to oneself alone: they are shaped by the forces, people, and experiences around them. Just as Talmadge cannot get through to Della, Caroline cannot get through to Talmadge. Della, like all people, is not entirely her own self.

I was here when you were born.

-- Talmadge (Section 5, Part VII, Page 416 paragraph 2)

Importance: As Talmadge enters his final few days, Angelene spends as much time with him as possible, caring for him and tending to him. He says, hauntingly, that he was there when Angelene was born. He has brought Angelene into the world; now, she will see him out of this world and into the next. It is a tender and poignant exchange between the two.