Paris to the Moon Study Guide

Paris to the Moon by Adam Gopnik

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Paris to the Moon, by Adam Gopnik, was an account of five years spent by the author and his family in Paris, from 1995 to 2000. Gopnik, a writer for The New Yorker, arguably America's best magazine, fulfilled a lifelong desire to live in Paris. In so doing, he also continued a venerable tradition of correspondents to The New Yorker based in the French city. Much of the material in this book originally appeared as articles in the magazine. Gopnik's wife, Martha, and their young son, Luke, were the other most important people in the book.

As a chronicle of an American family adjusting to life in a European society, Paris to the Moon belongs to a genre of writing that goes back centuries, to when America was a brash upstart on the "other side of the pond" from the socially and culturally mature Old Europe. Paris, in particular, has long held a fascination for American writers, as a city of beauty, romance, and cultural achievement rarely matched in the world. The book's title came from an engraving Adam and Martha bought there, which showed a train on a track rising from Paris to the moon—an image Gopnik equated with a widespread perception of Paris as a celestial place. He related that he had first visited there for a year when he was a teenager and his parents, both professors, came for a sabbatical. Later, he and Martha "ran away" for a short while to Paris before they were married.

Luke was an infant when they arrived. He learned English and French simultaneously for the first five years of his life, and considered Paris home. Providing this experience for the child was a principle reason for the family going to France, and Gopnik expended many words on chronicling Luke's development. He also was very interested in French cuisine, both for itself and for what it revealed about the French way of life. He diligently shopped for the ingredients of meals, cooked, ate out a lot, tried to help protect a famous French restaurant from changes under new ownership, and discussed French food and its cultural importance with several experts.

Gopnik considered how he should think about the differences between French and American society, the importance of language, what he should choose to write about, and what such writing by an expatriate visitor could or could not achieve. He was fascinated with cultural differences concerning sports, and he examined other aspects of popular culture such as high fashion and the impact of US television on France. One of his most penetrating ideas, which recurred with embellishments throughout the book, concerned the impact on French society of an arrogant, rules-oriented public bureaucracy, and how everyday people coped by thinking of themselves and their lives in an abstract way that gave them distance and philosophical acceptance of their lot. Gopnik tried hard to understand this central attribute of the French mind while at the same time nurturing an acceptance of its mystery, just as he accepted and relished his main theme, the romance of Paris.

The Winter Circus—Paris to the Moon and Private Domain

The Winter Circus—Paris to the Moon and Private Domain Summary and Analysis

Adam Gopnik's nonfiction book, Paris to the Moon, is an elaboration of articles he wrote for The New Yorker while working as that magazine's Paris-based correspondent, from 1995 to 2000. With his wife, Martha, and their infant son, Luke, Gopnik moved from New York City to Paris and wrote about the family's adaptation to a new country. Gopnik wrote with insight and humor about often small or quirky details of French life, from the perspective the bemused American. The first section, The Winter Circus, began with a chapter that had the same title as the book, Paris to the Moon, which came from a 19th century engraving Martha and Adam bought in Paris that depicted a train rising on a track from Paris to the moon. Gopnik declared that many American through the generations had regarded Paris as a celestial city, and he was no exception. He described his childhood fascination with France and his first stay in Paris for one year in 1973, when he was in his early teens and his parents, who were college professors, were on sabbatical. That year he went to the movies a lot with his cousin, and both boys were in love with the actress Jacqueline Bisset.

Later, Adam ran away with Martha to Paris for a week before they were married. In the 1980s, New York intervened for the couple but after their first child, Luke, was born in 1994, they decided to go to Paris while the infant was still "portable." Gopnik wrote that even as the world became more homogenized at the end of the 20th century, France became more different. He thought the French saw life in a singular light, "a kind of moral moonlight," although he admitted that he romanticized the country. Indeed, he warned that the romance of Paris was the subject of his book, along with showing how a cocooned, expatriate family coped with a new country. He foreshadowed that the book would seek the macro in the micro.

The next chapter, "Private Domain," began with Gopnik declaring that a bomb went off under his bed the other morning. He quickly dampened this hyperbole by explaining that all he heard was ambulances, but he later read that Islamic terrorists set off a bomb in the subway perhaps a few hundred yards from the Gopnik's' apartment. This led him into a discussion of the new Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, who Gopnik thought was probably relieved by the diversion that terrorism provides from media attention to his shenanigans involving government-owned apartments. Gopnik explained that the most desirable apartments in Paris were owned by the city, and Juppé had rented many of them to relatives and friends. When this was discovered by the media, Juppé had to go on TV and explain himself, a humiliation Gopnik said was usually reserved for American politicians.

Gopnik's family had great trouble finding a suitable apartment, but he argued that Juppé's privileged benefits extend to most French people, bestowed on them by government because of their place in society; only new immigrants were left wanting. After Juppe's hidden deals were discovered, the French elite agreed that more transparency was necessary, but Gopnik thought the charm of Paris was that things hidden in other societies, such as adultery, were in the open in France, while things in the open elsewhere were hidden here. He concluded, "A Paris you can see right through seems hardly worth having."

The Winter Circus—The Strike and The Winter Circus, Christmas Journal 1

The Winter Circus—The Strike and The Winter Circus, Christmas Journal 1 Summary and Analysis

In "The Strike," Gopnik discussed a strike that began with railroad workers and spread to other transport employees, government postal and telephone company workers, and even to students. Gopnik's personal concern was whether the strike would prevent him from receiving a turkey he ordered for a belated Thanksgiving meal, and he was told by the rotisserie manager that the outlook was bad. The goal of the strikers, Gopnik explained, was conservative: they intended to protect the status quo by protesting recent governmental budget cuts that would affect their conditions. Similarly, the students wanted smaller classes and more government subsidies.

To Gopnik, the strike was a prime example of a French penchant for handling difficulties simply by pretending they weren't happening. In this case, the French strikers wanted to ignore the effects of global capital and service-based economies that predominated in the tough, competitive conditions of the late 20th century. They wanted nothing to change, and Gopnik admitted that he admired their stubborn refusal to join the liberal "paradise" of the British, American, and German ideals on the grounds that perhaps it was not such a paradise after all. Gopnik's turkey finally arrived, and the rotisserie manager pointed out it was fed on pure corn, wandered in the open air, and slept in the trees. Gopnik thought that the manager somehow believed the strike would prevent the curse of frozen turkeys and supermarkets from invading Paris. Not incidentally, Gopnik wrote, the turkey was so much better than any other one he ever had eaten that it seemed like another species.

"The Winter Circus, Christmas Journal 1" was a grab-bag of observations and vignettes about life in Paris. It began with noting that despite the momentous tragedies visited upon European cities in the twentieth century, CNN weather reports used the same cheery tones as for any American place. Gopnik said his son, Luke, had found shelter from television at Luxembourg Gardens, where he rode an ancient carousel. The bigger children catch suspended rings on sticks as they rode by, but Luke was too young for that. He also liked a musical horse outside a toy store, and on rainy days, they went to a taxidermy shop filled with big game that looked all the more fierce because, in the French manner, the animals had been "reanimated" to look bored. Luke was frightened by the place but always wanted to go back, which was the same way his father felt about philosophical lectures he was attending. One lecturer talked about a principle he called "the Regulon" that kept species from over-producing. Gopnik refrained from suggesting that Darwin dealt with this principle, which was called death. Another intellectual, who invented the idea that reality had been supplanted by media images and simulated events, argued there was no Regulon in the Semiosphere.

Gopnik took Luke to the Winter Circus, to see Cirque du Soleil. He talked about Luke's Sri Lankan babysitter, and his attempts with Martha to furnish the apartment from the Parisian flea market. He exploded the myth that sex was a major aspect of Parisian society, and he described a department store called BHV that was anything but sexy. He bought Christmas lights in the form of a wreath that were just as tangled as the American string-form. At BHV, the Christmas anthem was the theme from Entertainment Tonight, convincing Gopnik that there was no Regulon in the Semiosphere.

The Rules of the Sport and The Chill

The Rules of the Sport and The Chill Summary and Analysis

At the start of "The Rules of the Sport," Gopnik wrote about a French government committee charged with choosing a name for a new stadium in Paris. Speculation abounded, but in the end, the committee chose to call it the French Stadium, which Gopnik interpreted as ironic minimalism that shows the French would not get carried away by sports as the Americans do. Gopnik tried to find an American-style gym in Paris, and was sent to the Ritz. He dove into the pool, only to discover upon surfacing that everyone else in the pool was around the edges, eating tea sandwiches off silver platters. He joined a "New York-style" gym, and found that extreme enthusiasts were permitted to attend once weekly. He arranged to come several times weekly, but it took weeks for him to actually use the machines, because of preliminary assessments and counseling. He said an interest in sports identified a Frenchman as a hobbyist, which was vaguely suspect.

Men broke the ice in France by discussing politics, not sports. Finally, Gopnik got on an exercise bike and pedaled furiously, working up a sweat while the French people around him strolled through their exercise. Afterwards, he asked for a towel and was told by the beautiful attendant that the provision of towels was "envisaged." A few days later, he went to a French ministry to finish a months-long process of finalizing his residency permit, and was told he must have a physical examination. He replied weakly that he had joined a gym, which the official said would be useful for his dossier.

"The Chill" began with the observation that the weather was cold, but that the French gift for dramatization made it seem colder than it was. Gopnik believed the French were actually feeling miserable about their economic condition, as demonstrated by a series of recent crises. A state-supported mortgage lending company was taken over by its employees, with the president, Jérôme Mesyonnier, held in a pseudo-hostage state the French called "sequestered." Unemployment was 12 percent, but the French were not persuaded by the arguments of American free-marketeers. The people's solution to unemployment was to strike for retirement at age fifty-five. A current best-seller, Gopnik wrote, was a book that railed against commerce, although there was no alternative except that of the extreme right-wing politician, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who tried to get a bill passed that would require people to inform the government of foreign guests in their homes. This sparked a massive demonstration, and the bill died. At a children's concert, a union representative took the stage to harangue the five year-olds about workers in the arts. He got a big hand from the kids.

Bill Gates visited France in the midst of the economic crisis and was reverently received, but his message was that buying Windows would bring happiness, Gopnik wrote. After five days as a symbolic hostage at the mortgage lending company,

Meysonnier declared, "Enough," and went home. On television, he looked worn out, but Gopnik thought perhaps this should not be a surprise; Meysonnier was fifty-five.

A Tale of Two Cafés and Distant Errors, Christmas Journal 2

A Tale of Two Cafés and Distant Errors, Christmas Journal 2 Summary and Analysis

In "A Tale of Two Cafés," Gopnik brooded on what he called the Two-Café Problem, related to the Three-Body Problem of nineteenth century mathematics, which concerned the effects on each other of three planets that all were affected by gravity. Gopnik's challenge was to figure out why the Café de Flore was popular and its neighbor, the equally venerable Les Deux Magots, was scorned by the Parisian fashionable set. Gopnik researched the histories of the two establishments, discovering that the Deux Magots was for years the more fashionable café. James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Albert Camus and Simone de Beauvoir were a few of the famous people who frequented it.

A friend told Gopnik that the former owner of Les Deux Magots was from the Auvergne region, as was the owner of another café across the street, the Brasserie Lipp, and they created business for each other. Gopnik thought of the Brasserie Lipp as the "third planet" of the Three-Body Problem. He then talked to a writer, Jean-Paul Enthoven, who said the Flore was patronized by right wing leaders in the 1930s, which made Les Deux Magots the choice by default of the left. Tourists followed the left, looking for writers like Camus and Jean Paul Sartre, which sent the left to the Flore after the war, when the right-wingers were gone. Another friend remarked to Gopnik that fashion was about making choices, which implied winners and losers. And who decided on the beauty? Paris, he concluded, a reference to both the city and the Greek hero who stole Helen to begin the Trojan War.

The chapter titled "Distant Errors, Christmas Journal 2" began with Gopnik's observation that whenever his French-made fax machine malfunctions, its message was always "distant error," as if the machine itself was never responsible, a stance that Gopnik thought was symbolic of all French intellectuals and bureaucracy. He participated in a panel broadcast on French radio, during which the French blandly blame America for a decline in the quality of French writing and painting. After a year in France, he felt like a transporter of distant errors, which he considered to be part of the immigrant experience. He reported that Halloween came to Paris in a big way for the first time this year, but the French had trouble with the concept of dressing their children as the dead and horrific to then demand sweets under threat of vandalism. Nor did the French understand fact-checking of articles, which they thought was a way to control ideology. Gopnik thought language was what prevented signs and cultures from going universal; it was the Regulon in the Semiosphere.

The arrogant language of French officialdom drives him crazy, but the other side was the elaborate, improvised courtesy of the French, as demonstrated by deliverymen who

brought furniture early in the morning in absolute silence, to prevent waking the child. At a café with Luke, Gopnik discovered an old-fashioned, American pinball machine. Luke loved it, and they went back regularly to play. Soon, they found a chair tucked underneath the machine for the small patron. Nobody ever said anything about it. Gopnik continued to tip well, as usual. The chair was always there.

Papon's Paper Trail and Trouble at the Tower

Papon's Paper Trail and Trouble at the Tower Summary and Analysis

In "Papon's Paper Trail," Gopnik attended the end of the trial of Maurice Papon, former secretary general of the Gironde department (or area of the country), of which Bordeaux is the capital. Papon was accused of complicity in crimes against humanity during the German occupation of France in World War II. The trial has been long, sad, and ridiculous, like the O.J. Simpson trial in America, Gopnik wrote. In Bordeaux, Gopnik listened as British and American journalists in the press room translated their notes on Papon's closing speech. Gopnik wrote a short history of Papon's activities during the occupation, and of the charges against him, including the deportation of more than 1,500 Jews to the Auschwitz death camp. Gopnik wrote that the state machinery in France was what keeps the country functioning and unified.

By changing events into abstractions, the state symbolized what worked. In a way, such abstraction was on trial, because Papon signed the deportation orders, but they might have been memoranda that merely recorded actions already taken by Papon's boss. The verdict depended on the perceived intent of the paperwork. After deliberating all night, the jury gave Papon ten years for complicity, although he was not convicted of mass murder. This was considered a victory for the prosecution, because a powerful man had been brought down by the common people. The abstraction of the state's paperwork had been made to stand for real individuals. After the conviction, Papon fled to Switzerland, but was brought back and jailed.

"Trouble at the Tower" was the tale of a British woman who got off the elevator on the first platform of the Eiffel Tower, although she had a ticket to go up to the second platform. This happened in the summer, when many French had left Paris to the tourists. There were debates over whether the woman felt dizzy and over whether she was mistreated by an elevator worker. In any case, the tourist was a successful writer, and her complaint resulted in the employee being fired. The other employees reacted by going on strike, closing down the tower. French sentiment backed the workers, while Anglo-Saxons tended to side with the allegedly roughed-up customer.

These different viewpoints illustrated the temperamental and even intellectual divisions between the cultures, Gopnik thought. The British and Americans emphasize consumerism, whereas the French champion producerism. The Americans wanted to consume in a world where workers were hidden or dressed up nonhumans, so as not to be disconcerting. This, Gopnik wrote, was called Disney World. The French dreamed of professionalism unhampered by customers, who could be knocked down as soon as they acted up. This, Gopnik concluded, was called Paris in July.

Couture Shock and The Crisis in French Cooking

Couture Shock and The Crisis in French Cooking Summary and Analysis

In "Couture Shock," Gopnik described a number of fashion shows he attended, the first of which was the Valentino show, at which the ladies in the front row suddenly folded over their programs and began fanning themselves in unison. It was the coldest July in Paris that anyone could remember, but the ladies were fanning, because that was what they always do. This season there were sixteen haute couture shows in Paris, with about one thousand outfits that nobody would buy, even the extremely rich ladies. The two explanations Gopnik discovered for this were that the shows were like research and development processes, which affect future buying patterns, and that the shows represented the living memory of vanishing standards of workmanship and imagination. Nobody seemed to mind that the two explanations were contradictory. Gopnik described lascivious photographers, haughty models, and unimaginative reporters.

Most of the shows were held in hotels, but Givenchy held a show in a stadium, in the rain, to the horror of the fashionable ladies. Ungaro created a forest-like set, Olivier Lapidus showed the most ridiculous costumes of the season, and Christian Lacroix staged an extravagant, unreal show that captivated Gopnik in the way of a "romantic cartoon." Gopnik said the subject of high fashion was all the emotion that arises from women wearing clothes. Yves Saint Laurent was the most classic show. Supermodel Claudia Schiffer was there, but Karen Mulder stole the show by appearing in a see-through top that drove the photographers wild. Gopnik suspected Schiffer would have liked to jump into the audience and strip, but Mulder merely covered her breasts with her fingertips.

"The Crisis in French Cooking" began with the description of how a dessert of braised tomato was created at the restaurant Arpège. The method was so complex that it gave food lovers hope that French cuisine would retain its creative superiority indefinitely. Gopnik went upstairs to the main kitchen, where eleven men worked in a cramped space. Three were Americans, and one Frenchman wanted to move to America. Gopnik declared that most people love Paris because the first time they ate something there, it was better than anything they had ever eaten. He had that experience as a teenager with his family. He wrote that for the first time, people were worried now that French cooking was deteriorating. The everyday restaurant might not be great anymore, perhaps because of an unwillingness to continue experimenting, which had been the hallmark of great French cooking. Gopnik traced the history of French cuisine to Auguste Escoffier, the first master of deglazing meat and creating sauces. This was an essentialized approach to cuisine, in that it reflected an order locked into the earth itself.

Nouvelle cuisine brought an emphasis on spices to compete with this ethic of the soil. That balance continued for a quarter-century, but the food became too rich. Even so, Gopnik wrote, American cuisine was caught up in corrupt ingredients, commercialism, and power. The French still ate for pleasure. He searched for the first Parisian restaurant in which he ever ate, and the meal he had there was better than he remembered. This boded well for French cuisine, even though he admitted he might have gone to the wrong restaurant.

Barney in Paris and Lessons from Things, Christmas Journal 3

Barney in Paris and Lessons from Things, Christmas Journal 3 Summary and Analysis

Gopnik wrote in "Barney in Paris" that he and Martha were often asked why they left America shortly after the birth of their first child, to which they gave various high-minded or whimsical replies. The real reason, he confided, was to keep Luke away from the children's show, "Barney," which was dominated by a man in a cheap purple dinosaur suit singing doggerel in an adenoidal voice. To readers who would surmise that Barney stood for all American kiddie video culture, Gopnik said no, just Barney. During the family's first week in Paris, they were awakened one morning by an organ grinder underneath their apartment window to whom Gopnik tossed a ten-france piece; a promising beginning. They went to circuses and parks and Luke rode carousels. Luke attended a gym for two-year-olds, and formed a solemn attachment to Charlie Chaplin films.

When the family returned to New York for a visit, a friend put Luke in a bedroom with videos. Introduced to Barney, Luke developed an obsession that could not be quelled. Back in Paris, his parents acquired Barney videos to keep him happy. Three little French girls from the gym class visited their apartment, and they got hooked on Barney, too. A couple of weeks later, Luke announced that he did not like Barney, which delighted his father. Luke clarified that he only liked to watch Barney. Gopnik realized that his son, watching Barney, now had the quintessential American look in his eye of one who had seen right through it, but could not take his eyes away.

The first part of the title, "Lessons from Things, Christmas Journal 3" referred to a French school term Gopnik had learned concerning whole fields of study that traced civilization's progress from stuff to things—for example, the entire passage of coffee from the bean to the porcelain coffee pot. The best lesson from things he had learned in Paris concerned cooking. He shopped every day, making the rounds of the butcher, the vegetable shops, and the fish monger. He loved the repetition of cooking, although each time he promised himself never to do anything so ambitious again. The sublime moment was when the stuff of cooking became things, as they blended and changed in the pot or pan. He brooded that the absence of "stuff" was what made writing a depressing job. Gopnik wrote about Luke seeing his first puppet show at the Luxembourg Gardens and being puzzled that they had no legs. The two went to many puppet shows, which Gopnik translated hesitantly for the boy. They walked through the beautiful streets as Luke wondered aloud about the latest puppet show. They also regularly visited the dinosaur museum, where the figures had the enormity of the industrial age, compared to the postindustrial fierceness and cunning of New York's dinosaurs.

The national library was gigantic, too. Impersonal and cut off from Nature, with assigned seats and many elevators, it made Gopnik glad to get outside again. Former President François Mitterrand's grand projects such as this library didn't impress Gopnik. He thought meaningful smallness was the defining trait of an epoch's art, as in nineteenth century French painting or 20th century American popular music. The best lesson from a thing he learned in the year was a picture and poems by the poet Stéphane Mallarmé on the wrapping of a sugar cube. Leaving his coffee unsweetened, Gopnik kept the cube.

The Rookie

The Rookie Summary and Analysis

Gopnik described a bedtime story he concocted for Luke after seeing him playing with a soccer ball and realizing that the boy knew nothing about baseball. Gopnik said the Rookie was a three-year-old boy from Anywhere, USA, who discovered in 1908 that he could throw stones with incredible accuracy. He knocked a robin off its perch a mile away and when his mother chided him, he threw another rock that landed in a nest without breaking an egg. His parents reluctantly sent him to the New York Giants, where the management dubiously gave him a tryout. He was so good that they started him as pitcher in an exhibition game. He struck out everyone until the Terrible Ty Cobb came to the plate and sneered that the boy looked like a baby. Cobb dribbled the ball toward first, and when the boy tries to tag him, Cobb stepped on his hand. In the dugout, the boy sprinkled a few drops of milk on the ball from the baby bottle his mother had packed, and nobody could hit it after that. When Cobb struck out swinging, he literally tied himself into a knot.

Luke loved this story so much that Gopnik told it almost every night for two years, constantly expanding it with the help of a baseball history book he brought along to France. Gopnik reflected that the sports words meant little to Luke, who had never seen a baseball game, and this made Gopnik realize that he himself missed the lore of American sports.

Thinking about what else he missed, Gopnik decided it was a kind of loneliness or "scuffed up soulfulness" in New York that did not exist in Paris, where even the shopkeepers required a personal relationship with you. It was hard to be lonely in Paris; what Gopnik missed was the blues. He went to New York on business and bought a PBS series on baseball that he had never seen. In it, he and Luke saw Ty Cobb and another figure in the Rookie story, the pitcher Christy Matthewson. Then they saw an unidentified little boy in a baseball cap, winding up. Luke immediately recognized the Rookie. Sometime later, Gopnik decides to finish the Rookie story.

After Cobb cleated the Rookie and cut his hand, the boy threw a pitch straight at Cobb's head, knocking it off his shoulders. It settled back on his neck with no permanent harm done, but the umpire kicked the Rookie out of the game, and he went home to his mother. Luke hated this ending, so Gopnik had the Rookie return, and Luke took over the narrative. Eventually, the story faded away, but when bombs fell in Serbia, Gopnik thought back and realized that the Rookie would have been too young for the First World War, and too old for the second. He was lucky that way.

The World Cup, and After, The Balzar Wars

The World Cup, and After, The Balzar Wars Summary and Analysis

"The World Cup, and After" was about the famous soccer tournament, which in Paris began with a parade of four, 65-foot-high inflatable dolls that represented different nationalities slowly parading through the streets. Gopnik thought the weird symbolism of internationalism and slowness was apt for soccer, which for him moved at a snail's pace. He resolved to watch the entire, 32-nation tournament, to find out why the world loved soccer. The critiques of the play by British TV commentators sounded to him like end-of-term school reports. The low scores didn't bother him as much as the lack of action, the "desultory shin-kicking." He acknowledged the importance of defense in sports, but maintained that soccer players could usually score only in penalty shoot-outs, which starved the audience for entertainment.

The tedium was punctuated by fan violence at games around the world, although Paris remained peaceful. Gopnik decided that soccer was meant to be experienced, not enjoyed. Nil-nil, he wrote, was the score of life. He watched a Stanley Cup hockey game on cable, and although it was his favorite sport, to his horror he could not see the puck. He found himself anticipating the next big World Cup match, between France and Italy. Not long afterward, France won the World Cup, and even President Chirac reluctantly joined in the celebration. On the Champs-Élysées, Gopnik saw that the usual white line of car lights going one way and red lights going the other way were melded in the celebration. For once, Paris was all mixed up.

"The Balzar Wars" concerned a brasserie by that name, which Gopnik declared was the world's best restaurant, not because of its food or fashionableness, but because of a hundred small things that made it unique and soulful. He loved the democratic handshake each patron got from the two maîtres d'hôtel, but best of all he liked the ten warmhearted and ironic male waiters who had been together there for decades. They brought the food on an oval platter and painstakingly transferred it all, meat and vegetables, to plates for each diner. One night when Gopnik and his family were there, they learned that the Balzar has been bought by Jean-Paul Bucher, who was consolidating and standardizing restaurants throughout Paris. Gopnik met with a group of regular patrons who decided to dine together at the Balzar one night and publicly voice their concerns.

On the appointed night, a young publisher named Lorenzo Valentin made a speech at the Balzar, which got media coverage. Bucher agreed to meet with the protestors, who told him they wanted no changes. He surprised them by agreeing. He said the Balzac was too small to fit into his financial plans, and he only bought it because he loved it. Everyone was mollified, and the waiters quietly voiced their solidarity with Gopnik

whenever he went to the Balzar. Even so, Gopnik's American instincts told him the Balzar would stay the same and then it would change, and everyone would love it as long as they could.

Alice in Paris, A Machine to Draw the World, Christmas Journal 4

Alice in Paris, A Machine to Draw the World, Christmas Journal 4 Summary and Analysis

"Alice in Paris" was about the visit to Paris of Berkeley chef Alice Waters, who strolled through an outdoor produce market with Gopnik and agricultural scientist Antoine Jacobsohn. In the presence of the vegetables, both Gopnik's companions were very excited. Alice had been asked to open a restaurant at the Louvre, and Antoine was potentially her "principal forager" to gather foodstuffs for the restaurant. They were delighted by the freshness of the produce, but Alice was dismayed by its lack of variety. Antoine explained that the small grower was left out when the market moved from a location it had occupied for centuries, which he thought damaged the culture of cuisine in Paris. They spoke to a vendor about asparagus, and Gopnik decided to braise a lamb for seven hours for a dinner at his place that Waters would attend.

Alice visited the Louvre, and saw that the area was too small for what she envisaged, which was an art installation in the form of a restaurant. She remained hopeful that the space problem could be solved. Gopnik described Alice as a child of the 1960s who never became conservative, and remained idealistic. On the night of Gopnik's dinner, all the dishes were fine except his lamb, which he realized he cooked with a Fahrenheit recipe on a Celsius oven. Alice didn't notice, which Gopnik understood was because she didn't think of him as a chef. Later, he reflected that the ancient, seven-hour recipe he used probably was for harder sheep in tougher times. In our less patient modern day, a four-hour lamb would have been great.

"A Machine to Draw the World, Christmas Journal 4" began with the Gopniks being told in April that they had three months to leave their apartment, because the owners were returning from abroad. They panicked, but then found a better apartment nearby. On Gopnik's birthday, Martha and Luke gave him a toy called a machine to draw the world. Like the old camera lucida, this device reflected a nearby scene onto paper, allowing the viewer to trace it. Gopnik found this difficult, because it required a lot of light and everything must stand still. At lunch, he thought about how he and Martha got a nearby Chinese restaurant to prepare takeout food for them, which charmed the management. The Gopniks tried it again on a Mexican restaurant, which gave them real plates that they forget to return for a month, by which time the restaurant had gone out of business.

In early December, Luke fell very sick and was sent through a battery of tests at the hospital, which determined that he had salmonella poisoning. Nobody asked about insurance, and this experience of the effectiveness of socialized medicine converted Gopnik. Luke was already very French. He had a hamburger and remarked that he did not like the red sauce, which was ketchup. One day, Gopnik saw high school students marching, and reflected that they look wan and starved for pleasure. He kept tracing,

which he began to equate with detail-oriented French writers. Paris was like that, he thought: best drawn in detail by a visitor rather than compared to anything. When Gopnik decorated the Christmas tree that year, a visiting French couple laughingly explained that he should tie on the wreaths of lights, not put the branches through them, which Martha could not believe he never figured out. He picked up Luke after school one day and they took a beautiful walk in the city, which made Gopnik think that you can't escape yourself, but you can run away. At Christmas, the surprise was that another baby was on the way. The Gopniks wouldn't be going home just yet.

A Handful of Cherries

A Handful of Cherries Summary and Analysis

Gopnik revisited the saga of the Brasserie Balzar, admitting right off that its group of defenders lost their fight, although in some ornamental, French sense, they might have won. He recounted that the friends of the Balzar first met in June, but then summer came, and Paris closed up like a box. By August 1, everyone had gone to the countryside or beyond. Gopnik and family went to New York for a few weeks. Soon after their return, he got a call from the leader of the friends group, Lorenzo Valentin, who said things were going badly for the waiters and the restaurant. A cranky food writer named J.P-Quélin had outlined the debate in an article, and when the friends held another meeting, they agreed that they should do something to get Quélin on their side.

Claude Blanchot, the steward of the waiters, said they were planning a walkout in protest of declining standards. As the friends considered what to do, a nervous Gopnik suggested they consider an exit strategy, which was poorly received. The group decided to try to buy out the owner, M. Bucher. Gopnik loved the idea but soon realized it was impractical, because as an acquisitive businessman, Bucher would see a sale as capitulation. In October, everyone met at the Balzar again and Valentin made another eloquent speech supporting the waiters, who walked out the next day. The friends met with Bucher again, but he flatly said the days were over of waiters terrorizing owners, and he would give them a fat envelope if they wanted to leave.

The scariest thing Bucher said was that he might sell the Balzar to an English restaurateur operating in Paris. Gopnik wrote that the French liked to complain about the Americans, but they truly distrusted the British. Gopnik had dinner with Quélin, in attempt to curry his favor. They ended up drinking three bottles of wine and talking about family, journalism, the American and French cultures, and food. Gopnik remarked that the pompousness of French bureaucracy had spilled over into everyday life, and Quélin liked this idea. After that, Quélin never wrote anything contemptuous again about the effort to save the Balzar. By Christmas, almost all the Balzar waiters had taken their fat severance checks. In May,

Claude called to invite the Gopniks to a dinner at a restaurant to thank the Balzar's supporters. Gopnik spoke to a waiter named Robert at the dinner, who noted that the key to acceptance of disappointments was to step outside oneself, to see oneself as an abstraction. Gopnik realized that this French trait, which he had deplored, was actually a strength. For a while, the drama of the Balzar and Gopnik's righteous indignation kept him from missing the place itself. Later, he realized that although the restaurant still existed, he had lost it for good, and now he missed it all the time.

Like a King

Like a King Summary and Analysis

When Adam and Martha discovered that their second child after Luke would be a girl, everyone told them this was the king's choice. Martha was just happy that the baby won't be born in New York, because she wanted a girl and all her New York friends had two boys, all with family names like Harry or Moe. Adam had no idea why the king would choose to have a girl after a boy, who would be less likely than a second boy to ascend to the throne. He realized that the phrase was both a joke and not a joke, like fathers passing out cigars in New York when a baby was born.

The couple went for the first of several sonograms and they discovered that all obstetricians in Paris wore black. Their doctor, who had a black shirt unbuttoned almost to the waist, asked Martha to undress and she stripped in front of him, but Adam was the only uncomfortable one. Later, they were given a small, stapled album of images of the fetus. Gopnik reflected that pregnancy and childbirth in France celebrate a woman's availability and fecundity, while in America it was almost the only event that was not sexualized. He noted that by French law, women got many weeks of paid leave before and after pregnancy, and they were certain to spend four or five days in the hospital, all paid for by employers and the state. He thought this "queenly" treatment for all French mothers was well worth the cost.

Adam and Martha visited clinics and chose the Clinique Sainte-Isabelle in the suburb of Neuilly. Their midwife advised them that when they came to the clinic for the birth, they should not tell the taxi driver that Martha was in labor, or he might not take them, for fear the birth would occur in his cab. Adam became afraid that he wouldn't be able to get the cab drivers at the rank across the street to make a U-turn to pick up Martha, because they sometimes refused to do so. One day, they caught a cab and the driver mentioned that a girl would be the king's choice. He explained that French kings wanted a girl second, because she could marry another king and expand the kingdom. Martha went into labor early one morning.

Adam hurried across the street to the cab rank, but with New York skill, Martha hailed a cab going in the right direction. The clinic was locked when they arrived, but a sleepy midwife finally opened up. She said paperwork was missing if Martha needed an epidural, and Adam had to rush back to the apartment and return with the paper, which was put into a file and never checked again. The baby turned, and had to be delivered by cesarean section. Adam washed the squalling infant with the midwife, dressed the baby himself, and returned her to Martha. He reflected that the universe was meaningless and yet its whole point, at this instant, in this place, was the birth of this child, whom they named Olivia. He felt he had taken part in the only majestic choice in life, which was to continue it.

Angels Dining at the Ritz and One Last Ride

Angels Dining at the Ritz and One Last Ride Summary and Analysis

"Angels Dining at the Ritz" took place at the Ritz Hotel's pool, to which the Gopniks bought an eight-week pass during the last stages of Martha's pregnancy. They were frightened off earlier from the place by the expense and poolside silver tea platters, but it was still cheaper and easier than leaving Paris for the summer. It had a mythological theme of bas-relief friezes and murals, the best of which was a tile mosaic of two mermaids at the bottom of the pool's shallow end. Luke and Adam tried to dive down and kiss the mermaids, but Adam was self-conscious about splashing and Luke couldn't make it. Luke developed a love of stealing shower caps in little boxes from the dressing room. When Martha became too big to be comfortable at the pool, Adam and Luke went alone. One day, they met Cressida Taylor, a gorgeous five-year-old preschool friend of Luke's, and Cressida's lovely little girlfriend, who were there with an au pair. The three children had a wonderful time, and Gopnik took Luke back every Wednesday after that for the kids to swim together, and to have extremely expensive hot chocolate and cake.

When Luke had a school function one Wednesday and couldn't come, Adam went alone and later reported to Luke that Cressida was very sad. The next Wednesday, Luke did not want to go to the pool, and Adam realized the boy wanted Cressida to miss him. Witnessing this first experience of the power of love reignited romantic interest between Martha and Adam. After the eight-week pass ran out, Adam and Luke stopped going to the pool but Luke didn't seem to mind, because he lived in the present. On their last visit, Luke decided they should simply touch the mermaids, which they dived down and did. Later, when they packed to leave Paris, Adam found hundreds of pristine shower cap boxes in Luke's drawer.

Gopnik announced in "One Last Ride" that Paris had the best end-of-century spectacle, better than New York or London. His family was sick with the flu until Christmas Eve, but shopped quickly and had a nice holiday. On Christmas night, a huge wind knocked down trees and devastated parks. On New Year's Eve, Adam and Martha had the windows open at midnight and the TV on, when they heard a muffled bang. They saw on TV that the Eiffel Tower was flashing with fireworks and thousands of light bulbs. Later, Gopnik kicked himself for not running outside to see the spectacle in person.

A week later, he and Luke were walking on a bridge when the Eiffel Tower suddenly lit up, unexpectedly, just as it had a week earlier. They watched for ten minutes, and Luke joked that it looked like champagne, while Adam silently rejoiced in a Parisian sight his child would remember forever. They went to New York to make preparations for their return. Back in Paris in February, Luke rode the carousel one last time at the Luxembourg Gardens. For the first time, he easily speared the hanging rings with a stick

as he rode by. Gopnik yelled that he was doing it with unconscious ease, but Luke replied, "Daddy, I am thinking about it." They left the stick and hard-won rings for the next child who would get up and give it a try.

Characters

Adam Gopnik

Adam Gopnik, the book's author, was the main figure. Through his descriptions of his experiences in Paris, he revealed himself to be thoughtful and humorous, with wide-ranging interests and an impressive command of the literature, history, popular culture, and politics of both France and the United States. He was neither self-deprecating nor arrogant, but clearly has a positive self-image. His warmth of feeling for his wife and two children was a central aspect of the personality that came through in this book.

Gopnik had a penchant for making associations between small, seemingly insignificant things or events and what he thought they symbolized in larger terms. He constantly sought the macro-revelation in the micro-observation. His love for Paris was heartfelt and one thing that he did not really try to parse or explain. It simply existed, and he made no excuse for accepting the romance of that love. He also felt like an interloper, though, because he knew he could never be truly French, and this sense of otherness, or even inadequacy, was ever-present in the book. It lent tension to Gopnik's love of the place, complicating his thoughts about how he best might participate in life there as a visitor writing about Paris. Wit, along with an interest in people and in events around him, saved Gopnik's ruminations from becoming too insular. He admitted to being something of a loner by nature, but he was fully immersed in life, and he brought much soul and intelligence to his depiction of these years in Paris.

Martha Parker

Martha Parker, the wife of Adam Gopnik and the mother of their two children, was Adam's constant companion in this book. She was not often quoted in conversations with him or others, but she manifested as an important presence in the story. Her ideas or attitudes were often relayed in paraphrase by Gopnik, so that her personality was filtered through his perceptions. He clearly saw her as bright, temperate, and calm. On occasion she could be a little peeved if she was left at home too long while he rambled about Paris, and on one occasion she actually yelled at him for spending too much money on trivialities, but generally, she was depicted as a warm lover and a great mother to their children. She also showed flashes of humor.

Gopnik mentioned that she has become a screenwriter, which entailed constant rewriting of the manuscript upon which she was working, but these years when Luke was small, followed by Olivia's birth when Luke was five, obviously preoccupied Martha with the duties of motherhood. She loved Paris as much as Adam did, and shared his joy that their son was spending his first years there. She thought of Paris as a beautiful experience but not their complete home, while New York was their complete home but not always a beautiful experience.

Luke Gopnik

Luke Auden Gopnik, the son of Adam and Martha, was an infant when the family moved to Paris and was five years old when they returned to New York City. In the first part of the book, his role was principally as an inspiration for his parents to move to Paris, and as a focus of their hopes for him in those early years of his life. As Luke began to walk and talk, Gopnik reported a few amusing or surprising statements he made, as proud parents tend to do, and his early, hesitant forays into the big world. For much of the book, Luke was too little to have developed much of a discernable personality, but he seemed to have a mixture of self-confidence and timidity, as if he knew his limits. The first significant impact he made as an individual was when he began to speak French in an accent more native-sounding than that of his parents. His most poignant development came toward the end of the book, when he refused to meet with a little girl who wanted to play with him, because he enjoyed the idea that his absence would cause her to miss him. By the end of the book, he was able to make small jokes to his father, and the notion that Luke would now probably remember some of what he saw in Paris gave Adam joy.

Olivia Gopnik

Olivia Gopnik was the second child of Adam and Martha, born not long before they left Paris. Events leading up to her birth and the birth itself were described in the book, but Olivia as a person was too young and new to play any role.

Maurice Papon

Maurice Papon was once the secretary-general of the Gironde, a department or region of France, and the defendant in a long, highly publicized trial. He was accused of complicity in crimes against humanity fifty-five years earlier, during the German occupation of France in World War II. Gopnik attended and reported in the book on the last day of Papon's trial in Bordeaux and its aftermath. Papon, a voluble and unrepentant defendant, was sentenced to ten years in prison.

The Rookie

The Rookie was an imaginary little boy concocted by Gopnik in a bedtime story for Luke that went on, with embellishments, for two years. The Rookie, who had the gift of throwing stones with incredible speed and accuracy, got a tryout as a three-year-old with a professional baseball team and became a star pitcher. When Gopnik wrapped up the story by having the Rookie run home to his mother, Luke protested so fiercely that the Rookie had to be recalled to the team.

Lorenzo Valentin

Lorenzo Valentin was a young, very handsome French publisher who loved the Balzar restaurant in Paris, as did Gopnik and many others. Valentin became and the leader and spokesman for an association of friends of the Balzar who tried to keep it from changing its style under new ownership. Valentin made several speeches during the course of this tale, which covered more than one chapter, and in each case he was eloquent, tactful, and his words were received with enthusiastic applause.

Alain Juppé

Alain Juppé became Prime Minister of France in 1995, the year the Gopniks arrived in Paris. Juppé was embroiled in charges that he had given preferential treatment to friends and relatives who were living in choice Parisian apartments owned by the government. Gopnik thought that terrorist attacks at that time in Paris must have been welcomed by Juppé as a diversion of media attention from his shenanigans.

Jacques Chirac

Jacques Chirac was the President of France when the Gopniks moved to Paris in 1995. Chirac, who had been mayor of Paris in the 1980s, appointed Alain Juppé as the French Prime Minister.

François Mitterrand

François Mitterrand was President of France before Chirac. He built several large monument-style edifices that Gopnik did not like. In this book, Gopnik especially decried the impersonal National Library.

Claudia Schiffer

Claudia Schiffer was a supermodel who attended a fashion show of Yves Saint Laurent in Paris. Gopnik portrayed her as a shameless publicity hound.

Karen Mulder

Karen Mulder was a fashion model at the Yves Saint Laurent show who upstaged everyone and excited the photographers by wearing a see-through top and covering her nipples with her fingertips.

Jean-Paul Enthoven

Jean-Paul Enthoven was a French writer consulted by Gopnik to shed light on why the Café de Flore in Paris was more fashionable than its neighbor, Les Deux Magots. Enthoven gave an explanation that went back to patronage of the cafes by famous writers in the 1930s and 1940s.

Jean-Paul Bucher

Jean-Paul Bucher was a Parisian waiter turned entrepreneur who acquired many restaurants in the city that he then standardized in terms of cuisine and service. A neatly dressed, rotund and polite man, Bucher responded agreeably to complaints from Gopnik and others that he was harming the quality of the Balzar restaurant in particular. Even so, Bucher had a steely edge and when pushed too hard by the friends of the Balzar, he stood his ground.

J.P-Quélin

J.P-Quélin was an irascible food critic for a French newspaper who made disparaging comments about the Balzar restaurant. This prompted Gopnik to invite him to dinner, where the two exchanged many ideas over three bottles of wine, and developed respect for each other's opinions.

Alice Waters

Alice Waters was a chef and the owner of a well-known restaurant in Berkeley who had been asked to consider starting up a restaurant in the Louvre. She came to Paris to research the possibility, and met Gopnik there. A pale and pretty woman of about fifty, Waters had charisma and a California idealism that attracted chefs and many other people to her. Gopnik cooked dinner for her with fear, and did not do a good job, but she was kind.

Antoine Jacobsohn

Antoine Jacobsohn was an agricultural scientist with a Parisian mother and an American father. He had studied in both countries, and was considering being a "forager" for the new restaurant that Alice Waters was planning in the Louvre. Jacobsohn, like Waters, tended to become excitable in the presence of fresh vegetables.

Claude Blanchot

Claude Blanchot was the steward of the waiters at the Balzar restaurant. As such, he was the official spokesman, and attended meetings of the friends of the restaurant who

were trying to protect it from change by the new owner. Claude was a dignified and circumspect man who became a little pleading as things got bad for the waiters at the Balzar, and whose speeches became rather long-winded.

Robert

Robert was a waiter at the Balzar with whom Gopnik spoke at a dinner held in appreciation of the friends of the restaurant after the drama of the waiters' walkout had been resolved. Robert spoke intelligently about another waiter who had lost a daughter and did not know how to cope with his grief. Robert's theory was that the man had not been able to see himself in the abstract, as a victim of circumstances, which would have helped him to cope. Gopnik took this observation as a key insight into the nature of the French people and their penchant for abstraction.

Cressida Taylor

Cressida Taylor was a beautiful five-year-old girl to whom Luke was greatly attracted. Gopnik described Taylor as the most gorgeous little girl he had ever seen. She had long blonde hair and blue eyes, and a delicacy of movement that was entirely natural. Cressida developed a five-year-old's crush on Luke.

Objects/Places

Paris

Paris was the principal and almost the only setting for the book. When they arrived, Paris had fallen into an end-of-the-century economic and cultural funk. It seemed to have been left behind by London and New York, but Gopnik saw this is as a positive development, at least for him and his family. It not only meant they could afford to live there, but as the rest of the world became increasingly globalized, France seemed left behind and therefore increasingly different, which Gopnik liked. The stated subject of his book was the romance of Paris, and he saw it everywhere. Throughout the book, he celebrated the beauty of the place, which he noticed as much in its details as in its wider views. He describes it as one might describe a lover, meticulously and always with pride, even when the place irritates him. He lavishes attention on it, and Paris responds by coming alive as a personable, dazzling, serene, and haughty presence.

The Luxembourg Gardens

The Luxembourg Gardens, a favorite haunt of Luke, was perfectly designed for a small child, with a playground, a puppet theater, and a carousel. Luke and Adam go there often throughout the book.

The Left Bank

The Left Bank was a fashionable part of the city where the Gopniks' apartment was located, not far from the Eiffel Tower.

Deyrolle

Deyrolle was a taxidermists' supply house on the rue du Bac where Gopnik took Luke on rainy days to look at the stuffed animals, which ranged from big game to domestic pets.

The Winter Circus

The Winter Circus was a wooden octagon set back from the boulevard Beaumarchais where Gopnik went with his family in the early 1970s and where he took Luke in the 1990s to see Cirque du Soleil.

BHV

BHV was a nineteenth department store on the rue de Rivoli on the Right Bank where the Gopniks shopped frequently. Everyone referred to it by its initials, which stood for Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville, or the City Hall Bazaar.

New York City

New York City was where the Gopniks occasionally went during their five years in Paris, usually for a few weeks of vacation in August, but sometimes to conduct business. Very little action in the book was described in New York, however. It was simply mentioned that they went there, did something, and came back to Paris.

Bordeaux

Bordeaux was the capital of the Gironde, a department (or region) in France where Gopnik went to watch the end of the long trial of the politician Maurice Papon, accused of war crimes. The town is briefly sketched by Gopnik as "a trench coat-and-train station, 1940s kind of town, with mediocre, concrete modern architecture."

The Brasserie Balzar

The Brasserie Balzar was an Alsatian restaurant on the rue des Écoles in Paris that Gopnik declared was the best restaurant in the world. He and others tried to protect its high standards of cuisine and service after a new owner took over, but their valiant effort eventually failed.

the Clinique Sainte-Isabelle

The Clinique Sainte-Isabelle was a clinic in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly that Martha chose for the birth of their baby girl. Adam described it as a sensible, primly bourgeois place.

The Ritz Pool

The Ritz Pool was in the Ritz Hotel on the Place Vendôme in Paris. The Gopniks thought about joining shortly after they arrived in Paris, but did not do so until near the end of their time in the city, when they joined for eight weeks. At the pool, Luke often swam with his lovely young friend Cressida Taylor, whom he knew from preschool.

The World Cup

The World Cup was a 32-team international soccer event held in Paris in 1998 that Gopnik witnessed, mostly on television. France won that year, and Gopnik watched the celebrations in the streets.

Paris to the Moon

Paris to the Moon was the title of a nineteenth-century engraving, done in the style of Daumier, that Adam and Martha Gopnik bought not long after they moved to Paris in 1995. It showed a train departing from the Right Bank of Paris and heading into the sky on a track that ends at the moon. The Gopniks took it as emblematic of the reputation of Paris as the "celestial" city.

Themes

The Expatriate Abroad

The Expatriate Abroad has been a theme beloved by writers throughout the history of literature. For Adam Gopnik, being away from his home raised two central questions that perhaps in part were welcome because they offered a great excuse for leaving home. The two questions upon which he dwelled in his book were can you run away, and can you escape yourself? What he meant by the first question was can you get away from the expectations, duties, and other dictates of your everyday life simply by going someplace completely different, or will those influences follow you and continue to exert their power? The second question meant can escape the essence of yourself—all your memories, experiences, prejudices, doubts, and fears? For him, these questions did not have immediate, simple answers, because he recognized that leaving behind everything in his home of New York City would free him to live differently.

At the same time, a new culture with a new language provided a new set of circumstances to which he had to respond in ways that required him to be different from the person he was in New York. His questions, then, concerned how much different he could be from who he was. In effect, he wondered if it was possible to change so much that he would be transformed into an essentially new person, with a new set of concerns and values unrelated to those of his former life. The answer he eventually gave to these two questions was that the experience of Paris changed him, yet he remained essentially the same. He could indeed run away from New York City, and he saw that being an expatriate was synonymous with freedom, because all such confinements had been escaped. Even so, he could not escape himself. Gopnik was a new father speaking a new language and integrating himself into a new culture, yet despite all these major changes in himself and his life, on some fundamental level he remained incapable of becoming anything other than the man he always had been.

The Quality of Loneliness

The quality of loneliness preoccupied Gopnik in this book. Having come to a new place, leaving behind old associations with other people, he and Martha were more alone than ever before, and yet, Gopnik did not feel lonely. His little family was an island onto itself, but the principal reason for his lack of loneliness was a difference Gopnik perceived in how acquaintances interacted with one another in Paris compared to New York City. In Paris, shopkeepers, waiters, and others he encountered in everyday life constantly required bits of information about him. They wanted to know how he was going to cook the beef he had bought, or whether Martha was pregnant with a boy or girl. In New York, Gopnik often felt lonely in crowds, and from the absence of this loneliness in Paris, he came to recognize that he valued it. He identified it as a "scuffed up" feeling, a kind of blues that he found soulful and attractive. Here in a foreign country, surrounded by strangers, he never felt lonely in a crowd.

As an expatriate, Gopnik had come to equate loneliness with the freedom of having escaped New York City, but the relationship between those two conditions was complicated by the relentless interest of Parisians in each other's lives. Everywhere he went, he felt like someone was watching him, not with ill intent, simply with interest. In Paris, he never could enjoy the blues of loneliness, and it was a sweet sadness that he missed.

Family Life

Family Life often took center stage in this story. Adam and Martha brought their infant child with them to Paris, which is essentially where real family life began for them. The demands of this family life were readily embraced by both parents, even as they coped with the wholesale replacement of their New York routines with the new demands of living in Paris. The cocoon of the natal family became even more powerful than usual for the Gopniks, surrounded as they were by the foreignness of France. The effect of being an American family in France was particularly strong on Luke, who began to identify English with home life, and French with the more authoritarian life of daycare and preschool, where his caregivers tended to be commanding in the fashion typical of French bureaucracy. At the same time, family and home to Luke amounted to an apartment in Paris. His only memory of New York was from their occasional visits there after the family moved to Paris.

Martha and Adam were pleased on one level that family and home meant Paris to Luke, but on another level it began to worry them that perhaps he would have trouble fitting into New York. In these ways, the relationship of family to home was an important theme in the book. The other way in which family life was central to the book was in Gopnik's basking in its warmth and security. Family was his touchstone, his strength, and his real purpose. For him, family was an affirmation of life in a meaningless universe. It seemed doubtful that he could love living in Paris as much as he did without the accompanying love of his family.

Style

Perspective

Adam Gopnik used first person to tell the stories of his family's experiences in Paris. Usually, it was "I" but sometimes he wrote, "we." Essentially, the tales were told in present tense, which of course gave the reader a sense of being there at the moment, but he often used past tense to relate something that happened days or even weeks earlier. This mixture of tenses helped to keep the active verbs of present tense from becoming stale with overuse. Gopnik also included interviews and conversations to bring new perspectives to the book. He portrayed many interchanges with his family, friends, and acquaintances, sometimes offering long quotes that probably were not verbatim but were the closest reconstructions he could make of real conversations. He also clearly did research into both historical and contemporary topics, integrating this material smoothly into the narrative, so that it read as if these were things he already knew.

Gopnik also drew on a broad familiarity with aspects of American and French popular culture to fashion his own, unique interpretations of situations and events. In this way, the book offered different perspectives, but all of them came through the filter of the author's sensibilities. The result was a viewpoint that was journalistically balanced in the sense of Gopnik having made a serious effort to discover not only facts but how others analyzed these facts, and often how they fit into an historical picture. It was not objective journalism, however, because Gopnik then used all this gathered information to form opinions that were often arguable, and sometimes were sometimes were such absolute statements that the reader recognized them as hyperbole. This is the so-called new journalism, which is not new anymore, also known as creative nonfiction.

Tone

Enthusiasm and even joy permeate this book, in which Gopnik fulfills a lifelong dream to live in Paris. The eagerness with which he explores the city, its ambience, events, history, and contemporary issues, is infectious. Gopnik quickly confesses great love for the city, and then does everything possible to draw the reader into his embrace of Paris, to make the reader complicit in this love. He is not uncritical of Paris, however, nor is he reluctant to address what he perceives as its shortcomings. One recurring example of his displeasure is in the officious, inefficient nature of French bureaucracy, which he encounters frequently in dealings with government employees.

is a tendency he perceives in French people to look at life abstractly, removing themselves from the moment in order to observe events objectively, which accounts for the impression they give of indifference. This bothers Gopnik, and he devotes a good many words to puzzling over it. Generally, though, he is delighted to be in Paris, and he conveys that delight by trying to evoke the mysterious romance of the city in all its

manifestations. A related aspect of the book's upbeat tone is Gopnik's affection for his family. His fascination with Luke, the couple's newborn son, and the attention he lavishes on the child during the first five years of his life are not unrelated to Gopnik's love of Paris. A major reason he and Martha moved there was to give Paris to Luke and to themselves at the beginning of the boy's life. This book is about a dream come true, and it is infused with that very triumph.

Structure

The book was adapted from a series of articles published in the New Yorker while Gopnik was living in Paris, and its structure bore the marks of that original form. It had 23 chapters, each with a title in lieu of a chapter number, just as a magazine article would carry a headline. These chapters were broken into five sections: four chapters in the first section, six in the second, five in the third, and eight in the fourth. Each of the four section headings was repeated in one chapter of that section, which was the chapter that described Christmas that year. For example, the first section heading was "The Winter Circus." One of its four chapters was called, "The Winter Circus, Christmas Journal 1." The second section had a chapter that repeated its section title, followed by a comma and "Christmas Journal 2," and so forth in the following two sections.

Another motif in the structure was a brief, italicized description of each section that followed the section title on the Contents page. For example, "The Winter Circus" section title was followed by this description: "An American family arrives in Paris, is greeted by bombs and strikes, and a good time is had by all." This technique was a nod to nineteenth century literature, in which chapter descriptions frequently appeared. As such, it subtly recognized a wealth of writing in the past about Paris. One last notable aspect of the structure was a double-page image near the front of the book showing the "Paris to the Moon" engraving from which the book's title was taken. The first chapter of the first section was also titled "Paris to the Moon."

Quotes

"A scowling grey universe relieved by pastry: This was my first impression of Paris, and of them all, it was not the farthest from the truth." The Winter Circus—Paris to the Moon, pages 5-6.

"But even if our apartment building had been officially declared the epicenter of the bombing campaign, I don't think I'd move. Terrorism is part of life, while a nice apartment in Paris is a miracle." The Winter Circus—Private Domain, page 20.

"Things got so bad that Juppé had to submit to a humiliation that the French had previously considered fit only for American politicians. He had to go on television and answer questions from reporters." The Winter Circus—Private Domain, page 24.

"What an old place France is, the attic bursting with old caned chairs and zinc bars and peeling dressers and varnished settees. The feeling is totally different from an antiques fair in America; this is the attic of a civilization." The Winter Circus—The Winter Circus, Christmas Journal 1, pages 46-47.

"Despite their reputation, the French are not really cultural chauvinists at all. They remain chauvinists about their judgment, a different thing; increasingly their judgment is their culture." The Winter Circus—The Winter Circus, Christmas Journal 1, page 48.

"For all the complaints about a new puritanism, the truth is that feminism in America has, by restoring an edge of unpredictability and danger to the way women behave and the way men react to that behavior, added to the total tension upon which desire depends." The Winter Circus—The Winter Circus, Christmas Journal 1, page 49.

"The absence of the whole rhetoric and cult of sports and exercise is the single greatest difference between daily life in France and daily life in America." Distant Errors—The Rules of the Sport, page 65.

"The loneliness of the expatriate is of an odd and complicated kind, for it is inseparable from the feeling of being free, of having escaped." Distant Errors—Distant Errors, Christmas Journal 2, page 89.

"Paris is marked by a permanent battle between French civilization, which is the accumulated intelligence and wit of French life, and French official culture, which is the expression of the functionary system in all its pomposity and abstraction." Distant Errors—Distant Errors, Christmas Journal 2, page 103.

"They were stout and old and plain; evil may sometimes be banal, but virtue, to its credit, always is." Distant Errors—Papon's Paper Trail, page 121.

"Most Americans draw their identities from the things they buy, while the French draw theirs from the jobs they do." Distant Errors—Trouble at the Tower, page 124.

"Couture is a romantic cartoon. It's a caricature of the romantic impulse, with a cartoon's exaggerations but a cartoon's energy and lighthearted poetry too." Lessons from Things—Couture Shock, page 140.

"French classic cooking was French provincial cooking gone to town." Lessons from Things—The Crisis in French Cooking, page 152.

"The romance of your child's childhood may be the last romance you can give up." Lessons from Things—Barney in Paris, page 167.

"There are times, when one reads about the uninsured and the armed and the executed, when French anti-Americanism begins to look extremely rational." A Machine to Draw the World—A Machine to Draw the World, Christmas Journal 4, page 259.

"The will toward contemplative observation is the keynote of French sensibility and tied, in ways both beautiful and horrible, to French indifference." Machine to Draw the World—A Machine to Draw the World, Christmas Journal 4, page 263.

"Not really liking it much is a precondition of art criticism of all kinds." A Machine to Draw the World—A Handful of Cherries, page 275.

"In New York pregnancy is a ward in the house of medicine; in Paris it is a chapter in a sentimental education, a strange consequence of the pleasures of the body." A Machine to Draw the World—Like a King, page 301.

"There was at least for a moment present again between us the central elements of love: buoyancy, seminudity, and uncertainty, that mixture of imperfect faith and intoxicating drink that is desire." A Machine to Draw the World—Angels Dining at the Ritz, page 329.

Topics for Discussion

France is a country renowned for its cultural influence on the world, but Gopnik argued that such influence had declined by the end of the 20th century, when he lived there. Good taste had become the culture of the people. Explain what he meant by that, especially with regard to influences on France from America and other countries.

The author often seemed annoyed in this book by the officiousness of people working in government positions, yet that problem exists in America, too. What did his irritation tell you about his experience as a foreigner in French society?

Gopnik wrote about a current of anti-Americanism running through French society, but he concluded that it wasn't as real as French mistrust of the British. Discuss the difference in the French attitude to these two nations, as explained by the author.

The author embraced Paris, but did not feel entirely embraced by it. What did he think existed in the nature of being an expatriate, and in the nature of the French people, that prevented him from feeling fully integrated in the society?

Gopnik's American accent and sometimes tortuous phrases when he spoke French were a bane to him. They reminded him of the difficulties his Jewish immigrant ancestors had with English. Give an example or two of his difficulties with the language, and provide your assessment of how effective he was in expressing himself to French people.

The place of sports and exercise in France were much different than in America, Gopnik found. Specifically, how did the French differ from Americans in the way they thought about people who were interested in spectator sports, and in their own participation in exercise?

Cuisine was a major interest of Gopnik in this book. He saw much significance in the French approach to preparing, serving, and eating food. What did these rituals tell him about fundamental differences in French and American society?

Many world-famous French fashion houses are centered in Paris, and Gopnik saw a number of high-fashion shows. Summarize his impressions of the models, the photographers, the audiences, and the true purpose of high-fashion shows.