

# **Private Peaceful Study Guide**

**Private Peaceful by Michael Morpurgo**

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



# Contents

<a href="#">Private Peaceful Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Five Past Ten.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Twenty to Eleven.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Nearly Quarter Past Eleven.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Ten to Midnight.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Twenty-Four Minutes Past Midnight.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Nearly Five to One.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Twenty-Eight Minutes Past One.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Fourteen Minutes Past Two.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">A Minute Past Three.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Twenty-Five Past Three.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Nearly Four O'clock.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Five to Five.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">One Minute to Six.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>



# Plot Summary

Alone in a barn in World War I Belgium, Private Thomas Peaceful struggles to remain awake. As far as he is concerned, this might be the last night of his life, and he is determined not to waste it. With only eight hours until six in the morning, Thomas is determined to stay awake and remember his entire seventeen years of life.

Thomas remembers growing up in a rural village in England with his two brothers, Charlie and Big Joe, and his mother. He remembers the profound friendship and love he felt for his brother Charlie and their friend Molly. He remembers the three of them playing together after school and poaching on the Colonel's land.

As the three grow up, they swear to always stay together and vow that as long as they are together, they will always have great luck and happiness. However, as time goes on and Charlie and Molly grow out of their childhood before Thomas does, they begin to grow apart. Thomas falls in love with Molly, but so does his brother Charlie. With Charlie and Molly seeing each other in secret, it is only a matter of time before Thomas finds out.

When the war comes, everything seems to change in their cozy little village. Thomas discovers that Molly and Charlie have been seeing each other behind his back, and Molly will be having Charlie's baby. Charlie and Thomas, both feeling that they have little choice in the matter, join the army to go fight the Germans. While training, Thomas and Charlie decide that the war is not as bad as they have heard. The training feels surreal as if they are only rehearsing for some fake battle that will occur far off in the distance. However, the Peaceful brothers soon learn the truth of the Great War.

German-occupied Belgium teaches Thomas the truth about war, death, destruction, and fear. Thomas remembers the beginning of the war and how without Charlie by his side, he would never have made it to that barn in Belgium. As the night flies by, Thomas remembers all of the horrors of war and he remembers that the abandoned German dugout, where Charlie refuses to obey an order from their sergeant in order to stay with Thomas.

Thomas has tried to remember his whole life in one single night with the knowledge that Death is waiting at six o'clock.



# Five Past Ten

## Five Past Ten Summary

Private Peaceful opens with the main character, Thomas Peaceful, finally alone. He is determined not to sleep this night, as he doesn't want to waste any time dreaming. He has nearly eighteen years of yesterdays and tomorrows, and he is determined to remember them all tonight.

Thomas remembers his first day of school. He is worried about school, despite his mother's and his brother's attempts to make him feel better about it. His brother Charlie leads him to school on his first day, and promises to take care of him. When they get to school, Thomas and Charlie are separated, as Charlie is one of the "Bigguns" and Thomas is one of the "Tiddlers." In his "Tiddlers" class, Thomas is the youngest of the children. Thomas learns how to tie his boots and makes a friend in the process.

On the way to school, Thomas sees a dead crow hanging from the fence. The crow reminds Thomas of his father's death. Thomas's father used to take Thomas out into the woods with him in the mornings to cut timber. Thomas would play in the woods while his father worked. One day, Thomas was playing in the woods and a tree almost fell on him. Thomas's father yells at him to run, but Thomas is scared and can't run. Thomas's father runs to him and throws him out of the way of the falling tree. The tree crushes Thomas's father, killing him instantly. At the funeral, Thomas keeps his terrible secret. If Thomas had only run when his father told him to, his father would still be alive. Thomas feels that he killed his father.

## Five Past Ten Analysis

Thomas Peaceful does not want to go to school. His mother told him that it was a great new beginning, but Thomas feels that it is the end of his beginning. Thomas knows that what ever happens today, he will not be the same when he returns home.

Thomas does not like crows. When he sees the dead crow, he feels no sympathy for it. After his father's death, which he blames himself for, Thomas and his family bury many of his father's personal items in the ground and plant a rose bush over them. The dead crow reminds Thomas of the time that he found some robin eggs in a nest. Thomas was going to take the eggs, but he noticed the mother robin sitting in the rose bush, looking at him. Her eyes were begging him not to take the eggs, but Thomas sees his father's eyes, begging him not to take anything that doesn't belong to him. Thomas leaves the eggs behind and instead watches the baby robins as they grow. He is forced to watch, just as helpless as the mother robin, when the babies are murdered by the crows.



# Twenty to Eleven

## Twenty to Eleven Summary

Big Joe used to always eat everything. Thomas muses that everything was his favorite food, no matter what it was or which plate it was on. Whenever Thomas and Charlie didn't like something on their plates, they would simply rake it onto Big Joe's plate when their mother wasn't looking. Big Joe was happy for the extra food, and seemed to like the conspiracy of it all as well.

One day at school, Thomas gets into a fight over Big Joe. Big Joe runs to the school to show his little brother a slow worm he has found. One of the bigger boys sees this, and makes fun of Big Joe and Thomas, saying that Thomas has a loon for a brother. Thomas usually knows better than fighting at school, as he is a little guy and wouldn't often do well, but he is so upset about it and caught off guard, that he attacks the bigger boy furiously. The bigger boy gives Thomas a good beating, but Charlie arrives soon after and takes over for Thomas. Finally, Mr. Munnings breaks up the fight and whips both Charlie and Jimmy Parsons for fighting. Thomas remembers that with each lash of the cane, Jimmy cried out, but Charlie never did. He was so proud of his brother that day. Molly goes to Thomas and cleans him up some. She tells Thomas that she thinks that Big Joe is nice, and Thomas decides that he will love her forever. After that, Molly is a frequent guest at their house, though Thomas doesn't find out why for quite some time to come.

Thomas's mother goes to work for the Colonel at his house taking care of his wife, which meant that someone else had to come to the house to take care of Big Joe, Charlie, and Thomas. That someone else ended up being Grandma Wolf. Grandma Wolf wasn't actually their grandmother. She was their great aunt. However, she felt that Great Aunt made her sound old and cantankerous, which Thomas remembers that she was anyways. Life was not good with Grandma Wolf. She was mean to Big Joe and often hit him. She was strict and had far too many rules. When Thomas's mother returned home, she was too tired to even stand up to Grandma Wolf and so Grandma Wolf ran the house.

## Twenty to Eleven Analysis

Big Joe had meningitis when he was a baby and the doctors said that he would never be of any use to anyone. Despite this fact, Big Joe did indeed get better over time, just not all the way better. He knew things, and was very caring, generous, and loving, but he simply couldn't understand everything that he saw. While most people called Big Joe crazy or stupid, Thomas and Charlie and their mother just called him special. They also judged people by their reactions to Big Joe. If someone ignored him, called him stupid, or talked to him like he was an idiot, then they knew that that person wasn't worth knowing. If, on the other hand, people treated Big Joe well, and could get along with



him, then the rest of the family would like them just for that. When the Colonel ignores Big Joe, Charlie and Thomas instantly dislike him. When Molly tells Thomas that she thinks that Big Joe is nice, Thomas decides to love her for the rest of his life.



# Nearly Quarter Past Eleven

## Nearly Quarter Past Eleven Summary

Big Joe loved mice. When the autumn came, the mice decided that it was better to be inside than out. Grandma Wolf was terrified of mice and would shriek and look silly whenever she saw one. Big Joe would put out food for the mice, and since he didn't realize why Grandma Wolf smacked him, he continued to feed them despite her punishment. Grandma Wolf would put out traps, but Charlie and Thomas tripped them all. She would put out poison, and they would sweep it up. Grandma Wolf even once tried to have a man from the village come and charm the mice away, which of course didn't work either. That whole autumn, only one mouse was caught. Big Joe mourned that single mouse terribly, so Molly, Charlie, and Thomas dug a grave for it and sang a hymn over it. For Big Joe's birthday, Molly gave him a harvest mouse, which quickly became his favorite pet. He took it inside with him and kept it in his dresser drawer. One day, Molly, Charlie, and Thomas returned from school to find Big Joe sitting in the floor crying uncontrollably. Grandma Wolf had found the mouse and killed it. In order to keep Joe from bringing any of his other pets inside, she killed every one of them too. Molly yells at Grandma Wolf and tells her that she is a terrible person and that when she dies, she will certainly go to Hell, then runs home in tears.

Soon after that, the Colonel's wife dies, and Grandma Wolf goes to live with the Colonel in the big house as his live in servant. The boys' mother comes home to the cottage, and they will stay in the cottage. Their mother will do some of the Colonel's laundry and sewing, most of which she can do from home, and they will begin to make some money again. Everyone is happy again, for now.

One day, while lying in the shallows of the stream, Molly reads their futures in a hand full of gravel. She says that the three of them will always be together, and so long as they stick together they will always be happy and lucky. Unfortunately, that doesn't last. Molly becomes sick with Scarlet Fever, and Charlie and Thomas are not allowed to see her anymore.

## Nearly Quarter Past Eleven Analysis

Despite Grandma Wolf's ever effort to rid the house of mice, Charlie and Thomas made sure that she couldn't. With Big Joe feeding them, and the other boys tripping the traps and sweeping up the poison, the mice came in droves. Of course, Grandma Wolf took her anger out on the boys, but Thomas feels that seeing her scared silly and shrieking like a mad woman was worth every smack she gave them.

When Molly and Charlie run ahead, leaving the younger Thomas behind, he would often feel left out. He wonders if sometimes they did it just to have some time alone, though Molly often ran back for Thomas. One day, Molly dares Charlie to take off all of his



clothes and jump in the river. To Thomas's surprise, his brother does it and then Molly follows. Thomas is too shy and refuses to take his clothes off in front of Molly. Finally, one day they convince Thomas to join them. When Molly tells their futures in the stones at the stream, she says that they will always be together and happy. Unfortunately, this is not true. The stones foreshadow Molly's illness and it is not long before she gets Scarlet Fever.

Thomas remembers that he and Charlie prayed for Molly. Big Joe sang Oranges and Lemons, and Charlie and Thomas said Amen. They kept their fingers crossed for good measure.





# Ten to Midnight

## Ten to Midnight Summary

While Molly was sick, Charlie and Thomas tried poaching one more time. As it turns out, Molly was right when she said that they would always be lucky so long as they stuck together. With Molly gone, Charlie and Thomas were anything but lucky. Thomas fell asleep on his lookout, leaving Charlie upstream with his net unprotected. When Thomas wakes up to see the Colonel's bailiff and his hound, Thomas realizes that he has failed his brother. Charlie and Thomas are marched back to the big house at gun point by the bailiff, who summons the Colonel. The Colonel decides that he will whip them both and make them clean out his kennels. Their mother stops the Colonel from whipping the boys, but agrees to make them clean out the kennels. Charlie and Thomas end up cleaning out the kennels every Saturday until Christmas Eve. They make great friends with the dogs, and actually enjoy their punishment. Still, when Christmas Eve arrives, and they are freed from their work, they both blow loud raspberries back at the Colonel's house on their way home.

Charlie and Thomas are glad to see Molly, waiting for them at their house when they return from the Colonel's house. She is better now, but different. Her hair has been cut shorter, and she now has the beauty of a girl who is becoming a woman. Thomas feels a different, deeper love for Molly now.

As time goes on, Thomas feels that he is being left behind by Charlie and Molly. They both leave school and take jobs at the big house, leaving him alone most of the day. When they are all together, Molly and Charlie talk about grown up stuff from the big house, and have no interest in school anymore. Thomas realizes that they are now a part of a world that he does not belong to, and that they are growing apart. He is not jealous or angry, just deeply hurt by the loss.

One night, Charlie tells Thomas that he is in trouble. The Colonel has decided to kill Bertha, who is Charlie's favorite dog, because she is old and doesn't hunt well. Charlie begs the Colonel to spare her, but he tells Charlie that she is his dog, and he'll do what he wants with her. Charlie steals Bertha and hides her in their father's old shed. He knows that the Colonel will likely find out, but he doesn't know what to do. He simply could not allow her to die.

## Ten to Midnight Analysis

Thomas remembers that he and Charlie were never really sure whether they should believe in God or not. Thomas remembers looking up at Jesus on the cross in church, and feeling sorry for him. He believed that Jesus was a kind man and that being nailed to the cross must have been cruel and painful. If God is Jesus's father, and is truly almighty, then why did Jesus, who never did anything wrong, have to go through all of



that? Thomas believed then, just as he believes now, that crossed fingers and Molly's stones were just as reliable as praying to God. Thomas knows that he shouldn't feel like that since without God there is no Heaven. Thomas desperately needs there to be a Heaven.



# Twenty-Four Minutes Past Midnight

## Twenty-Four Minutes Past Midnight Summary

The Colonel shows up at the cottage the next morning. He demands that Charlie tell him where his dog is and that he be held accountable for his thieving ways. Charlie admits that he stole the dog, and explains why. He refuses to tell the Colonel where the dog is, so Charlie's mother pays the Colonel sixpence for Bertha. The Colonel says that they can eat the dog for all he cares, and that he will accept the sixpence as payment for her, but that Charlie is still fired.

Charlie goes to work for a farmer across town, and doesn't get to see much of his brother or Molly after that. Molly's parents find out about Charlie's theft of the dog, and forbid Molly to see any of the Peaceful family. Charlie tries every day to see Molly, but her parents turn him away each time. Eventually Charlie convinces Thomas to deliver letters for him, thinking that he'll have an easier time seeing Molly. Her parents turn Thomas away too, but Molly sneaks out to see him. Thomas ends up being their postman during his last year in school. After he is done with school, Thomas ends up working with the same farmer as Charlie. They work together now, which Thomas is glad for. He now can see his brother all day every day, and still acts as postman for Charlie and Molly. Somehow, through the letters and farm work, it is almost like all three of them are together again.

One day, Charlie and Thomas come home later than usual to find their mother, Molly, and her mother waiting for them. Molly is red eyed from crying, and her mother is obviously angry. She tells Charlie that she has found the letters and read every one of them. She says that all that love stuff is disgusting and sinful, and demands to know if they have been meeting. Charlie admits that they have, and Molly's mother again forbids them from seeing each other. Charlie apologizes to Thomas for not telling him, but admits that he loves Molly. He will find a way to see her, no matter what the cost.

Soon, Bertha begins to come up missing. She would be gone for a while, then come home, or even worse, be found in the woods, lost and confused. One day, she does not come home. Thomas, Big Joe, and his mother all set off to find her. Thomas is just about to give up and go home when he hears a gun shot. When Thomas gets to the old shed in the woods that his father used to use, he sees the Colonel with his shotgun, and Bertha dead at his feet. Charlie and Molly come out of the Cottage, and Molly asks why the Colonel did it and runs home.

## Twenty-Four Minutes Past Midnight Analysis

When Thomas sees Molly, all she can ever really talk about is Charlie. Now Thomas knows jealousy. He loves Molly, and is jealous that she seems more interested in his big brother than in him. When Molly starts talking about the war, it is a relief to Thomas. At



least now he doesn't have to hear about his brother all day. Molly can't understand why they must go to war, and Thomas doesn't understand either. The whole thing sounds kind of silly to both of them, but the whole town is talking about it.

When Thomas finds out that Charlie and Molly have been meeting and didn't tell him, he becomes angry and jealous. He feels betrayed by both of them. He doesn't want to ever talk to either of them again, but Charlie wants to talk to him about it. He tells Thomas that they both wanted to tell him, but that they couldn't. They both know that Thomas loves Molly, but Charlie and Molly love each other too.

When Charlie apologizes to Thomas, he asks if they are still friends. Thomas says yes, but he doesn't mean it. He is just too hurt by what has happened. After that, Charlie and Molly start sneaking off to Charlie and Thomas's father's old wood shed in the forest. Bertha begins going missing for hours at a time, but usually comes home. When she doesn't, Thomas finds her dead at the shack with the Colonel there. This is when Thomas discovers that his brother and Molly have been meeting at the shack, as the dog went to the shack to find Charlie when the Colonel shot her.



# Nearly Five to One

## Nearly Five to One Summary

Bertha is buried in the orchard, along with all the rest of Big Joe's pets. They sing no songs over Bertha, however. Perhaps they are just too angry or perhaps they are just too tired. Either way, Bertha has a silent funeral. On the way home, Big Joe asks their mother if they will all go up to Heaven when they die. She says that they will all go to Heaven to be with Father and Bertha. Later that day, Big Joe wanders off. No one feels worried about it, as he generally does wander. However, when night falls, and Big Joe has not yet returned, everyone gets worried. Everyone knows that Big Joe is terrified of the dark. Charlie, Thomas, and their mother go looking for Big Joe, but none of them find him. Eventually, the entire village mounts a search party. It is Molly that suggests that they look for him at the church. Thomas finds Big Joe at in the church tower, and everyone celebrates.

## Nearly Five to One Analysis

When Big Joe asks his mother if everyone goes to Heaven after they die, she answers that they will all be with Father, Bertha, and the other animals when they get to Heaven. After this, Joe goes missing. This seems to foreshadow the worst for Big Joe. He is slow, and does not understand everything the same way that most people do, so it is easy to assume that he has gone off to die so that he could be with the others. This is made even worse when all of the searchers seem to feel like he is dead. They pole the ponds and the lake, as they all know that Joe can't swim. Molly asks where Joe would most want to be, and the obvious answer is in Heaven with his father and his pets. When Thomas finally finds Joe on top of the church tower, Joe is cold to the touch and does not respond to Thomas. Even when Thomas shakes him and yells at him, Joe does not wake. Finally, Joe wakes up and informs his little brother that he is hungry. Joe did want to go to Heaven, but it seems that he thought the church tower was Heaven. After climbing the tower, he fell asleep.



# Twenty-Eight Minutes Past One

## Twenty-Eight Minutes Past One Summary

For a short time after Big Joe had been found, it was as if all old grudges were forgotten. However, everything did eventually return to normal. One day, Charlie and Thomas return home late from work to find Molly there. Her coat is hanging on their father's peg, and she has her luggage there. As it turns out, Molly is pregnant with Charlie's baby. Charlie is happy, and decides that Molly must stay. Molly and Charlie are married soon after. Thomas tries his best to never be left alone with either of them. He doesn't spend any time with Molly, and he no longer stays for drinks with Charlie at The Duke. At work, Thomas tries to take any assignment he can that will end up with him away from his brother. One day, while at market, Thomas sees a Sergeant Major in town, recruiting soldiers for the war. When he gets home, Thomas decides he will go to war. Unfortunately, he is a little over a year too young. A few days later, the Colonel shows up and demands that either Charlie join the army, or he'll kick the family out of the cottage. Charlie asks Thomas to look after Molly for him, but Thomas informs them that he will be going too. If he shaves and lies about his age, he will be able to go to war with Charlie.

## Twenty-Eight Minutes Past One Analysis

Thomas remembers that once he was told in Sunday school that the church towers represent a promise of Heaven. In France, the incredible spires reaching up to Heaven make the towers of the churches back home seem squat. Most of the spires have been thrown down in France now, and he feels that God, if he was ever real to start with, must have abandoned France and everyone who is there. The broken steeples remind him of broken promises similar to the broken promise that brought him to France for the war.

# Fourteen Minutes Past Two

## Fourteen Minutes Past Two Summary

Charlie and Thomas volunteer for the army. Both of them lie about Thomas's age, saying that they are twins, both born on October 5th, and both seventeen. The lie holds, and they are shipped off for training. All throughout their basic training, Charlie and Thomas and the rest of the regiment fell as though the war is some distant thing, and that they will all be just fine. The hard truth comes out, however, when they get to France. At France, they saw the injured soldiers, and met their new training sergeant. Sergeant "Horrible" Hanley, was a great tormentor. Charlie, who refused to jump through the sergeant's hoops, brought his wrath down on the whole regiment.

## Fourteen Minutes Past Two Analysis

The lie about Thomas's age doesn't hold up long. When they get to France, they meet several people that know them from home. They were forced to reveal Thomas's true age. It didn't make much of a difference though, as there was little that anyone could do about it with Thomas already in France. Thomas is not the only underage kid in the regiment, far from it in fact.



# A Minute Past Three

## A Minute Past Three Summary

Thomas and Charlie and their local friends are sent up to the front. Never again will they have to deal with Hanley, or so they all hope. None of them are particularly afraid of the front until they actually get there. They have to sleep standing up, and always have wet feet. There are mice, and lice to plague them, but the worst plague is the rain. It comes down constantly, leaving a river in the bottom of their trenches and churning their floor into mud. Everyone is cold. The captain told them that they were going to a quiet sector, and it turns out that he was right. There is little gun fire, and all but one casualty is due to illness and cold, not German gun fire.

One day, it comes time for Charlie and Thomas and the rest of their company to go on patrol. This time, they must do something that no one has had to do so far. They must bring back a prisoner. They sneak out into no-man's land, and sneak across to the German front. They sneak through the barbed wire without being noticed, and sneak down into the German trench. At first, Thomas wonders where the Germans are. Then, one comes out from behind a curtain. The German and the British all stand there doing nothing for a moment, just staring at each other. Instead of putting his hands up and coming with them quietly, like he was supposed to, the German runs shrieking back through the curtain to warn his comrades. Someone throws a grenade in after him. When Thomas makes it into the main trench, one of his comrades from home is dead, shot through the head. All of the Germans from the trench are dead but one. They take the German back across no-man's land to the British trench. Charlie has to carry their captain on his back. Back at the trench, the captain orders Charlie to come visit him in the hospital. When Charlie goes to visit the captain, he finds that the captain has already headed home. He left his watch for Charlie. Charlie tells Thomas that if anything ever happens to him, the watch belongs to Thomas.

## A Minute Past Three Analysis

When Thomas's company is up for patrol, he finds that he is not afraid. He doesn't know if it is true courage or simply the double rum ration, or maybe even Charlie's comment that it is like poaching. When they finally get their German prisoner, he is stripped naked. In a shell crater, Charlie, Thomas and the prisoner huddle together in the bottom of the crater. Thomas and Charlie give the German a drink and a cigarette in the trench, and muses that without his uniform, he doesn't seem that much different from them. He's not that bad of a guy, for a German of course.

In the crater, the captain is injured and can not move his legs. Instead of obeying orders and taking the rest of the company and the prisoner back to the trench, Charlie carries the captain on his back to get him back to the trench. As Charlie says, if one goes, everyone goes.





# Twenty-Five Past Three

## Twenty-Five Past Three Summary

Thomas's company is sent to the Wipers now and not their quiet sector that they are used to. The entire village is in ruin, and there are more animals than villagers left. The trenches here are terrible. They are not well made, and there is water and worse in the bottom. They have a new company commander, a young lieutenant who seems to know less about fighting a war than the regulars do. One day, the bombing starts, and doesn't end for two whole days. They all sit in the trenches, huddled in their own private misery, waiting for the bombardment to stop. They all know that once it stops, the Germans will soon arrive, with their machine guns and gas, but they all are fine with it, as it means that the earth around them must at least stop trembling. When the shells finally stop, they are all ordered out onto the firesteps. At first, Thomas can see several Germans coming into no-man's land, then a hundred, then thousands. As the Germans run for the allied trenches, they all open fire. To Thomas, it seems that the Germans must be immortal. Finally, when they are closer, Thomas can see that they are indeed mortal, with many of them falling and dying right in front of him, but that they are also brave. He doesn't bother aiming, just fires until empty, then reloads and starts over again. Finally the Germans reach the barbed wire. Enough of the wire has survived the bombardment that it stops most of them. Only a few Germans ever live long enough to make it to the few gaps, and they are quickly shot down. With the Germans in retreat, the lieutenant orders them up and over in pursuit.

Into the German trenches the Allies surge, ready to finish the war. The enemy is nowhere to be seen, but the Allies continue forward. The Germans begin another bombardment, this time of their own trenches, to drive the Allies out. After falling back to their trench, Thomas notices that Charlie is not back. All night and the next day, Thomas hopes that his brother will arrive. Just when Thomas thinks that Charlie must certainly be dead, he hears Charlie announcing himself at the edge of the trench. Thomas is on sentry duty when Charlie arrives back, shot through the foot. Charlie gets to go home for surgery, but he will be back. When Thomas's company returns at Pop for more training, they find that their new commander is none other than Horrible Hanley himself.

## Twenty-Five Past Three Analysis

During the two-day bombardment, everyone is ready to do whatever it takes to end it. They all know that the bombardment is a prelude to a German push, but they don't care, they just want it over. When the Germans do finally arrive, Thomas is terrified. He is lucky to be standing next to Charlie, who reassures him and keeps him from buckling under the fear. After surviving the German push, turning it aside, and pursuing the Germans back into their own trenches, Thomas is knocked down by a shell explosion. Thomas loses his hearing temporarily, and is somewhat dumbfounded. He only returns to the trench because the lieutenant grabs him and pulls him up. On the way back, the



lieutenant is shot and killed, and Thomas barely make it back. That night, he tries to console himself by saying that Charlie will be back in a day or two, but by morning Thomas has decided that Charlie can only be dead. While many people try to talk to Thomas, and many people are screaming around him, Thomas does not hear any of it. Thomas is experiencing shell shock.



# Nearly Four O'clock

## Nearly Four O'clock Summary

As Thomas is writing his first letter home in a while, someone cries out that gas is coming. Thomas frantically puts his gas mask on, and heads out onto the firestep. He has never seen gas before now, and the sight of it snaking its way in tendrils toward him causes him to break. He falls and his mask comes off some, allowing a little of the gas in. Thomas breaks and runs from the gas. He ends up in a trench with his gas mask off, retching. He looks up to see a German soldier with a rifle aimed at his head. Thomas has no gun, and is sure that today will be his death. Instead, the German tells him to run. Thomas doesn't know why this German decided to spare him, but he makes good use of it. Back at the hospital, Thomas is pronounced healthy, and lucky for only getting a small whiff of the gas. On his way out, he passes many bodies of those who weren't quite so lucky. Horrible Hanley tells them all that they disgraced their regiment, and drives them ever onward. On their single day of leave before going back to the lines, Thomas decides to go and see Anna. When he gets to the estaminet, he finds that Anna is not there. When he asks where she is, her father tells him that she was killed by a shell. Thomas feels a terrible emptiness in him, but when he returns to the trenches, he finds that Charlie has returned.

After a few more days, the Germans begin a shelling that seems to last forever. Both sides are sending thousands of shells over the trenches, and again, it seems that it will never stop. When the shelling finally stops, the Germans try again to invade the trenches. This wave of Germans never make it even to their barbed wire, with the Allied machine gunners cutting them all down before they even get close. As the whistle blows, Thomas and the rest of the company head out into no-man's land once again, to pursue the retreating Germans.

## Nearly Four O'clock Analysis

Thomas receives two letters from home when he gets back from the hospital. His mother writes him and tells him about his new nephew, Tommo. They named him for his brave uncle, and she says that he is a handsome little fellow. She tells him that Charlie has told them all that the war is not as bad as they think, and that they've all just been having a great time in France and Belgium. The second letter is from Charlie and Molly. They both miss him terribly, and Charlie will soon be coming back to the lines. Charlie has told little Tommo all about his brave uncle.

When Charlie returns, he tells Thomas that he didn't want to talk about home for the same reason that he lied to their family. He doesn't want the war to touch home. Home is supposed to be a safe place, and he doesn't want to take the war back there. Also, he doesn't want to bring his family to the war, because they don't belong in that terrible Hell hole.



# Five to Five

## Five to Five Summary

Thomas takes a bad head wound and is partially buried by a shell explosion that kills perhaps a dozen of their men. Thomas wakes to find that he is underground. Charlie grabs Thomas by his feet and pulls him out of the ground. Thomas, Charlie, Sergeant Hanley, and a dozen or so men are in a concrete dugout left over by the Germans in what is now part of no-man's land. Thomas is wounded to the point that he can't actually go anywhere. They are surrounded on three sides by German guns. When Sergeant Hanley gives them the order to run for the German line to continue the push, no one is ready to go. They all know that it is a suicide attack, and don't want to go. Charlie voices the opinion of the entire company. The sergeant reminds Charlie that if he disobeys his orders, he will be shot in front of a firing squad. The rest of the company does go out over the edge with the sergeant, but Charlie stays behind with Thomas. Most of them die, but sure enough, Sergeant Hanley is one of the few to survive to press Charlie's court marshal. Charlie is sentenced to death after a "Trial" of only one hour long, with no witnesses. When Thomas comes to see him, Charlie makes him promise to tell everyone back home the truth of how things really are in the war, and to take care of Molly, Tommo, and Mother.

## Five to Five Analysis

When Thomas wakes up, he finds that he is buried alive. His first thought is that his men thought that he was dead, and buried him. He tries to scream that he is still alive, but instead ends up choking on dirt. When Charlie digs him out, he is relieved to find that he is not dead, and not buried alive by his own men. When Sergeant Hanley decides that they must continue the push, everyone knows that it is a suicide mission, and that the sergeant has gone lost it. Sergeant Hanley knows that they are surrounded and will be cut down by German machine gunners as soon as they leave the dugout, but he orders them all to run for the German border on his word. Charlie tries to convince the sergeant to just wait for dark and to run back to their own line.

At his court marshal, Charlie is railroaded into a death sentence by firing squad. He tells them all the truth, but the only other witness is Sergeant Hanley himself, who does not tell the same story. The officers believe the sergeant because that is what they want to believe. They sentence Charlie to death in under an hour and call him worthless. The rest of the men and the officers feel sorry for Charlie and Thomas. They try to make Charlie as comfortable as possible, because they know that it is wrong to kill him. They try to comfort Thomas because they pity him for the loss of his brother. Thomas refuses to be comforted and refuses to see the priest as well. Why pray, when Thomas doesn't even believe in God anyways. In just about an hour, Charlie will be executed by firing squad for refusing to leave his brother behind.

# One Minute to Six

## One Minute to Six Summary

At about six o'clock in the morning, Thomas tries not to think about what is going on. His brother is taken out in front of the firing squad to be executed for cowardice. Thomas later finds out that he was right in his imagining. Charlie walked out onto the firing field with a smile on his face. He refused the hood and looked the men in their eyes. He cast his eyes skyward and began singing Oranges and Lemons to himself. The entire camp stands at attention to mourn with Thomas. The six men who were in the trench with Thomas and Charlie stand a vigil the whole night over Charlie's grave. When they leave that night, they all say good bye to Charlie for the last time.

## One Minute to Six Analysis

The men and officer of the firing squad do not want to kill Charlie, but they know their orders. After Charlie's death, everyone mourns him. Thomas is glad to find that Sergeant Hanley was killed, but his happiness is short lived. That horrible man has finally gotten what they all felt that he deserved, but Thomas is upset that it came too late to save Charlie. He hopes that Charlie knows that Hanley is dead, as it might give him a slight comfort. After saying good bye to his brother for the last time, Thomas feels as if a part of him has died with Charlie. The company is preparing for a big push. The officers say that this is the last push, that the Germans are on the run, and that they will drive them all the way back to Berlin with this one. Thomas has heard this before. He doesn't know if it will work that way this time but regardless of what happens, he must survive. He has promises to keep.



# Characters

## Thomas Peaceful

Thomas Peaceful is a young teen from Iddesleigh village in Devon, England. He is the youngest of three brothers. When Thomas is very young, he and his father go out to cut some wood. A tree falls, right where Thomas is standing. Thomas's father yells at him to run, but he doesn't, being frozen in place by fear. When his father throws Thomas out of the way, the tree falls on his father instead. Thomas never tells anyone exactly how it happened, but holds onto this terrible secret his whole life. Thomas feels as if he has killed his father.

Growing up, Thomas and his brother Charlie were pretty well inseparable. When Molly comes along, she completes their threesome. Thomas grows up loving Molly, and eventually that love matures from the love of a childhood friend to another kind of love all together. Charlie also loves Molly, and she loves both of them, as well as their brother Big Joe, and their mother. However, as Charlie and Molly grow up, only a year apart, they begin to grow closer together and farther from Thomas, who is three years younger than Charlie and two years younger than Molly.

Thomas and Charlie lie about Thomas's age so that he can join the army and fight in the Great War. They both become Private Peaceful, and this book is told from Thomas's point of view. Thomas was never quite as brave as his older brother, and often it is only Charlie's constant presence at his side that keeps him going during the Hell that is war. Thomas is shell shocked and injured, causing Charlie to stay behind with him in a dugout. When Charlie is sentenced to death for disobeying a direct order, Thomas finally tells his brother his terrible secret, only to find out that Charlie and Mother both already knew. Thomas talked in his sleep while having the nightmares, and told them both many times over without even knowing it. In the end, Thomas is driven on by the memory of his brother, and by the promises that he made before the execution. He must survive the war to keep his promises to Charlie.

## Charlie Peaceful

Charlie Peaceful is the middle of three brothers. Charlie spends most of his life looking after his younger brother, since their father died and Big Joe is not able to take care of his brothers. Charlie always inspires Thomas to be brave, and always stands up for him as well.

After Molly and Charlie begin seeing each other, they both keep it secret from Thomas. They both know that Thomas loves Molly, and they both love Thomas too, so they don't want to hurt him. Charlie ends up fathering a boy with Molly, and so they get married in the church in the village. Soon after, the Colonel informs them that if Charlie doesn't sign up for the army, and do his civic duty, that the Colonel will kick the family out of the



cottage. Charlie joins up to the army, along with his little brother, who has to lie about his age.

Throughout the training and the war, Charlie never seems to be afraid. He often speaks out against the terrible Sergeant, who they call Horrible Hanley. When they get to war, Charlie is seen as the leader of the company. He gives them all strength and courage, especially Thomas. When Thomas seems scared, Charlie sings to him, or makes comments like "It's a good night for poaching," to cheer him up.

After Thomas is injured, and the company is trapped in a German dugout, surrounded on three sides by German guns, Charlie does the unthinkable. He blatantly disobeys a direct order from his sergeant. Sergeant Hanley orders the men over the edge of the dugout and on into the German trenches, which is suicide. The men all know it, but only Charlie speaks up about it. He tells the sergeant exactly what the men are thinking, and says that they should wait for cover of darkness, then go back to their own line. When the sergeant makes clear to Charlie that any man left in the dugout after he gives the order to go will be court marshaled and executed, Charlie refuses to leave. He will not leave his brother to die alone in a German dugout. When Charlie is executed, he walks out onto the field with a smile on his face. He refuses the hood and sings as they shoot him. Even after death, Charlie continues to inspire and protect his brother.

## Big Joe

Big Joe is the oldest of the Peaceful brothers. He had meningitis when he was a baby, and never really got over it. He grew up slow, and always had a hard time understanding certain things, but other things he understood just fine. Big Joe is a kind, generous, loving boy, who loves to share his treasures and loves his pets. Throughout his life, Big Joe catches many different types of animals and bugs and keeps them out back in boxes. He cares for all of them until Grandma Wolf kills them all.

## Molly

Molly first meets Thomas and Charlie at school on Thomas's first day of school. Molly is the teacher's pet, and best student. She is also one of the oldest students still in the "tiddler" class. She teaches Thomas to tie his boots, and is proud of him when she sees him practicing it on his own. After the fight with Jimmy Parsons, Molly takes Thomas aside and cleans him up. She tells him that she thinks that Big Joe is nice, which instantly makes Thomas decide to love her forever. Molly becomes like part of the family almost instantly. She is often found at the Peaceful residence. Thomas, Charlie, and Molly decide that they love each other and will be three friends forever.

After a nearly fatal brush with Scarlet Fever, Molly returns to the Peaceful house, but she has changed. She now has the beauty of a young woman, and Thomas and Charlie both love her more than ever. Molly and Charlie form a relationship after they leave school, and therefore Thomas, behind them. She still loves Thomas, but not in quite the same way as Charlie. She doesn't want to tell Thomas about Charlie because she



doesn't want to hurt him. After seeing Charlie in secret for a while, she becomes pregnant with his child. Molly's parents throw her out of the house for being a sinful girl, and she goes to live with the Peacefuls, who accept her as a full time part of the family now.

## Sergeant

When Charlie and Thomas arrive in France for training, they find that Sergeant Hanley is going to be their trainer. He drives them day in and day out, never letting up. Right from the start, Charlie refuses to play along with his mean jokes. Everyone else fears him, and calls him Horrible Hanley. Hanley punishes Charlie by lashing him to the gun wheel all day while the others train. From then on, he seems to have it in for Charlie and Thomas.

After losing a captain and a lieutenant, Horrible Hanley becomes the leader of their company. As a commanding officer, he is worse even than when he was a trainer. He never allowed them to have any time off, always making them train. He called them terrible names and insulted them all. He broke their spirits as no German attack ever could.

After receiving the order to push through the German line, Hanley leads his company in a charge. After being beaten back, they hole up in an abandoned German dugout, surrounded on three sides by German machine guns. Despite the obvious fact that to continue the charge would mean certain death, Hanley ignores Charlie's pleas to wait for dark and go back. Instead, he orders the men forward, costing dozens of lives. After ordering several men to their deaths and bringing Charlie up on charges of treason for disobeying his orders, he finally dies by what seems to be a freak accident.

## Grandma Wolf

With all of their grandparents dead, Grandma Wolf was the closest thing to a real grandmother that the Peaceful boys really had, though they didn't want even her. Really their great aunt, she insisted on being called Grandma, as great aunt made her sound old. She was old, and she was mean. Her facial hair as much as her attitude is what led Charlie and Thomas to name her Grandma Wolf.

When Thomas's mother had to go to work for the Colonel's wife in the big house, Grandma Wolf came to live with them to keep house and raise the children. She was strict and mean, and often punished the boys without even telling them what they were getting smacked for. For all of her fearfulness, Grandma Wolf was terrified of mice. Big Joe fed the mice, and the other boys always tripped her traps and swept up her poison so that they could enjoy the sight her her frightened silly. Grandma Wolf finally did get her revenge, however, when she killed all of Big Joe's pets.





Eventually, the Colonel's wife die and Grandma Wolf went to the big house to be his servant again. She eventually seemed to fill the void of the Colonel's wife, living with him openly as if she was his wife.

## The Colonel

The Colonel is a wealthy land owner in the village that the Peacefuls call home. The Colonel employs most of the village on his estate. He is just as mean as Grandma Wolf, but it is said that when she goes to live with him, that she wears the trousers.

## Captain Wilkes

Captain Wilkes, or Wilkie, as the company calls him, is the first commanding officer of Thomas's company. He is a kind man, which is a stark contrast to "Horrible" Hanley.

## Bertha

Bertha was one of the Colonel's fox hounds. She becomes the favorite dog of Charlie who works for the Colonel in his kennels. When Bertha gets too old to be a good hunter, the Colonel decides to shoot her. Instead, Charlie steals her. This causes the Colonel to fire Charlie, but he allows them to keep the dog, since Charlie's mother pays for it. Bertha becomes Big Joe's new favorite pet until the Colonel shoots her later.

## Anna

Anna is the only girl other than Molly that Thomas has ever loved. She is a waitress at the estaminet, and the daughter of the owner. She serves Thomas his beer and chips every time he comes in. She always shows an interest in Thomas, but it takes him a while to work up the courage to ask her name. After returning to the estaminet for the last time, Thomas finds that Anna was killed by a shell. Her death leaves Thomas a little more empty inside.



# Objects/Places

## Iddesleigh

Iddesleigh, in Devon, England is the village home of Thomas and Charlie Peaceful and their family.

## Great War

The Great War was the common name for World War I. Beginning in 1914 and ending in 1918, this war consumed most of Europe. Thomas and Charlie join the army and fight for the Allies.

## Fritz

The German soldiers were often called the Fritz by the Allied soldiers.

## Tommy

The German soldiers often called the British soldiers Tommy.

## Wipers

The Wipers was a town on the front line. The Germans had shelled the town almost out of existence.

## Pop

Pop was what Thomas and his company called the town that they trained and camped in while not on duty in the trenches.

## The Duke

The Duke was the tavern in Iddesleigh where all of the local villagers, including Thomas and Charlie drink in the evenings.



## **Ford's Cleave Woods**

Ford's Cleave Woods is the area in which Thomas's father used to cut wood for the Colonel. It was here that Thomas's father died to save his son from being crushed by a falling tree.

## **St. James**

St. James is the church at Iddesleigh. It is here that they Peacefuls attend church, have Thomas's father's funeral, and marry Charlie to Molly.

## **Salisbury Plain**

The training camp at Salisbury Plain is where Thomas and Charlie first begin their training for war. However, here it is easy to forget that the war is very real and they don't take their training very seriously.

## **Etaples**

The training camp at Etaples in France was in stark contrast to the one at Salisbury Plain. Here, there is no pretending that they are merely rehearsing. Here, Sergeant Hanley drives the company to the point of exhaustion, especially the Peaceful boys.



# Themes

## Love

From the moment that Molly said that Big Joe was nice, she has been the love of Thomas's life. Growing up together, Molly comes to be loved by all of the Peaceful family and loves them all in return, especially Thomas and Charlie. The three children, Thomas, Charlie, and Molly, spend all of their time together, get in all of their trouble together, and pledge to always stay together.

When Molly and Charlie form a love of a different kind, Thomas does feel jealous. However, it is his love for both of them that drives him to forgive them their betrayal. When they discover that Molly will have Charlie's baby, Thomas has mixed feelings. His jealousy is renewed, but in his love for them, he is happy that they seem happy.

When Charlie is forced to join the army, Thomas refuses to let him go alone. He loves his brother, who has always looked after him, and feels it is his duty to look after Charlie now. They lie about his age to get him in, and from then on, Thomas and Charlie are back to being inseparable. Many times, it is only their brotherly love that gets them through in the war. When Charlie dies, a part of Thomas dies also, but it is Thomas's love for Charlie, Molly, and their child that drives him to keep his promise to Charlie. Out of love, Thomas will survive to go home and take care of the family.

## Fear

While in the quaint village of Iddesleigh, Thomas knows little of fear. The time that Big Joe runs off, Molly's Scarlet Fever, and the time he and Charlie get caught poaching on the Colonel's land are a few instances. Each of these are, at the time, very scary, but brief enough.

Thomas Peaceful truly comes to know fear in Belgium. Men live and die in the trenches, under constant bombardment from German shells, constant fire from German machine guns, and the constant threat of death by gas. For a time, Charlie's presence keeps Thomas from being overcome with fear. However, when the shelling starts and doesn't stop for days, not even Charlie's best efforts can save Thomas from the debilitating fear. Thomas curls up on the ground in the bottom of the trench and just cries. When he sees the German gas coming toward him for the first time, with its yellow green tendrils snaking toward him, searching him out, Thomas is again overcome by fear, allowing his gas mask to slip and almost costing him his life.

## Injustice

The main theme of this story is the injustice of the whole war. For four years, millions of soldiers threw themselves across barren wastelands at each other in a war of attrition.



Millions died, and many more were injured or had their minds shattered. The war was caused by the assassination of an archduke. The French and the Germans went to war over it and all of Europe was drawn into the war on one side or another.

During and after the war, over three hundred soldiers were executed for desertion, cowardice, and even two for falling asleep on watch. Most of these soldiers were shell shocked, and the British government knew it then as well as they know it now. The court marshals for these soldiers were rarely even trials at all, many not even lasting a full twenty minutes. The soldiers are rarely represented fairly, if at all, and the sentence for their treason is almost always death in front of a firing squad.

While New Zealand pardoned all of their executed soldiers posthumously, and the United States and Australia never allowed their soldiers to be executed in the first place, the British soldiers were never forgiven. Several British governments have continued to refuse posthumous pardons for their executed soldiers, which still haunts their survivors.



# Style

## Point of View

This story is written in the first-person point of view. The narrator follows Thomas Peaceful, for whom the book is named, as he spends one torturous night remembering his life and waiting for the morning which will bring the death of his brother and best friend.

Thomas tells most of this story from his own personal memories and feelings as he remembers the life that brought him to that old farmyard barn in Belgium, waiting for his brother's execution the next morning.

## Setting

This story has a split setting. Overall, this story takes place in a barn in Belgium, over the course of one night, toward the end of the first World War.

As Thomas remembers his entire life, however, the setting includes almost eighteen years and many places. The story of Thomas's life begins in the small village of Iddesleigh in Devon, England. After joining the army, Thomas takes the story to a training camp in Salisbury Plain, then across the channel and on to France.

In Belgium, Thomas introduces the idea of the trenches. They are like a subterranean world all to themselves. In these trenches, men live and die, and are uncomfortable for the whole trip. For the vast majority of the time that they are on the front, Thomas and his company live in the trenches.

Just outside of their trenches lies yet another Hellish setting. No-man's land, as it is called, is described as a barren wasteland. Nothing lives this place between the Allied and German trenches, not even grass and shrubs. It is dotted with craters from shells, abandoned trenches and dugouts, and millions of human bodies. Any time spent in no-man's land is full of fear and insanity for Thomas and his company, as it likely is for every soldier who fought in that war.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is personal and informal. This book is told by one man, to himself, from his memories, and so there is no need for formal speech save for quoting others. Despite this casual tone, the language is not crude, for the most part or sarcastic. Instead it is almost childlike, as the narrator remembers his childhood, which at seventeen, was not that long ago. Throughout the course of the war, Thomas's language does mature a bit, and as it does it also becomes darker, with vivid glimpses into insanity and fear and the mind of a man who has been shell shocked.



Most of this story is told through exposition from Thomas's memory. There are vivid descriptions of the world and people around him, as well as very deep insight into his emotions as he grows from frightened little boy to a frightened, yet determined young man on the front of a war. The dialogue is simple when they are children; coarse when they are soldiers; and sad but determined when Thomas and Charlie see each other for the last time.

## Structure

This story is made of thirteen chapters, taking up one hundred and ninety-four pages. The chapters are not numbered and are named only for the time of the night in which they begin. The pace of this novel is smooth despite an odd, but interesting plot flow. Each chapter begins with the title, telling what period of time it is, and a short passage with Thomas in the barn in Belgium. After this brief passage, Thomas is lost in his memories and the story is transported back into history. The book spans both a single night and a young man's lifetime, all at the same time.

The main plot is the story of Thomas Peaceful's life as he remembers it while spending the night in a barn in Belgium, in the height of World War I. This story is not only the story of Thomas's personal development, however, but also that of his brother Charlie and the love of his life, Molly. Thomas and Charlie both love Molly, but Charlie is the one who ends up marrying her and fathering a child with her. However, when the war comes, both brothers must go. In the end, it is up to Thomas to return home, not Charlie, and take care of Molly and the baby. Behind all of this, is the general theme that is the reason for this book's creation. Over three hundred British soldiers were executed after the war for cowardice, treason, and falling asleep. Millions more are killed in injured in battle. The story of the Peaceful brothers' lives and Charlie's rigged trial mirrors the injustice that was perpetrated against those men who really served.



## Quotes

"Tommo! Tommo! Run, Tommo" (Five Past Ten, p. 9).

"Horrible, isn't it? Horrible food for horrible children. Don't you treat Big Joe like that ever again" (Twenty to Eleven, p. 15).

"They say we'll always be together, the three of us, for ever and ever. They say that as long as we stick together we'll be lucky and happy" (Nearly Quarter Past Eleven, p. 42).

"Every time I eat humbugs from now on, every time I look at skylarks, I'm going to think of that yellow airplane, and the three of us, and how we are right now" (Ten to Midnight, p. 55-56).

"Very well, but you can consider yourself no longer in my employ" (Twenty Four Minutes Past Midnight, p. 62).

"Ha Tommo. Ungwee. Ungwee" (Nearly Five to One, p. 85).

"Don't you go running off again, young man. You gave us all a terrible fright" (Twenty-Eight Minutes Past One, p. 89).

"I'm Charlie Peaceful, and he's Thomas Peaceful. We're twins and we're volunteering" (Fourteen Minutes Past Two, p. 108).

"Oranges and Lemons, say the bells of St. Cements,  
You owe me five farthings, say the bells of St. Martins.  
When will you pay me? Say the bells of Old Bailey.  
When I grow rich, say the bells of Shoreditch.  
When will that be? Say the bells of Stepney.  
I'm sure I don't know, says the great bell at Bow.  
Here comes a candle to light you to bed,  
And here comes a chopper to chop off your head"  
(A Minute Past Three, p. 123).

"You'll be all right, Tommo. You'll be fine" (Twenty-Five Past Three, p. 145).

"Go boy. Go. Tommy, go" (Nearly Four O'clock, p. 162).

"Yes Sergeant, I hear you. But the thing is, Sergeant, even if I wanted to, I can't go with you because I'd have to leave Tommo behind, and I can't do that. As you can see, Sergeant, he's been wounded. He can hardly walk, let alone run. I'm not leaving him. I'll be staying with him. Don't you worry about us, Sergeant, we'll make our way back later when it gets dark. We'll be all right" (Five to Five, p. 181).

"Bye, Charlie" (One Minute to Six, p. 195).





## Topics for Discussion

Discuss fear. How does fear manifest itself for Thomas Peaceful throughout the story? What are the effects? Does fear manifest differently for others in the story than it does for Thomas Peaceful?

Describe the love that Thomas bears for both his brother and Molly. What happens to test that love? How does Thomas respond to these tests of his love?

Big Joe has a developmental problem. How has this effected the Peaceful family? How do people react to Big Joe around the village and how does it affect the Peaceful family? What other effects does Big Joe's condition have on Thomas Peaceful and his family?

Throughout the story, Thomas reveals that he was never sure if God ever really existed. What reason does Thomas question his faith? How does that faith fare in the face of The Great War? What does Thomas believe about God in the end of the story? Why?

This story was written to tell about what the author saw as a great injustice. What is this great injustice? Why might this have happened as it did?

Discuss the point of view of this novel. What is the point of view? What does the author hope to accomplish by telling the story from this point of view?

From the very beginning of this story, it is clear that something terrible will happen when morning comes. What is coming at six o'clock in the morning? Why is it happening? How does the author foreshadow this coming event?

For Thomas's whole life, he has kept one dreadful secret hidden. What is Thomas Peaceful's secret? Why does he feel that he can never tell anyone? What is revealed about his secret in the end?