

The Professor's House Study Guide

The Professor's House by Willa Cather

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Plot Summary

The Professor's House by Willa Cather is a tale about dealing with loss and change. Godfrey St. Peter is a successful author and professor at a small Midwestern college, Hamilton, whose impending move to a new house sets off a series of personal and familial tensions. These tensions primarily revolve around Tom Outland, a remarkable friend and student of Godfrey's who died prematurely in World War I, and his legacy.

While finishing moving out of his house, Professor Godfrey St. Peter decides that he will continue to use his cramped, uncomfortable study on the third floor of his old house where for fifteen years he wrote his multi-volume Spanish Adventurers in North America. His attachment to the study reveals his sentimental temperament, which is not readily understood by his family. His connection to the study is due in part to his friendship with his former student, Tom Outland.

Tom Outland developed and patented ideas which were used to create the Outland Engine, a new type of plane engine. Tom left the patents to his fiancée, Rosamond, the daughter of Godfrey St. Peter. Louie Marsellus, who later married Rosamond, successfully developed and marketed Tom's ideas, which resulted in a large fortune for Rosamond. The money causes conflicts within the family and within the town community as well, especially in terms of who deserves money from Tom's invention. The family conflicts mostly deal with how money has changed Rosamond, and how Tom's memory is honored or dishonored.

The novel also tells Tom Outland's story in the second book. Tom had been a call boy in New Mexico when he befriended Rodney Blake. Tom and Rodney then get a job herding cattle. While they are working herding cattle, Tom discovers a number of abandoned cities on a cliff of a mesa. After Tom and Rodney explore the ruins for a few months, Tom goes to Washington to try to get experts to come and investigate. Tom is unable to get anyone to come. While he is gone, Rodney sells all of the artifacts to a German. Tom is mad at Rodney and they are no longer friends. Tom then goes to Hamilton to find St. Peter and start college. St. Peter is impressed with Tom's brilliance. Tom then goes off and dies in World War I.

The last book of the novel deals with a summer that St. Peter spends working on editing Tom's journal. St. Peter has a near death experience that allows him to let go of many things that he was unable to let go of otherwise.



Book 1, The Family, Chapter 1

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 1 Summary

The Professor's House by Willa Cather is a tale about dealing with loss and change. Godfrey St. Peter is a successful author and professor at a small Midwestern college, Hamilton, whose impending move to a new house sets off a series of personal and familial tensions.

While he is finishing moving out of his house, Godfrey St. Peter decides to stay on in his study. He comes to the decision after reflecting on the twenty years he has spent living in the house and tending his garden. He had shared the study with Augusta, his seamstress, who had often used it for her sewing when St. Peter was not working. He explains his decision to Augusta, the family's seamstress, who does not understand the reason he wants to stay in such an uncomfortable room. St. Peter stops Augusta from removing two female forms that she had used for dressmaking because he wants the room to stay the same.

After his conversation with Augusta ends, St. Peter spends more time reflecting on his life and his work. He describes how he devoted his life to two works, writing his Spanish Adventures in North America and teaching at the university. He also reflects on the time he spent with his wife and two daughters.

St. Peter even reflects on his childhood, which began by the shores of Lake Michigan. When he was eight years old, his family moved to Kansas, and he deeply missed Lake Michigan. A reason that St. Peter chose to teach at Hamilton was because it was near Lake Michigan. Since he could see the lake from his study, it was a great help in completing his book. Ironically, he is moving out of his house because the book won the Oxford prize in history, which awarded him enough money to build a new house.

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 1 Analysis

The main character, Godfrey St. Peter, is introduced here. The novel begins in media res, in the middle of the action. The professor is nearly finished moving out of his old house into his new house and has already finished the major work of his life. All of the action that will take place over the next year is a summation of his whole life. The author, in her focus on St. Peter's attachment to his study, is revealing that he is a sentimental man who has trouble easily letting things go. Change is very difficult for him. That point is clearly made by the reference to how painful leaving Lake Michigan was for St. Peter. Another major reason why St. Peter is so attached to his study is that he remembers that "it was there he and Tom Outland used to sit and talk half through the warm, soft nights" (p. 7).

The author is also sketching out the basic framework of the professor's life. She highlights the important elements in his life: his work, his family, and his garden.



Another important element in the background in this chapter is the brief discussion that St. Peter has with Augusta concerning religion. The author, Willa Cather, was a Catholic. In that conversation, she is highlighting a difference between Augusta and St. Peter: she has faith, and he does not. His lack of faith is notable, especially given his last name, since St. Peter was the head of the apostles and was appointed by Christ as the head of the Church. The biblical St. Peter was called the rock of the Church, and Godfrey St. Peter's name serves to signify that which he has lost: faith. Augusta's faith is something that St. Peter desires at some level, even though he openly denies such a desire.



Book 1, The Family, Chapter 2-3

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 2-3 Summary

At their new house, St. Peter and his wife have their two daughters, their husbands, and an English visitor, Sir Edgar Spilling, who is interested in St. Peter's work on the Spanish adventurers. The conversation turns to Tom Outland, however, when St. Peter's son-in-law Louie Marsellus mentions that he and his wife, Rosamond, are building a house on Lake Michigan and plan to name it Outland.

Marsellus explains to Spilling that Tom Outland was an inventor who had created a new type of plane engine, and that Outland had patented the engine and left the rights to Rosamond because she was his fiancée before he died. Because Marsellus was an electrical engineer, he was able to finish the engine design and market it for a large fortune. St. Peter's other son-in-law, Scott McGregor, is annoyed at this, because he was Outland's friend and Marsellus had never met Tom, yet Marsellus takes advantage of Tom's brilliance and speaks of Tom as though they were old friends.

The next day, St. Peter's wife, Lillian, scolds him for being quiet at the party with Spilling because she understood his silence as being a criticism of Marsellus. St. Peter mentions that he is not happy that Rosamond and Marsellus are naming their house after Outland. His wife also is unhappy with him because she feels that he never has time to talk to her and is always quiet towards her. It turns out that she was jealous of Tom Outland, who she says is the son-in-law that St. Peter wanted to have, because he replaced her as an intellectual companion for St. Peter. Lillian had been St. Peter's only intellectual companion because there was only one other professor, Dr. Crane, who was as smart as St. Peter.

After his conversation with his wife, St. Peter goes to meet with the landlord, Appelhoff, who owns St. Peter's old house, arranging to rent it for another year. When he is going back to his old house, he runs into Horace Langtry, who is another professor at the university. The two are professional rivals, having disagreed on many things within the university, but St. Peter was always the more popular and well regarded professor.

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 2-3 Analysis

The author introduces some of the other main characters in these two chapters. The reader first encounters St. Peter's wife and children in the second chapter, as well as indirectly encountering Tom Outland. The way that the author introduces Tom Outland reveals the way that he will be primarily encountered throughout the novel, in terms of how others remember him. Even when Tom later speaks for himself, it is through St. Peter's recollection of conversations he had with Tom.

The author is also revealing the tensions that Tom Outland brought to the family. Tom had been the fiancée of Rosamond, St. Peter's oldest daughter. Tom was the son-in-law



that St. Peter wanted, and Mrs. Lillian St. Peter believes that St. Peter resents Louie Marsellus for not being Tom. Lillian was deeply jealous of Tom because she felt that Tom replaced her as an intellectual companion. Tom had served as a more suitable intellectual companion for St. Peter because Tom was as smart or smarter than St. Peter. Tom's brilliance was one of the things that made him stand out to St. Peter as an exceptional student and friend.

When St. Peter has his conversation with Appelhoff, the author is using strong foreshadowing. Appelhoff is an image of St. Peter — just as Appelhoff has spent his life hard at work in physical labor and has never had the time to think and reflect, St. Peter has spent his life hard at work in mental labor and has never had the time to think and reflect. St. Peter, having completed his life's work on the Spanish adventurers, is now coming to a time when he will, like Appelhoff, have time to think and reflect. This prospect frightens St. Peter at some level, because he will have to face himself, to encounter himself.

The encounter with Horace Langtry reveals the type of intellectual that St. Peter is: one who is not concerned with worldly success and riches, but rather one who loves knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The author uses Langtry to show how petty academics who seek out worldly success truly are.



Book 1, The Family, Chapter 4-5

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 4-5 Summary

While St. Peter is working in his study on Tom Outland's journal, he is greeted by his daughter Rosamond, who offers to build him a new study at the new house. He turns down her offer because he does not want to leave his current study. Rosamond says that Augusta should at least remove her sewing forms from the study, but St. Peter says that the study is their room too, and that they have every right to stay. She then offers to provide an income for him out of the fortune left by Tom Outland. She says that it is what Tom would have wanted, and that it would allow St. Peter to focus on his writing. He turns her offer down, because he does not want his memories of Tom to be associated with money. After St. Peter inquires about money being given to Dr. Crane, who helped Tom develop the engine, Rosamond assures him that she will take care of the Cranes.

Later, Lillian St. Peter and Scott McGregor run into each other as they're both heading to see St. Peter. They decide to stand outside of the classroom where he is lecturing in order to overhear a bit of the lecture. They hear him responding to a student's question about the contributions of science to human development. St. Peter makes the point that science has not made man happy in the way that art and religion have made men happy, but that science has only succeeded in making men comfortable. His wife tells him that he shouldn't talk to his students in such a manner because they aren't bright enough to understand him, and that St. Peter does himself a disservice by treating them as if they were smart.

He and McGregor then go for a swim in Lake Michigan. McGregor questions St. Peter as to if he's going to let Marsellus name his house after Tom Outland, and St. Peter responds by saying that he doesn't know how to prevent it. McGregor then says that Marsellus annoys him.

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 4-5 Analysis

The author does not directly state that St. Peter is working on Tom's journal, but she says that he was working on papers with handwriting that his daughter Rosamond "knew very well" (p. 47). Since Rosamond was Tom's fiancée, she would have known his handwriting very well. The author is using foreshadowing to hint at the project that St. Peter will commence later in the book.

When Rosamond urges her father to leave the old study and move to a new one, the author is showing that St. Peter's family fails to understand the importance of the study to him, and also fails to understand him in an important way.

The conversation about money reveals that a major reason why St. Peter's friendship with Tom is so important to him is that it was not worldly or commonplace. Money, to St.



Peter, is commonplace and worldly, and as a result, accepting Rosamond's offer would ruin his memory of the friendship. Part of the reason that Rosamond made the offer is that she does not feel that she deserved the money that Tom left to her, since she married someone else.

St. Peter's lecture reveals important characteristics. St. Peter is not an avowedly religious man, but he speaks highly of the importance and contributions of religion to humanity in contrast to the importance and contributions of science. St. Peter is clearly revealed to not be a champion of modernity or the progress of science.

The conversation between Scott and St. Peter shows the tension that exists between those who knew Tom as a friend and student, like Scott and St. Peter, and those who know him from his inventions and legacy, namely Louie Marsellus. The author is underscoring the point that the real Tom Outland is a different person from his fame after death.

The joke in the picture may have been that St. Peter arranged for the pageant is that the roles were reversed. Saladin was seen as brash and arrogant, while King Richard I, also known as Richard Plantagenet, was seen as being the patient, reasonable person in the argument. Another element of the joke may have been the fact that Louie looked Jewish, and would not have fit the part of the Muslim Saladin.



Book 1, The Family, Chapter 6-7

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 6-7 Summary

In October, St. Peter walks in as Louie Marsellus and Mrs. St. Peter are planning a trip to Chicago for Rosamond's birthday and for a lecture that St. Peter will be giving at the University of Chicago. Louie is showing Mrs. St. Peter an emerald necklace he is planning to give to Rosamond on the trip. Mrs. St. Peter thinks that the necklace is too fancy, and that the Marselluses are not rich enough for Rosamond to wear it in public. Louie responds by saying that he wants Rosamond to wear it at home, and that he likes how fancy they are.

St. Peter then goes upstairs while he waits for Louie Marsellus to leave. When he is going upstairs, he thinks about his wife's relationship with her two sons-in-law. Her relationship with both Louie and Scott confuses St. Peter because he did not expect it from her. She was very tough on Tom Outland for small faults, but readily forgives Louie and Scott for their faults. He then comes downstairs and tells his wife that he does not want Louie to apply to join the Arts and Letters society because he knows that Scott will prevent him from joining.

In November, when St. Peter is going to visit his daughter Kathleen to help her pick out fur coats, he notices Rosamond leaving the McGregor bungalow and heading to her waiting car and chauffeur. He notices that she is wearing a proud expression and a fancy coat. He compliments her on the coat, and finds out that her husband had picked it out for her.

When he goes in to speak with Kathleen, he finds out that she has been crying because she is envious of her older sister. Kathleen explains that she is envious of Rosamond not so much because she is rich, but because she makes a point of displaying her wealth, as if to remind Kathleen that she is not rich. Kathleen blames Louie for the change in Rosamond. Kathleen also blames St. Peter for doing nothing with Tom's notes until Louie came along. She thinks that if her father had developed the ideas in Tom's notes, then the whole family would be better off. St. Peter responds that he didn't know enough to do what Louie did, and that the money would have gone to Rosamond anyway.

The divide between his two daughters pains St. Peter, because Kathleen had always looked up to Rosamond, that is, until the death of Tom Outland, because of how quickly Rosamond seemed to forget Tom, who had been her fiancée. He is also hurt by seeing how envious Kathleen is toward Rosamond.

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 6-7 Analysis

One of the main points of these two chapters revolves around the emerald necklace that Marsellus is giving to Rosamond. Because the necklace is so extravagant and out of



proportion for their economic situation, even though they are wealthy, it shows that Marsellus is concerned with putting on the appearance of being very wealthy. He seems to have a need to out do others in showing off his wealth. The green of the emeralds foreshadow the envy that Kathleen will feel towards Rosamond. Kathleen's envy is made obvious in chapter 7, when she states that she is envious.

The talk about the Arts and Letters refers to an exclusive club that Scott is a member of but Louie is not. Louie would like to join it, but because Scott dislikes Louie, he will secretly prevent him from joining. The author is again revealing the tension in the family caused by the legacy of Tom Outland.



Book 1, The Family, Chapter 8-9

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 8-9 Summary

St. Peter and his family are in Chicago, and Louie Marsellus has arranged for St. Peter and his wife to go to the opera to see Mignon, a French opera that St. Peter enjoyed when he was a student in France. At the end of the opera, St. Peter remarks to his wife that it has been a mistake growing middle-aged, and that they should have died beautifully when they were young. She responds by saying that something besides age and children came between them.

After the trip, when they return to Hamilton, it is already cold. Mrs. St. Peter tells her husband that the study will be too cold for him, and that the stove he uses to heat his study is not safe. St. Peter and his wife briefly argue about this point.

On Christmas Day, St. Peter plans to spend the day alone in his study, working. He runs into Augusta, his seamstress, on the way to the house. He asks her a question about the Magnificat, and in answering the question, she tells St. Peter that he knows little about religion.

After he spends the morning working, he eats the lunch that his wife packed for him and reflects upon the time he spent in Paris. He remembers buying beautiful flowers from a couple selling them on the street, and regretted not buying more. He then reflects how his relationship and travels with the Thierault family helped to shape the design of his book.

That night, he has Christmas dinner at home with his family. Louie Marsellus asks his wife about an old silver bracelet, without realizing that the bracelet belonged to Tom Outland. Louie then, in discussing the dinner menu, accuses Scott of being intolerant toward him.

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 8-9 Analysis

Going to the opera and seeing Mignon makes St. Peter reflect upon his youth. When St. Peter remarks to his wife that they should have died in a shipwreck when they were young, he is being both nostalgic and romantic. He is reflecting upon the beauty and promise of youth, as well as the intensity of youthful romance. St. Peter, in wishing that he and his wife were shipwrecked when they were young, wishes that their dreams and youth could have remained preserved and pure before they were lost in day to day life. Tom Outland died young, before he was worn out by day to day life. When she tells him that something came between them, she is possibly referring to Tom Outland, but the author does not make it clear.

When Mrs. St. Peter tells her husband about the dangers of the stove, the author is again using foreshadowing to allude to an event in the third book.



St. Peter's question to Augusta about the Magnificat serves to again indicate St. Peter's distance from Catholicism, and from his namesake.

St. Peter's reflection upon his time in France reveal details about the man, but more importantly it shows that St. Peter is beginning to reflect more and more upon the events of his own life.

The incident regarding the dull silver bracelet emphasizes the point that Louie has little regard for the person of Tom Outland. The criticism that Louie makes of Scott may be justified, especially since Scott was planning on preventing Louie from joining the Arts and Letters group, but Louie seems to be unaware of the reason why Scott is intolerant towards him.



Book 1, The Family, Chapter 10

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 10 Summary

Later in the winter, Scott McGregor gives St. Peter a ride home. On the way, McGregor speaks to St. Peter about Tom Outland, which causes St. Peter to think about the day that he first met Tom.

Tom approached St. Peter on a Saturday morning, carrying only a grey canvas telescope, a hat, and a coat. He tells St. Peter that he wants to go to school at Hamilton, and is seeking St. Peter's advice. Though Tom hasn't been to high school, he can read Latin well, and proves it to St. Peter by reciting a Latin poem. The problem, however, is that Tom hasn't had any math or science, and does not have good handwriting.

Tom tells St. Peter that he has money in his name in New Mexico, but that he can't touch it while he's healthy. Tom then recounts more of his story to St. Peter, describing the job he had as a call boy.

Tom was then invited by Mrs. St. Peter to have lunch. After he went upstairs to wash his hands, he slipped and fell on the stairs. During lunch, he tells the St. Peters more of his story, including his work for a cattle firm. Tom then gives a very old piece of pottery to Mrs. St. Peter. He also gives two turquoises to Kathleen and Rosamond.

Tom did well in his studies, especially in math, and spent a great deal of time at the St. Peter household. He played with Kathleen and Rosamond often, telling them stories of his adventures with Roddy. At dinner one night, Kathleen relates some of Tom's stories to her parents, including a story about the death of Tom's parents when Tom was just a baby. After his parents died, he was raised by the O'Brien's. Many of Tom's stories also focused on his friend Roddy.

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 10 Analysis

It is in this chapter that the author first directly introduces the reader to Tom Outland, even though the reader meets Tom through St. Peter's recollection. The main point of the reflection on Tom is to briefly introduce the reader to Tom's background. The author provides details, such as the bank account in New Mexico, which will be explained later in the book. When Tom mentions that the money he has in New Mexico is in trust for somebody else, the author is using foreshadowing to allude to Tom's friend Rodney Blake. The allusion to Rodney Blake is made clearer later in the chapter when Tom tells stories of his adventures with Roddy to Kathleen and Rosamond.

Tom's intelligence is made clear when the narrator speaks about how quickly Tom progressed in his tutoring. St. Peter is cautious about becoming eager about Tom's prospects as a student, because he is unsure if Tom is actually as good of a student as he appears to be. It is clear from what has already happened that Tom is as brilliant as

he appears to be. The author is emphasizing here that the friendship between Tom and St. Peter is founded upon a shared love of the intellectual life and the pursuit of truth.



Book 1, The Family, Chapter 11-13

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 11-13 Summary

Kathleen and St. Peter are discussing their seamstress, Augusta, who lost five hundred dollars on a bad investment. When St. Peter suggests that they talk to Rosamond, Kathleen tells him that it will do no good because Rosamond already refused to help. She refused to help because Louie Marsellus, her husband, advised Augusta not to make the investment. They decide to donate one hundred dollars each, with the hope that Rosamond will make up the rest.

Kathleen then notices that St. Peter still has Tom's blanket, and tells the story of how Roddy gave it to him.

Later, while St. Peter is eating breakfast, he reads a note from Mrs. Crane requesting a meeting. In the meeting, she asks him what money they could receive from the help that Dr. Crane gave to Tom Outland and the development of his engine. St. Peter explains that no provision or mention of Dr. Crane was made in Tom's will, and that he can't really do anything to help them. She gets angry with St. Peter for not having given them more help in the past. She finishes by saying that she will take the matter to court. After Mrs. Crane leaves, St. Peter reflects on his friendship with Dr. Crane.

That night, St. Peter visits Dr. Crane to talk him out of taking legal action against Louie Marsellus, since Dr. Crane would lose. Dr. Crane admits that he hadn't done anything with Tom's notes before they were legally given to Louie and Rosamond, and that it was really only the money that concerned him. Unable to convince Dr. Crane not to take legal action, St. Peter advises him to at least get a better lawyer.

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 11-13 Analysis

The conversation between Kathleen and St. Peter reveals their generosity, because one hundred dollars is a large sum at that time, as well as how stingy Rosamond has become because of her wealth.

The discussions with both Mrs. Crane and Dr. Crane reveal that the tensions caused by Tom Outland's money are not confined to the St. Peter family. The Cranes believe that they have a stake in the money, but are unwilling to ask for it directly from Louie Marsellus. The reason that they are unwilling to ask for it directly is because of Mrs. Crane's brother, Homer Bright, who has advised the Cranes to go to court. Homer is not encouraging his sister and brother-in-law to go to court for their benefit, but rather his own.



Book 1, The Family, Chapter 14-17

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 14-17 Summary

In February, St. Peter goes to Chicago again to help Rosamond shop for Spanish furniture. On the train back to Hamilton, St. Peter meets Scott McGregor. McGregor notices that St. Peter looks very tired, and is concerned for St. Peter. When St. Peter gets home, he talks with his wife about the trip.

A month later, Louie Marsellus reveals that he and Rosamond made plans to go to France and to take St. Peter and his wife with them. St. Peter says that he will see if he can make it, but is upset that he feels that he will ultimately refuse to go on the trip. After he announces that he will not be going to France, Louie is disappointed and his wife asks him what or who is making him spend less time with his family. He says that he is worn out and tired.

After his family went to France in May, St. Peter slowly began to work on his summer project: editing Tom Outland's journal. St. Peter reflects that since the journal covers only six months of Tom's life, he needs to add a section about Tom's personality. He remembers that it took his wife two years to become jealous of Tom. She claimed that he was too mysterious.

After Tom graduated, he turned down a scholarship offer and remained in Hamilton to be an instructor in the Physics department. The summer that Tom graduated, he finally told St. Peter the story of his life.

Book 1, The Family, Chapter 14-17 Analysis

When St. Peter goes on a shopping trip with his daughter to purchase Spanish furniture, he is worn out by the trip. He went because he felt an obligation to go. The author is revealing that St. Peter is feeling burdened by the obligations he has to his family. In refusing to go to France with his family, St. Peter is beginning to withdraw from his familial obligations because he is tired. It is not as though he wants or plans to abandon his family, but that he needs time on his own to simply be quiet and reflect on his life.

The summer project that St. Peter is working on is a frightening prospect for St. Peter, because in some way as long as he is still working on it, Tom Outland is, in a certain sense, still alive to him. Once he finishes the project, he will have to move on.



Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 1

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 1 Summary

Tom's story begins in Pardee, New Mexico, where he was working as a call boy. He has to summon two men from a poker game, but they want to finish their hand. There is a new person in the game, Rodney Blake. Rodney came into the game without putting on clean clothes, but no one says anything because he is a large man. He ends up winning the jack-pot.

Later that night, Tom follows Rodney back to his room to make sure that he is okay. In Rodney's room, Tom picks up the gold and money that Rodney won and bundles it together for Rodney. In the morning, he wakes up Rodney and tells Rodney that he owes him breakfast. Rodney agrees. Tom then convinces Rodney to put the money into a savings account.

That winter, Tom becomes sick with pneumonia, and Rodney cares for him. When the doctor and Father Duschene tell Tom to live in the open all summer for his health, Rodney gets them a job with a cattle company. In May, they went twenty miles south of Pardee and saw the Blue Mesa to the south. They spend all summer at the camp. Tom reads one hundred lines of Latin a day. They also read books like Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels, which is Rodney's favorite book. In October, Rodney stayed with the cattle while Tom went with the foreman to store their winter supplies.

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter begins with a shift in the narrator's point of view. Tom Outland is now the first person narrator. He is recounting his story to Godfrey St. Peter. The action in this chapter takes place at least twenty years before the action in the rest of the book. Tom is telling St. Peter how he ended up in Hamilton.

The point of this chapter is to introduce the reader to Tom Outland. The style of the chapter is simpler and more action oriented than the chapters found in the previous book because the emphasis is on what Tom is doing, rather than Tom's interior world.

The author reveals important characteristics about Tom's character. Tom could have easily taken the money that Rodney won at poker, but he did not.



Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 2-3

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 2-3 Summary

Tom and John Rapp, the foreman, are setting up and cleaning out the cabin that will house Tom and Rodney during the winter while they watch over the cattle. They both won't be able to stay in the cabin at the same time for awhile because the cattle needed to stay to the north, and that Tom and Rodney would alternate shifts. Rapp warns them that cattle have run across the river to the mesa, and that no one has ever gone over to get them because it's too difficult to cross the river safely.

Tom mentions that he would like to try and climb the mesa, and Rapp warns him that he would be fired if he tried because he would injure himself and lose the herd. After Rapp left, Tom and Rodney settled into a comfortable routine, but the mesa was always a temptation for them.

When Tom is hunting turkeys, he discovers an irrigation ditch, along with pottery and some tools. He takes what he finds to Rodney to share his discovery. Tom then crosses the river and rides around the mesa to get a better understanding of the mesa. He does not see a way that he could climb to the top.

In November, the foreman brings provisions for Tom and Rodney, along with an Englishman, Henry Atkins, who agreed to cook for Tom and Rodney in exchange for room and board. Rapp warns Tom and Rodney not to leave Henry alone with the cattle for any period of time at all. Life is much better for Tom and Rodney with Henry there to cook and take care of the cabin.

Later, after they lose a few cattle, Tom takes his horse and goes across the river without Rodney's knowledge to find the lost cattle. He finds that the air is wonderful in the valley. He calls the valley Cow Canyon because wild cattle roam there. As he is exploring, he discovers a deserted stone city in a cliff of the mesa. At dinner that night, he tells Rodney and Henry about his discovery. They decide to explore further once the weather is warmer. Rodney explores the canyon further on New Year's day, and finds four other villages.

Tom and Rodney make plans to explore the mesa once their contract ended with the Sitwell Company. Henry agrees to go along with Tom and Rodney to spend time exploring the mesa and the cities.

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 2-3 Analysis

These two chapters are more action oriented than the whole of the first book, but the author makes some important points here. In describing the mesa as a temptation for

Rodney and Tom, the author's point is that there is something in the human spirit which craves not only open spaces, but the exploration of the unknown. The mesa is unknown and unexplored, and that fact alone makes it tempting for Rodney and Tom. When Tom discovers the irrigation ditch and tools, he is curious to know about who built the irrigation ditch and used the tools.

When Tom loses a few of the cattle, it is not really his fault that they ran off, but he blames himself for the loss and tries to recover the cattle. This shows that Tom is not just interested in getting the job done, but wants to do the job well. It is his desire to do the job well that leads to his discovery of the cities in the mesa.

The author is also showing the degree of freedom that Tom, Rodney and Henry all share. In deciding to explore the cities, they don't worry about the practicality of their expedition, or how they will find work after they are done exploring.



Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 4-5

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 4-5 Summary

Tom and Rodney begin their adventure in May. They carry tools and food up, and spend several days finding their way up to Cliff City. Once they make it up to Cliff City, they explore a little before returning to the river to get more food. Before they leave, they find a crystal clear spring of water and water jars, along with kitchen supplies.

After spending a few days in their cabin by the river, they return to Cliff City. They rebuild part of a road that was lost in a landslide and they then hire workmen to build a cabin for them at the top of the mesa, above Cliff City. Tom and Rodney then build a ladder to allow them easy access to Cliff City and Cow Canyon.

Their work is nearly done in July, just as their money is running out. They build shelves for the artifacts they will find. Tom then begins numbering each item and making notes about it. At the end of each day, he writes up an account of the day's activities. Henry gives Tom and Rodney help in recovering artifacts.

They discover the dried out body of a woman who lived in the valley, and decide that she had been murdered because of a wound in her side. Henry names her Mother Eve. They later find three other bodies.

In August, Henry is bitten by a rattlesnake in his forehead while standing on Tom's shoulders trying to climb up to a new set of ruins. He dies after two hours. Rodney gets the priest from the village, Father Duchene, and they bury Henry. Tom and Rodney are sad after Henry dies, but Father Duchene keeps them company and lifts their spirits. They continue their explorations of the mesa.

Father Duchene cuts down a cedar tree and finds out by counting the rings that the tree is 336 years old and only began to grow after Cliff City was empty. Since Father Duchene helped, Tom and Rodney understand many of the things they found in the city because he knew a lot about the people of the area.

Father Duchene thinks that the people who lived on the mesa were wiped out by another tribe which was more violent than the mesa dwellers were. He thinks that they were destroyed while they were in one of the valleys, because Cliff City is still intact.

Both Father Duchene and Rodney think that Tom should go to Washington to tell the government about the discovery. Father Duchene tells Tom to go to the Smithsonian Institute. Rodney and Tom then make plans for Tom's trip to Washington. They stay on the mesa until Christmas. Tom hides his journal in Cliff City before he leaves. Tom then leaves on the train to Washington.

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 4-5 Analysis

The author begins by focusing on the details of the mesa and of Cliff City. She goes into depth describing the colors and details of the area, in order to emphasize the beauty and tranquility of the area.

The death of Henry draws Tom and Rodney closer together, and is the impetus for Father Duchene to assist Tom and Rodney. The author is setting up the set of circumstances which allows Tom to go to Washington to see if he can get experts interested in exploring the city.



Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 6

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 6 Summary

The first thing that Tom does upon arriving in Washington is to visit his district Representative in Congress. He tells Tom to go see the Indian Commission, which ends up being bad advice. Tom spends three days waiting at the Commissioner's office before he suspects that the people at the Commissioner's were not taking him seriously. When Tom finally meets with the Commissioner, he is told that the Indian Commission doesn't deal with history, and that he should try to get a letter to see the Smithsonian Institute.

Tom sees his Congressman again and gets a letter to the Smithsonian. He has trouble seeing the director of the Smithsonian, but is encouraged by the people in the office. He meets the director's stenographer, Virginia Ward. She suggests that Tom invite the director's secretary to lunch at Shoreham, a fancy hotel. On his twenty second day, a Thursday, in Washington, he takes the secretary to lunch and but doesn't have much of a chance to speak because the secretary keeps talking. The secretary then tells Tom that he arranged an interview for Tom with the director on Monday.

Tom lives with a married couple who were strange to Tom, because they were concerned with appearing to be richer than they actually were. Tom finds living with the Bixbys makes him sad. Tom often walks around the city and sees many people like the Bixbys, people he thinks are living in slavery to their jobs and obligations.

When Tom meets with the director, he tells the director about what he found and the director tells him to meet with a Dr. Ripley. Dr. Ripley wants to come to New Mexico to study the mesa, but didn't have the money. Tom talks to his Representative to try to get money for the trip. Tom also talks to a Dr. Fox. In the end, in April, Dr. Ripley tells Tom that there isn't the money for him to come and see Tom's discovery.

Tom goes back home in May, ashamed because he is broke and has nothing to show Rodney. When Tom gets back to Tarpin, he finds out from Bill Book that Rodney has sold all of the artifacts that he and Tom found to a German for four thousand dollars.

Rodney asks Tom for a chance to explain before Tom gets angry. Rodney told Tom that he thought it was the best they could do, and didn't want to miss the chance. Tom is very angry with Rodney because he doesn't think that the artifacts were theirs to sell. Rodney tells Tom that the money is in the bank, with Tom's name on it, so Tom can go to college. In the end, Tom is able to convince Rodney how much the artifacts meant to him, and Rodney decides to leave. Tom tells Rodney that they can't be friends again. Rodney then leaves, and Tom is sad.



Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter contains the author's most pointed criticism of the modern world: that it makes human beings into slaves. She is comparing and contrasting the world of Tom Outland — in which he is truly free, beholden to neither a salary nor a cubicle — and the world of Washington — in which men and women are filled with anxiety over money and appearance, and are slaves to their wages. The men in Washington look like drones going into and out of their buildings.

The author also is critical of the falsity which is in Washington. In describing the characters that Tom Outland meets in Washington, most are living a lie and lying to make themselves look more important than they truly are. The author effectively shows how petty and silly all of the posturing done by the people in Washington truly is.

The conflict between Tom and Rodney upon Tom's return to Tarpin is one of the saddest and most tragic episodes in the novel. Rodney acts in what he believes to be the best interests of both Tom and himself. Rodney also thinks that he is acting in accord with Tom's wishes. Rodney was not being materialistic and greedy in selling the artifacts, but Tom's reaction shows how little money means to Tom. After Rodney departs, Tom realizes that Rodney's friendship meant even more to him than the artifacts.



Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 7

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 7 Summary

Tom tries to find out where Rodney went and tells Father Duchene what happened. Father Duchene recommends that Tom wait back at the mesa for Rodney to return, and to keep up with his studies. Father Duchene agrees to look for Rodney by putting out notices. Tom then goes back to the mesa alone.

Tom enjoys his time alone on the mesa, and thinks that he is fully there. He keeps up on reading Latin and studying, and thinks that it's the first time he's truly studied. He also cleans up the ruins because the German left a mess when he took all of the artifacts. He thinks that this is the best summer he will ever have. He memorizes parts of Virgil's Aeneid.

That winter, he works on the railroad in Pardee and continues to look for Rodney. He heads to Hamilton to meet St. Peter that spring.

Book 2, Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 7 Analysis

The author focuses upon how Tom deals with the fallout of the end of his friendship with Rodney. It is only when Tom is alone with himself that he is able to truly find and understand himself. The reason that Tom is able to truly study is that he is not doing it for any practical reason or for anyone besides himself. He is studying for his own sake, and for the value of study itself.



Book 3, The Professor, Chapter 1-2

Book 3, The Professor, Chapter 1-2 Summary

During the summer he spends at home alone while his family is in France, St. Peter reflects on his life. He realizes that his life happened by chance. He thinks that many of the things that made his life happy were not things that he caused, but things that just happened. Tom Outland, he thinks, happened by chance.

In thinking about Tom, St. Peter remembers that two years after Tom graduated, he and St. Peter went to the Mesa and Tom helped St. Peter explore the routes traveled by the Spanish explorers, which St. Peter was still writing about. They also recovered Tom's journal from where he had hidden it.

The next summer they went to Mexico. They plan to go to Paris, but their plans are interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. When Father Duchene comes through Hamilton on his way to Europe, Tom decides to go with him to Europe. St. Peter is unsure how Tom's life would have turned out if he had not gone off and died in the war.

After his reflection on Tom, St. Peter is having trouble getting much accomplished on his work. He is annotating Tom's diary, but is being very slow about it. He is slow because he has been thinking and day-dreaming, something he had never done before. He is becoming friends with his younger self again.

St. Peter experiences a strange disconnect with his life. He does not feel like his life really is his life, but that his life was merely a series of events that happened to him. He remembers things from his childhood that he had forgotten for a long time.

When St. Peter is reflecting on himself as a child, he comes to believe that he is going to die soon. He becomes so convinced that he is going to die that he decides to see a doctor.

Book 3, The Professor, Chapter 1-2 Analysis

St. Peter is feeling disconnected from his life in these two chapters. He sees his life as a series of events that happened to him, rather than things that he did or caused. As a result, he feels that he does not have ownership of his own life, since it is a series of things that just happened, rather than a series of events that he has lived. He is trying to understand who he is, and that is when he encounters himself as a child. St. Peter is thinking about how his life actually turned out in comparison with how he thought his life would turn out when he was a child.

St. Peter's encounter with Tom Outland was very refreshing for him, because he saw in Tom things that he had lost: namely enthusiasm and excitement for learning and a pure



joy for life. St. Peter was so worn down by the humdrum of day to day life that he had lost the youthful optimism that Tom was able to give him again.

St. Peter's thought that he was going to die reveals that he does not know what the future will hold for him. He is unable to see his future, and now that his life's work is over, he doesn't know what he is supposed to do with his life. At the same time, St. Peter is not being metaphorical about his feeling that he is going to die. He really thinks that he will die. Otherwise, he would not have gone to see a doctor.



Book 3, The Professor, Chapter 3-5

Book 3, The Professor, Chapter 3-5 Summary

The doctor visits St. Peter and does not find anything wrong with him. St. Peter does not tell the doctor that he thinks he will die soon. He gets letters every week from his family, and often reads them by the lake.

When the fall term opens, St. Peter returns to work but is still sure that he will die soon. He speaks with his son-in-law, Scott McGregor, who agrees that St. Peter has the right to stay in his study. St. Peter does not see how he can live in the new house. He is more comfortable with the idea of death as a freeing experience.

He then gets thin letters from his wife and Louie Marsellus, and is scared by them because he knows what the letters will say. When he opens the letters, he finds out that his suspicions were right, and that his family is coming back soon, and would actually be back in a few days.

St. Peter is very scared because he enjoyed being free of his family and does not want to face them again. He just wants to be alone. His feelings confuse him. He falls asleep on his couch, even though there is a heavy wind.

He awakes to find that his study is dark and filled with gas from his stove. He thinks about getting up, but falls back asleep.

The next time he awakes, he is covered with a blanket and finds that his seamstress, Augusta, is present in the room. She tells him that she had pulled him out into the hall.

He tells Augusta that he wants her to stay the night in the house, because he is feeling lonely. He is very happy that Augusta is there because he feels a sense of obligation toward her that he doesn't to his family. He loved his wife and loved his family, but the happy years seem to have passed for him. As he tries to figure out if he made a mistake in life, he realizes that he didn't know how to live without being very happy.

St. Peter feels that his near death experience has changed him, even though he is not yet sure how it changed him. He wonders if his family will notice the difference.

Book 3, The Professor, Chapter 3-5 Analysis

St. Peter's thought that he will die soon is unaffected by the doctor, but it is telling that St. Peter continues on with his duties. At the same time, it is his duties that frighten him. He is scared of opening the thin letters from his family because he knows that his familial obligations will resume.



When his study is filled with gas, and St. Peter is faced with the prospect of death, he undergoes a profound transformation. He realizes that he is free to die and to withdraw from his obligations, and if he is free to withdraw from his obligations through death, then he can fulfill his obligations while remaining free.

St. Peter's view of obligation is changed in his experience with Augusta. He comes to understand that familial and human obligations are not tiresome and draining, but rather can bring the happiness that he sees in Augusta.



Characters

Professor Godfrey St. Peter

Professor Godfrey St. Peter, the main character of the novel, is an accomplished professor and chair of European history. The story focuses upon one year of his life, but the reader is able to glimpse a picture of St. Peter's entire life through the use of flashbacks. St. Peter has finished the major work of his life, an eight volume work, *The Spanish Adventurers in North America*. He and his wife, Lillian, have two married daughters, Kathleen and Rosamond. He has recently built a new house, and is having trouble leaving his old house behind. Leaving his old house makes him think of many things, including his friendship with Tom Outland.

He met Tom when Tom showed up at his house one day. Tom wanted to meet St. Peter and get advice about enrolling at Hamilton. Tom became friends with St. Peter's family and eventually with St. Peter. They took many trips together. St. Peter thinks of Tom as the only remarkable pupil he has ever had.

St. Peter is having trouble moving on in life, since he has already accomplished his life's work and his family is grown. He doesn't really know what else is in store for him in life. He is reluctant to move on and just wants to be alone. When he spends a summer alone, he feels very peaceful, but is worried when his family is returning. He nearly dies in a gas accident, and in nearly dying, he becomes ready to see his family again and apparently resume his role as a husband and father.

Tom Outland

Tom Outland is the second main character in the novel. His parents died when he was very young, and he was adopted and raised by the O'Brien's. As a young man, he worked in Pardee, New Mexico as a call boy. It was there that he met Rodney Blake. He and Rodney became fast friends. They then began to work herding cattle near a mesa. While exploring the mesa, Tom discovers long abandoned cities which have many ruins and artifacts. They spend a few months exploring the mesa with their friend and helper Henry. After Henry dies, Tom then goes to Washington to seek out the help of experts in exploring the city. He is unable to get anyone to come and help him while he is in Washington. While he is in Washington, Rodney sells all of the artifacts to a German for four thousand dollars. Tom is very upset by this, and ends his friendship with Rodney. He then spends a summer alone on the mesa.

Tom then goes to Hamilton to find St. Peter and begin his college education. He befriends the St. Peter family, excels in college, and becomes engaged to St. Peter's daughter, Rosamond. After he graduates he works as an instructor in the physics department. He also makes many discoveries in the physics laboratory which he



patents. He then decides to go to fight in World War I, but he first leaves the rights to the patents to Rosamond. He dies in World War I.

Lillian St. Peter

She is St. Peter's wife of almost thirty years. She was his main intellectual companion until Tom Outland came along. She is very involved in the lives of her children, especially her two sons-in-law.

Louie Marsellus

He is the husband of St. Peter's older daughter, Rosamond. An electrical engineer by trade, he was able to take Tom Outland's notes and successfully develop and market the Outland Engine, which resulted in a large fortune for Rosamond.

Scott McGregor

He is the husband of Kathleen McGregor and is employed as a writer and editorialist for a newspaper. He was a friend and classmate of Tom Outland.

Kathleen McGregor

The younger of St. Peter's two daughters, she is married to Scott McGregor.

Rosamond Marsellus

The elder of St. Peter's two daughters, she was Tom Outland's fiancée before he died, and the heir to the money made on his patents. She is married to Louie Marsellus. Her money has changed her for the worse.

Rodney Blake

Rodney is Tom's friend in the southwest. He is about ten years older than Tom, but treats Tom like an equal.

Dr. Crane

A physics professor at the university, he helped Tom Outland develop his ideas. He is a sickly and tired man.



Henry Atkins

He is an Englishman who was assigned by Rapp to cook and clean for Tom and Rodney while they were tending the cattle near Blue Mesa.

John Rapp

The foreman of the Sitwell Cattle Company who oversaw Tom and Rodney's work.



Objects/Places

The Professor's Study

Small and cramped, but with a view of Lake Michigan, this is where St. Peter's heart truly lies.

Hamilton

The town where St. Peter lives and teaches, and where he met Tom Outland.

Cruzados River

The river in New Mexico along which Tom Outland and Rodney Blake grazed the cattle.

Blue Mesa

The Blue Mesa is the one notable landmark in the area of New Mexico where Tom and Rodney grazed cattle.

Washington

Washington, D.C., where Tom spent a number of months trying to get the Smithsonian Institute and the government interested in his discovery of Cliff City.

Cliff City

This is the stone city discovered by Tom Outland in Tom Outland's Story, Chapter 3.

The New House

Built with the money that accompanied the Oxford Prize in History, this is the house where the St. Peters now live, but it is not where Godfrey St. Peter wants to live.

Outland

Rosamond and Louie Marsellus' house that they built with the money that they made off of Tom Outland's invention. They named it in his honor.



Lake Michigan

One of the five great lakes, it is where St. Peter spent the first few years of his life before moving to Kansas, and where he spent most of his adult life. It is another place where St. Peter's heart lies.

Tarpin, New Mexico

The city which Tom and Rodney used as a base while they were exploring the mesa.



Themes

Loss

Loss is one of the major themes found in *The Professor's House*. Godfrey St. Peter is at a moment of profound change in his life, a moment which involves coming to terms with the things and people he has lost in his life, namely Tom Outland. St. Peter's loss, however, is not merely confined to Tom Outland's death. Both of his daughters are now grown and married, his life's work, the eight-volume *Spanish Adventurers in North America* is complete, and he is faced with losing the house where he had lived for over twenty years and the garden that he had often found to be comforting. While it may seem that St. Peter's attachment to his house, and especially to his study, is unreasonable and foolish, especially since his new house is much nicer, his old house and his study serve as a connection to the past for St. Peter. He and his friend Tom often had conversations in his study, he completed his book in the study, and his daughters grew up in the house. The house is his last tangible link to many happy years, and so to St. Peter, abandoning the house would be abandoning the things that made his life meaningful.

It is only through a brush with death that St. Peter is able to begin to let go — something he would not have been able to do without that experience. Letting go of the past changes him, but the author provides little details as to how it changes him. The reader is only told that he is able to now finally move on.

While St. Peter has to come to terms with many losses in his life, Tom Outland is another character who is faced with the challenge and difficulty of loss. He experiences loss in two ways: the loss of the artifacts in Cliff City and the loss of his friendship with Rodney Blake. While the loss of the artifacts was painful for Tom, painful enough that it brought about the end of his friendship with Rodney, the loss of his friendship with Rodney was the more painful and lasting loss. Tom never forgave himself for pushing away Rodney, and was sure that he would have to pay for his mistake sometime in his life. He tries to deal with his loss by first searching for Rodney, and then by pursuing the goal that Rodney wanted him to pursue: a college education.

Transformation

The theme of transformation follows alongside the theme of loss in *The Professor's House*, but it is a broader theme than loss because it is applicable to characters other than Godfrey St. Peter and Tom Outland. The theme of transformation looks at how people are shaped by the events of their life, for better or for worse.

The relationship between Rosamond and Kathleen is a clear example of how the author examines transformation. The reader is told that when they were young the two sisters were quite close, and that Kathleen idolized her older sister, Rosamond. As a child,



Kathleen was often happier when Rosamond got new things than when she got new things for herself. This idolization ended quickly when Rosamond became engaged to Louie. St. Peter believes that Kathleen experienced this transformation in her attitude toward her sister because she thought Rosamond forgot Tom Outland too quickly. The transformation in the sisters' relationship continues through the influence of Louie. In her marriage to Louie, Rosamond came to resemble Louie more and more, a transformation that both Kathleen and St. Peter did not like. In response to Rosamond's transformation, Kathleen becomes envious of her sister.

Another instance of transformation found in the novel is that of Rodney Blake. When he first appears in Pardee, New Mexico, he is an anti-social drunk with poor social skills. Through his friendship with Tom Outland, he gets cleaned up and begins to care about others besides himself. Tom's influence has a positive effect on Rodney, even though he later angers Tom.

Freedom in the Modern World

Tom's experience in Washington, D.C., reveals a theme that runs throughout the novel: the theme of finding freedom in the face of the demands of the modern world. Tom and Rodney are shown to be truly free, to be their own master even when they are working for someone else. Tom and Rodney are contrasted with the men in Washington, who seemed to Tom to be "like people in slavery, who ought to be free" (p. 211). When Tom left Washington to return to New Mexico, he "wanted nothing but to get back to the mesa and to live a free life and to breathe free air, and never, never again to see hundreds of little black-coated men pouring out of white buildings" (p. 213).

The men in Washington who depress Tom are driven by money and really are slaves to their wages. Money is the primary concern in their lives, largely because it is the primary factor in determining their social status. The relationships in Washington are not driven by genuine personality, but by external appearance. As a result, the people in Washington have lost the freedom to be themselves.

The theme of freedom also plays out at Hamilton University. There is a conflict between two main groups at the university: one which wants to lower standards and focus on practical pursuits, and one, represented by St. Peter, which wants to maintain academic standards and focus on the pursuit of the truth apart from any practical applicability. The practical approach is that which cramps freedom and destroys natural curiosity, while St. Peter's approach allows for genuine freedom of thought and exploration.



Style

Point of View

In the first and third books, the author uses a third person perspective restricted to Godfrey St. Peter. The narrator focuses upon St. Peter and speaks through his experiences and memories. Through the author's use of this technique, the reader is granted access to the thoughts and feelings of St. Peter, but is restricted from the knowing the thoughts and feelings of the other characters, except in so far as St. Peter is able to discern them.

The second book is written with the first person perspective and in the past tense because it is Tom Outland's story as he related it to St. Peter. Since it is written in the first person, the second book is limited to Tom Outland's feelings and emotions.

Setting

The novel is primarily set in a small Midwestern university town, north of Chicago and on the western coast of Lake Michigan, and takes place between the first and second world wars. St. Peter takes two trips to visit Chicago with his family. A number of flashbacks take place in France and Spain as well.

The second book of the novel takes place in the early twentieth century and begins in a small town in New Mexico where Tom and Rodney meet. The action then shifts to Blue Mesa, where Tom and Rodney discover Cliff City. Tom then goes to Washington, D.C. in order to find experts to help him study Cliff City. After a few months, he is unable to find anyone to help him and he returns to New Mexico, and then makes his way to Hamilton.

The author uses vivid descriptions to help the reader picture the locations she is writing about, especially when she writes about New Mexico and Cliff City in the second book.

Language and Meaning

The language in the first and third book is fairly formal and refined, reflecting the high degree of learning and sophistication achieved by Godfrey St. Peter. Occasionally, the author inserts French phrases, as if to emphasize again the educational level of St. Peter. The only Latin phrase which occurs in the book is a line from Virgil's Aeneid, which Tom recites to St. Peter in order to prove his skill at Latin. None of the sentences are overly complex or confusing.

The language is simpler in the second book, in order to reflect Tom's rustic nature and lack of formal education. In no way does the simplicity of the language indicate that Tom was unintelligent, just unrefined. Just as in the first and third book, there are no overly complex or confusing sentences.



The language of the book requires a decent vocabulary, but is easily understood with a strong vocabulary.

Structure

The novel is split into three books. The first and third book focus on Professor Godfrey St. Peter and his family over the course of one year. The first book is split up into seventeen chapters ranging from five to twenty pages in length, averaging about nine pages in length. The third book has five chapters, which range in length from three to six pages, and average a little over five pages each. The second book is the story of Tom Outland. It has seven chapters, ranging from five to twenty-two pages in length, with each chapter being about ten pages long.

The plot of the novel has a few different subplots, but they are all connected. The main plot deals with St. Peter himself, while the subplots deal with his family members and other people in Hamilton. Another subplot deals with Tom Outland's history and background.

The first and third books of the novel are driven both by dialogue and St. Peter's interior reflection, while there is a description of action, it is not as important. The second book is driven both by action and dialogue, with very little interior reflection. The moments of interior reflection serve primarily as a response to the action and only give insight into Tom Outland.

The pace of the novel is steady and easily read. The more introspective and reflective parts can seem a little long, but the novel is well paced. One difficulty that it could pose for a reader is that the novel is not linear, and often uses flashbacks as a story telling device. The flashbacks are not jarring, nor overly tedious.



Quotes

"But the notes and the records and the ideas always came back to this room. It was here they were digested and stored, and woven into their proper place in his history."

The Family, Chap. 1, p. 16

"The heart of another is a dark forest, always, no matter how close it has been to one's own." The Family, Chap. 8, p. 78

"St. Peter lay looking up at them from a little boat riding low in the purple water, and the design of his book unfolded in the air above him, just as definitely as the mountain ranges themselves. And the design was sound. He had accepted it as inevitable, had never meddled with it, and it had seen him through." The Family, Chap. 9, p. 89

"Yes, the Professor reflected, after all these years, that was still true. Fellows like Outland don't carry much luggage, yet one of the things you know them by is their sumptuous generosity — and when they are gone, all you can say of them is that they departed leaving princely gifts." The Family, Chap. 10, p. 103

"He couldn't have wished for a better companion for his daughters, and they were teaching Tom things that he needed more than mathematics." The Family, Chap. 10, p. 107

"I am quite ready to permit myself a little extravagance to be of service to the women of my family. Any other arrangement is humiliating." The Family, Chap. 14, p. 135

"It's the feeling that I've put a great deal behind me, where I can't go back to it again — and I don't really wish to go back. The way would be too long and too fatiguing. Perhaps, for a home-staying man, I've lived pretty hard. I wasn't willing to slight anything — you, or my desk, or my students. And now I seem to be tremendously tired. One pays, coming or going. A man has got only just so much in him; when it's gone he slumps." The Family, Chap. 15, p. 143

"What he needed was a pal, a straight fellow to give an account to. I was ten years younger, and that was an advantage. He liked to be an older brother. I suppose the fact that I was a kind of stray and had no family, made it easier for him to unbend to me. He surely got to think a lot of me, and I did of him." Tom Outland's Story, Chap. 1, p. 165

"He said if I once knew Latin, I wouldn't have to work with my back all my life like a burro. He had great respect for education, but he believed it was some kind of hocus-pocus that enabled a man to live without work." Tom Outland's Story, Chap. 1, p. 167

"From the cabin, night and day, you could hear the river, where it made a bend round the foot of the mesa and churned over the rocks. It was the sort of place a man would like to stay in forever." Tom Outland's Story, Chap. 2, p. 168



"It was like that in everything; they spent their lives trying to keep up appearances, and to make his salary do more than it could." Tom Outland's Story, Chap. 6, p. 209

"During my days of waiting for appointments, I used to walk for hours around the fence that shuts in the White House grounds, and watch the Washington monument colour with those beautiful sunsets, until the time when all the clerks streamed out of the Treasury building and the War and Navy. Thousands of them, all more or less like the couple I lived with. They seemed to me like people in slavery, who ought to be free." Tom Outland's Story, Chap. 6, p. 211

"If it was my money you'd lost gambling, or my girl you'd made free with, we could fight it out, and maybe be friends again. But this is different." Tom Outland's Story, Chap. 6, p. 222

"Every morning, when the sun's rays first hit the mesa top, while the rest of the world was in shadow, I wakened with the feeling that I had found everything, instead of having lost everything." Tom Outland's Story, Chap. 7, p. 227

"But the older I grow, the more I understand what it was I did that night on the mesa. Anyone who requites faith and friendship as I did, will have to pay for it. I'm not very sanguine about good fortune for myself. I'll be called to account when I least expect it." Tom Outland's Story, Chap. 7, p. 229

"His career, his wife, his family, were not his life at all, but a chain of events which had happened to him. All these things had nothing to do with the person he was in the beginning." The Professor, Chap. 2, p. 240



Topics for Discussion

Why is the Professor so attached to his study? Why doesn't his family understand his attachment? What are the causes of his attachment?

What do you think happened to Rodney Blake? Write another chapter of the book describing what happened to Rodney.

What is the significance of the conflict between Godfrey St. Peter and Horace Langtry?

Why does Tom not want to use the money that Rodney left him for his college education?

What does it mean that Godfrey St. Peter is becoming friends with the boy he had left behind in Kansas, "the original, unmodified Godfrey St. Peter" (p. 239)?

What does it mean that Tom thinks that all of him was there on the top of the mesa after Rodney left, and that he had "found everything instead of having lost everything" (p. 227)?

What role does St. Peter think that chance had played in his life?

What does St. Peter mean that he had fallen out of love? Do you think that he really means what he says? Why or why not?

How does the near death experience change St. Peter? Write another chapter of the book that deals with the return of his family.