Rebecca Study Guide

Rebecca by Daphne Du Maurier

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

"Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again." This opening line from *Rebecca* is one of the most powerful, most recognized, in all of literature. For more than sixty years, audiences around the world have praised Daphne du Maurier's novel as a spellbinding blend of mystery, horror, romance, and suspense. In this book, readers can see the traditions of romantic fiction, such as the helpless heroine, the strong-willed hero, and the ancient, imposing house that never seems to unlock its secrets. Using elements familiar to audiences of romances through the ages, from the moody and wind-swept novels of the Brontë sisters in the 1840s to the inexpensive entertainments of today, *Rebecca* stands out as a superb example of melodramatic storytelling. Modern readers considered this book a compelling page-turner, and it is fondly remembered by most who have read it.

The story concerns a woman who marries an English nobleman and returns with him to Manderley, his country estate. There, she finds herself haunted by reminders of his first wife, Rebecca, who died in a boating accident less than a year earlier. In this case, the haunting is psychological, not physical: Rebecca does not appear as a ghost, but her spirit affects nearly everything that takes place at Manderley. The narrator, whose name is never divulged, is left with a growing sense of distrust toward those who loved Rebecca, wondering just how much they resent her for taking Rebecca's place. In the final chapters, the book turns into a detective story, as the principal characters try to reveal or conceal what really happened on the night Rebecca died.

Overview

Rebecca chronicles the nameless narrator's marriage to Maxim de Winter, a marriage which is overshadowed by the memory of Maxim's first wife, Rebecca, who was killed in a mysterious sailing accident. As Maxim's second wife learns more about Rebecca, she becomes more intimidated and jealous, until Maxim reveals the intriguing details of the marriage. The reader, along with the narrator, slowly unravels the events that had previously taken place at Manderley, the de Winter residence.

As the novel progresses, Rebecca's underlying evil and the previous events at Manderley become more and more apparent. The obsessive nature of both Maxim and Mrs. Danvers begin to overpower the central love story. With peripheral characters supplying minor details of the past, the narrator starts to piece together past events, and this knowledge changes her life.

Author Biography

Daphne du Maurier was born in London, on May 13, 1907. Her grandfather was artist and novelist George du Maurier, who drew cartoons for the satiric humor magazine *Punch* and illustrated books, including a few of Henry James' novels; his own novel *Trilby* included a mystic character named Svengali, which has since become a common word in the English language. Her father was Sir Gerald du Maurier, one of the most famous actors on the English stage in the 1910s and 1920s, who first performed the role of Captain Hook in *Peter Pan.* Daphne, along with her sisters, was educated at home. She began publishing short stories in 1928, with the help of her uncle, who was a magazine editor, and her first novel, *The Loving Spirit,* was published in 1931. The following year, she married Major-General Sir Frederick Arthur Montague Browning II. Literary success came quickly. In 1936, she achieved international success with *Jamaica Inn,* a tale of smuggling along the Cornish coast. It was followed in 1938 by *Rebecca,* which became a huge bestseller. Alfred Hitchcock filmed both novels in 1939 and 1940, respectively. Hitchcock also made one of his best-known films, 1963's *The Birds,* from a 1952 du Maurier short story.

For more than twenty-five years, du Maurier lived at Menabilly, a country estate that was the inspiration for Manderley. Her marriage to Browning was a friendly one but not a loving one, and she kept herself occupied by writing and entertaining friends. The couple's social circle included some of the most famous people of the day, including Sir John Gielgud, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and the actress Gertrude Lawrence, who was rumored to have been her lover. Browning's death in 1965 came as a blow to her. She moved from Menabilly to another famous house, Kilmarth, which dated back to the 1300s. The novel *The House on the Rock* is about Kilmarth.

In addition to novels and short stories, du Maurier also published biographies of Branwell Brontë (the brother of Anne, Charlotte, and Emily), of her father and grandfather, and of Sir Francis Bacon. She wrote several plays, including a three-act adaptation of *Rebecca.* Among her autobiographical works is *Myself, When I Was Young* and *The "Rebecca" Notebooks, and Other Memories.* She also wrote several books of local history about Cornwall, where she lived.

Daphne du Maurier died in Par, Cornwall, England, on April 19, 1989, at age of eighty-one. She had not written anything in years, and it was decades since her last important piece of fiction, *The House On the Strand,* was published in 1969.

About the Author

Daphne du Maurier was born May 13, 1907, in London, England. Her grandfather, George du Maurier, wrote the popular novel Trilby (1894). Her parents, Gerald and Muriel du Maurier, were British actors. Du Maurier combined both her grandfather's writing skill and her parents' flair for drama in her own highly dramatic fiction. The author of sixteen novels and many short stories, as well as plays, nonfiction, and poetry, du Maurier's popular acclaim began with her first novel, The Loving Spirit, published in 1931. Sir Frederick Browning liked The Loving Spirit so much that he sought out the young author, and they married shortly after meeting. Du Maurier lived in Menabilly, which she discovered while walking in Cornwall and which became the prototype for Manderley, the setting for Rebecca. Reprinted more than forty times, Rebecca is du Maurier's most famous novel. Du Maurier died April 19, 1989, in Par, Cornwall, England.

Du Maurier specialized in Gothic romance and fantasy. Besides Rebecca, her other popular novels include Jamaica Inn and My Cousin Rachel. Hollywood has added to du Maurier's reputation. Two of Alfred Hitchcock's classic films, Rebecca (1940) and The Birds (1963), are adaptations of du Maurier's fiction. Six of her novels and stories have made the journey to the screen: Jamaica Inn (1939) with Charles Laughton and Maureen O'Hara; Frenchman's Creek (1944) with Joan Fontaine and Basil Rathbone; Hungry Hill (1947) with Margaret Lockwood; My Cousin Rachel (1952) with Richard Burton and Olivia de Havilland; The Scapegoat (1959) with Alec Guinness and Bette Davis; and Don't Look Now (1973) with Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland and directed by Nicholas Roeg.

Most critics agree that du Maurier had a special ability to create tantalizing, suspenseful plots which makes her books difficult to put down. Her fiction shows melodrama at its best—straining but not breaking the reader's credulity.

Rebecca, which has received the most critical acclaim, won the National Book Award in 1938. Some critics find My Cousin Rachel to be a successfully haunting tale similar to Rebecca, while others find the plot unnecessarily long and the writing uneven.

Kiss Me Again, Stranger (1952), a collection of stories that includes "The Birds," has been admired for its suspenseful tales of psychological horror and fantasy. Don't Look Now (1971), another collection of short stories, has been praised for its suspenseful plots and well-developed characterizations. In 1969, du Maurier was granted the title of Dame Commander, Order of the British Empire, in recognition of her literary achievements.

Plot Summary

The Future

The first two chapters of *Rebecca* take place at some undetermined time in the future. The narrator remembers events that happened in the past at Manderley, an English country estate. She and an unidentified male companion are traveling around foreign countries, reminding themselves of the life they once lived by reading the English news in newspapers. This section gives readers a description of Manderley and vaguely mentions other characters that will be important as the story progresses: Mrs. Danvers, Favell, and, of course, Rebecca.

The final paragraphs of the second chapter take the action back in time, to the very start of the story, when the narrator was a companion to Mrs. Van Hopper and was staying at the hotel Cote d'Azur at Monte Carlo.

The Hotel Cote d'Azur

Mrs. Van Hopper is presented as a greedy, vain, patronizing woman who likes to think of herself as entering European high society, although she clearly is too ill-mannered to do so. Her companion is a poor young woman who could never afford to be in such an expensive resort by herself. When Mrs. Van Hopper sees Maxim de Winter, she recognizes him and asks to sit at his table, using the excuse that he and her nephew know each other. She does not recognize his impatience with her, although the narrator does. Later, after they have gone back to their room, de Winter sends a note to the narrator, apologizing if he has been rude.

The next morning, Mrs. Van Hopper becomes ill, and her companion finds herself with free time. She has lunch with de Winter, and then they start meeting regularly for rides in the country in his car. She tells him about her life, but he hardly talks about his. From Mrs. Van Hopper's gossip, she knows that his wife died in a boating accident about eight months earlier, and that he owns the estate known as Manderley.

When Mrs. Van Hopper decides that she wants to return to America, the narrator tells de Winter. He returns to Mrs. Van Hopper's room with her and explains that her companion will not be going with her, that they are in love and going to be married.

The Uncomfortable Months

After a few weeks of honeymooning in Italy, Maxim de Winter returns to Manderley with his wife. Not having come from a wealthy background, she is intimidated by the responsibilities of being the mistress of a huge estate. She is uncomfortable with giving orders to the servants. They respond to her discomfort in different ways. Frith, the senior butler, is patient with her uncertainty and is willing to offer polite suggestions as

to ways that she might want to handle things, if she wishes, always making it clear that domestic situations are hers to command. On the other hand, there is Mrs. Danvers, who came to Manderley when de Winter was first married to his first wife, Rebecca. Mrs. Danvers does not allow anything to be changed in Rebecca's bedroom, keeping it exactly as it had been when she was alive. She also corrects the new Mrs. de Winter when she tries to change the way that Rebecca did things. Maxim is hesitant to talk about Rebecca, and so the narrator assumes that he is tortured by the memory of their love.

Once, while walking out near the shore, her dog (who had been Rebecca's dog) leads her to a cottage that is falling apart in disrepair. There, she meets Ben, a retarded young man who talks in mysterious half-sentences, frightening her. When she tells Maxim that she met Ben in the cottage, he is upset to hear that the cottage was unlocked, making her suspect that he wants it to remain unchanged, the way Rebecca left it.

One afternoon, while Maxim and the other servants are away, she finds Mrs. Danvers with a strange man, who introduces himself as Jack Favell. He is loud and aggressive, although he asks her not to tell Maxim that he was in the house. Later, from Maxim's sister, she finds out that Favell was Rebecca's cousin. Maxim finds out that Favell was there and reprimands Mrs. Danvers, who, walking away, gives Mrs. de Winter a scornful, piercing stare.

The Masquerade

After local people keep asking Mr. and Mrs. de Winter if they are going to have the grand costume ball, which has been a long-standing tradition at Manderley, Maxim agrees to go ahead with it. Mrs. Danvers suggests to Mrs. de Winter that she might want to have her costume patterned after one of Maxim's ancestors, pictured in an oil portrait in the hall. She agrees and draws a sketch of the picture of Caroline de Winter, which she sends to a costume maker in London that Mrs. Danvers has recommended. She waits with growing excitement for the day of the ball, certain that it will be her chance to show off as the mistress of the house.

Before the party begins, she walks downstairs in her costume, only to find Maxim and her close friends horrified: the costume is the same one that Rebecca wore to the last ball at Manderley. Maxim, in a rage, shouts at her to go upstairs and change. She thinks about staying in her room all night, but Maxim's sister Beatrice convinces her to attend the ball in a regular dress and explain to the guests that the costume makers had sent the wrong package. Throughout the whole evening, Maxim stays away from her, and when he does not come to bed that night, she becomes convinced that he hates her for desecrating the memory of Rebecca.

The Sunken Boat

The next day, while she and Mrs. Danvers are arguing, word comes that a ship has run aground in the bay. The divers who are sent to assess the damage find a greater

surprise: at the bottom of the sea is Rebecca's boat, with a dead body in it. That night, Maxim explains to his wife that he lied when he identified Rebecca's body, miles upshore, months after her disappearance. The body in the boat is hers. He put it there after he killed her, and then he sank the boat. He was not, after all, living with grief over Rebecca because she was a cruel, spiteful, promiscuous woman. His love for his new wife is true.

When the body is identified as Rebecca's, there is an inquest. Just before the case is closed, with the finding that she became trapped in the boat when it sank, it is revealed that the boat would not have sunk on its own, that someone pounded holes into it from the inside. Mrs. de Winter, fearing Maxim's exposure, leaves the courtroom in a faint, but she later finds out that the verdict was that Rebecca committed suicide.

Favell shows up that night with a letter that Rebecca sent him on the day she died, asking him to meet her that night; he says that it proves that she did not plan suicide. When Maxim refuses to pay blackmail, the local magistrate is called. He does not believe Favell's claim that he and Rebecca were lovers, and when Ben is called in to testify about seeing them together, he refuses to say anything, afraid that they mean to commit him. The next day they all drive to London to see the doctor that Rebecca had consulted. He tells them that she had cancer and was going to die a painful death. The magistrate accepts this as evidence of her suicide, and on the drive home, Maxim guesses to his wife that Rebecca goaded him into killing her.

The narrator explains that they later found out that Mrs. Danvers received a long-distance call, probably from Favell, and that she packed her belongings and left Manderley in a hurry. The last paragraph of the book describes the closing scene in which, returning from London, Mr. and Mrs. de Winter come around a corner to find the house engulfed in flames.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In the introduction of *Rebecca,* the author describes a dream she recently had. The dream is about her old home, Manderley. She describes the grand house, its vast gardens and wooded area, and its location near the sea. She imagines it, as it had once been, when she lived there. She describes the books and newspapers that would lay in stacks after being read, the warm fire they would sit near, and the dog that used to sit at her feet. The vision in her dream then turns to a description of how Manderley must look now. It is abandoned, no one is there to read newspapers by the fire or play with the dog. In fact the dog no longer lives at Manderley. The author describes how the gardens look; unkempt and the flowers have given way to weeds. The author is relieved they are no longer at Manderley because they had felt fear there. They are now staying at a hotel far away.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 begins the mystery of the story *Rebecca*. The reader anticipates the telling of a story that will explain the author's current situation. There is suspense, not to what will happen but what happened in the past. Chapter 1 also presents the mystery of who the author's traveling companion is. It is not known what fear was felt that drove them away from Manderley.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The author explains how they can never go back to Manderley. The feelings of fear and unrest are too great in their old home. The man she is with becomes deeply disturbed if he is reminded of Manderley.

The couple now lives a dull, monotonous life in the hotel where they stay, but there, they are safe. They amuse themselves with English mail. They pour over the results of sporting matches that previously would have held little interest to them. The author has a very unique hobby that interests her. She obtains information about the English countryside. She knows the estates, owners, tenants, type of animals, and other details. It is through her study of the English countryside, her hobby, that she stays connected to her former home.

As she has tea at the hotel, she remembers the tea she used to have at Manderley. They always had such an abundance of food set out for them. She then describes how she had once been looked down upon by Mrs. Danvers and compared to a Mrs. de Winters, whom is no longer living. Her current living situation gives way to comparison between the hotel she now stays at and the hotel Cote d'Azur in Monte Carlo, which she had once stayed at. The author begins describing her time there.

She is in Monte Carlo with Mrs. Van Hopper, her traveling companion. She touches on the fact that she is always treated as inferior during her travels. The servants do not respect her. Mrs. Van Hopper is a rather brash woman. The two are eating dinner when the older woman notices that Max de Winter has taken a seat at the next table. Mrs. Van Hopper regards Mr. de Winter as famous because he owns Manderley. It is known that his wife had died within the year.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 continues the mystery and suspense as to what caused the author to reside in a hotel. The reader's traveling companion is still not known although when the comparison between the author's current hotel and one she had stayed at in the past is explained, the reader has a sense of foreboding that she will explain how she met her traveling companion.

The author begins to explain her stay at the other hotel. A Mr. de Winter is introduced and the reader is able to predict with some level of confidence that he will be an important character and perhaps even her current traveling companion. It is also revealed that the fear was very great at this place she calls Manderley. With the fear came some level of drama, and now the peace, quiet, and monotony is preferable.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

After dinner Mrs. Van Hopper likes to have tea in the reception hall. Her main goal is to meet as many of the noteworthy people she can. She does this my mentioning a relation she has in common with her target. Tonight, she has her sight set on meeting Mr. de Winter. She has the author retrieve a photo of someone that Mr. de Winter knows.

The author does as she is told but takes a little too long at her task and when she returns she finds Mrs. Van Hopper already in conversation with Mr. de Winter. Mrs. Van Hopper is rude to the author and makes a comment to Mr. de Winter letting him know that he does not have to stand up when the younger woman is in his presence. Mr. de Winter, however, has excellent manners and gives up his spot on the sofa to the author and sits on a much more uncomfortable chair. The three have coffee together. Mrs. Van Hopper tries to talk to Mr. de Winter about his home, Manderley, but it is clear to the author that Mr. de Winter does not wish to talk about this subject. Mrs. Van Hopper is oblivious to Mr. de Winter's discomfort and continues asking prying questions. Mr. de Winter makes a couple of impolite remarks toward Mrs. Van Hopper but the woman does not notice. The author is embarrassed for Mrs. Van Hopper. Later, when Mrs. Van Hopper is trying on dresses, the author receives a note from Mr. de Winter, apologizing for his rude behavior.

Chapter 3 Analysis

It is revealed that the author is not of the same social standing as Mrs. Van Hopper or Mr. de Winter. While Mrs. Van Hopper treats her as inferior, Mr. de Winter has excellent manners and treats her kindly. The author mentions that she was very young and shy. She has a constant conversation with herself explaining what she would do if she were more confident. The story *Rebecca* is part, character story. The reader is able to see the transformation of the author.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

The next morning Mrs. Van Hopper is taken ill. The doctor recommends that the woman have a full-time nurse to take care of her and orders strict bed rest. The author goes down to lunch alone. Mr. de Winter is the only other person in the dinning room and his table is right next to hers. She is nervous sitting down and knocks over the vase. Mr. de Winter helps her clean up and then invites her to lunch with him at his table. The author does not want him to invite her out of pity, and he convinces her that pity was not his motive.

The two talk comfortably throughout lunch. The author tells him that Mrs. Van Hopper pays her a salary to be her traveling companion. Her parents are both dead. She speaks to him about her father, whom she loved very much but never talks to anyone about. He asks her what she is going to do on her day off and she tells him that she will sketch, a hobby of hers. He offers to drive her to her desired destination. They have a nice drive for the rest of the afternoon. He drives fast and this excites the author. They drive up to the top of a winding look out. All of a sudden Mr. de Winter grows pensive as he looks over the edge. He is in his own little world and the author has trouble bringing him back. He apologizes and they drive back to the hotel.

She spots a book of poetry in his back seat and he tells her that she can read it. Once she is back at the hotel having tea alone she leafs through the book. She sees the inscription, "To Max - from Rebecca." She thinks back to what Mrs. Van Hopper had said. Mr. de Winter's wife had drowned and he never speaks of the tragedy.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Chapter 4 begins the friendship between the author and Mr. de Winter. Although she is awkward and shy, she immediately feels comfortable with Mr. de Winter and tells him details of her life, such of her deceased father, which she does not usually share with others. The reader is filled with a sense of apprehension and suspense over the character of Mr. de Winter. It is known that his wife had recently died and he does not like to talk about his famous home or his wife. There is an awkward and fearful moment in which Mr. de Winter is lost in his own world at the edge of a cliff. The author is fearful for a moment of this man she really does not know. It is not known if Mr. de Winter will turn into a protagonist, or an antagonist; perhaps he will be the source of the fear.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The author explains to Mr. de Winter, that she was twenty-one and in love for the first time. She spent everyday with Mr. de Winter for the next two weeks as Mrs. Van Hopper recovered. The two take their meals together and go for long drives during the day. They talk with each other as if they were old friends who have just reunited.

One day the author expresses her wish to Mr. de Winter that she would like to be an older, more mature woman, dressed stylishly; a woman who was cool and confident. Mr. de Winters tells her that he likes her because she is not the woman she wishes to be, but rather, exactly who she already is. He makes her promise she will never be that woman.

The author believes that Mr. de Winter has spent time with her because he has good manners. Mr. de Winter tries to convince her that he spends time with her because he likes her company. He also tells her that he never wants to revisit his past or speak of his tragic memories. He has upset and scared her with his harsh talk and so he comforts her by putting his arm around her and kissing her on her head. She feels safe. As they part he tells her that his family calls him Maxim and he wishes that she do the same. He had called her by her first name since they met. She wonders to herself why Rebecca, his first wife, had called him Max and he would only allow her to call him Maxim, the same name his family used for him.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Over the course of the next two weeks the author and Mr. de Winter spend everyday together. The author is in love but she still does not have the confidence that Mr. de Winter actually enjoys her company and likes her. She believes that he has spent time with her because of his manners.

The reoccurring theme of the presence of Rebecca is felt. Even though she is dead she will continue to be a factor in the relationship between the author and Mr. de Winter. The author's insecurity causes her to believe that Rebecca was special enough to call Mr. de Winter, Max, while she is asked to call him the same that his family and friends do, not the woman that he loves.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Mrs. Van Hopper has recovered from her illness and informs the author that they will be leaving the next day. They will go to Paris to meet up with Mrs. Van Hopper's daughter and then the three of them will sail to New York City, where Mrs. Van Hopper is from.

The author packs her and Mrs. Van Hopper's belongings. She does not want to leave. She does not want to say goodbye to Mr. Van Winter. That night she receives a message that he will not be back from his day trip to Cannes until very late.

The next morning Mrs. Van Hopper decides they should take the earlier train, instead of the later train in which they are booked. She sends the author to change their reservations. Instead, she goes to Mr. de Winter's room to say goodbye. He is surprised by her sudden change in plans. He asks her if she would wish to marry him rather than go to New York City with Mrs. Van Hopper. It is no ordinary, romantic proposal and once again she believes that he is simply being kind.

She agrees to marry him and tells him that she loves him. He never says the words back to her. The pair explains the new development to Mrs. Van Hopper. The older woman is quite mad at the author because she had kept their relationship a secret. She accuses the author of being pregnant. Mrs. Van Hooper leaves for Paris alone. Mr. de Winter arranges for a private wedding and the couple is married in a matter of days. They will honeymoon in Venice.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The issue of the author's marriage to Mr. de Winter is settled very quickly. She loves him and tells him so but he does not return the sentiment. She believes that telling her that he loves her was just overlooked. She feels that he wants a quick wedding because he had a large wedding when he married his first wife. Although comfortable with Mr. de Winter she still feels awkward and shy. Her feelings are more pronounced as there is also a large age difference between the pair. Mr. de Winter has much more life experience than the author.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The pair arrives at Manderley after their honeymoon in Italy and France. The author is painfully shy meeting the staff. She was not raised with money and is not used to a houseful of wait-staff to oversee. Nor is she prepared to manage a house of this size.

She is dressed unfashionable and a little shabby on her arrival. The couple only stopped in London briefly and she did not buy many new clothes. She hears a couple of the servants laugh at her when she trips.

Her first meeting with Mrs. Danvers, the head housekeeper, does not go well. Mrs. Danvers is not very friendly to the author and outwardly shows her contempt. The author assures the woman that she will make no changes as to how the house is being run. The housekeeper shows the author to her room. It has been redecorated at Mr. de Winter's request. It is not his usual room; he had never stayed in the rooms on the east wing.

Maxim meets with his wife and shows her the gardens. After dinner they retreat to the library where they drink coffee and tea and read the newspaper in front of the fire. All of a sudden the author sees that this is Maxim's routine, the same routine he had with his former wife, Rebecca.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The authors own comparisons between herself and Rebecca are reflected in the looks of the staff. Mrs. de Winter is still painfully shy and awkward and relishes the time she spends with Maxim, away from the staff. The theme of another person in their relationship, Rebecca, is continued. Rebecca is, symbolically, everywhere the author turns. It is as if she now lives Rebecca's life for her.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The next morning the author finds Maxim is already up and downstairs eating breakfast. He tells her that he will be at the office for the rest of the morning and she is left alone. The servant comes to clear away breakfast. The author heads to the library. It is cold there and she searches for some matches to start a fire. The servant sees her and tells her that the fire in the library is usually not set until evening. Mrs. de Winter used to spend her days in the morning room. He tells her that of course he would order someone to light a fire in the library if she wanted to. He says this in a way that led the author to believe that it would be an inconvenience and that the proper place for her was in the morning room. She tells him she will go there. He watches her as she goes through the wrong door, as she had not been shown the full house yet. He redirects her to the morning room.

Once she arrives she sees that the dogs are already resting by the fire. They know the routine of the house and know the fire in the library is not lit until evening. The author looks around the room that was clearly, painstakingly decorated. Every piece was chosen by Rebecca. She is sitting at Rebecca's desk, now her own, when the house phone rings. It is Mrs. Danvers. She wants the author to approve the menu that has been set out on the desk for her. The author approves it straight away. The housekeeper questions her explaining that Mrs. de Winter used to plan the menus with her.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The author continues to live Rebecca's life. The staff do not realize that she may want to do things differently and she is constantly reminded of they way that Rebecca did things. Each time the author is reminded of Rebecca it symbolizes the intrusion of the dead women in her life. The author cannot break out of her shyness and insecurity until the vision of Rebecca ceases to loom over her.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Beatrice, Maxim's sister, and her husband Giles arrive for lunch. The author is shy and afraid of meeting them without Maxim and runs through a passage and up a set of stairs in order to hold off the visit. She gets lost and winds up in the west wing of the house. Mrs. Danvers runs into her. She tells the author that she would be happy to show her any room that she wishes to see. She says this in a mocking way as if she were speaking to a child who has done something foolish. She leads the author to the main staircase.

The author finds that her husband has returned and is visiting with Beatrice and Giles in the morning room. He jokes with her that she must have been hiding. Beatrice is a very honest woman who is very blunt. She and Maxim get into a couple of sibling squalls and the author, seeing her husband become tense, changes the subject frequently throughout lunch.

The women are alone after lunch giving Beatrice the opportunity to pepper the author with questions. She remarks on the fact that the new bride is so young. The author is twenty-one years old compared to Maxim's forty-two. She asks the author if she loves her brother and compliments her, contributing to the fact that Maxim looks so happy and healthy. As she leaves, Beatrice tells the author that she was surprised when she met her because she was so unlike Rebecca.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The author's shyness is further displayed as she hides from Beatrice and Giles. She is unsure of herself and does not want to meet them without Maxim, who gives her strength. As the group is talking, Beatrice and Maxim start to bicker as brothers and sisters tend to do. The author realizes that her husband is getting upset and she changes the subject, purposely making herself the center of conversation. This act symbolizes that as Maxim gives her strength, he gives her strength. She is willing to go outside of her comfort zone in order to help her husband. Her love supersedes her insecurities.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Beatrice and Giles leave and Maxim is in a hurry to take his wife on a walk. He asks a servant to bring one of the rain coats from the flower room for the author to wear as he does not want to wait for her to go upstairs and fetch her own. The young dog, Jasper, joins them on the walk.

The pair walks along the path and through the woods. As they come to a fork in the road Jasper follows one path while Maxim goes down another. He explains to his wife that the other path leads to the cove where they used to keep a boat. The author knows that Rebecca must have brought Jasper along to the cove, where she sailed.

The pair follows the path to a place called Happy Valley, which is a little clearing, carpeted with flowers. It is a very pretty place. As they are walking back, Jasper once again goes down the other path. This time he will not listen to their calls. Maxim suggests they leave him as he can find his way back but the author is worried about the tide and goes after the dog. She climbs over a few large rocks and finds herself in a small cove. The dog is barking at a man. The author introduces herself as Mrs. de Winter and for a moment the man is confused, she garners from speaking to him that he is quite slow. The author sees a small cottage on the beach and enters it looking for some twine in which she can tie to Jasper's collar. The cottage looks as if it has been abandoned. The furniture is covered in sheets and pushed to the center of the room. She finds some string, ties up Jasper and rejoins her husband, who has not followed her onto the beach.

Maxim seems angry that she had gone after the dog and angrier still that she had gone into the cottage. He tells her that he has bad memories of the place and that he was sorry for coming back to Manderley. He begins walking fast, back to the house; the author can hardly keep up. When they are alone in the library the author apologizes for making him angry and expresses her love for him. He questions her, asking if she really does love him. He looks unsure and is fearful. Just then the servants come in with their tea.

Chapter 10 Analysis

There is much mystery surrounding the cove and the cottage near the sea. The author uses the plot element of suspense to draw the reader's interest. Maxim becomes very withdrawn and angry that the author had been on the beach. The author believes that he is still in love with Rebecca and his memories of her accidental death are too much for him to bear. She tries to calm him by telling him her love. He does not believe she truly loves him. It is sensed that he is about to reveal something important about his memories but the servant enters with tea. The moment is lost.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Maxim returns to normal and the couple began their life together. The author however becomes very fearful of doing or saying anything to Maxim that would remind him of his past. She feels it was her fault, in going down to the cove, his bad memories had reappeared and that now he regrets coming back to Manderley. The author walks on eggshells around her husband so as to not upset him.

The new Mrs. de Winter begins the routine of her life, receiving callers and calling on people. These are the duties of a woman in her new position. As she is being driven back home after one of these calls, she sees Frank Crawley, who works in Maxim's office, walking towards Manderley. She decides to get out of the car and walk with him. She had liked Frank the moment she met him; he was very kind to her and is a good friend of her husband.

The author mentions to Frank that she had been down to the beach and ran into a man, who was very slow. He tells her it was Ben and that he is quite harmless. She goes on telling Frank that the cottage looks like it needs some work. Maxim had not wanted anything done with the cottage. It was filled with Rebecca's things. The author questions Frank about the cottage and Rebecca. He tells her that Rebecca used to have moonlight picnics at the cottage. He looks uncomfortable talking about her.

She asks him about the accident that led to her death. He tells her that Rebecca often used to sail at night, as she did the night she died. Her boat sunk and she must have died trying to swim to shore. Her body was found two months later, forty miles away. Maxim went to identify the body alone.

The author apologizes for all of the questions. She explains that when she makes calls she feels as if the people she is calling on are making comparisons between her and Rebecca and she is afraid she falls short. Frank tells her that her presence is refreshing and that she is just what Maxim needs. She ends her conversation with Frank by asking one more question. She asks if Rebecca was beautiful. He answers, "yes, I suppose she was the most beautiful creature I ever saw in my life."

Chapter 11 Analysis

The author expends all of her energies so that Maxim will not be reminded of the sea or Rebecca's accident. She is so fearful of upsetting her husband. Although it may be that her actions are not all together altruistic as when he is upset she is reminded that he has loved another woman, and he may still be in love with her.

While she speaks to Frank she notices that he looks very uncomfortable speaking about Rebecca. The author believes this is because he is such a good friend of Maxim's and

he wants to protect his friend's feelings. He explains to the author that he thinks her marriage to Maxim is the best thing that could have happened. The author takes this simply as Frank being kind. It is important to remember Frank's awkwardness however as there could be another reason for this. The conversation ends with Frank's answer to her last question that Rebecca was a beautiful woman. This only serves to increase the author's insecurities about her own beauty, or as she believes, lack thereof.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Mrs. Danvers has made herself quite scarce. The author is happy she does not have to deal with Mrs. Danvers, as she makes her nervous. However rude Mrs. Danvers is to the author, ever since Beatrice had told her that Mrs. Danvers and Rebecca had been close, the author has felt sorry for Mrs. Danvers. It must be hard on her to see another woman take the place of her friend.

Mrs. de Winter picks some roses from the garden. She asks a servant to fill one of the vases with water and he instead directs her to the vase, which Rebecca had used for roses. Instead of being difficult Mrs. de Winter defers to Rebecca's preference. She does the same thing after she tells the servant which table she would like to put the flowers on and he tells her where Rebecca would have put them.

After the instance with the flowers the author breaks a cupid figurine on her writing desk, in the morning room. She puts the pieces of china in an envelope and hides it in the desk. That evening one of the servants comes to the library to announce that Mrs. Danvers has accused one of the junior servants of stealing the cupid figurine. Mrs. Danvers is summoned and the author has to tell her that she has broken it. Maxim makes fun of his wife for acting like a maid by concealing the evidence of the accident. Mrs. Danvers leaves and Mrs. de Winter tells her husband that she is often looked upon as a maid, and gets as little respect from everyone else. She tells him that everyone else is constantly measuring her up. Maxim thinks this is nonsense.

Chapter 12 Analysis

The fact that Mrs. de Winter's hides that she broke the cupid, symbolizes that she does not feel comfortable living in Manderley. She does not feel as if it is truly her home, instead she looks upon herself as a visitor in someone else's home and life. Her husband thinks that her feelings are unwarranted. This is important to note because it makes him look insensitive or oblivious.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Maxim goes to London for a couple of days for a dinner. The author is dreadfully afraid that Maxim will suffer some sort of accident while on route to the city. She receives a message that he got to his hotel safely, and is overjoyed. She decides to go on a walk with Jasper. She visits Happy Valley and then Jasper runs off to the cove, just as he had before. She goes to fetch him and notices the cottage door looks ajar. Jasper runs inside and begins barking at something. Ben, the slow man she had talked to before, is hiding in the cottage. He says a couple of broken phrases that do not make much sense to the author. She attributes it to the fact that he is slow, mentally.

As she is walking back to Manderley she notices that the drapes in one of the rooms in the west wing are open. There is a man looking out the window. He sees her and moves away from the opening and a woman's arm, which she recognizes as belonging to Mrs. Danvers because of the shirtsleeve, closes the drapes. Mrs. de Winter thinks it odd that Mrs. Danvers should be entertaining guests when Maxim is away but does not wish to interfere with the other woman's business.

She goes inside silently and notices that Mrs. Danvers has entertained her guest in the morning room. She hears voices and hides behind the door. Mrs. Danvers is explaining to her guest that she had arrived earlier. Jasper gives her hiding place away and Mrs. de Winter comes face to face with the unknown visitor. His name is Mr. Favell. He is Rebecca's cousin. He is a very rude and presumptuous man. He asks her lewdly if she wants to go for a drive and she refuses. Before he leaves he asks her not to mention his visit to her husband. Maxim is not fond of Mr. Favell. All of the servants are busy at work and Mrs. Danvers has disappeared. Mrs. de Winter decides to investigate the west wing.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The author's insecurities are so great that she does not have the backbone to confront Mrs. Danvers. There is much mystery surrounding Mrs. Danvers' visitor. Mr. Favell is a rude man, who upsets the author as much as the reader. His character is that of a villain and Mrs. Danvers is his counterpart. It seems inevitable that he will cause the de Winter's problems.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

She finds the room that Mrs. Danvers and Mr. Favell were in. She finds the light and sees that the room is set up as if someone was living there. All of the furniture was set up, brushes were on the dressing table, and a robe and pair of slippers were set out. It was Rebecca's room. The author looks throughout the room.

Mrs. Danvers walks in and surprises Mrs. de Winter. She tells Mrs. de Winter why she had not asked to look at the west wing. She tells her that she would have been happy to give her tour. She leads Mrs. de Winter around the room describing Rebecca as she went. She makes the author feel the fabric of the dressing gown, put her hands in her slippers, shows her Rebecca's clothes. Mrs. Danvers tells Mrs. de Winters that Rebecca and Maxim used to be happy, they used to laugh, and he would brush her hair.

Then Mrs. Danvers describes the accident. She regrets not having been there when Rebecca died. Maxim has not slept in the west wing since his former wife's death.

Mrs. Danvers wonders out loud as to the possibility that Rebecca is looking down on Maxim and her. The author leaves in a hurry and locks herself in her own bedroom.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The confrontation that the author has with Mrs. Danvers in Rebecca's old bedroom is a rising action in the plot structure of the story. Mrs. de Winter is in obvious crisis. She has had the feeling that she was compared to Rebecca and that Rebecca was living with them at Manderley and the preserved room symbolized the physical manifestations of her feelings.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

The next morning Maxim left a message that he would be home that evening. While at breakfast Beatrice telephoned Mrs. de Winter to announce that she would be nearby her and asked if she would like to come with her to see Beatrice and Maxim's grandma. Mrs. de Winter accepts the invitation and is happy to have plans for the day.

The visit with Gran goes well at first. The old woman has a full-time nurse and wait-staff look after her. The nurse is very kind and talks to Mrs. de Winter as Beatrice catches up with her grandma. The nurse explains to them both that Gran has good days and bad days. It seems as if Gran is experiencing symptoms of dementia.

Suddenly Gran becomes quite agitated. She shouts that she wants Rebecca. She goes on that she loved Rebecca so much and she wanted to see her. She does not remember that Rebecca is dead. Beatrice and Mrs. de Winter leave. Beatrice is quite embarrassed at her Gran's actions. Mrs. de Winter tells her not to worry about it. Mrs. de Winter arrives back at Manderley in time to hear Maxim yell at Mrs. Danvers for having Mr. Favell at his house. Mrs. de Winter hides as Mrs. Danvers passes her. She enters the library to greet her husband telling him how she has missed him.

Chapter 15 Analysis

The situation that happens with Gran is another manifestation of the author's feelings and insecurities. Gran, who is suffering from dementia, begins to ask for Rebecca saying that she was so fond of Rebecca. This is symbolic of the author's feelings that she is constantly compared to Rebecca and that she always comes up short in the comparison.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Mr. and Mrs. de Winter have a line of uninvited guests arrive after lunch one evening. It is during this visit that Lady Crowan begins talking about the formal balls that used to be held every year at Manderley. She wants to see anther ball. She begins working on Frank, Maxim and Mrs. de Winter. She tells them that it is only right to throw a ball in honor of the new bride. She is very persistent and it would seem rude to not agree to throw a ball. Frank and Maxim were in charge of all of the invitations and Mrs. Danvers did all of the organization of the staff and decoration. The ball was to be a costume affair.

Maxim always refuses to dress up but everyone else gets quiet excited about it. Maxim suggests his wife dress up as Alice in Wonderland. She tells him that she will keep her costume a surprise and will wow him the evening of the ball.

She is finding it quite difficult to find a good idea for a costume. She is flipping through some art books when Mrs. Danvers enters the room. She suggests that Mrs. de Winter look at the pictures hung in the hall and dress as one of the ancestors. She particularly suggests that she look at a picture of a woman in a white dress. The author takes Mrs. Danvers's suggestion and looks at the pictures. She likes the white dress very much. She orders a reproduction dress and a wig. Only she and Clarice, her young maid, know of her secret.

The night of the ball has arrived. Maxim, Giles, Beatrice, and Frank are waiting at the bottom of the stairs for Mrs. de Winter to make her entrance. She stands at the top of the stairs and the group looks horrified. Beatrice gasps and Maxim tells her to go upstairs and change into something else immediately. She runs back to her bedroom nearly in tears. She passes by Mrs. Danvers who looks very pleased with herself.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Chapter 6teen presents another rising action of the plot structure. The author becomes more sure of herself teasing her husband and Frank that they will be shocked at her costume. Even though the ball was neither what Maxim had wanted nor what the author had wanted at first, everything comes together beautifully. Manderley shines with the decoration, the space was meant for a formal ball, and everyone is in good spirits.

The crisis, or rising action, occurs when the author appears in costume, dressed as the same ancestor that Rebecca had dressed as for the last ball. Maxim believes that she had dressed that way on purpose and is furious. The author is ashamed at her mistake. She feels as if she should have foreseen that Mrs. Danvers would deceive her in this way.

Her mistake brings all of her insecurities to the surface. Her newfound confidence, however small, is smashed.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

She gets back to her room and sends her maid away. Beatrice comes upstairs and apologizes for upsetting her. Rebecca had dressed as the very person for the last Manderley ball. Beatrice tries to convince Mrs. de Winter to change into another dress and join the party. The author does not think she can bare it. Beatrice finally leaves promising that she, Giles, Frank, and Maxim will all spread the word that the dressmaker had sent the wrong costume to explain why she was in regular formal wear.

Mrs. de Winter chooses a formal gown and irons it methodically. She goes downstairs to join the party and play the part of a gracious host. Throughout the party she cannot bring herself to eat or drink anything. Maxim does not go to her. Finally the party is over and Beatrice suggests that Mrs. de Winter go to bed, as she does not look well. She tells the author to sleep in late and have breakfast in bed. The author takes her suggestion and goes to bed. She waits up all night but Maxim never comes to bed.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Mrs. de Winter returns to the ball. She does not do so because she wants to, rather because it is expected of her. She goes through the motions of the party but does not enjoy it. Beatrice is very kind and sympathetic towards her situation. Maxim does not come to bed that night. This intensifies the author's self doubts and depression.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

She sleeps late and has breakfast in bed. She messes up Maxim's side of the bed so that the servants will not find out that he had slept elsewhere. She is feeling very bad about herself. She is upset that Maxim is angry with her; he thinks that she dressed like Rebecca had on purpose. She must explain herself. She spends some time thinking of what her guests must think of her, how they probably compared her to Rebecca.

She must speak with Maxim and explain herself. Mrs. de Winter calls the office looking for her husband. He is not there but Frank speaks with her. She tells him that she must speak to her husband; she is very worried. She tells Frank that her husband is still in love with Rebecca and not her. Frank tells her that he wants to come and see her but she hangs up.

She searches out Mrs. Danvers. The older woman looks as if she has been crying. The housekeeper asks why she had ever come to Manderley, why she wanted to take Rebecca's place. The author tells Mrs. Danvers that she loves Maxim. The housekeeper tells her that she hates her but now she has no energy left even to hate her. She suggested that Mrs. de Winter dress as Rebecca was because she was angry at her for telling Maxim that Mr. Favell had visited. The author denies she had told Maxim. Mrs. Danvers explains how she practically raised Rebecca. She explains how she was always an adventurous young girl. She goes on and on about Rebecca. They hear a loud booming sound. It is a ship's distress call.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Mrs. Danvers tells the author that she is exhausted by the energy it takes to dislike her. It seems that Mrs. Danvers will no longer be an impediment to her happiness but the author believes that she has already done enough damage. The entire day is spent trying to speak with her husband who has made himself scarce.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Everyone goes down to the sea to see the wrecked ship. Maxim helped by taking one of the crewmembers of the boat to a doctor in town. Most people were on the beach watching the excitement of the boat crash. The coast guard, who had been at the Maderley ball, had pointed out the diver to Mrs. de Winter. She stayed by the beach watching the boat for sometime. The activity had died down but she stayed on the beach to avoid speaking with Frank who tried to convince her to take lunch with him.

She finally goes back to Maderley and has tea alone. Captain Searle, the harbormaster, calls asking to speak with Maxim. It is not known when Maxim will return so Mrs. de Winter tells him that she will speak with him. Captain Searle arrives and tells her he has some disturbing news. The diver that had been sent to investigate the boat crash that afternoon had discovered something. The diver found a sunken boat. It was Rebecca's boat. There is a body inside the cabin of the boat. They do not know the identification of the body. Rebecca did not usually travel with a companion. Just then Maxim enters the room. Mrs. de Winter leaves the room as Captain Searle repeats what he had told her to Maxim.

She reenters the room after the Captain leaves. She apologizes for her costume choice the other evening. He tells her that he has already forgotten about the event. He asks her if she really loves him then he tells her that they will never be happy. He announces that Rebecca has won. The author does not understand but tells him that she wants to help him grieve. Maxim turns to her and tells her that Rebecca had no sailing companion. She did not drown. He had shot her and sunk her boat.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Chapter 9teen reveals the climax of the story. He confesses to her that he had killed Rebecca; it was her body that had been found. Mr. and Mrs. de Winter, the main characters are in obvious crisis. This is a turning point in the story.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Mrs. de Winter is in shock. She does not say anything as Maxim comes to her, wraps her in his arms and begins kissing her. He tells her that he loves her very much. It is the first time that he has said this to her. She tells him she thought that he still loved Rebecca. He looks at her and tells his wife that he never loved Rebecca.

Rebecca was a very good actor. She could make anyone fall in love with her but he always had suspicions about her true character. She did reveal her true character after their wedding. Rebecca knew that he would not suffer the humiliation of a divorce so she struck a deal with him. She promised to make Manderley into the best house there was. She decorated it, threw parties, and generated public interest in the estate. In exchange he ignored all of her activities in London. She was a cruel, despicable woman.

One evening she came back early from one of her trips to London, he followed her down to the cottage. He brought his shotgun; he was going to scare whoever she was sleeping with. When he got there she was alone. He told her that she was going back on their agreement; she was having affairs at Manderley and not containing them to London. She told him that no one would believe him if he ever said anything bad about her. If she got pregnant and had a child it would be raised as his heir and would own Manderley when Maxim died. She insinuated that she was pregnant now. It was impossible that it was Maxim's child. Rebecca was laughing at him when he shot her. He carried her body to her sailboat. He sailed out a bit and then drove a stake into the bottom of the hull. He closed her body in the cabin and took the dingy back to shore.

Mrs. de Winter shook off her initial shock. She told Maxim that there was no proof that he had killed Rebecca. Perhaps they would not even find out that it was Rebecca's body. She tells him that he will just have to tell the authorities that he had made a mistake in identifying the other woman. She tells him that she is going to stand by him and that they are going to get through this ordeal together.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Maxim tells his wife for the first time that he loves her but he is afraid that she does not really love him. This is the fist time that he has told his wife of his feelings. The reason that Maxim had frequently questioned his wife of her feelings is thus revealed. He was afraid that she would not love him after he revealed that he murdered Rebecca. He explains that he never loved Rebecca. She was a horrible woman.

The author is not horrified that her husband has killed his first wife. She feels sorry that he was married to someone who he did not love and who did not love him. This may be a result of the fact that she finally learns that her husband is not in love with his dead

wife, rather, that he loves her. All of her previous comparisons to Rebecca had been for naught. Rebecca was not the amazing women that she was led to believe. The author gains confidence from these revelations. She transformed instantly. It is as if she grew up in the manner of a few minutes. She resolves to be confident and strong for the sake of her husband and their future together.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

The author makes a resolution to herself that she will no longer be shy. She needs to be strong for her husband. They must be happy together. There is a telephone call for Maxim. He returns to inform his wife that the boat is to be raised tomorrow. He had told the caller that he believed Rebecca to be alone and he admitted that he must have made a mistake in identifying the other woman as Rebecca.

The next morning Maxim leaves early to be there when Rebecca's boat is raised. The author has breakfast and goes to the morning room. The room has not been touched. The flowers are dead and the windows are closed. She rings for a servant and is uncharacteristically firm. She also makes changes in the menu that Mrs. Danvers had set out for her. She is arranging fresh flowers when Mrs. Danvers enters. The housekeeper wants to know why she had changed the menu. Mrs. de Winter is firm with Mrs. Danvers and gives her reasons. Mrs. Danvers questions Mrs. de Winter about Maxim's whereabouts and the calls from reporters. Mrs. de Winter says nothing. Maxim returns with news that the activities to lift the boat out of the water were successful. There is no question that the body is Rebecca. There is no sign of her being shot however; the bullet did not hit a bone.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Chapter 20-one continues the author's transformation. She is suddenly strong and firm with the servants and asserts her place as lady of the household.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

The news of the discovery of Rebecca's boat and her body is all over the newspapers. A formal inquest is set to be held in the next town. A jury will hear the evidence and rule over the cause of her death. Mrs. de Winter comes with Maxim and Frank to the inquiry however when they arrive, she decides to wait in the car. After awhile she decides to walk around and a police officer, recognizing her, leads her to a small waiting room. The police officer tells her that she could enter the proceedings without being seen, it was almost over and Maxim had already spoken.

She enters the proceedings and finds a seat in the back. James Tabb, the man who refurbished the boat for Rebecca was the last one to give his testimony. He testifies that the vessel is seaworthy and he is upset that he has lost business since it capsized. He is allowed to examine the boat and shares his findings. He says that the boat was purposely sunk. The holes in the bottom of the boat was not caused by running into rocks, rather they were made by a spike.

The room is shocked to hear this testimony. It seems as if it was not an accident after all. Maxim is called to answer more questions. He denies knowing anything about the manmade spike holes. He tells the room that his wife looked after her own boat. He is asked whether he had a happy marriage with Rebecca and Mrs. de Winter faints.

Chapter 22 Analysis

The author's newfound strength falters as Maxim is the new focus of the investigation. The penalty, if he is convicted, for murder would be death by hanging. Maxim, on the other hand is very calm. His outward appearance is of confidence even though he has shared with his wife that he does not think they will be allowed to have a future together, insinuating that they will eventually figure out that he had killed Rebecca.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

She is taken to the small waiting room. Frank comes out to drive her home. After he drops her off at Manderley he returns to help Maxim. She waits for Maxim's return, imagining the worst. Maxim returns and tells his wife that Rebecca's death was ruled a suicide. He tells her that there was not enough evidence to prove that anyone else purposely sunk the boat but herself. He only stays for a short time and Frank has arranged a burial for Rebecca's body. Maxim promises that he will not be long and will be back in time for dinner.

Mrs. de Winter waits for her husbands' return in the library. She is notified that they have a visitor. Mr. Favell enters rather rudely. He orders one of the servants to get him a drink and smokes. He means to wait for Maxim to return. Maxim returns and tells Mr. Favell to leave. Mr. Favell has other notions. He tells Maxim that he does not believe that Rebecca killed herself. He thinks that Maxim killed her. He shows Maxim a note that was left for him from Rebecca the night she died. She had told him to meet her in the cottage by the sea as she had something to tell him. He announces that they were lovers, as Maxim surely knew.

He tells Maxim that he will forget about Maxim killing Rebecca if he gives him two or three thousand pounds every year for the rest of his life. Frank wants to consider the offer but Maxim tells him that he will not be blackmailed, and again asks him to leave.

Mr. Favell threatens to go to the authorities and Maxim saves him the trouble by telephoning Colonel Julyan and asking that he come over right away. The Colonel arrives and Mr. Favell reiterates his accusations against Maxim. He tells the group that he was Rebecca's intended husband and the point of the letter means that she had meant to meet with him that night. She would not have made an appointment and then killed herself.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Rebecca's death was ruled a suicide but the relief was short lived. Mr. Favell returns to become a point of external conflict. He reveals that he was Rebecca's lover and he knows that she did not kill herself. Maxim is perfectly calm throughout the whole ordeal with Mr. Favell. He calls Colonel Julyan on his own free will. It is his wife and Frank that want him to consider Mr. Favell's blackmail attempt. It seems that Maxim has either resigned himself to the fact that he will be caught or he is certain, for some unknown reason that he will not. The suspense builds as the author waits so see if Maxim's secret will be revealed.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Mr. Favell laughs wickedly prompting Colonel Julyan to write him off as being drunk. Maxim notifies the Colonel of Mr. Favell's attempt at blackmailing him. Colonel Julyan is not impressed with Mr. Favell. He tells Mr. Favell that he does not have proof against Maxim. Mr. Favell believes he has a witness to Rebecca's murder. He thinks that Ben had been on the beach that night. Maxim calls for his servant to fetch Ben. The author is sickened. She thinks back to the conversations that she had with Ben. She thought he had been talking nonsense but he had said unkind things about Rebecca, that she had been mean to him and that he hadn't told anyone. Now she knows that Ben had meant that he hadn't told anyone that Maxim killed Rebecca.

Ben arrives and Colonel Julyan asks him questions. Ben denies ever having seen Mr. Favell before. Mr. Favell calls him a liar and other names. Ben proves to be no help but is very concerned about being sent to an asylum. Maxim assures him they will not send him to an asylum and has his servant feed him and drive him home. Mr. Favell makes a stink claiming that Maxim had bribed Ben with food. Mr. Favell asks that Mrs. Danvers be called. Mrs. Danvers arrives. Mr. Favell tells the group that Rebecca had been in love with him and asked Mrs. Danvers to confirm that. Mrs. Danvers denies that Rebecca had loved him. She tells the group that Rebecca thought of making love to men as a game. She would come home and laugh with her about the men.

She is asked if there is any reason why she thought Rebecca would have killed herself. Mrs. Danvers can think of no reason. She is given Mr. Favell's note from Rebecca. She cannot think of anything important that Rebecca had to tell Mr. Favell. She is asked if she knows what Rebecca had done in London that day. Mrs. Danvers tells her that she still has Rebecca's engagement diary. She goes to fetch the diary.

Mrs. Danvers returns with the diary. Rebecca had a habit of writing all of her appointments in the diary and crossing it off as she finished it. She looked up the date of Rebecca's death and announced that Rebecca had a hair appointment and then an appointment with Baker. Mrs. Danvers did not know who Baker was. She looks in the back of the diary and sees that there is part of a phone number for Baker, but no exchange. It looks as if there is also an M written next to it. It is suggested that they try every London exchange beginning with the letter M. Frank makes the calls at the insistence of Maxim. It takes two tries but Frank finally returns with the information. The second number that he calls is a medical office. Baker is actually Dr. Baker, but he has retired. Frank was given his address.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Colonel Julyan performs his duty and investigates Mr. Favell's claim. Maxim is more than helpful leading the reader to become suspicious as to what his plan is. It is a wonder why Maxim would be so helpful in the investigation against himself. The reader is suspicious as to whether Maxim has a secret plan and knows that Mr. Favell's accusations will go unproven.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Frank comes back with an address. Dr. Baker lives in London. There is no telephone number. Frank tells the group that Dr. Baker was a very well respected woman's specialist. The men have no idea why Rebecca would have visited him. The entire time the author thinks that, the reason is so obvious.

Colonel Julyan suggests writing Dr. Baker and inquiring as to why Rebecca had seen him. Mr. Favell is against this idea, as it would buy too much time for Maxim. Also Dr. Baker might divulge confidential information more easily if Mr. de Winter asked for it himself. Maxim agrees to make the trip to London tomorrow. Colonel Julyan agrees to go with him after Mr. Favell calls for a law official to accompany him. Mr. Favell also wants to go himself and Colonel Julyan agrees, if he is sober. It is asked that Mrs. Danvers locks Maxim and his wife in their bedroom tonight and unlocks the door in morning.

After the group leaves Mrs. de Winter announces that she will go with Maxim to London tomorrow. He agrees. They will have the entire trip to be together. They sit together in the library. Maxim stokes his wife's hair and kisses her.

Chapter 25 Analysis

The plan is set to go to London the next day. Mr. and Mrs. de Winter are desperate to spend as much time together until they will be separated by the news that Dr. Baker will give them. Maxim does not reveal any plan that he may have, to keep him from being proved guilty. Either he does not have such a plan or he does not trust his wife to keep the secret as she did faint in the inquiry, which did not look good for him.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Mrs. de Winter wakes before her husband. She bathes and dresses and then hears Mrs. Danvers unlock their bedroom door. She had locked them in the night before. The author packs a small suitcase, as she did not know how long they would be gone. Her husband wakes and gets ready. They have breakfast together and talk quietly.

It is time to leave and Frank tells them that he will wait by the telephone. Mr. de Winter promises to call him. The couple sets off for London picking up Colonel Julyan on the way. Mr. Favell follows them in his car.

They stop for lunch; Mr. Favell eats across the street. The trip to Dr. Baker's house takes eight hours. They arrive at the house and wait in the drawing room for the doctor. He has been outside playing tennis with his sons. The author takes the time to look around the room and describes what she sees. She notices a postcard from Switzerland and comments to herself that the doctor's family has friends in Switzerland.

Dr. Baker arrives and Colonel Julyan explains the reason for their visit. He tells the doctor that Rebecca's death has been ruled a suicide and they are looking to see if news she heard from the doctor was a motive for killing herself. The doctor has heard about Mrs. de Winter's body being found but does not recognize treating a woman with the last name de Winter, she must have used a fake name. The doctor leaves and returns with his records. The time Rebecca had in her date book corresponded with a medical record for a Mrs. Danvers. Rebecca had seen Dr. Baker the week before and had come for the results of the x-ray. She was very ill, in a matter of months she would be put on morphine. She had a large growth on one of her ovaries that was inoperable. Dr. Baker agreed that her illness would have been a motive for suicide.

Chapter 26 Analysis

There is a great sense of foreboding within the author and her husband, as they are getting ready for the London trip. The author believes that in some way she feels as if they might never return to Manderley. It is interesting to note that the author mentions that she saw a postcard from Switzerland in Dr. Baker's house. It was as if she was trying to figure out what kind of man Dr. Baker was.

It is revealed that Rebecca had an illness, cancer. It is ironic that Rebecca had been found to have cancer as she had been like a cancer in Maxim's life. She had been in pain for some time, as she had put him in pain. She was not pregnant as she and Mr. de Winter had thought. It seems as if she had lied to Mr. de Winter the night he killed her. The cancer is thought of a motive for suicide and Mr. and Mrs. de Winter are noticeably relieved. It seems as if the crisis is over.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

The group goes to the cars and stands around in shock. Mr. Favell asks if cancer is contagious but no one knows. He tells Maxim that he got a lucky break but he will get him another way. Mr. and Mrs. de Winter, and Colonel Julyan get in the car and drive off leaving Mr. Favell laughing at them.

Colonel Julyan decides to visit his sister who lives in London and take the train home tomorrow. The de Winters drop him off at his sister's house. He tells them that they should go on holiday to get away. He suggests Switzerland as he once vacationed there with his family.

Mr. and Mrs. de Winter stop at a restaurant in London for dinner. Mrs. de Winter is overjoyed and relieved. She tells her husband that they can now put this behind them and live their lives together happily. Mr. de Winter seems distracted and goes to call Frank to tell him the news. He returns and tells his wife that Mrs. Danvers has packed up all of her things and left without saying a word. Mrs. de Winter is happy by the news but her husband thinks that it is overly strange.

The couple leaves the restaurant and Maxim asks his wife if she wouldn't mind sleeping in the back seat so that they may make it home as soon as possible. He has a feeling that something is wrong. She agrees and has nightmares the entire ride back. They stop once for tea. She wakes up and sees that they are less than an hour away from Manderley. As they near their home she wonders out loud that it is strange she sees the northern lights, as it is summer. It is not the northern lights she sees. It is Manderley burning.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Mr. Favell separates from the group after threatening that he will have his revenge on Maxim. The threat goes mostly unnoticed. Before Colonel Julyan leaves he mentions that the de Winters should take a vacation abroad. He specifically mentions Switzerland. This seems a coincidence, an element of the plot, as the author had recently noticed a postcard from Switzerland, at Dr. Baker's house, and had thought that he must have friends who went to Switzerland. The reader could take these instances as a mere coincidence, an element of the plot structure. On the other hand it could have a much more important meaning. The author adds this element so that the careful reader will form a suspicion that Colonel Julyan was indeed the friend who had sent the postcard from Switzerland to Dr. Baker. This whole excursion to Dr. Baker's could have been an elaborate ruse by Colonel Julyan, Frank, and perhaps Maxim to insure that Rebecca's death would be ruled a suicide. Perhaps Rebecca really was pregnant, as she had told Maxim. If she were pregnant it would provide a reason to as why she

wanted to see Mr. Favell too, as he was probably the father. This coincidence is never picked up upon by the author.

Maxim becomes anxious to get back to Manderley, having a bad feeling. This feeling is made worse when he hears that Mrs. Danvers has suddenly left Manderley. The author does not share his suspicions. Maxim's feelings are a foreshadowing that a possible tragedy is about to occur.

Maxim's suspicions are proved true as they come upon their home in flames. The fire at Manderley is symbolic of the end of the fear and worry that plagued the couple since they moved to the house. Rebecca will no longer live over them and Mrs. de Winter will no longer be compared to Maxim's deceased wife. They are free to live their life together without a physical representation of their tragic memories. It can be concluded that Mr. Favell and Mrs. Danvers had something to do with the arson but it is never revealed and the story ends.

Characters

Ben

Ben is a mentally retarded man who lives near Manderley and spends his time near the cove where Rebecca kept her boat. When he first shows up, speaking in riddles that she does not understand, he frightens Mrs. de Winter. When Favell is trying to prove that he and Rebecca were lovers, he sends for Ben as a witness that he was a frequent night visitor to the cottage where she often slept. Ben is confused, however, and afraid that the authorities have sent for him to put him in an asylum, and he refuses to say anything about what he knows.

Frank Crawley

Frank is the manager of business affairs at Manderley, an efficient and faithful employee who, though boring, is always extremely tactful about what he says in social situations. Soon after she meets him, Mrs. de Winter feels that she can trust Frank. When she is uncomfortable about how Maxim might feel about his dead wife, Frank assures her that she is just what Maxim needs, making him one of her first friends at Manderley. She even feels comfortable enough with him to ask him directly if Rebecca was beautiful, and he replies: "I suppose she was the most beautiful creature I ever saw in my life." From this she assumes that he, like everyone else, was in love with Rebecca. Later, when Maxim tells her the truth about Rebecca, he explains that Frank had wanted to quit his job because she kept pestering him sexually and would not leave him alone. When Maxim is accused of killing her, it becomes clear that Frank knows he really is guilty and probably knew all along, although he has remained quiet.

Mrs. Danvers

Mrs. Danvers came to Manderley as Rebecca's maid soon after Rebecca and Maxim were married. She is very formal and intimidating toward the new Mrs. de Winter, showing her how things are done at the house and practically insisting that the traditions that Rebecca started be continued. She has two encounters with Mrs. de Winter that are particularly odd. In the first, Mrs. de Winter goes for the first time to the rooms that Rebecca occupied after seeing Mrs. Danvers in the window with a strange man, who turns out to be Jack Favell. While she is in the room, Mrs. Danvers comes in and, as if she is a curator in a museum showing off a prized collection, shows her Rebecca's belongings. She touches the bed, the clothes, and the hair brushes adoringly. She says that she allows no one else into Rebecca's rooms, that by keeping them intact it is like Rebecca has never really left, remarking that "It's not only in this room.. . . It's in many rooms in the house. In the morning-room, in the hall, even in the little flower-room. I feel her everywhere. You do too, don't you?"

It is Mrs. Danvers who suggests the costume for the ball that makes Maxim angry with his wife because it is the same one that Rebecca wore. The evening of the ball, she sees Mrs. Danvers in the hall, an evil smile on her face: "The face of an exulting devil."

On the day after her humiliation at the masquerade ball, Mrs. de Winter finds Mrs. Danvers in Rebecca's room. Mrs. Danvers tells her directly that she should never have come to Manderley, and, recognizing her misery, stands beside her at the window, urging Mrs. de Winter to jump and kill herself before they are interrupted.

Later, it becomes clear to Mrs. de Winter that it was Mrs. Danvers, with the help of Favell, who set Manderley afire before disappearing.

Maxim de Winter

When he first appears at Monte Carlo at the beginning of the novel, Maxim is the mysterious, handsome forty-two-year-old stranger who has suffered the tragic loss of his wife eight months earlier. After a brief courtship, he asks the book's narrator to marry him, and he takes her back to his country estate, Manderley, which is famous all over the world. Whenever his late wife, Rebecca, is mentioned, he becomes excessively emotional. He and his new wife move into a wing of the house on the far side of the one he occupied with Rebecca. He encourages her not to do things that Rebecca did. She assumes this to mean that he still mourns the memory of his late wife and is not willing to let Rebecca's place in his heart be taken by another.

Once the boat that Rebecca died in is found, Maxim confesses the truth to his wife: Rebecca was, in spite of the glowing praise of almost everyone who knew her, a spiteful, bitter woman who threatened to make him responsible for her child by another man, and in a fit of rage he killed her. The most incriminating piece of evidence against him is that he identified a body that washed up on the shore far away, months after her disappearance, as Rebecca. Because he is well liked in the community, the officials are willing to accept that his identification was a mistake. There is no evidence of foul play on the corpse that they find on the sunken boat because Maxim's shot passed through her heart without touching any bone.

For several of the book's final chapters, Rebecca's cousin, Jack Favell, questions Maxim's innocence, first trying to blackmail him and then, when Maxim calls his bluff, insisting that the authorities investigate further. Maxim does not lose his composure by denying Favell's accusations or trying to prove them wrong; instead, he risks exposure by agreeing to any steps that might prove him guilty. In the end, when it is found out that Rebecca was not pregnant but that she was, in fact, dying of cancer, he guesses that she actually wanted him to kill her, that she wanted to die without suffering and to leave him with the guilt of her murder.

Mrs. de Winter

The narrator of this book is never called by her given name. Not until she is married to Maxim de Winter is she directly referred to by name. She was a poor orphan, whose parents both died within five weeks of each other. She took a job as companion to the wealthy American, Mrs. Van Hopper, with whom she is staying at Monte Carlo in the south of France when they meet Maxim de Winter.

After Maxim marries her and takes her back to his estate, Manderley, she feels self-conscious about her position as mistress of the house. In her embarrassment, she leaves the details of the house to the servants, thus permitting them to continue with the patterns they had become used to under Maxim's late wife, Rebecca. She allows herself to be bullied by Rebecca's personal maid, Mrs. Danvers, who continually corrects her about how things should be done, remarking that "Mrs. de Winter," meaning Rebecca, arranged things. Mrs. Danvers is always ready to embarrass the new Mrs. de Winter by pointing out her timidity; however, the other servants and laborers at Manderley, as well as people who live nearby and stop there, are kind to her.

When Maxim agrees to throw a grand costume ball at Manderley, his wife, at the suggestion of Mrs. Danvers, orders a costume that reproduces the gown and wig worn by a de Winter ancestor in one of the mansion's oil paintings. As the party approaches, her childish excitement rises to a fevered pitch, but when Maxim sees her costume, he loses his temper and tells her to take it off□it is identical to the one Rebecca wore at the last ball before her death. She hides in her room, but eventually comes out in an ordinary dress from her closet and performs her duties as a hostess although she feels that she has insulted Maxim and has been humiliated by him.

It is the day after the ball that the boat in which Rebecca died is found. A series of events, which include accusations of murder aimed at Maxim and a formal inquest, follows. Throughout the rest of the book, the narrator relates the action and describes her concern, but her involvement is minimal.

Jack Favell

When the narrator first encounters Favell, he has been sneaked into Manderley by Mrs. Danvers. He is there on a day when the other servants are off, and his car is hidden behind the house. He is a bold, annoying man, who makes leering, suggestive remarks, offering Mrs. de Winter cigarettes and asking her to go for a ride in his car. He is obviously familiar with the estate: the young dog, Jasper, knows him, and he refers to Mrs. Danvers as "old Danny." She later finds out that he is Rebecca's cousin and that Maxim does not want him in the house. In addition, he and Rebecca were lovers; Favell contends that at the time of her death, Rebecca was planning to run away with him and marry him.

Favell is the driving force for the action in the book's later chapters. Upset that an inquest has determined that Rebecca died by suicide, he shows up at Manderley with a

note that she sent him on the afternoon of the day she died, asking him to meet her that night as she had something important to tell him. Using this as proof that she did not intend to kill herself, he attempts to blackmail Maxim, and when that does not work, he insists that the authorities be called to investigate, leading them to call Ben as a witness, to go through Rebecca's diary, and, finally, to drive to London to interview her doctor. At last, Favell gives up. Outside of the doctor's house, he is feeling sick. Maxim and his wife find out later that Favell actually returned to Manderley to take Mrs. Danvers away, starting the house on fire before they left.

Frith

Frith has been a servant at Manderley since Maxim was a child. He is faithful, performing his duties without ever letting any opinions or suspicions be known.

Colonel Julyan

The Colonel is the magistrate of Kerrith, the leading law official in the county. He is a guest at the masquerade ball, and, two days later, he dines at Manderley after Rebecca's sunken boat has been raised and her skeleton found. In spite of the tension in the room, the Colonel makes small talk with Mrs. de Winter until the servants have left the room, and it is only then that he is open about the sunken boat.

When Favell makes accusations against Maxim, Colonel Julyan is brought in to investigate. At first, he is obviously disgusted by Favell's drunken state, but he weighs the evidence carefully. His eventual determination is that there is plenty of evidence for believing that Rebecca committed suicide and little reason to think that she did not. Maxim de Winter, however, believes in the end that the Colonel can tell he is guilty but content to let the matter be forgotten.

Beatrice Lacy

Maxim's sister, Beatrice, is the opposite of his wife. She is tall, athletic, and outspoken. At first, she seems intimidating, and the narrator does not think that they will get along. Still, Beatrice (or "Bee," as her friends call her) is fond of the narrator. Her wedding present to the couple, a set of books about the history of art, is chosen because one of the few things she knows about her new sister- in-law is her interest in drawing. She takes Maxim's wife along with her when she goes to see their grandmother, to introduce her to the only other member of Maxim's family.

When Mrs. de Winter mistakenly upsets Maxim by wearing the same costume to the Manderley ball that Rebecca once wore, Beatrice helps her get over her humiliation, picking out an ordinary dress from her closet and telling her that it will look fine on her. Although her assertiveness in social affairs is useful in that case, it becomes dangerous later. After a coroner's inquest finds that Rebecca committed suicide, Beatrice, not knowing that Maxim killed her, tells her sister-in-law to insist that they open the case

again because she thinks that a suicide verdict is a humiliation to her brother. At the time, her son is home from school with the measles, and no one is allowed to leave the house, so she is not able to raise a fuss that could have exposed her brother's guilt in the crime of Rebecca's murder.

Major Giles Lacy

Beatrice's husband is something of a stereotype: a big, dull, jovial man, who recedes into the social background behind his brash, domineering wife. When Maxim discloses the truth about Rebecca, he mentions that it was obvious from Giles' loud, boisterous manner when he and Rebecca came back from an afternoon of boating that they had had a fling.

Robert

Robert is the assistant butler at Manderley. He performs the duties, such as going to the post office, that Frith is incapable of doing.

James Tabb

Tabb is the shipbuilder who performed yearly maintenance on Rebecca's boat. After it is pulled from the harbor, people said that he had not maintained it properly, and Tabb, to save his professional reputation, inspected it. He testifies at the inquest that the boat sank because of holes deliberately put in it from the inside, a fact that nearly causes great trouble for Maxim before the coroner declares it an act of suicide.

Mrs. Van Hopper

At the beginning of the book, the narrator is employed as a companion to Mrs. Van Hopper, a rich and pretentious American woman. She is a social climber, trying to ease into upper-class European society by introducing herself to its finest members. In the case of Maxim de Winter, she uses snapshots that some mutual friends have sent her from their vacation as an excuse to sit at his table and have lunch with him. After de Winter tells her that he is in love with her companion and is taking her away to marry her, Mrs. Van Hopper offers her congratulations, but when he leaves, she raises doubts in the narrator's mind:

"Of course," she said, "you know why he's marrying
you, don't you? You haven't flattered yourself
he's in love with you? The fact is that empty house
got on his nerves to such an extent he merely went
off his head. He admitted as much before you came
into the room. He just can't go on living there
alone. . ."

Setting

With the exception of the opening chapters in Monte Carlo, Rebecca takes place at the country estate of Manderley.

The now famous first sentence, "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again," prepares the reader for the importance of the manor house. Du Maurier adheres to the Gothic tradition by giving psychological importance to the house, which becomes almost a character in its own right. The mansion's rooms provide clues to Rebecca's character. There is a stigma attached to the sea, the site of Rebecca's drowning.

Maxim orders Mrs. Danvers to redecorate the east wing, which looks out on the rose garden, rather than taking up residence in the west wing with its view of the sea.

Manderley is important to the narrator before she even sees it. Her elderly companion, Mrs. Van Hopper, dwells on British aristocracy and places great value on Manderley as a stately home.

In addition, when younger and vacationing nearby, the narrator herself had purchased a post card of the estate. She speculates, "Maybe there was something inviolate about Manderley that made it a place apart." Her reflection on the uniqueness of the house prepares the reader for the events which are later revealed.

Social Sensitivity

Rebecca gradually presents the facts and the conflicts that are central to the plot. By basing the story in the Gothic tradition, the novel is more of a suspenseful mystery than a cause for any real apprehension. Both the reader and the narrator discover Rebecca's story at the same time, thus dissolving some of the more frightening aspects of the book.

The sexual and psychological innuendos are subtle and present little threat to young adult readers. In addition, the tone and vocabulary of Rebecca are sophisticated; any reader mature enough to fully handle all aspects of the novel is probably mentally prepared for its subtleties.

Literary Qualities

Du Maurier excels at first person narration. Rebecca is written from the point of view of Maxim's second wife, whose name is never revealed. This deliberate omission serves to emphasize her colorless personality and, by contrast, to accentuate the powerful personality of her predecessor, Rebecca.

Du Maurier has written that she had meant to begin Rebecca with the narrator meeting Maxim, then later decided to move the beginning of the action to an opening epilogue. This decision is, in large part, responsible for the success of the novel. In Rebecca—as well as in My Cousin Rachel and other of her works— the action begins with a major character's elusive memories of the way life used to be before a terrible event. The novel then describes the events that irrevocably changed the character's life.

Du Maurier allows the novel to end quickly by using this narrative device, thus avoiding a long, anticlimactic denouement.

Rebecca follows the conventions of the Gothic novel and is largely responsible for the genre's resurgence in the twentieth century. Typified by Horace Walpole's novel, The Castle of Otranto (1764), the Gothic novel is often set in an eerie mansion or castle. Usually, a young heroine's life is threatened by secrets contained in the mansion until the man she loves rescues her. Rebecca follows this formula except that Maxim, the hero, does not rescue anyone from the evil Manderley. To the contrary, Maxim was responsible for the death of his first wife and is unaware of the danger his second wife faces.

Themes

Loyalty

The driving force behind the actions of this book's characters is loyalty. This is seen most clearly in the characters of Frank Crawley, the business manager of Manderley, and Frith, the head butler. Crawley expresses his loyalty by being congenial, never shying away from a topic of conversation and yet never expressing exactly what he thinks either. Mrs. de Winter can sense that Crawley is on her side, but she also knows that he will not be completely honest about what he thinks of Rebecca because his sense of loyalty to Maxim would forbid it. Frith is just as deeply loyal, but it is easier for him to keep up his attitude of detachment because, as a servant, he is not involved in family matters nor expected to know about the de Winters' affairs anyway.

Like Frith, Mrs. Danvers is a family servant, but her sense of loyalty makes her negligent in her duty. She is loyal to Rebecca, the dead member of the family, and, in her attempt to preserve Rebecca's memory, she is disrespectful to the current Mrs. de Winter. At first, her loyalty appears as just an annoying, but almost respectable, personality tic, as when she tells the narrator that certain practices are followed because "that is the way Mrs. de Winter wants it done," ignoring the fact that the person she is talking to is now Mrs. de Winter. After the costume ball, her hostility becomes open, and she tries to capitalize on the narrator's grief at her inability to fit in by urging her toward suicide, because "You tried to take Mrs. de Winter's place." In the end, her loyalty to Rebecca's memory makes it impossible for Mrs. Danvers to accept that the new Mrs. de Winter and Maxim can be happy together, so she burns Manderley down.

The narrator's greatest concern, however, is her suspicion that, despite having married her, Maxim is loyal to the memory of Rebecca. She reads his moodiness to mean that he is still grieving over his lost wife. His refusal to use the bedroom that he used with Rebecca, his refusal to go near the cottage Rebecca used, and his anger at seeing her wear the same costume Rebecca wore all seem like signs that he is not willing to give up the memory of her. In the end, when he admits to having actually hated Rebecca and killed her, the narrator does not even think of leaving him because he is a murderer; she stays loyal to him throughout the investigation because she loves him.

Flesh versus Spirit

Part of the narrator's sense of inferiority results from the fact that she is competing with the memory of a dead woman. Her sense of what Rebecca was like builds up slowly from isolated clues: the inscription in a book, her formal agenda left in her desk, Mrs. Danvers' description, and the descriptions of all of the people who knew her. The most uncomfortable comparison comes from Maxim's grandmother who, at eighty-three, is senile and unpredictable: in the middle of their conversation, she loses touch with reality and calls out, "I want Rebecca, what have you done with Rebecca?" There are several

practical reasons that the narrator feels she cannot compete with Rebecca, as she finds out about her beauty and social grace. She also is unable to compete because Rebecca is just a memory and therefore is incapable of doing wrong, while she, being human, is quite fallible. Rebecca's continuing presence in Manderley is manifest in the way she decorated it, in her schedules and customs (such as the daily approval of the menu), and in the words of praise visitors have for her. She haunts the narrator as much as if she actually occupied the house like a ghost. "Sometimes I wonder," Mrs. Danvers tells her, as they are looking at Rebecca's belongings. "Sometimes I wonder if she comes back here to Manderley and watches you and Mr. de Winter together."

The ironic thing is that the ghost of Rebecca that haunts Manderley is more a result of terror than of grief. Maxim de Winter remembers her as a mean-spirited woman who put on a sickly sweet image before the public. If he is haunted by her, it is because of his own internal struggle with the guilt he feels for killing her, not because he misses her at all. Frank Crawley's elusiveness about Rebecca, which the narrator thinks is because of his suppressed love for her, is actually discomfort, because she put him in an awkward position by making sexual advances toward him. Beatrice and Giles cannot speak of her memory clearly because they both know that she seduced Giles, and so, unsure of how to speak of her, they end up talking about her with polite praise. In the formal British setting of this novel, people find it better to speak well of the dead than of the living.

Guilt and Innocence

One of Daphne du Maurier's greatest achievements in this novel is to convince readers of the innocence of the murderer and the guilt of the murder victim. There are several reasons why, according to the novel's moral structure, Rebecca deserved to die. For one thing, she was cruel and a liar: as Maxim explains it, "They all believed in her down here, they all admired her, they never knew how she laughed at them behind their backs, jeered at them, mimicked them." Mrs. Danvers repeats Rebecca's falseness when she bursts Favell's delusion that she loved him: "Love-making was a game with her, only a game. She told me so. She did it because it made her laugh." Another reason Rebecca deserved her fate is the fact that she was promiscuous: when the truth comes out about her, the list of men she was with or tried to seduce includes Favell, Crawley, Giles, and, presumably, a lot of others, first in London, and then, increasingly, at her cottage at Manderley, where she would invite men for "picnics." In addition, there are perversities that are not described in the book, things that she told to Maxim that he says, with a shudder, "I shall never repeat to another soul." The ultimate offense, the one that drives him to shooting her, is that she threatens to have another man's child and tell everyone that it is Maxim's so that the child would be raised bearing his name: "And when you died Manderley would be his. You could not prevent it. The property's entailed."

Maxim's innocence in killing Rebecca stems from the fact that it is a selfless act: he is not protecting himself, but the good name of Manderley, which her exploits threaten to destroy. To the narrator, Maxim's pureness of heart, his love for her, and his devotion to Manderley are more important than the fact of the murder he committed. They find out

in the end that Maxim was even less guilty than they had assumed him to be because Rebecca had cancer and was going to die anyway. One last factor in mitigating Maxim's responsibility for what he did is his guess that Rebecca goaded him into shooting her, so that she could die a quick and painless death and make him feel guilty about doing what cancer would have done in a few months anyway. Readers are left with the impression that Rebecca is guilty and that Maxim, who actually killed her and buried her at sea, is a victim of circumstances.

Style

Setting

There are two main settings for this novel. The first is the resort of Monte Carlo on the southern coast of France. Since 1862, when the first gambling casino was opened there, the town has been famous around the world as a playground for Europe's rich. Starting the book in this setting serves to establish the wealthy social class of these characters. It also helps to raise readers' curiosity about Manderley, which is talked about constantly, even by characters who have never been there but who know it by reputation. The narrator buys a postcard of Manderley in a shop in Monte Carlo.

Most of the book tales place at Manderley, the English country estate that has been owned by the de Winter family for generations. The house itself is imposing to a young girl who was not raised in this wealthy social environment. It is so large that she gets lost, so large that one entire wing can be shut off with Rebecca's personal belongings with little effect. Ancient portraits hang on the walls, reminding the narrator of the responsibility of becoming part of a well-established dynasty. The place is decorated with expensive things that Rebecca put there, constantly reminding her of the presence of the first Mrs. de Winter.

The house is surrounded by trees, which can be inviting on a sunny day but frightening on a dark, rainy one. Past the trees is the bay. Manderley's proximity to the sea is important because it adds to the beauty of this rich estate but also because the sea hides the corpse of the murder victim, but hides it in a way that it can be found again. One other significant aspect of Manderley is the mysterious cottage where the narrator encounters Ben: this place is left to decay, obviously because Maxim cannot bring himself to go there, raising the prospect of mystery until the end, when it turns out to be central to the horrible events of the past.

Structure

Most of *Rebecca* follows a chronological path, from the time the narrator meets Maxim de Winter at Monte Carlo to the night that Manderley burns down. There is, however, a prelude that takes place some time after the events in the novel. There is no way to tell when this beginning section, which comprises the first chapter and a half, takes place, only that the events that happened at Manderley still haunt the narrator and her male companion, who is left unidentified.

The function of this beginning is to foreshadow events that the reader is going to read about. Mrs. Danvers is mentioned, and so are Jasper the dog and Favell. They are all brought up in the natural way that they might pass through the mind of someone thinking about the past. Because readers do not know what these names refer to, however, they serve in these first chapters to focus attention, to keep readers alert for

the story that is about to unfold. The most important element of this introduction is the fact that the man travelling with the narrator is not identified: while reading the main story, readers have to be alert to signs that her love affair with Maxim de Winter might end and to look for clues that hint who her true love might turn out to be.

Gothicism

The true flowering of the gothic novel was during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when it was a sub-category of the much broader romantic movement in literature. While romanticism explained humanity's relationship with nature as one of mutual benefit, with nature providing an escape from the rules of society and offering artistic souls a chance to express themselves creatively, Gothicism stressed the frightening, dark, unsure aspects of nature. The most powerful example of the gothic novel is Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein,* which is concerned with the tragic results that can occur when humans tamper with nature.

Gothic novels usually include elements of the supernatural, mystery, and horror. In *Rebecca,* all of the events end up being explained within the realm of commonly understood reality, but the haunting "presence" of Rebecca's personality gives the book a Gothic mood. Another key element of these works is their setting in ancient castles, usually decaying, which is an element that shows the romantic movement's fascination with ancient history along with the Gothic interest in death and decay. The short stories of Edgar Allan Poe contain many of the most recognizable Gothic elements. Many of the novels that modern readers associate with romance and horror use elements of Gothicism.

Narrator

Readers are often so comfortable with the narrative voice used in this novel that they can finish the entire book without realizing how little they know about the woman who is telling the story. Du Maurier does not even provide a name for this person. She is described as being small and girlish, with a pageboy haircut. (Frank Crawley suggests that she might be Joan of Arc at the masquerade because of her hair.) The book does not, however, tell how old she is nor where she was raised nor how she came to work for Mrs. Van Hopper, her employer when the story begins. She does like to draw, but not so much that she practices her interest within the story, and she seems perplexed by the books on art history that Beatrice gives her. It is not until the seventh chapter that any of the other characters addresses her directly, and then it is as "Mrs. de Winter," a title that identifies her in relation to her husband.

Du Maurier manages to keep her readers from being curious by having this narrator describe the things around her with such fascination and loving detail that all attention is drawn to them. The people and events that she encounters fill her imagination, and she in turn fills the reader's imaginations with her descriptions. Maxim de Winter, in particular, is so important to her that she focuses her story on him. Furthermore, this

narrator has such a complete, believable personality, which comes out through her telling of the story, that readers find that they are not curious about her past.

Historical Context

Post World War I

During the 1800s, Britain had built its empire by adding colonies, dominions, and protectorates. These were the great years of the British Empire: Queen Victoria, reigning for over sixty years, gave the nation a sense of stability and progress. Her conservative social views created the stiff-lipped, formal stereotype of the British citizen that is known today and that is portrayed in *Rebecca:* strict rules of behavior between the sexes, tea at fourthirty each day, and a fascination with wealth that was suppressed by the good taste not to talk about it. When Victoria died in 1901, her son Edward succeeded her to the throne. The Edwardian age in England is considered a time of international stability, owing to Edward VII's talent for negotiations. Like the Victorian era, Edward's reign from 1901 to 1910 was marked by domestic stability and social formality.

World War I shattered the tranquility of Europe, especially of Great Britain. Previous military conflicts, such as the Crimean War and the Boer War, had been marked by the civility of the participants. In the previous battles, the British class system had been clearly maintained, separating officers from soldiers, keeping the former far from the fighting, in deference to their ranks. World War I, on the other hand, brought new technology that destroyed any sense of class in battle. Long-range cannon, portable machine guns, and, especially, the use of poisonous gas forced the genteel tradition to wake up to the inhumane horrors of modern warfare.

Being with the winning forces, Britain benefited at the end of the war; colonies that had been under German control became British mandates. For a short while, there was a post-war economic boom as laborers returned and industry grew. The old social class system, though, with the type of rigid structure that du Maurier presents in *Rebecca,* was on its last legs as modern technology made the feudal system that great estates like Manderley were built upon seem increasingly pointless.

The Approach of World War II

Like America and many other countries around the world, Great Britain suffered through an economic depression in the 1930s. The country, which had started the century as the most powerful on Earth, was forced to take measures that would assure its continued economic stability. In 1931, for instance, the British government, which had been borrowing money from France and the United States to get by, imposed a heavy tariff on items that were brought into the country. This helped to control the economy, forcing British citizens either to buy goods that were made within the British Empire or to add tax money to the general revenue base. Although it helped the economic situation, British self-esteem suffered from this sign of economic weakness. The country's free trade policy had been a source of pride for Britain, and this forced abandonment of that

policy was a clear sign that Great Britain no longer dominated the world the way it once had.

At the same time, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party were rising to power in Germany. To a large extent, Hitler was able to gain power because of the same worldwide economic stagnation that was affecting America, Britain, and other countries. Germany was hit particularly hard, with prices of basic foods and supplies sometimes doubling within a week. Hitler was able to appeal to the suffering people, and he also addressed the matter of German pride, convincing the German people that the country was being mistreated by the international community. The Treaty of Versailles, which established the conditions for Germany's surrender in 1918, separated the states that had made up the German Republic, and placed restrictions on the country's armed forces, leaving Germany economically and militarily vulnerable. The Nazi party was voted into power in 1933 because the electorate believed that they could end the country's suffering and humiliation.

Almost immediately, Hitler's government began its program of military expansion. In the following years, German forces were used to absorb Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, all of which it had given up to end the war. Looking back on it, many people wondered why the countries that had led the winning force in World War I did not stop Germany when it first started to violate the Treaty of Versailles. For one thing, many people across the world agreed with the German view that the treaty had been too confining and had caused the citizens of Germany to suffer more than they should have, and so there was not strong opposition to the steps Germany took to "correct" the situation. Another reason was that the economic crisis made countries in Western Europe, such as England and France, reluctant to fight if they did not have to. Hitler signed new treaties with London, agreeing to limit the size of the German military, giving those who wanted to avoid war a chance to argue that it would be unnecessary. The forces opposing intervention into German affairs were so strong that the world ignored the stories that escaped from German territories of concentration camps where, it has been proven, millions of Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals were mutilated and killed.

Great Britain eventually did enter into war with Germany in 1939, after Hitler broke a nonaggression pact with Poland and attacked that country. By that time, it was clear that he intended to continue endless expansion and that treaties made no difference. At the start of the war, the brunt of opposing Hitler fell upon France, which was defeated by the Germans in 1940, and England, which was hammered by German bombing raids. Seventy thousand British civilians died during the war, which lasted until 1945.

Critical Overview

Rebecca is one of those novels that critics have a difficult time disrespecting. On the one hand, it does have excessive, overblown language in places, and its plot is far from original. On the other hand, the book's overwhelming approval by the general public, from its first printing in 1938 up through today, has made it in some respects immune to negative criticism, forcing reviewers to think twice before dismissing it as just one more popular romance. In general, critics have tended to take the time to find out what is effective in this novel and why it works, rather than just dismissing it because of its weaknesses.

Basil Davenport, reviewing *Rebecca* for the *Saturday Review* when it was first published, identifies the book as a mystery about who Rebecca really was and what happened to her, but he also credits du Maurier for writing so well and so compellingly that she does not have to rely on the murder mystery plot: "The book is skillfully contrived so that it does not depend only on knowledge of it for its thrill; it can afford to give no hint of it till two-thirds of the way through." Davenport goes on to explain that *Rebecca* is, after all, melodrama: the heroine, for one thing, is "at times quite incredibly stupid," such as when she takes advice from the housekeeper whom she knows hates her. He also points out "a forced heightening of the emotional values," a disreputable trick that melodrama relies on. Still, Davenport finds the novel "as absorbing a tale as the season is likely to bring."

As time went on, critics saw *Rebecca* outlive the usually short life cycle of popular romances, elbowing its way into a position in literary history. John Raymond, writing about it in the *New Statesman* in 1951, identifies du Maurier as "a poor woman's Charlotte Brontë" of the 1930s. He goes on to note, "Her *Rebecca,* whatever one's opinions of its ultimate merits, was a *tour de force.*" He further suggests that du Maurier's fame may have made her a force for the literary world to reckon with but that her writing had become twisted by her commercial success so that she was then writing prose that was ready to be adapted to movies. Raymond's review of *My Cousin Rachel,* which came at the tail end of du Maurier's prolific period of one romantic bestseller after another, describs the book:

> . . . a honey for any Hollywood or Wardour Street
> tycoon. Slick, effective, utterly mechanical, the book
> is a triumphant and uncanny example of the way in
> which a piece of writing can be emasculated by unconsciously
> "having it arranged" for another medium.

Like Raymond, critics of the 1950s tended to cloud their judgments of du Maurier's writing with the tremendous financial success that it brought the author.

In the 1950s, du Maurier's style shifted as she focused on supernatural elements, particularly in her collection *Kiss Me Again, Stranger.* The short stories in that book were met with mixed enthusiasm. John Barkham's review in the *New York Review of Books*

simply captures the acceptance of her style at the time by noting of the eight stories, "None of them is bad, and several are very good indeed." In particular, he points out the excellence of "The Birds," which was adapted years later to one of Alfred Hitchcock's most famous movies.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, du Maurier became better known as a writer of the supernatural, rather than as a romance writer who used supernatural elements to build suspense, as she had been after the success of *Rebecca.* Susan Hill, writing in 1971 about another collection of scary stories called *Not After Midnight,* notes that it was:

> . . . a good read, and most likely, a bestseller. If only
> the quality of the prose matched up to her inventiveness,
> if only the dialog were not so banal and the
> descriptions so flat, we might have something more
> than holiday reading on our hands.

With her popularity clearly established, and the reading public jumping at the chance to buy new novels from her, du Maurier moved, in later life, to writing about real-life subjects: her father, her grandfather, her early life, the countryside where she lived, and the occasional historical figure, such as Sir Francis Bacon. Critics tended to ignore her non-fiction works, or, if they did look them over, they approached them with a polite, patronizing attitude, suggesting that they viewed them as signs of a popular writer dabbling in a hobby. Of her book about Bacon, for instance, historian Pat Rogers notes, "Daphne du Maurier has many literary gifts, but I am not sure that this book has fully enlisted them." It is likely that a review of a book by a true historian would not have been so congenial and non-critical.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of creative writing and composition at two community colleges in Illinois. In the following essay, he examines whether the lack of information about the narrator of du Maurier's story is a legitimate artistic device or just an amusing but ultimately pointless trick.

No one could ever reasonably question the popularity of British romance and mystery writer Daphne du Maurier. An author who sells books in the millions is rare enough, but her fans took their enthusiasm beyond simple purchases. In an age before the internet made conversing with fellow enthusiasts as easy as sitting down at a keyboard, there were several societies devoted to her, like the fan clubs that movie stars tend to attract. Most of this cult of du Maurier centers around one book: her 1938 neo-Romance, *Rebecca.* The book attracts new fans every year, with thoughtful readers of literature beaming about how hard they found it, after the last page, to shake off their involvement in the lives of the dashing Maxim de Winter, the repressed Mrs. Danvers, catty Bee, and all of the rest of the larger-than-life characters who roam the halls of Manderley.

It is tempting to give in to du Maurier, to congratulate her posthumously for creating a world that has lasted over a half of a century. There is, however, another side of the argument, a side that would describe *Rebecca* as nothing more than a work of really competent trash, which owes its popularity to its appeal to the least common denominator in literary tastes. To critics of this inclination, the book's continuing popularity is no sign of the author's talent, but of her willingness to corrupt her considerable skills to be all things to all people, ending up with nothing particular to say.

It is an age-old debate: is it mere snobbery to say that what sells is trash, or is it delusional to say that what sells is art? One way or the other, in the case of *Rebecca,* it seems impossible to separate the book's overwhelming popularity from its merit.

The question becomes even more compelling when the focus of inquiry is narrowed to one particular aspect of the book, such as du Maurier's handling of the narrator. For the first third of the book, she has no name, a mystery that the author is clearly willing to go out of her way to preserve. It is not as if there are no opportunities to have the character's name revealed in dialog, or in a memory of something once said to her, or any of the countless other tricks that authors use to reveal such information. Du Maurier knows that she is teasing readers about it, and she makes her teasing quite clear. "But my name was on the envelope," the narrator says of a letter de Winter sends her in chapter 3, "and spelled correctly, an unusual thing." This story takes the time to draw attention to something, without going on to say what that something is.

Artistically, this coy act should not work. It usually does not. Beginning writers often try leaving out specific details about crucial characters, hoping that, without names or faces, it will be easier for readers to relate to the characters, as if anonymity is the same thing as universality. Usually, avoiding the obvious just results in weak writing because readers tend to feel less, not more, involved when details are left out. The book may

work because of this technique, or it might work in spite of it. The general rule against obscurity just might be wrong, but anyone who has read much amateurish writing that tries to stir up suspense by leaving out facts will swear that it is right. The other two likely explanations are difficult to unwrap from one another: either du Maurier just happened to find that one-in-a-million recipe of the precise amount of characterization needed, without one atom over, or else readers are willing to let her get away with underwriting her main character because the rest of the book is just so much fun.

There is plenty of reason to believe the first option, the one about du Maurier's precision in molding a credible human being of the second Mrs. de Winter. It is, after all, not as if the character is *entirely* left up to readers' imaginations. Some facts are given about her. She is supposed to have artistic talent, although this is always brought up in the negative, in terms of the sketching that she has *not* been working at. She is young, as the other characters always point out, with short black hair and pale skin. At Monte Carlo, talking about her father, she thinks of herself as "so much of a schoolgirl still," which is an attitude readers see reflected in the way others behave around her.

The narrator's father, in fact, is considered by her to be her "secret property," but readers never really find out why. All that is explained is that she has told Maxim de Winter about her childhood, but the facts of that childhood, and what made it special, are not shared with the reader. A critical reader has to wonder why du Maurier chose to provide, as an indicator of the narrator's past life, only a shell of a father, without filling in the details. If readers feel that they know this narrator, then the author's work is done, but if they are being asked to accept the relationship between de Winter and the narrator as a standard father fixation, with stereotyped behaviors from a psychology text taking the place of true characterization, then the author has not done her job but is getting away with cheating. Throughout the book, details about Mrs. de Winter seem to indicate that she is oversimplified, an incomplete character type. Readers are not given enough facts to consider her as a person.

One more consideration makes it even more difficult to judge how well Daphne du Maurier has rendered this very important character: offsetting the lack of details provided is the full richness of her voice, which readers hear from the first page to the last. So well is the voice rendered, through word choices, sentence structure, and the nature of the specific details she chooses to dwell on, that it is easy to know her feelings about any particular issue mentioned, whether she explains her thoughts or not. In effect, the entire book is a trip taken from within her mind. There may not be much said about her past, nor is there much reflection on her own identity because she simply is not the introspective kind. If this is her intention, then du Maurier actually defines this character's personality by refusing to say much about it, by letting her exist in the present rather than being the sum of her past.

The other way that it is possible to say that the book's imprecision about this one character works would be to consider the narrator's place in the book as a whole. Whether it was du Maurier's intention or not, this character seems to take up just the right amount of place, proportionally, in the overall story. If one looks at *Rebecca* as a whole world, and not as the story of this one character, then too much about her might

take away from another part of the story and throw the whole finelytuned machine out of balance. For instance, there is obviously a balance between the first Mrs. de Winter, Rebecca, and the second, the book's narrator. More about the narrator and she might overshadow Rebecca; if more were said about Rebecca to keep her equal to the narrator, the secret of de Winter's feelings about her might fail to surprise. Knowing too much about the narrator might make her sympathetic, thereby making readers less likely to believe that de Winter could love Rebecca's memory more than his wife. More about her past could help readers decide whether her uneasiness about Rebecca is paranoia or legitimate fear, which would diminish the book's overall effect. This is not like most literature, which is character-driven; it is suspense. Just knowing the narrator's name could potentially wake readers out of the trance that du Maurier's writing casts so successfully, making the situation too real, even though the book relies on taking them away from common reality.

Rebecca's detractors call the book mechanical, pointing to the wooden characters and situations that could exist nowhere except Manderley. It is true that these characters are not filled in as great authors can do, not given lives of their own. They exist as tools. Mrs. Danvers, for instance, is unimaginable beyond her job in the book, which is to react to Maxim de Winter and his new wife. She could hardly be imagined with an existence outside of that setting because she has no real personality. This may be the author's intent in creating her; if so, it is not necessarily a well-chosen plan. Even Maxim de Winter, moody and tortured, is such a non-entity that readers, like the narrator, can ignore his shooting down a pregnant woman. What he does matters very little because he has such little substance.

The other characters may or may not be put together sketchily, but one cannot think of du Maurier as doing sloppy work in creating the narrator. She obviously chose to direct attention away from this character, rather than letting readers know who she is and what she thinks. Rebecca, the character, is a mystery because the narrator knows little about her and is too overwhelmed by the grandeur of Manderley to find out more. *Rebecca* the novel is effective to the extent that readers are just as willing to forget their questions about the new Mrs. de Winter.

Literature often relies on readers playing an active role, and the measure of *Rebecca*'s success might just be found in how one defines "active." If being distracted, if having one's curiosity stifled and not fed, is active, then the book works as literature. On the other hand, there is much to be said for the charge that hiding Mrs. de Winter's personality is a trick, one that might be amusing but does not make for good, lasting fiction. Sales records do not establish a book's true value, but the continued admiration of wave after wave of fans just might be enough to prove that Daphne du Maurier's unorthodox presentation of Mrs. de Winter is effective.

Source: David Kelly, Critical Essay on *Rebecca,* in *Novels for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Bakerman discusses du Maurier's romantic suspense novels, noting her inventiveness, and that "the many, many, modern gothics which echo Rebecca*" are good evidence that du Maurier tends to set trends rather than to follow them.*

During her long, distinguished career, Daphne du Maurier has tried her hand successfully at both fiction and nonfiction□biography, autobiography, historical romance, short stories and celebrations of place□but her auctorial reputation rests most firmly upon six romantic suspense novels whose plots stem from some crime or crimes. The novels are *Jamaica Inn, Rebecca, Frenchman's Creek, My Cousin Rachel, The Scapegoat,* and *The Flight of the Falcon.*

Central to the du Maurier tradition are sound, exciting, workable plots: an orphan seeks refuge in her aunt's home only to find it the center of a smuggling ring; a young wife lives under the shadow of her predecessor and of her husband's secret; a noblewoman abandons family responsibilities to become lover and cohort of a pirate; a youth falls in love with a distant relative who is not only his beloved cousin's widow but also a suspected poisoner; an Englishman exchanges identities with a Frenchman and lives his double's life for a time; and an aimless young man finds his long-lost brother who is engaged in what may be a diabolical scheme. All of these basic plots are thrilling, all allow for abundant complication and all offer good possibilities for quick pace and great suspense.

Though even so swift a summary of the plots reveals variety, there are elements of commonality shared by all six titles under discussion here. For critics, that commonality has sometimes been dismissed as "formula fiction," and this term (often perceived as demeaning) has contributed to some misapprehension of the skill with which the author combines formulaic elements with experiments in established literary forms, especially variations of the *Bildungsroman,* to create the freshness and innovation which account for so much of her appeal. Indeed, the many, many modern gothics which echo *Rebecca* are good evidence that du Maurier tends to set trends rather than to follow them.

Certainly, it is no disgrace either to establish or to follow a popular, even beloved, literary formula. Du Maurier has done both; she tends to capitalize on some very old, established patterns (some reaching back into folk literature)□the worried, self-conscious second wife, the dangerous darkhaired beauty, the ineffectual male seeking selfdefinition and power, the dark, mysterious male□ and bend them to her will and to her skill.

The cultural images and symbols du Maurier employs in her romantic adventures are very closely allied with the cultural myths or themes which she explores. *Rebecca,* for instance, opens with one of English fiction's most famous lines, "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again." Manderley, the named house which has become so

indispensable to modern gothic fiction, is a very important socio-cultural symbol in the novel, for it represents all the pleasures, perquisites, comfort and standing of the powerful upper class to which Maxim de Winter belongs. Manderley is Maxim's heritage both in fact and in symbol and he will do almost anything to protect it.

Similarly yet differently, Jamaica Inn is the central sociocultural symbol of the novel named after it. Normally, an inn represents a safe harbor for the weary traveler. Jamaica Inn, however, is an ironic symbol: there, plans for theft and bloodshed are laid; there, the spoils of shipwreckers (criminals of the lowest class) are stored. Not only the seat of criminal activity, the inn is also personally dangerous for Mary Yellan, the young woman who seeks refuge there. The emotional impact of both Manderley and Jamaica Inn is very great, for one represents a form of "the good life" any reader can recognize (and many desire) and the other represents all the false hopes and failed refuges most human beings encounter during the short journey between the cradle and the grave.

The cultural materials du Maurier most frequently employs in her romantic crime fiction also indicate elements of social convention. The British class system conflicting with the concept of upward mobility (for females via marriage; for males by assertion of control over lands and money); the idea that outside marriage a young woman has almost no identity; and the importance of retaining one's good name (no matter what reputation one deserves) are all central to these works. In *Rebecca* for example, Maxim de Winter resorts to extreme violence to preserve his reputation and it is the consensus among those of his peers privy to his secret that he acted properly in doing so. Mrs. de Winter and Mary Yellan desire upward mobility and believe that marriage is their vehicle to security and status. Philip Ashley, the narrator of *My Cousin Rachel,* genuinely mourns Ambrose, the cousin from whom he inherits a vast estate, yet Philip is aware that as the master of the family holding, he enjoys power and position which would have been unattainable in a secondary or even a shared mastery.

Beyond those socio-cultural images and symbols lie others, even more pervasive and more powerful than those based upon class, property and reputation. Du Maurier also explores universal problems which take on the aura of cultural myth. The difficulty of distinguishing between good and evil and the impossibility of purging certain kinds of guilt are important in almost every story. Mary Yellan nearly falls prey to a very wicked man because she mistakes cultural trappings for his real nature. Armino Donati (*The Flight of the Falcon*) wants to trust his brother's charm, poise, and attractiveness, but he suspects that vicious intent lies beneath Aldo's attractive exterior, and John, the protagonist-narrator of *The Scapegoat,* must learn that even the most crass codes of behavior can generate redemptive action.

Maxim de Winter not only hides his crime successfully but also involves his current wife and others in the concealment; he pays with years of misery, the loss of almost everything he sought to protect, yet guilt remains a constant in his life. Philip Ashley weighs the evidence against Rachel, his beloved, judges her□and lives out his years pondering his own guiltiness. Like Maxim de Winter, he has been both judge and jury; like Maxim, he must forever bear the memory and the weight of his actions.

The universal, mythically proportioned problems lying at the heart of du Maurier's most important novels are, indeed, basic. They are also, however, problems with which most human beings are expected to make their peace fairly early in life. One of the most important lessons learned by the very young is the ability to look behind disguise and to discover the essential decency or corruption of others, and very early on, people generally learn to assuage, ignore, or expiate guilt. Though these lessons may well have to be relearned or modified as maturing individuals confront new problems, people and situations, the groundwork, the basic principles of choice and evaluation, ought to be established during adolescence.

Though the du Maurier characters are no longer teenagers, they are, nevertheless, curiously immature for their years. Preoccupied by hard work and secluded in a small, friendly community, Mary Yellan has missed the experiences she needs to develop her judgment. Carefully protected, Philip Ashley has depended upon his cousin Ambrose for guidance. Both Armino Donati and John, the surnameless hero of *The Scapegoat,* have simply abdicated responsibility; they refuse to act. Maxim de Winter, seemingly an adult in full control of his powers, is caught in the grip of an obsession, Manderley and all it stands for, and is actually the most immature character of the lot. And Dona St. Columb, protagonist of *Frenchman's Creek,* a wife, mother, noblewoman, is frozen into unmaturity, for she has substituted social activity and petulant rebellion for awareness and growth. Thus, these important characters are, for all narrative purposes, youngsters, and in her stories, du Maurier exposes them and many of their fellows to the maturation tests and experiences most commonly found in stories about adolescents. This device adds considerably to the novels' suspense, for it is, in a sense, a plot within a plot. Not only do readers wonder when and if the dangers and courtships will be resolved happily, but they also wonder if the characters will be able to come to terms with the worlds in which they must live. Readers are keenly interested in discovering whether or not the characters will ever resolve the question of who they really are.

This question is also linked to another cultural artifact du Maurier exploits widely. She uses one of the oldest of western European tales, the Cinderella Cinderella story, in various ways throughout these six novels. Almost mythic itself, it becomes the vehicle for the ethical questions (of good and evil, of guilt) upon which the plot complications turn. Various elements of the Cinderella story appear in each of the novels under discussion here and all of them hinge upon the character's discovery of who he or she really is, the discovery at the heart of Cinderella's adventures.

In du Maurier's romantic suspense novels, as in *Cinderella,* the major question is not detection but justice. It is important that Cinderella's triumph include the public humiliation of her wicked relatives because, in the eyes of many people, public punishment is equated with justice. Because the evils which Cinderella confronts, overt cruelty, jealousy and selfishness, are easy to identify and are subject to social disapproval, the wicked are punished; justice, seemingly, is served.

But the evils which the du Maurier protagonists confront are more complex; simple, obvious punishment is not always meted out. Instead, the irony which colors du

Maurier's social commentary also affects her portrayal of justice, for while justice is always imposed, it is often served secretly, privately. To du Maurier, the impact of a crime is of far greater interest than the solution of a puzzle and this interest demands sophisticated modes of punishment.

The crime motif in du Maurier's novels is also enriched by another element of the Cinderella story, the disguise pattern. Frequently, the novels' protagonists appear in disguise; Lady Dona St. Columb, for instance, dresses as a boy when committing piracy. To her bitter dismay, Mrs. de Winter unwittingly disguises herself as Rebecca, her predecessor, for she is tricked into duplicating the costume Rebecca once wore to a fancy-dress ball and this scene lays the groundwork for the revelation of Maxim's crime. These disguises are fascinating and useful plot complications, lending action, adventure, or ironic foreshadowing to the stories.

Even more useful, however, are the disguises worn by the other characters, and these disguises exacerbate the difficulty of separating evil from goodness, one of the mythic themes which pervades these works. In each of the novels, at least one very powerful personality is examined and explored; these characters are charismatic, mysterious, disguised. Several are not what they seem to be and are unmasked. Frances Davey, the Vicar of Altarnum (*Jamaica Inn*), is not really a devout pastor ministering wholeheartedly to his flock but a dangerous criminal. Maxim de Winter is not a man emotionally crippled by the death of his beloved but rather a man tortured by guilt and the refusal to pay for his crime.

Others among these disguised charismatics are better than they first seem. Jean-Benoit Aubéry, the French pirate, *is* actually a criminal, but he is more decent, caring and nurturing than all the nobles among whom Dona St. Columb has lived. Jem Merlyn (*Jamaica Inn*) who makes no attempt to hide his career as petty criminal and horse thief, is far more honest with Mary Yellan than are the other inhabitants of the Bodmin area.

A third group, most notably Rebecca de Winter and Rachel Sangalletti Ashley, are essentially unknowable□one is never sure just which guise is mask, which reality. The world perceived Rebecca as the epitome of feminine grace and beauty, the perfect mistress for Manderley. To Maxim, her husband, she seemed a corrupt monster. To Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper, and to Jack Favell, Rebecca's lover and cousin, she appeared to be a free spirit, capable of commanding devotion even from beyond the grave. Though most of the characters choose to believe Maxim's interpretation of Rebecca's character, the puzzle is never resolved. Nor is the mystery surrounding Rachel's character dispelled; she may be tragically accused of and punished for a crime she did not commit, a crime which was, indeed, never committed by anyone, or she may be a grasping poisoner who kills for wealth and position. These characters not only drive forward the action, but they also complicate the process of distinguishing between good and evil, sometimes beyond the capacity of the protagonists (and some readers). Unlike the disguises of the Cinderella figures, these enigmatic masks are meant to be impenetrable.

The disguise motif, then, establishes the most difficult tests the Cinderella figures must pass in order to win better lives. Further, because the enigmatic figures may mislead the protagonists, the element of disguise also strengthens the other fictional pattern du Maurier exploits. The education or maturation novel, the *Bildungsroman* (for which *Cinderella* is one of several important prototypes), is deeply embedded in both "serious" and popular fiction throughout western culture. Itself enormously popular, it is prime material for a writer like du Maurier who seeks a very wide audience.

In the traditional *Bildungsroman,* a young person who has great faith in his own power and potential tests his mettle as a means of initiation into maturity. He often takes a journey, acquires mentors of varying levels of reliability and engages in dangerous adventures. Ultimately, he emerges sadder but wiser, ready to take his place in adult society. He has compromised with the ideal and settled for pragmatism. Du Maurier uses this treatment of the *Bildungsroman,* most commonly found in "high culture" novels, very successfully in both *Jamaica Inn* and *Frenchman's Creek.*

In *Jamaica Inn,* Mary Yellan dreams of security and hopes to find peace and opportunity living with her aunt and uncle at the inn. Instead, she finds danger to her life and honor and a host of false mentors. Among them is her criminal uncle, Joss Merlyn, who presents a sexual threat; he finds Mary attractive and to her dismay, she is somewhat drawn to him. For relief, advice and comfort, Mary turns to a local minister, one of du Maurier's masters of disguise, who does, indeed, advise her but who is actually also a false mentor.

Because of his abusive treatment of her aunt and because of his criminal activity, which she slowly comes to recognize, Mary has little trouble recognizing Joss as an evil person; indeed, he represents the worst that life can offer her: sexual excess, constant danger, shared criminal behavior. Dark, mysterious, violent, Joss symbolizes trouble and degeneration. The Reverend Mr. Davey, however, seems to represent redemption until his mask is finally stripped away during a melodramatic series of events that include an abduction and wild chase over the moors.

Not only does the final unmasking of Davey leave Mary without a functioning mentor, it also forces her to question the basic rules of social convention. She has hoped to establish a very normal, secure life on the Cornish coast, and obviously one means of doing so would have been to marry well, preferably, like most of the Cinderellas, to marry *up.* The revelation of Davey as villain and exploiter removes him from the ranks of potential mates and also, importantly, calls into question the viability of Mary's dreams of security and status.

A poor girl with modest dreams, Mary is barred, finally, from upward mobility by the rules of the class system. Tainted by her low birth, her poverty, her association with criminals (she is even an unwilling spectator and thus marginally a participant in one raid), Mary cannot change her status. She shares in the guilt for this last raid because she was there and because willful blindness as well as circumstance have stopped her from preventing it.

Though Mary has learned not to trust outward appearances, her fate lies, finally, in the hands of yet another masquerader. Jem Merlyn, Joss' younger brother, is an enigmatic man who reveals little of his true emotion, a sexually attractive person who prefers liason (when he can get it) to marriage. Nevertheless he loves Mary and is the only individual who acts effectively to save her from rape or murder. Despite the tensions which exist between them in the early days of their acquaintance, Mary "believes" that she loves Jem, that he is her true mate and she rides off with him, "'Because I want to: because I must; because now and for ever more this is where I belong to be.'"

The real world for which Mary, chastened and tempered, settles is a marginal world in which she will always hover between poverty and security, social acceptance and rejection, love and danger. Ironist that she is, du Maurier gives no guarantees that for this young woman there will be any "happily ever after." Though Mary is a successful *Bildungsroman* protagonist (she has learned, she has matured, she has compromised), she is a failed Cinderella; the class system prevails and Mary Yellan is frozen into the fringes of accepted society. She has love but little else, and du Maurier refuses to promise that that will be enough.

On the surface of her life, Dona St. Columb is, at the opening of *Frenchman's Creek,* Cinderella leading an enchanted life after the glass slipper has slid smoothly onto her foot. Chronologically an adult, Dona is nevertheless a rebellious child. Disgusted with her dull husband, often irritated by the demands of motherhood, and bored with London life, Dona disguises herself and engages in dangerous, illegal pranks, "playing at" highway robbery, until, restless and annoyed with herself as much as with her world, she runs away to Navron House, the family estate, fleeing both her obligations and her escapades.

There, however, she moves even more deeply into disguise and danger, for she comes to love a French pirate who is raiding the Cornish coast. A kind of nautical Robin Hood, Aubéry, the Frenchman of the title, teaches Dona what love and sexual satisfaction really are, and she revels in the relationship. Initially disguised as chic matron, polished noblewoman, Dona believes she has found her true nature when disguised as a thieving boy or sensual lover and she discovers that she is not only a competent thief but also a clever schemer when she undertakes to save her lover from imprisonment and death. During this period, Navron House continues to stand for the positive qualities of whatever is decent in Dona's public life, everything opposed to the corruption symbolized by London. The nearby creek where the Frenchman moors his ship and *La Mouette* itself symbolize freedom, love, the right to break□social codes in order to achieve happiness□everything children imagine that adulthood allows.

Eventually, Dona must choose between life with the Frenchman and life as Lady St. Columb and in the end, social convention and family obligation claim her. For her, life as a constrained, postball Cinderella *is* reality whereas life on the fringes of society is dream. Except in memory, she will truly become,

a gracious matron, and smile upon her servants, and
her tenants, and the village folk, and one day she will

have grandchildren about her knee, and will tell them the story of a pirate who escaped.

Dona will not live happily ever after, but she will live responsibly.

She, too, has been tempered and chastened and like Mary, she responds, however hesitantly, to the lessons she has learned. If Mary Yellan cannot penetrate respectable levels of English society, no more can Dona St. Columb abdicate the upper classes. These young women come to know themselves very well; they find out precisely who they are, but they are, finally, defined by the social roles assigned by birth. Their very traditional *Bildungsroman* journeys, culminating in compromise and pragmatic acceptance, are complete.

In popular fiction, two variations of the traditional *Bildungsroman* occur frequently and du Maurier experiments with these varieties just as she does with the traditional pattern in *Jamaica Inn* and *Frenchman's Creek.* As feminist critics have pointed out, the modern gothic novel is a form of the *Bildungsroman* whose youthful protagonists, usually females, are, either consciously or unconsciously, engaged in a quest for advancement as well as for adulthood. They want power, selfhood, love and maturity and much of the time, they tend to perceive these desirables as interchangeable if not synonymous.

In a sense, they feel that they will be forever unworthy if they are not loved by some greatly desirable person, but also, secretly or even unconsciously, they feel themselves to be the equal□if not the superior□of most of the characters surrounding them. This conflicting sense of self-worth (obvious in *Cinderella*) is often painful and almost always results in the protagonists' maintaining a kind of public guise of meekness which hides a fiery, judgmental, or even arrogant personality. Cinderellas, they are not only disguised initially by their lowly positions, but also they actively parade a mask of humility.

The second Mrs. de Winter, the protagonistnarrator of *Rebecca,* is precisely this sort of person and because of the confessional nature of the novel, readers are privy to the seemingly meek, the genuinely humble and the bitingly judgmental elements of her nature from the outset. Though she maintains a quiet, obedient exterior, she denounces thoroughly (and with some good cause) Mrs. Van Hopper, an American of abundant financial means and absolutely no taste, whom she serves as companion. She feels distinctly superior to the Van Hopper world but too inexperienced, uninteresting and plain to be a likely helpmeet of Maxim de Winter. Both attitudes cause her considerable trouble. Ironically, she accepts Mrs. Van Hopper's evaluation of her personality and assumes that to Maxim she is merely a toy, a pet, that she can never truly be his equal. Yet, inwardly, she weeps and rages, for she yearns to be his true companion, to move beyond the shadow of Rebecca and into prominence as the mistress of Manderley, with which she has been entranced since childhood.

Maxim, enigmatic, preoccupied with keeping secret the crime he has committed, withholds a large part of himself from his second wife even though he senses and deplores her unhappiness. In turn, Mrs. de Winter, unaware of Maxim's true thoughts, assumes he is still grieving for Rebecca. Both marriage partners maintain disguises,

acting out a "happy" married life, refusing to share, pretending before outsiders and one another.

This Cinderella temporarily acquires both her prince and her castle, but she can genuinely enjoy neither, and when truth does finally prevail between the de Winters, it is too late. The prince, the princess and the marriage survive, but the castle, Manderley, symbol of all the perks of upper-class life, is destroyed. Once again, du Maurier's irony intrudes and the class system prevails. Mrs. de Winter deserves her tainted prince *only if* they are exiled from the social circles to which Maxim was born and to which Mrs. de Winter aspires. Cinderella finds that compromise dominates adulthood and the real world; she acquiesces and endures the consequences of fallen pride. Society has preserved its aura of respectability by protecting Maxim from disclosure of his crime, but nevertheless, it has firmly punished the de Winters. Though this *Bildungsroman* hero has learned her lessons all too well, there is nowhere to use her education.

We can never go back again, that much is certain. The past is still too close to us. The things we have tried to forget and put behind us would stir again, and that sense of fear, of furtive unrest, struggling at length to blind unreasoning panic□now mercifully stilled, thank God□might in some manner unforseen become a living companion, as it had been before.

Instead, the de Winters drift through Europe, maintaining the social façade, marking time until death releases them.

In traditional adventure-suspense fiction, the protagonist takes a slightly different view of himself than do gothic heroes such as Philip Ashley and Mrs. de Winter. They do not perceive themselves as better than others and they do not yearn for status. Usually, these characters have seen something of life, have become aware of its stresses and pitfalls and, as protection, have disguised themselves as "small," inconsequential persons. Each must stretch his capacity, admit his own potential, abandon insignificance, *expand* in order to meet and conquer some criminal threat. Doing so will signify emergence from a willfully chosen, prolonged adolescence into full maturity. Generally, they pass their exacting tests and emerge stronger, more confident, no longer hiding their capabilities from the world.

Du Maurier's experiments with this variant of the *Bildungsroman, The Flight of the Falcon* and *The Scapegoat,* allow their protagonists much more promising futures than do her treatments of the traditional *Bildungsroman* or of the modern gothic, even though the events are just as melodramatic, the assessments of human nature just as uncompromising. Furthermore, in these novels, the questions of guilt and evil are expanded considerably, a fact underscored by the use of non-English settings.

Though matters of social class and its privilege remain important in *The Scapegoat* and are echoed by allusions to earlier times in *The Flight of the Falcon,* these novels are allegories and du Maurier uses St. Gilles, the French village dominated by the de Gué

family of *The Scapegoat,* and Ruffano, the Italian university city in which *The Flight of the Falcon* is set, as microcosms. In the first novel, she examines the political and economic impact of one man's criminality, selfishness and arrogance. In the second, she explores the effects of a clever, ambitious man's manipulation of oppressive political systems.

Because du Maurier is chiefly a storyteller and not a philosopher, dramatic action dominates theme in these novels; the political implications are not particularly profound and they are certainly not unique. However, these implications intensify the suspense in both books, just as they later intensify her futuristic political study, *Rule Britannia* (1972) and they continue du Maurier's examination of the conflict between personal ambition and one's duty to others which is the subject of such novels as *I'll Never Be Young Again* (1932) and *The Progress of Julius* (1933), novels outside the boundaries of romantic suspense fiction.

Du Maurier complicates the problems of distinguishing between good and evil and of guilt and emphasizes the allegorical nature of *The Flight of the Falcon* and *The Scapegoat* by using Christian symbolism in both. Crucial action in *The Flight of the Falcon* takes place during Easter Week, for instance, and a priest, a character in *The Scapegoat,* states the theme of both books:

'There is no end to the evil in ourselves, just as there is no end to the good. It's a matter of choice. We struggle to climb, or we struggle to fall. The thing is to discover which way we're going'.

Both novels also depict Satanic and Christlike figures who are very much alike: in *The Scapegoat,* the men are identical in appearance and in *The Flight of the Falcon,* they are putative brothers. Further, the Donati brothers share a kind of *Doppelgänger,* the spirit of Claudio, a long-dead Duke of Ruffano, who is depicted as both tempted and tempter in an old painting, "The Temptation of Christ." These devices help du Maurier move beyond questions of personal complicity and individual destiny around which *Rebecca, My Cousin Rachel, Frenchman's Creek* and *Jamaica Inn* center and focus attention, instead, upon the basic duality of human nature.

An examination of her treatments of the Cinderella story and of her experiments with various forms of the *Bildungsroman,* then, indicate that Daphne du Maurier brings a rich imagination, a sound sense of story line and action, and a great willingness to experiment to her fiction. Though individually the novels considered here□*Jamaica Inn, Frenchman's Creek, Rebecca, My Cousin Rachel, The Flight of the Falcon* and *The Scapegoat* □match Cawelti's definition of formula fiction, together, they demonstrate that any formula□ or any literary convention□can be reinvented fruitfully. In the hands of a true storyteller, the old is always new and the "du Maurier Tradition" demands bold inventiveness, intelligence and a special awareness of the roots, artifacts, strengths and weaknesses of the culture from which it springs, toward which it is directed. Du Maurier blends all of these requirements into the heady compounds of the expected and the surprising which are so pleasurable to her readers. In achieving these ends, she

surpasses her competitors and her imitators. Others may emulate Daphne du Maurier, but she remains dominant.

Source: Jane S. Bakerman, "Daphne du Maurier," in *And Then There Were Nine,* edited by Jane S. Bakerman, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985, pp. 12-29.

Critical Essay #3

In the following review, Davenport calls Rebecca *a quality melodrama, comparing it with* Jane Eyre.

So Cinderella married the prince, and then her story began. Cinderella was hardly more than a school-girl, and the overworked companion of a snobbish woman of wealth; the prince was Maximilian de Winter, whom she had heard of as the owner of Manderley in Cornwall, one of the most magnificent show places in England, who had come to the Riviera to forget the tragic death of his wife Rebecca. He was twice the little companion's age, but she conceived a starved girl's adoration for him when he was kind to her, and there was something about her freshness that seemed to please him. Then to her astonished rapture, he proposed marriage to her, and carried her off to the splendors of Manderley, in its forest of azaleas, sloping down to the sea that had drowned Rebecca, the first Mrs. de Winter□"Mrs. de Winter," simply, as every one still calls her. For slowly and subtly the girl's dream changes to a nightmare. The great house where she cannot find her way, the first wife's shuttered bedroom, the servants who say that in Mrs. de Winter's time there were no complaints, and above all the old housekeeper, who keeps for the first Mrs. de Winter the ghoulish devotion of Phaedra's nurse or Electra's old slave□they all close in on her, like the monstrous azaleas. There was some mystery about Rebecca's death, too, as the village idiot knows; but the book is skillfully contrived so that it does not depend only on knowledge of it for its thrill; it can afford to give no hint of it till twothirds of the way through. But the revelation, when it comes, leads to one of the most prolonged, deadly, and breathless fencing-matches that one can find in fiction, a battle of wits that would by itself make the fortune of a melodrama on the stage.

For this is a melodrama, unashamed, glorying in its own quality, such as we have hardly had since that other dependant, Jane Eyre, found that her house too had a first wife. It has the weaknesses of melodrama; in particular, the heroine is at times quite unbelievably stupid, as when she takes the advice of the housekeeper whom she knows to hate her. But if the second Mrs. de Winter had consulted with any one before trusting the housekeeper, we should miss one of the best scenes in the book. There is also, as is almost inseparable from a melodrama, a forced heightening of the emotional values; the tragedy announced in the opening chapter is out of proportion to the final outcome of the long battle of wits that ends the book. But it is as absorbing a tale as the season is likely to bring.

Source: Basil Davenport, "Sinister House," in *Saturday Review of Literature,* Vol. XVIII, No. 22, September 24, 1938, p. 5.

Adaptations

In 1977, as part of the celebration of her seventieth birthday, Daphne du Maurier participated in a television biography about her life. This rare interview by Cliff Michelmore, entitled *The Make Believe World of Daphne du Maurier,* is available in VHS cassette from Banner Films in London.

Rebecca is one of director Alfred Hitchcock's most celebrated films, made in 1940 with Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine.M

Rebecca was also adapted to a television series on the British Broadcasting System in 1978 starring Jeremy Brett, Joanna David, and Anna Massey, with direction by Simon Langson.

A 1996 adaptation of the book, co-produced by Carlton-UK television and WGBH-TV in Boston, stars Charles Dance, Diana Rigg, and Faye Dunaway. This version is directed by Jim O'Brien with a screenplay by Arthur Hopcraft.>

A 1993 abridged audiocassette version of the book, read by Jean Marsh, is available from Audio Renaissance.

There is an unabridged audiocassette version, released in 1999 by Audio Partners Publishing Company, which is read by Anna Massey, who played Mrs. Danvers in the 1978 British television version.

Topics for Further Study

Monte Carlo is still recognized around the world as a vacation spot for the rich. Research what it was like in the 1930s: what sort of people went there, what sort of activities were available, and so forth.

Using the descriptions in the novel, draw sketches of various locations at Manderley.

Write a short story about where Maxim de Winter and his wife will eventually end up after they finish traveling, as described in the very first chapters. Bear in mind that this novel ends at just about the time that World War II begins.

The novel describes how Rebecca threatened to have someone else's child and make Maxim de Winter raise it as his own. Research British law and try to find out how difficult it would have been, in the 1930s, for him to divorce her.

Several times in the novel, the characters predict what the weather will be like, with observations such as "the glass is dropping." Explain how a barometer works and how accurate its predictions are likely to be.

Rebecca is still popular today. Find out the sales figures throughout the years. Try to explain at least one period of high or low sales.

Compare and Contrast

1938: The first nuclear fission of uranium is achieved by German scientists. This is the physical reaction that leads to the nuclear bomb.

1945: Nuclear bombs are dropped on the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, hastening the end of World War II by killing nearly two hundred thousand people.

Today: After decades of international fear about the devastation that nuclear weapons can cause, no other nuclear bombs have been used during wartime.

1938: Cancer is barely understood. The first cancer- causing agents, known as "carcinogens," have been isolated in England just five years before.

Today: Cancer is the number two cause of death in the United States, but millions of dollars are spent on research each year, and much progress has been made in understanding causes and treatments.

1938: The first steps in photocopy technology are made, as inventor Chester Carlson develops a method to reproduce an image on paper using electrostatic attraction.

Today: Image reproduction has progressed to the point that computer users are transferring scanned images from one machine to another, without ever using paper to transmit them.

1938: Orson Welles presents his radio program about an alien invasion, *War of the Worlds,* in the style of a news program. Across America, hundreds of listeners believe that Martians are really invading Earth, and become panicked.

Today: Audiences are used to radio and television programs that use the same style as the news, and few people would take such a preposterous story seriously.

1938: Radio and motion pictures are the main forms of entertainment in America. People living in urban areas attend live theater productions. Television technology is invented, but TV ownership is not widespread until after World War II.

Today: Most homes own at least one television, many with the possibility of access to over five hundred channels at a time through cable and satellite systems.

1938: Air travel is still an uncertain proposition. In 1937, aviator Amelia Earhart is lost at sea in the Pacific Ocean while trying to circumnavigate the globe. In 1938, Douglas Corrigan flies illegally from New York to Dublin, giving the excuse that his compass had led him in the wrong direction and earning him the nickname "Wrong-Way Corrigan."

Today: International flights are routine, and all flight paths are monitored by the Federal Aviation Administration.

What Do I Read Next?

The script for Arthur Hopcraft's 1996 adaptation of *Rebecca* for television has been published in paperback by Andre Duetsch Ltd.

Readers who enjoy the sweeping romance of *Rebecca* generally like du Maurier's previous novel, *Jamaica Inn* (1936), about a young woman who moves out to a house on the British moors and is faced with mystery and romance there.

Susan Hill wrote a sequel to *Rebecca* called *Mrs. de Winter* (1993). Hill's book carries on where du Maurier's novel left off. Die-hard fans of the original book should beware that reviewers generally find Hill's version to be a disappointment.

One of the most interesting and in-depth biographies of Daphne du Maurier is Martyn Shallcross' *The Private World of Daphne du Maurier,* published in 1992.

While *Rebecca* is a good example of romantic literature, the supreme example of the genre is Emily Brontë's 1847 novel *Wuthering Heights,* which also has a female protagonist in love with a cruel, strong male figure, living in a big, secluded English house.

The novel's plot, about a second wife who is haunted by the memory of the glamorous first wife, is clearly in debt to another classic romance: *Jane Eyre,* also published in 1847, by Charlotte Brontë, Emily's sister.

Kazuo Ishiguro's 1989 novel *Remains of the Day* is about the life of a faithful old-time English butler, a type that disappeared quickly after World War II. It gives excellent insight into the mind of a man like *Rebecca*'s Frith.

Topics for Discussion

1. Mrs. Van Hopper has briefed the young narrator on the history of Manderley and its owner, Maxim de Winter. With her previous knowledge, do you suppose that the narrator has fallen in love with Maxim or with Manderley?

2. Discuss the narrator's relationship to Mrs. Danvers. Why does Mrs. Danvers dislike the second Mrs. de Winter?

3. What is the significance of the boathouse? Why does Maxim stay away from it?

4. Why is Doctor Baker's testimony so important to Maxim's case? Does it make you change your mind about the events surrounding Rebecca's death?

5. What are some of the objects at Manderley that remind the narrator, Mrs. Danvers, and Maxim of Rebecca?

6. Why is the narrator's costume a mistake? What is the significance of such an error?

7. Beatrice Lacy, Maxim's sister, is kind to the second Mrs. de Winter, yet she constantly argues with Maxim. What is the background of her relationship with her brother?

8. Why is Rebecca written in the firstperson? Does this add to the suspense?

9. The narrator comments, "But Rebecca would never grow old. Rebecca would always be the same. And her I could not fight. She was too strong for me." Does she prove herself wrong by the end of the novel?

10. Why is it considered odd that Rebecca's boat sank? What clues are revealed later that indicate foul play?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Discuss the way the young narrator slowly collects information on Rebecca's personality and habits.

2. Read Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre (1847). Do you note any similarities between Thornfield Manor and Manderley? What makes each of these a Gothic novel?

3. Setting is very important to Rebecca. Discuss the significance of the sea, the rooms in Manderley, and the surrounding countryside.

4. At the inquest, certain details of the night that Rebecca died come to light. Why were they not presented earlier? What is the importance of these details?

5. Alfred Hitchcock's adaptation of Rebecca is one of his most successful films. Watch the movie and compare it to the book. Are there any stylistic similarities between the movie and the book?

Further Study

Auerbach, Nina, *Daphne du Maurier: Haunted Heiress,* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

This recent critical examination of du Maurier defends her against criticism that finds her work superficial.

Forster, Margaret, *Daphne du Maurier: The Secret Life of the Renowned Storyteller,* St. Martin's Press, 1994.

This is the biography that was authorized by du Maurier's family. It has some probing information because the author had more access to papers and interviews than many du Maurier scholars.

Horner, Arvel, and Sue Zlisnik, *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination,* St. Martin's Press, 1998.

This relatively new study of the author's works concentrates on the supernatural elements with which she worked.

Vickers, Stanley, *The du Maurier Companion,* edited by Diana King, Fowey Rare Books, 1997.

This reference work lists all of the novels, plays, films, and autobiographical works by du Maurier and other literary members of her family.

Bibliography

Barkham, John, Review in *New York Review of Books,* March 8, 1953, p. 8.

Davenport, Basil, "Sinister House," in *Saturday Review,* September 24, 1938, p. 5.

Hill, Susan, Review in *New Statesman,* July 23, 1971.

Raymond, John, Review in *New Statesman,* August 11, 1951.

Rogers, Pat, "Saving Her Bacon," in *Spectator,* Vol. 237, No. 7727, July 31, 1976, p. 20.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Novels for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Novels for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535