

Remembrance of Things Past Study Guide

Remembrance of Things Past by Marcel Proust

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Plot Summary

Remembrance of Things Past by Marcel Proust is the story of a young boy's journey through life. It is suggested that the ambiguous, unnamed narrator is partially autobiographical. The narrator experiences several romances, which lead the majority of the action in the novel. Remembrance of Things Past is the biography not just of the narrator, but of the entire social group in which he lives.

The narrator reminisces about his past, starting with his time at Combray. His childhood at Combray is unhappy; his sole comfort is Mamma's good-night kiss. When dinner guests come, he does not receive this kiss. The most frequent visitor is M. Swann, though his visits decrease after his marriage. On one occasion, the narrator is sent to his room before dinner ends, and Mamma rebuffs his attempt to kiss her. He sends a note requesting his mother to come to him, but she returns no response. He decides to wait up for her and meets her in the hallway. He grows afraid when he hears his father's approach, but Father sees that his son is unhappy and sends Mamma to sleep in his room and comfort him. The narrator visits Uncle Adolphe when an actress is visiting. The family disapproves, has an argument with him and never sees Uncle Adolphe again. The narrator reads a lot and ignores real life as much as possible. His friend, Bloch, visits once but is not allowed to return because the narrator's family does not like him. Luckily, he introduces the narrator to Bergotte's writing, which the narrator greatly admires. When the narrator learns the M. Swann's daughter is friends with Bergotte, he longs to befriend her. The narrator's family has avoided Swann's park since his marriage, but one day they take a walk through Swann's garden when the Swanns are supposed to be out of town. A girl appears, followed by a man and woman who call the girl Gilberte. The woman is Mme. Swann; the man is M. de Charlus. The narrator daydreams about meeting and being accepted by the Guermantes. Aunt Leonie dies, and the narrator leaves Combray.

M. Swann meets Odette de Crecy who introduces him to the Verdurin clan. The pianist plays a tune that M. Swann had heard and admired. M. Swann learns that it is called "Vinteuil's sonata", and it becomes M. Swann and Odette's love anthem. They have a long flirtation with no physical relationship until one day, when M. Swann drives Odette home, he arranges her flowers, and they kiss. After that M. Swann visits Odette every night. The Verdurins no longer like M. Swann and prefer Odette's other friend, Forcheville. M. Swann begins to become suspicious of the rumors he hears about Odette and is jealous of every man that comes into contact with her. There are many love games between the two, as M. Swann tries to convince Odette that he does need her or want her as much as she thinks. When he receives an anonymous letter detailing Odette's affairs, M. Swann realizes that their entire relationship has been a lie.

The narrator laments his inability to travel due to his poor health. He goes to Champs-Elysees every day where he encounters Gilberte. He begins to play with her and they become friends. The narrator is obsessed with Gilberte and the Swanns, and he learns that generally everyone disapproves of Swann's marriage, which has affected his social status. The narrator longs to see Berma act but is disappointed when he finally sees



her. After the play, he meets M. de Norpois who encourages him to become a writer. The narrator gets sick, and he is not allowed to return to Champs-Elysees when he gets better. Gilberte invites the narrator to her tea parties. He goes to the Swanns' house often after that. At one of Mme. Swann's tea parties, the narrator meets Bergotte. Gilberte is displeased when the narrator visits without her consent and, after an argument, he strives to convince her of his indifference. He finally decides to see her again but only as a lover. On his walk to her house, he sees her in the park with another man and his indifference for her grows.

Two years later, the narrator, Grandmother, and Françoise go to Balbec. At first, the narrator is lonely and his health suffers as a result. Eventually, he enjoys Balbec's beauty. He desires to be pleasing to others at Balbec, but he makes no friends. They run into Grandmother's friend, Mme. de Villeparisis, and they dine together daily. Mme. de Villeparisis' nephew, Robert de Saint-Loup, visits his aunt and becomes friends with the narrator. Saint-Loup tells the narrator about his uncle's early life and introduces the narrator to M. de Charlus when he arrives at Balbec. Saint-Loup and the narrator encounter Bloch on the street one day and are invited to dinner with the Bloch family. Saint-Loup's mistress is disliked and disapproved of by his family and friends.

The narrator admires a cluster of five or six girls and longs to meet them. That night, he goes to dinner at Rivebelle with Saint-Loup and gets drunk. He is introduced to a painter, Elstir, who invites him to his studio. At Elstir's studio, the narrator sees one of the girls from the group out of a window. Saint-Loup's military leave ends, and Bloch accompanies the narrator to see Saint-Loup to his train. The narrator persuades Elstir to give a tea party and introduce him to Albertine. Albertine and the narrator begin to take walks together. Albertine disapproves of Bloch and all of the girls that the narrator knows. She introduces the narrator to her friends, Andree and Gisele. Albertine is jealous of the narrator's attraction to Gisele. Albertine gives the narrator a note saying "I love you", and the narrator falls in love with her. At night at the hotel, the narrator visits Albertine and attempts to kiss her, but she rings the bell for help.

In Paris, because Grandmother is sick, the narrator's family moves to a flat that is attached to the Hotel de Guermantes. The narrator yearns to know Mme. de Guermantes. He attends the opera and finally appreciates Berma's talent. He sees Mme. de Guermantes at the theatre and begins to place himself in her way every day, which irritates her. The narrator loves Mme. de Guermantes. He visits Saint-Loup at Doncières to solicit an introduction to Mme. de Guermantes. He enjoys his visit to his best friend, but leaves without a chance to say good-bye because he is anxious to see Grandmother. Saint-Loup visits Paris and introduces his friend to his adored mistress, Rachel. Rachel makes Saint-Loup jealous at dinner and the theatre, and Saint-Loup sends the narrator to Mme. de Villeparisis's house alone, promising to follow shortly. Bloch is at the party and does not make a great impression on anyone there. Mme. de Marsantes, Saint-Loup's mother, arrives, followed before long by her son. Saint-Loup introduces the narrator to Mme. de Guermantes, who leaves when Mme. Swann arrives. M. de Charlus asks the narrator to wait to leave with him; on their walk, he offers to explain to the narrator what he has taken his whole life to obtain.



Grandmother gets a temperature and has a stroke. The doctor tells the narrator that the case is hopeless. Francoise nurses Grandmother and all of their friends visit her. Grandmother's health worsens and she dies. Albertine visits the narrator in Paris and they kiss. Because the narrator no longer loves Mme. de Guermantes, she no longer hates him, and friendship is possible. Mme. de Guermantes invites the narrator to dinner on Friday night. Mme. de Stermaria cancels her dinner date with the narrator. Saint-Loup and the narrator go to dinner together, where the narrator is treated poorly until his association with Saint-Loup is made known. The narrator goes to dinner at the Guermantes's house and is shocked by everyone's friendliness, but he is disgusted at Mme. de Guermantes's understanding. Overall, he is disappointed with the party. He finally leaves and goes to M. de Charlus's house where M. de Charlus is rude to him. He has heard that the narrator said something bad about him and is mad at him. They make up and part on good terms. The narrator goes to the Guermantes's house several days later where he encounters M. Swann who is dying.



Overture

Overture Summary

Remembrance of Things Past by Marcel Proust is the story of a young boy's journey through life. It is suggested that the ambiguous, unnamed narrator is partially autobiographical. The narrator experiences several romances that lead the majority of the action in the novel. Remembrance of Things Past is the biography not just of the narrator, but of the entire social group in which he lives.

The narrator describes waking in the middle of the night; sometimes he wakes to thoughts of books that he has read recently, other times to thoughts of women he is attracted to. At other times, he thinks he is back in his room at Combray where he used to visit often as a young boy, or at Mme. de Saint-Loup's house where he visited as a young man. Once he is wide awake, he begins to reminisce about his time at Combray.

As a young boy, the narrator begins to dread going to his bedroom in the afternoon where he will be banned until dinner is served. He describes his "magic lantern" that projects characters on his wall and tells the story of Golo and Genevieve de Brabant. When the dinner bell rings, he runs to dinner and to Mamma. After the narrator eats his dinner, his father sends him back upstairs to his bedroom with a book to read. Grandmother walks outside after dinner every day and complains that the narrator should be permitted to go outside also. The narrator describes his family's joking and bickering, and he admits that he is unhappy. In fact, his sole consolation is Mamma's good night kiss, even though she only stays a short time and the narrator knows he would upset her by asking her to stay longer. It is even worse though when dinner guests are present; she does not come at all.

The guest that comes most frequently is M. Swann, their neighbor. Everyone always feigns uncertainty when a visitor approaches, although it is nearly always M. Swann. M. Swann's father was very close friends with the narrator's grandfather and the two families remain close despite the decrease in visits since M. Swann's marriage. Before his marriage, the narrator's family believed that he lived as his parents had lived and had no idea of his personal life or the social circles in which he ran. They are shocked when his marriage revealed these details. Aunt Leonie gossips about M. Swann's personal life and discreetly insults him when he visits. Her opinion of another family friend, Mme. de Villeparisis, is lessened by the lady's praise of M. Swann. M. Swann presents the family with a case of Asti, and Aunt Leonie, Aunt Flora, and Aunt Celine believe their praise of good neighbors is sufficient in showing their appreciation, even though Grandfather is dissatisfied with this cold praise.

The narrator's father refuses to ask M. Swann how his daughter is doing, so Mamma attempts to inquire into the girl's well-being. M. Swann and Grandfather are unable to converse because of the interruptions from the narrator's three aunts. The narrator fears being sent to his room before dinner ends, but before dinner begins, his grandfather



suggests that he looks tired and his father sends him to bed. He is rebuffed when he tries to kiss his mother good night. He is sad that he will not receive a good night kiss and decides to send his mother a note requesting that she come to him. He gets Françoise, their servant, to deliver it by telling her that he must answer a question his mother asked him earlier. Although Françoise is suspicious, she agrees, and the narrator loves her for giving him the hope of seeing his mother. When Françoise returns with Mamma's message that she has no response, the narrator realizes he will not be able to sleep because his mother is angry at him.

He decides to risk Mamma's anger further by waiting up to meet her in the hallway for a goodnight kiss. Mamma is angry but, hearing Father approach, promises to come to the narrator's room to kiss him good night if he hurries away before his father sees him. It is too late; his father sees him in the hallway; however, he also sees that his son is unhappy and tells Mamma to sleep in their son's room for the night. The narrator had expected to be sent back to school, banished from his family for this "sin", but he cries because he has angered his mother. Mamma comforts him and brings him the books that his grandmother bought for his approaching birthday. The narrator thinks of his grandmother's affinity for buying gifts with "intellectual profit", although they are not always useful. Mamma reads aloud to her son and he feels much better. He does not think about the occurrences at Combray for a long time until he visits his mother one day and the tea is familiar. After a long consideration, he recognizes the tea that Aunt Leonie served at Combray and the memories flood around him.

Overture Analysis

The first chapter introduces the narrator and his family. It also sets the scene for the first book at Combray in the country. Characters are established, and most importantly, M. Swann is introduced. He will be the main character of the first book, *Swann's Way*. The lack of affection in the narrator's family is portrayed as well as their resistant friendship with M. Swann. M. Swann's marriage is alluded to in context of its separating him from people he knows, foreshadowing the general disapproval of his match.

The narrator's grandmother argues with his father that he should be allowed outside after dinner, foreshadowing her assistance to the narrator throughout the book for more pleasurable pursuits than his parents would choose on their own. His parents' banishing him to his room continually foreshadows his ill health and weakness that is seen throughout the rest of the novel. His heavy reading foreshadows his aspirations to become a writer. The magic lantern that brings forth images of legendary personas seems an allusion to the genie in the lamp. Grandmother's affinity for giving gifts that have intellectual profit although are often useless illustrates her condemnation of intellectual pursuits that have no purpose.



Combray

Combray Summary

The narrator describes the country scenery at Combray and his family. The narrator describes the church at Combray, which he greatly admires for its aesthetic value. His great-aunt Leonie brags that she never sleeps, though the narrator catches her sleeping occasionally. Francoise loves the narrator and his mother, who gratifies Francoise by expressing interest in her life. Aunt Leonie is very interested in strangers; since there are no strangers in Combray she knows everyone. There is a writer in Combray, M. Legrandin, who the narrator's grandmother dislikes. Aunt Leonie dislikes everyone except her friend Eulalie.

The narrator greatly admires his Uncle Adolphe and visits him often. The narrator is in love with theater and his uncle's affiliation with actresses makes his quite interesting to his nephew. When the narrator visits unexpectedly one day, he finds his uncle talking to an actress. Uncle Adolphe is very uncomfortable because he knows that his family disapproves of his friends. When the narrator leaves, he kisses the actress's hand. Uncle Adolphe hints that he would like to keep this rendezvous a secret, but the boy, in excitement, tells his parents as soon as he gets home. His parents are furious and argue with Uncle Adolphe. They never see him again.

The narrator mentions that the family at Combray cannot keep kitchen-maids; they get a new one every two years or so. He recalls one pregnant kitchen-maid, beautiful with new life. Through her beauty, he learned to appreciate art. When the kitchen-maid goes into labor, Francoise is very irritable and unkind to the girl, reinforcing the narrator's observation that Francoise is very kind to her people but not at all to strangers.

The narrator reads a lot and ignores real life as much as possible. He finds characters in the books he reads more realistic than the living people he knows. He yearns to visit the lands he reads about. He has a tendency to read in the garden and lose track of time. One time in particular, his reading is interrupted by the gardener's daughter who sees the cavalry coming. He joins her and Francoise in watching the cavalry parade past Combray. Francoise mourns for the boys who may lose their lives fighting for their country.

The narrator's friend, Bloch, visits once but is not allowed back because he annoys everyone. Unfortunately, Bloch is Jewish and the narrator's grandfather claims that all of the narrator's friends are bad Jews. He was unable to tell the narrator's father if it is raining outside, he cries over Grandmother's illness (which she believes is an affectation) and then he is late for dinner. Finally, he tells the narrator that Aunt Leonie was kept in her youth and led a gay life. Bloch fortunately discusses Bergotte's writing with the narrator before he is banished. The narrator admires Bergotte and associates himself with the writer, glad when they make similar observations about life. The narrator discusses Bergotte with M. Swann and learns that M. Swann knows Bergotte.



The narrator longs to befriend M. Swann's daughter when he discovers that she is friends with Bergotte as well.

The town Cure visits Aunt Leonie at the same time as her friend Eulalie and the three discuss a painter in the church. They talk about the history of Combray and the needs of the church. This conversation tires Aunt Leonie, who is unable to gossip with Eulalie afterward. Eulalie comes every Sunday because Aunt Leonie gives her money. Eulalie and Françoise hate one another because they are jealous of the gifts that Aunt Leonie gives the other. Life at Combray is very routine because Aunt Leonie insists upon it. The only day that varies is Saturday when dinner is served early because Françoise visits her daughter that day. Aunt Leonie begins to look forward to the irregularity of Saturday even though the day passes slower for her than other days. When Aunt Leonie is bored, she imagines the deaths of her family in an immense fire that she miraculously escapes. Sometimes she insists that François is a thief; at other times, Eulalie steals from her.

In going to the Month of Mary services at Combray the narrator often meets M. Vinteuil, who expresses his disapproval of M. Swann, his pride in his own musical compositions, and his love for his daughter. When the family visits him, the narrator peers into a window in time to see him set out a musical composition in hope that someone will notice it and ask him to play. When it is noticed, he exclaims at the carelessness of the servants who leave these things lying about. One day, the narrator's father believes that M. Legrandin snubbed him and his son, but the next day M. Legrandin visits them and invites the narrator to dinner. Then, at church, M. Legrandin unmistakably snubs the narrator's family, and they debate where to allow the narrator to dine with M. Legrandin. They decide to permit it. The narrator and M. Legrandin discuss books, and the narrator asks M. Legrandin if he knows the Guermantes family. He does not and insists that he does not want to though he seems to be trying to cover up his disappointment in the lack of acquaintance with the Guermantes. The narrator's family decides that M. Legrandin is a snob and decides to avoid him.

The family has two choices of paths when they decide to walk: Swann's Way or Guermantes Way. They have avoided Swann's park since his marriage, but on a day when his family is supposed to be away from home, the narrator, his father, and his grandfather take a turn through Swann's Gardens. The narrator expects Mlle. Swann to appear and desires to see her while he admires the beauty of Swann's park. The narrator is enamored when a girl appears, turns, and signals an insult. She is summoned by a woman and a man who both call her Gilberte. Grandfather comments that Gilberte is M. Swann's daughter, the woman is Mme. Swann, and the man is M. Charlus, Mme. Swann's lover. Grandfather and Father discuss the shame of M. Swann being sent away to provide time for a tryst between Mme. Swann and M. Charlus. The family tends to walk Swann's Way when there was bad weather because it was shorter and there was shelter if it began to rain.

M. Vinteuil's daughter has a constant companion with a bad reputation, but M. Vinteuil insists that the girl is studying music. When he learns that Mlle. Vinteuil's reputation is suffering because of the company she keeps, he grows ill and dies of a broken heart. Mother will not visit Mlle. Vinteuil because she blames the girl for her father's death.



Aunt Leonie dies and Françoise mourns deeply. Because the narrator's parents are busy with legal matters, he is allowed to walk alone. His desire for a girl overwhelms him and he secretly peers into Mlle. Vinteuil's window. Her notorious friend comes to visit and the narrator watches Mlle. Vinteuil place her father's picture near her before her friend enters. They greet each other and it is obvious that Mlle. Vinteuil is trying to adapt her habits and lifestyle to that of her friend. Her friend threatens to spit on M. Vinteuil's picture and Mlle. Vinteuil exclaims in surprise that she does not know how it got there.

In the narrator's walks by Guermantes Way, he daydreams about meeting and being accepted by the Guermantes. He finally sees Mme. de Guermantes at the doctor's daughter's wedding, but is disappointed because she looks so human. He tries to reconcile her physical image to his mental expectations. He is offended when others compare her to other women. When she glances at him, he falls in love with her immediately. He is depressed by the idea that he does not have the necessary qualifications for a literary career. The narrator cries when they leave Combray that year.

Combray Analysis

There is a parallelism between M. Vinteuil's placing his composition in plain sight and feigning surprise and Mlle. Vinteuil's reenactment of the scene with her dead father's photograph. Françoise's character is further described and her friendship for Aunt Leonie is elaborated. The introduction to Gilberte foreshadows the narrator's further acquaintance with her in book two. Similarly, the narrator's first glimpse of Mme. de Guermantes foreshadows his fascination with her in book three. The social order of the narrator's life is demonstrated in the snubbing and reactive avoidance of M. Legrandin.

Mme. Swann's character is introduced as well as M. Charlus's character. They both appear deceitful and licentious. The narrator's reading and disbelief in his talents as a writer foreshadows his later intentions to be a writer as a career. Uncle Adolphe's tryst with an actress shows the reputation of actresses in the narrator's society and foreshadows the narrator's later involvement with several different actresses.



Swann In Love

Swann In Love Summary

The Verdurin clan is described and their rule of inclusion is detailed. All attendees must be regular attendees and prefer their society to all others. Members of this clique bring their potential lovers to the Verdurins' parties to have the other members pass judgment. M. Swann has a habit of courting ladies of a lower social status. He meets Mme. de Crecy and falls in love with her because she loves him. Mme. de Crecy brings M. Swann to the Verdurins, where he is introduced and accepted. The idiosyncrasies of the Verdurin tribe are highlighted, such as Mme. de Verdurin's health palpitations that she insists are the result of her fine taste in music and art. The pianist plays a piece that M. Swann recognizes from a party he once attended. He had fallen in love with the piece but no one could tell him what it was called or who is the composer. The pianist tells M. Swann that it is "Vinteuil's sonata"; unfortunately, no one knows anything about the composer except that he is going crazy. M. Swann debates and rejects the possibility that the composer is the M. Vinteuil that he knows from Combray. Hereafter, the pianist plays part of Vinteuil's sonata for Odette and M. Swann, and it is deemed their love anthem.

Mme. Verdurin likes M. Swann and encourages Odette to bring more friends to their parties if they are like him. M. Swann joins the Verdurins' parties frequently. Dr. Cottard is amazed and reveres M. Swann more than ever when M. Swann mentions his high society friends, such as M. Grevy, the prefect of police. M. Swann usually arrives to the parties later in the evening because he is simultaneously in love with a little working girl who he usually spends time with before going to see the Verdurins. M. Swann also enjoys arriving late because that gives him the opportunity to escort Odette to her gate. He only enters her house twice during the earlier part of their courting. The first time M. Swann visits Odette at home is to have tea. He accidentally leaves his cigarette case, and Odette sends it to him with a note that says "Why did you not forget your heart also? I should never have let you have that back". The second time he visits to show her an engraving she had particularly asked to see. As she bends over it, he notices that she looks like Zipporah of Alessandro de Mariano, which causes him to appreciate her beauty. He reassures himself that he is studying art when he spends time with her because of this resemblance. When M. Swann finds himself getting bored with Odette, he writes a letter to force her to express her feelings for him.

One night, M. Swann arrives too late to the Verdurins' party and misses Odette. He is very disappointed until he finds out that she left a message for him that she would be at Prevost's Restaurant. She is not there and M. Swann searches throughout the town for her in vain. He finally runs into her just as he has given up. He gives her a ride home and begins flirting with her by arranging the flowers on her dress. M. Swann kisses Odette and this leads to a physical relationship between the pair. He visits her every night after this, but does not worry about her past or how she spends her day. Odette reawakens M. Swann's boyhood inspirations and ambitions.



Odette and her conception of fashion are quite vulgar, but M. Swann attempts to assimilate himself to her opinions on everything, including the Verdurins. The Verdurins are no longer satisfied with M. Swann because he does not agree with them completely on everything. They prefer Odette's other friend, Forcheville, who likes Brichot when M. Swann does not and alludes to M. Swann's higher society friends, which displeases the Verdurins. M. Swann is jealous of Forcheville, especially when he notices Odette's irritation in leaving with M. Swann instead of Forcheville. M. Swann disregards his thoughts that Odette is his "kept woman". One evening, Odette tells M. Swann she is not feeling well and sends him home, but he is suspicious and returns to her house to find her lights on and voices resounding from the house. His knock at the window to signal his knowledge of the event elicits two men's faces, which helps M. Swann to realize that he has knocked at the wrong house. His faith in Odette is restored. When M. Swann once goes to Odette during the day, she does not answer the door. Later, she tells him that he woke her and she did not reach the door in time. M. Swann knows she is lying. His suspicions are reinforced when a man is turned away at the door while he is with Odette. He suspects an intrigue between Odette and Forcheville and takes Odette on vacation, but is jealous of every man who looks at Odette.

The Verdurins, Odette, and Forcheville attend an event without inviting M. Swann one evening, and Odette allows the Verdurins and Forcheville to drive her home instead of M. Swann. M. Swann disdains the Verdurins, dwelling on their vulgarity, and they no longer welcome him to their parties. When Odette forbids M. Swann to join her and the Verdurins on their travels, he follows anyway but avoids her. The day of Odette's return to Paris, M. Swann waits impatiently and in vain for her to send for him. She forgets him often and is displeased when she encounters him in public. M. Swann refuses to give Odette the money for her to take a house in Bayreuth to entertain the Verdurins and Forcheville. Sometimes M. Swann trusts and loves Odette, but at other times he suspects that she is Forcheville's mistress and hates her. He can never hate her for long, though he sometimes stays away from her for several days to prove that he does not need or want her as much as she thinks.

There are many love games between Odette and M. Swann. His love for her is almost an illness, and he asks Uncle Adolphe, a mutual friend of both, to help him. Uncle Adolphe advises M. Swann to avoid her for a while and she will love him more. He also tells Odette that she should allow M. Swann to join her in public. She responds by telling M. Swann that Uncle Adolphe attacked her physically, which destroys M. Swann and Uncle Adolphe's friendship. Odette lives a gay life and M. Swann tries to ignore her reputation, but he sees her less and less because of her contrivances to avoid him. He enquires about who she spends her time with when she is not with him but is not satisfied with the answers. M. Swann is depressed and fears that Odette is in love with someone else. He is jealous of her other friends and wants to be acquainted with them. Odette's tone changes toward M. Swann, becoming less loving. M. Swann constantly refers to Odette when he is not with her. All of his friends see a change in him. Even when he attends a party, he is constantly thinking of Odette. Although Princesse de Guermantes is there and he spends time chatting with her, he refuses her invitation to dinner. Princesse de Guermantes is upset that he is so sad over someone as uninteresting as Odette. M. Swann cries when he hears Vinteuil's sonata, reminisces



about the time when Odette loved him and realizes she does not love him anymore. He wants to leave Paris but cannot while Odette is still there.

M. Swann receives an anonymous letter stating that Odette has had countless lovers, male and female. M. Swann discovers that Odette and Mme. Verdurin were lovers from this letter and he confronts Odette about it. She admits that she has also had female lovers since she met M. Swann. He is hurt from finding out more about Odette's life. He finds out that the night he missed her and she left a message that she would be at Prevost's Restaurant, she was with Forcheville. He realizes that their entire relationship has been a lie. He frequents bawdy houses to hear rumors about Odette. The Verdurins and their clan cruise on their yacht quite often so Odette is not around. M. Swann runs into Mme. Cottard, who tells him that Odette constantly talks about him and loves him. When M. Swann hears that Odette is Forcheville's mistress, his love for her disappears. He loves her again when he sees her unexpectedly until she excuses herself with speaking to him privately. He then learns that she is now Napoleon III's mistress. M. Swann berates himself for wasting so much time with "a woman who did not please [him], who was not in [his] style!".

Swann In Love Analysis

The references to the friendship between Uncle Adolphe and Odette foreshadow the narrator's later discovery that Uncle Adolphe's lady friend who the narrator met was Odette. The romance between M. Swann and Odette foreshadows their marriage, including the adulteries that Odette commits. M. Swann's lack of interest in society because of his obsession with Odette foreshadows his societal fall due to his imprudent marriage with her. His condemnation of the Verdurins as vulgar foreshadows his forbidding Odette to visit them once he marries her. His fascination with Vinteuil's sonata is ironic because of his dismissal of the idea that it could have been written by M. Vinteuil of Combray; it is implicit that M. Vinteuil is the composer. M. Swann's way of dealing with his relationship parallels the narrator's later romances. M. Swann's illicit relationship with Odette de Crecy also parallels Robert de Saint-Loup's relationship with Rachel.



Place-Names: The Name

Place-Names: The Name Summary

The narrator relates his desire to travel and laments that all travel plans are cancelled by his illness. His doctor forbids him to travel or do anything that may cause excitement. Françoise takes the narrator to Champs-Élysées every day. One day, the narrator sees Gilberte Swann and looks for her every day thereafter. They begin to play on occasion and become friends. The narrator is devastated on a snowy day when Gilberte does not seem likely to come, but he is elated when she arrives late. He is sad when she does not come because he loves Gilberte. She is mean to him, however, and tells him that she prefers other little boys to him. The narrator idealizes Gilberte, and sometimes she is quite nice to him. She buys him an expensive marble the color of her eyes, which he cannot afford, to remember her. She sends him a copy of a work by Bergotte that he asks her about. They call each other by their first names, but the narrator wishes Gilberte would admit that she loves him. One day she is not at Champs-Élysées, and he finds her at a friend's house. M. Swann arrives to collect Gilberte and the narrator is impressed with M. Swann as Gilberte's father, not as a former guest at Combray.

Gilberte announces she will not be around for a long time because of the approaching holidays. The narrator is sad as he realizes Gilberte's indifference to him, which he yearns to alter. He meditates on the name of the street the Swanns live on and idolizes an older lady at the park who Gilberte talks to until his mother tells her that the lady, Mme. Blatin, is awful. The narrator has no interest in anything except Gilberte and the Swanns. When the narrator's mother relates an encounter with M. Swann, he asks if they have quarreled. His mother insists that they have not, but she does not know nor wants to know Mme. Swann. When Gilberte is not supposed to be at Champs-Élysées, the narrator changes his walk in an attempt to see her. Sometimes he visits Allee des Acacias where Mme. Swann walks nearly every day for everyone to admire her. Other times, she goes to Allee de la Reine Marguerite where she meets different men. The narrator admires autumn and its reflection of femininity and love. He acknowledges that his old belief in the elegance of women is gone, degenerated as the years have passed. He no longer puts faith in elegance and beauty.

Place-Names: The Name Analysis

The narrator's fascination with Gilberte foreshadows their growing friendship. It also parallels M. Swann's early relationship with Odette de Crécy. The narrator's obsession extends to Mme. Swann as well, which is ironic in that it crosses into M. Swann's parallel relationship. The observation that Mme. Swann meets different men in Allee de la Reine Marguerite clarifies her marriage in terms of her lack of constancy toward her husband. Gilberte's indifference to the narrator can be seen as a parallel of Mme. Swann's feigned indifference to M. Swann during their courting and "love games". The

narrator's desire to travel foreshadows his trip to Balbec ,while his ill health is shown to prevent him from enjoying much of life.



Mme. Swann at Home

Mme. Swann at Home Summary

Everyone generally disapproves of Swann's marriage and his social status reflects this. His vanity has changed as well; in the past, he did not brag of his high society friends, whereas he now brags of any friends that he possesses. Dr. Cottard meanwhile has risen in society due to his immense medicinal gift. The narrator's family uses and associates with Dr. Cottard. They also associate with M. de Norpois, an ambassador of high rank. M. de Norpois does not have many friends, but the narrator's father is one of them. Although Mother thinks M. de Norpois is out of date, she persuades herself to like him for her husband's sake. M. de Norpois convinces Father to allow the narrator to hear Berma sing, against the doctor's advice. The narrator longs to see Berma act in something that he knows so that he can see what she adds to the piece. Though he admires the theatre building, he is disappointed with the play; it goes too fast for him to really dwell on Berma's acting and truly appreciate it.

After the play, the narrator returns home and meets M. de Norpois, who discusses the narrator's inclinations to write and encourages him to become a writer. He offers to introduce him to his friend's son, who is also a writer. The narrator shows M. de Norpois his writing, but it is not impressive. Father asks M. de Norpois's advice on investing Aunt Leonie's estate, which she bequeathed to the narrator. Françoise has labored all day to make dinner for M. de Norpois, and she is very pleased when she receives his compliments via the narrator. Father shows his son an article praising Berma. The narrator discusses Berma with M. de Norpois and admits that he could not figure out what was so wonderful about her. M. de Norpois praises her voice and her acting. He discusses politics with Father and the intent to visit Balbec with Mother. When he mentions that he dined the night before at the Swanns', general disapproval of M. Swann's marriage is mentioned. Apparently, Odette doubted that M. Swann would marry her and he has changed much since his marriage. The only opinion that M. Swann cares about concerning his marriage and Odette is that of the Duchesse de Guermantes, who refuses to meet Odette or Gilberte until after M. Swann's death. M. de Norpois mentions that he finds Mme. Swann charming. When the narrator asks if Bergotte was at dinner, M. de Norpois admits that he was and then states that he does not like the man nor his works. When the narrator tells M. de Norpois he is friends with Gilberte and praises Mme. Swann, M. de Norpois says he will pass the compliment on to the ladies. The narrator is excited at the prospect of being mentioned to Mme. Swann and Gilberte and expresses his gratitude which makes M. de Norpois decide not to convey the message. The narrator's parents discuss and praise M. de Norpois once he leaves.

The new year arrives and the narrator makes perfunctory visits with his family. He buys a picture of Berma for himself. He sends Gilberte a letter but she does not respond. When Gilberte returns to Champs-Élysées, she continues to play with the narrator. He praises her parents but she informs him that they cannot abide him. The narrator writes



a letter to M. Swann that Gilberte delivers, but it has no effect on her father. When Gilberte returns the letter to him, they wrestle for it and he appears to get sexual gratification from the contact. Unfortunately, the narrator gets sick which worries his grandmother. His parents ask Dr. Cottard's advice but they ignore it. The symptoms grow worse until they follow Dr. Cottard's prescription, and then the narrator gets better, but he is not allowed to return to Champs-Elysees. He receives a letter from Gilberte, saying she does not go to the park anymore either and inviting him to the tea parties she has every Monday and Friday. Apparently, Bloch told Dr. Cottard that Mme. Swann is very fond of the narrator and Dr. Cottard praises the narrator to Mme. Swann, which improves her opinion of him.

The narrator goes to the Swann's house often. He greatly admires Gilberte's tea party invitations, which are always printed on different stationary. In fact, he admires everything about the Swanns and their home. One time, Mme. Swann even invites him to a private tea with the family. When the narrator calls and Gilberte is not home, either M. Swann or Mme. Swann invite him in to talk to them. Mme. Swann receives many visitors on her day in and M. Swann brags about the friends they have. Gilberte is indifferent to her parents' vanity concerning their friends. When the narrator praises the Swanns' guests to his parents, his parents are disdainful and comment that M. Swann is no longer socially successful due in part to his habit of missing different classes of his friends together at one event. Although the M. Swann of the past is gone, he is no longer jealous of Odette because he is in love with another woman. The narrator comments that Gilberte is a combination of both of her parents both physically and mentally. M. Swann adores his daughter. The narrator dines with the Swanns often and is tormented by Gilberte's indifference to him. Gilberte's parents share stories with the narrator, praise Gilberte, and claim that he is Gilberte's favorite chum. Even Gilberte admits that they are the "greatest friends". The narrator is proud of his association with the Swanns. Mme. Swann confuses him by telling him secrets in English because he does not know English. Gilberte and the narrator go to a concert on the anniversary of M. Swann Sr.'s death, despite M. Swann's disapproval. Although Mother says that the narrator can invite Gilberte to tea at their house, he is embarrassed to because Mother refuses to inquire after Mme. Swann.

At a tea party given by Mme. Swann, the narrator meets Bergotte. He is disappointed with Bergotte's appearance, which does not fit his imaginings. At first, he agrees with M. de Norpois' opinion of Bergotte. Later, the narrator begins to notice the harmony in Bergotte's style and his kindness to strangers, though not to his intimates. Bergotte and the narrator discuss Berma's acting; Bergotte praises Berma. Bergotte listens to the narrator's opinions even when they do not coincide with his own. Bergotte and Mme. Swann dislike M. de Norpois, while M. Swann praises the ambassador. M. Swann insists that the narrator's presence has heightened the quality of their conversation, but the narrator fears that Bergotte thinks he is a fool until Gilberte assures him that he has made quite a conquest, that Bergotte finds him intelligent. Bergotte and the narrator leave together and Bergotte expresses regret at the narrator's recent illness. He points out that illness provides time for intellectual pursuits, but the narrator dissents and says he would rather be healthy. Bergotte believes that Dr. Cottard is insufficient because the narrator is an intellectual and he needs a doctor who is an intellectual as well. Bergotte



speaks poorly of the Swanns, which confuses the narrator because of the hospitality they had just shown them both. The narrator's parents are irritated that the Swanns introduced their son to Bergotte until he tells them that Bergotte thinks he is intelligent. Then, they praise Bergotte as "man of talent".

Bloch introduces the narrator to whorehouses. The narrator gives his aunt's couch to the mistress of a whorehouse before he realizes the degradation he has subjected the piece of furniture to, at which point he stops going. He sells some of his aunt's things to buy gifts for the Swanns. He is unable to write because of his preoccupation with Gilberte and her family, but his parents and Mme. Swann believe that Bergotte's society will inspire talent and is as good as working.

The narrator is able to see Gilberte as much as he wants, but she is displeased when he visits without her consent. On one occasion in particular, she is angry because her mother forbids her to attend a dance lesson because the narrator arrives. She insists to the narrator that she loves him and he will see one day; however, he does not believe her and decides never to see her again. The next day, he changes his mind and goes to visit her but she is out. He decides he will not go to her anymore and waits in vain agony for a letter of apology. He renounces her forever but accepts her invitations, canceling at the last minute. He wants to convince Gilberte of his indifference so he visits Mme. Swann only when he knows Gilberte will not be home. Although it grieves the narrator not to see Gilberte, he believes it will improve her opinion of him. He describes the gossip that occurs in Mme. Swann's parlor during her visiting days. The narrator tells Mme. Swann that he cannot see Gilberte again. On New Year's, he loses hope of receiving a letter from Gilberte and considers telling her that he will soon cease to love her because of her indifference. He does tell her that he will probably never see her again. He changes his mind again and decides to see her only as a lover. He sells some of his aunt's things for money so he can buy gifts for Gilberte. On his way to the Swanns' house, he thinks he sees Gilberte with a young man but is not sure. She is not at home so he is convinced that it was she in the park with another man. He decides never to see Gilberte again. He spends his money on whores. He loves and detests Gilberte simultaneously, but his indifference grows. Eventually, the narrator and Gilberte exchange friendly letters. He finds pleasure in walking and talking with Mme. Swann, who expresses her sorrow that he will not see Gilberte anymore.

Mme. Swann at Home Analysis

The juxtaposition of Swann's status and Dr. Cottard's status in society shows the importance of social standing in the narrator's world. M. de Norpois' visiting with the narrator's family and the Swanns demonstrates that they are of equal social status though M. Swann's marriage has made him fall in many people's opinions. The narrator's being permitted to finally see Berma proves his parents are beginning to permit him some pleasures. His discussion with M. de Norpois foreshadows his meeting Bergotte at the Swanns' house. Their friendship is foreshadowed by this meeting. It is ironic that while M. de Norpois does not pass the narrator's compliments to the Swanns, a lie told to Dr. Cottard by Bloch causes the Swanns to think highly of the narrator. The



narrator's invitation to Gilberte's tea party foreshadows their friendship, while his obsession parallels M. Swann's obsession with Odette prior to their marriage. His reaction of distancing himself from her also parallels M. Swann's attempts to distance himself from Odette, as does his frequenting whores. His lack of hope of a letter at the new year is parallel to his despondence the prior year when he could not see Gilberte. The narrator sees Gilberte with another man, which parallels M. Swann's finding Odette had other lovers.



Place-Names: The Place, Part I

Place-Names: The Place, Part I Summary

Two years later, the narrator is finally indifferent to Gilberte, though he occasionally reminisces and loves her again. He, his grandmother, and Francoise travel to Balbec. Grandmother plans an itinerary for their trip. They leave Paris on a train. The narrator is very sad to leave his mother and worries she will be lonely. The doctor prescribes beer or brandy for the narrator's nerves, which his grandmother disapproves of. She worries about her grandson's health and insists that he rest on their trip. They take a short detour on their journey to visit Grandmother's friend, Mme. de Sevigne, on the way to Balbec. They visit some old churches in the town where Mme. de Sevigne lives. The narrator admires Mme. de Sevigne because of her intellect, but he admires the girls in town for their looks. The narrator, Grandmother, and Francoise finally leave to go to Balbec, and the narrator is very excited.

The narrator is disappointed at the hotel because of the hotel manager's disdain for anyone who is not aristocratic. The narrator is very lonely and suggests to his grandmother that they may have to return to Paris because of his health; she does not object, but he changes his mind even though he is exhausted and feverish. The hotel room at Balbec is unfamiliar, which makes the narrator very uncomfortable. Grandmother enters his room to comfort the narrator in his illness, which pleases him and makes him feel much better. Grandmother's room is next door and the narrator signals his needs to her by three knocks on the wall. Grandmother recognizes her grandson's timid knocks from anyone else's knocks. The narrator fears being separated from the people he cares about, such as Gilberte, her parents, and his parents.

The narrator enjoys Balbec and praises the beauty of the sea views in Balbec. He desires to be pleasing to others at Balbec, despite their snobbish pretensions. The people at Balbec seem to be fascinated with social rank and status, and therefore are contemptuous of the narrator. The narrator is attracted to M. de Stermaria's daughter, but he cannot talk to her because of their social differences. The narrator and his grandmother run into her friend, the Marquise de Villeparisis, but Grandmother ignores her because she does not believe in socializing while on vacation. The narrator is upset about this because others who dine with Mme. de Villeparisis raise their social status by their association with her. The general manager at the hotel continues to be snobby and terrifies the narrator.

The narrator makes no friends; however, Francoise makes many friends with the hotel staff. Unfortunately, this inconveniences the narrator and Grandmother because she is hesitant to disturb her new friends for conveniences for her charges, which causes discomfort for Grandmother and the narrator. Mme. de Villeparisis encounters Grandmother again and they greet one another. Afterwards, they begin to dine together daily. Francoise dislikes nobles like Mme. de Villeparisis because her family was not threatened socially by anyone except nobility. Eventually, she befriends Mme. de



Villeparisis, but she is unwilling to believe Grandmother when she states the Mme. de Villeparisis was beautiful when she was young. Mme. de Villeparisis is very good to the narrator and Grandmother and sends them gifts. Grandmother suspects that Mme. de Villeparisis is connected to the Guermantes. This suspicion is confirmed when the Princesse de Luxembourg, who stays in the neighborhood for several weeks, visits Mme. de Villeparisis. Mme. de Villeparisis introduces the princess to the narrator and Grandmother. Princesse de Luxembourg is introduced to the narrator and Grandmother, and the narrator is astonished by her indulgence and kindness. Mme. de Villeparisis knows the narrator's father, his travels, likes and dislikes, and she praises him for it. The narrator is concerned because some of the ladies at the hotel doubt the authenticity of the Marquis and the Princess.

Place-Names: The Place, Part I Analysis

The narrator's desire to travel is finally realized in his trip to Balbec. His fear of leaving his mother and his feigned illness at his arrival in Balbec displays his attachment to his mother. His attraction to the girls in Mme. de Sevigne's town foreshadows his attraction to the girls in Balbec. The narrator's ill health is demonstrated on his train ride as well as by his first illness in Balbec. The appearance of Mme. de Villeparisis and Grandmother's suspicions of her connection with the Guermantes foreshadows the future discovery of these connections as well as the benefits of these connections for the narrator. This is further foreshadowed by the Princesse de Luxembourg's arrival. The narrator's desire for social standing to be able to associate freely with Mlle. de Stermaria demonstrates the importance of society and aristocracy in general and to the narrator in particular.



Place-Names: The Place, Part II

Place-Names: The Place, Part II Summary

The narrator suffers a feverish attack at Balbec but his grandmother disregards the doctor's advice. He finds Balbec beautiful and Mme. de Villeparisis takes the narrator to see the churches in the area where she displays her liberalism of mind, which impresses the narrator. The narrator desires many village girls they see; he is attracted to one girl in particular as they pass her. He gets out of the carriage to follow her but loses the girl and encounters Mme. Verdurin. Back at the hotel, the narrator takes a nap and wakes to a note from Bergotte, who visited while he was asleep. Leaving church later that day, the narrator is mesmerized by a group of girls who he doubts are different from one another. He asks one girl to deliver a message for him for five francs in order to exhibit his importance. He feels that he has succeeded in his plan to appear of importance. He is wretched when he notices a familiar pattern of trees but cannot place their familiarity. They return home by the Old Balbec Road.

When the narrator quotes Chateaubriand, Vigny, or Hugo, Mme. de Villeparisis, who knew them all, shares anecdotes about them with the narrator. He praises Mme. de Villeparisis's kindness, but is embarrassed when Grandmother hands her coat to the hotel manager as though he were any servant in the hotel. Mme. de Villeparisis receives visits from the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld and Mme. de Praslin. The narrator explains his love for his grandmother and his inability to live without her.

Mme. de Villeparisis expects her nephew to visit. This excites the narrator, who imagines becoming great friends with her nephew, Marquise Robert de Saint-Loup. Unfortunately, this visit is deterred by the love of an "appalling woman", his mistress. Eventually, Robert de Saint-Loup arrives along with his reputation as a womanizer. The narrator is offended when Saint-Loup does not acknowledge him. Mme. de Villeparisis introduces the narrator to Saint-Loup, and the narrator receives a cold greeting. Once the narrator and Saint-Loup become more acquainted, the narrator realizes that Saint-Loup was simply brought up with reserved manners. Saint-Loup is intellectual and disdains his own caste. He is also intolerant of varying opinions. Grandmother is also friends with Saint-Loup. Saint-Loup loves the narrator and their friendship, but the narrator is not quite as enraptured with their friendship.

Saint-Loup and the narrator encounter Bloch one day, and it becomes apparent that Saint-Loup also knows Bloch. The narrator is embarrassed by Bloch's mispronunciations and ill-breeding. Bloch accuses the narrator of snobbery for hanging out with a marquis, and the narrator tells Bloch he is "not being nice". Bloch speaks badly of the narrator to Saint-Loup and of Saint-Loup to the narrator. The narrator laments the fact that Bloch can be charming when he chooses but usually displays bad manners. Bloch invites the narrator and Saint-Loup to dinner with his family.



Saint-Loup tells the narrator about his uncle, M. de Charlus's early life and lechery. One day, there is an odd man watching the narrator and his grandmother. The man later appears with Saint-Loup and Mme. de Villeparisis. The odd man is Baron de Charlus, a Guermantes and Saint-Loup's uncle. This evidence of Mme. de Villeparisis' relation to the Guermantes raises her in value to the narrator's opinion. Saint-Loup educates the narrator on some Guermantes' family history and titles. The narrator suspects that M. de Charlus was one of Mme. Swann's lovers, but Saint-Loup denies this accusation. Grandmother likes M. de Charlus. The narrator describes M. de Charlus and compares him to Saint-Loup. Grandmother and the narrator separate from the three Guermantes, but first M. de Charlus privately invites the narrator and Grandmother to dinner in Mme. de Villeparisis' room. The narrator expects M. de Charlus to tell Mme. de Villeparisis about the dinner invitation but M. de Charlus does not. This is evident by Mme. de Villeparisis' and Saint-Loup's surprise at their arrival; M. de Charlus also feigns surprise. M. de Charlus talks to Grandmother all night and ignores the narrator, especially at the narrator's attempt to remind M. de Charlus that he had invited them to dinner. They discuss love and literature. M. de Charlus mourns that a house formerly owned by the Guermantes and visited by Marie Antoinette is now owned by Jews.

Grandmother sends the narrator to bed, and Saint-Loup mentions the narrator's depression before bed to M. de Charlus, who follows the narrator to his room. He loans the narrator a book by Bergotte to entertain him before bed. He praises the narrator's affection for Grandmother and seems to want to tell the narrator something, but leaves abruptly. The next day, M. de Charlus accuses the narrator of not caring about his grandmother and demands the immediate return of his book before leaving.

Saint-Loup and the narrator dine with the Bloch family. M. Bloch, Bloch's father, is just like his son. M. Bloch speaks of Bergotte as though he knows him, but does not know him nor wants to know him. The Bloch children admire their father very much. Bloch and his uncle argue a lot. His uncle insists that he was friends with Saint-Loup's father and Bloch claims that he is a liar. The narrator does not think highly of M. Bloch. The narrator calls on Bloch, who returns the call when the narrator is out. Françoise is disappointed with the narrator's appearance. Françoise likes Saint-Loup until she finds out that he is a Republican, but decides he lied and likes him anyway. Saint-Loup treats servants as equals and disdains the aristocratic caste. Everyone seems to dislike Saint-Loup's mistress. The narrator praises her for teaching Saint-Loup kindness to animals, and how to distinguish between real and fake friends. Unfortunately, she causes him pain because her friends have taught her to disdain him. She puts off breaking with him for monetary reasons, but forbids him to stay in Paris with her. Saint-Loup brings his mistress to Mme. de Villeparisis' house, where people speak poorly of her and she insists the people are vulgar. Saint-Loup is convinced that the men who try to convince her to break with him desire her for themselves. Saint-Loup waits in vain for letters from his mistress. The narrator is annoyed by Grandmother's vanity when Saint-Loup offers to take her photograph; Françoise exploits this annoyance and torments him about it. Grandmother offers not to sit for the photograph but the narrator insists. Grandmother seems to avoid him after this, which makes him very sad.



Place-Names: The Place, Part II Analysis

The narrator's ill health affects his trip again. His attraction to many different girls foreshadows his romances with different girls. The narrator's desire to be friends with Saint-Loup further highlights his desires to be affiliated with the aristocracy. The narrator's preoccupation with social status serves as a foil to Saint-Loup's disdain for social standing. Bloch's family is introduced and compared to Bloch. Bloch's character is better described in this chapter than it has been hitherto. He is seen as pretentious and ill-mannered. Saint-Loup's infatuation with his mistress and the affects of their relationship on him is introduced in this chapter and foreshadows the narrator's introduction to Saint-Loup's mistress. Grandmother's vanity annoys the narrator and shows his contrasting values; he is eager to be affiliated with the Guermantes but is irritated by his grandmother's desire to be photographed. Saint-Loup is introduced and his character is described. His importance to the narrator's future is foreshadowed by the discovery of his relation to the Guermantes.



Seascape, with Frieze of Girls

Seascape, with Frieze of Girls Summary

Saint-Loup's military leave ends and he spends much of his time working; the narrator misses his friend. The narrator admires many girls but is too frightened to approach them. He sees five or six girls coming toward them. They are all beautiful but look very different. They express contempt for anyone outside of their group, and the narrator decides they cannot be virtuous. He is particularly attracted to the girl with bright eyes, who he overhears the others call Albertine. He wants to know them all but is unsure how to gain an introduction to them. He goes to the hotel to rest before dinner and wonders about the girls. When Saint-Loup returns from working, the narrator tries to interest him in the girls in vain. The narrator is concerned with his boredom every time he attempts to write.

When the narrator and Saint-Loup go to dinner at Rivebelle, the narrator's attitude changes because he gets drunk. The narrator decides to live in the present and not worry about the future. They greet the Princesse de Luxembourg and many others; they know nearly everyone at the restaurant. The narrator hopes that Saint-Loup will introduce him to the girls at the restaurant who are disreputable.

The next day, the narrator wakes up midday. He thinks about the girls at the restaurant and the group of girls he saw the day before. He laments the rarity of running into strangers more than once and therefore the unlikelihood of encountering the girls again. He is introduced to Elstir, an artist who is a friend of the Swanns. Elstir invites the narrator to come and see him. The narrator sees two girls, one of whom looks like one of the girls from the group he saw the previous day but he is not sure. He does not visit Elstir because he is afraid of missing an opportunity to see the girls. His grandmother chides him for not visiting Elstir when he was invited. The narrator visits Elstir and admires his paintings. As they walk around Elstir's studio, discussing the paintings, the narrator sees one of the girls from the group through a window. Elstir tells the narrators about the girls, daughters of wealthy merchants. The narrator wants to walk the beach with Elstir where he believes the girls will be, hoping to solicit an introduction. The narrator is impatient for Elstir to finish painting. He notices a painting of a girl with a vase of carnations and admires it. When Mme. Elstir arrives, Elstir hides the painting. The narrator cannot resist looking at the finished painting, despite his impatience. Elstir and the narrator walk to the front but the girls are not there. The narrator walks Elstir home and the girls appear. Elstir approaches the girls and greets them, leaving the narrator alone. The narrator expects an introduction and gains indifference to meeting them. Elstir talks to the girls and then leaves them and returns to the narrator. The narrator is disappointed and mentions to Elstir that he wants to meet the girls. Elstir reproaches him for standing so far away. Elstir offers the narrator a painting as a token of his friendship, and the narrator requests the picture of the girl with a vase, who he recognizes as Mme. Swann. He then realizes that Elstir is the painter who used to



attend the parties at the Verdurins' house. Elstir is embarrassed with his past but does not regret it. The narrator leaves and returns to the hotel.

Saint-Loup will be leaving Balbec soon, and Grandmother buys autographed letters of Proudhon, a celebrated philosopher, as a going-away gift. Bloch accompanies the narrator to see Saint-Loup to his train. Saint-Loup invites Bloch to visit him in Doncières while saying that he will probably be too busy to see him. Bloch intends to visit Saint-Loup, despite the insinuation that Saint-Loup is not truthfully interested in seeing him again. Soon after Saint-Loup's departure, the narrator receives a letter from Saint-Loup that expresses Saint-Loup's desire to introduce the narrator to a friend of his.

The narrator persuades Elstir to give a tea party and introduce him to Albertine. When she first enters, the narrator does not recognize her. His opinion of Albertine changes after he is introduced to her because he can see that she is respectively bred. The narrator gives Albertine a flower. He is disappointed that Albertine is like other girls he knows. When the narrator sees Albertine several days later, he is shocked that she portrays the rude tone of the group of girls once again. As they talk at the front, the girls pass and Albertine waves. The narrator urges her to go with her friends, hoping that she will invite him to join them. Octave, a baccarat player, approaches and greets Albertine. Albertine does not introduce the narrator. Later, they run into Bloch who discusses his plans to go see Saint-Loup and invites the narrator to join him, but is refused. Albertine says that Bloch is not bad looking but he makes her sick. Albertine and the narrator part but promise to walk more together later.

On their next walk, Albertine introduces the narrator to Andree, another girl from the group. The narrator greets some girls he is acquainted with, but Albertine disapproves of the girls. Then they encounter Albertine's friend, Gisele, who the narrator finds very attractive. Albertine separates them, accusing the narrator of staring at Gisele and saying he would not care much for her anyway. Albertine is reassured by the fact that Gisele is going to Paris later that day for school, which makes the narrator sad. The narrator tells Grandmother that he is going to Doncières to see Saint-Loup. He plans to meet Gisele on the train and arrange to meet Paris, but he misses Gisele's train. Within a few days, the narrator meets the other girls who he also admires. He praises Andree's refinement, generosity, and kindness. He begins to go out with the girls almost every day. The narrator visits Elstir with the girls, and they all go to the racetrack. They often encounter Bloch's sister, but Albertine disapproves of the Jewesses.

The narrator picnics with the girls and they play games. The narrator rejects Saint-Loup's offers to visit because he is afraid of losing time with the girls, even though he rarely speaks to them. One day, Albertine writes a note to the narrator saying "I love you". The narrator decides to pursue a romance with Albertine. They play a game of Ferret. He longs to be next to Albertine so that he can touch her hands. When he gets next to her, he messes up the game by being distracted. He praises Albertine to Andree, hoping that Andree will repeat his compliments but she does not. The narrator is in love with Albertine, thinks about her all the time, and contrives to be alone with her; however, he does not tell her he is in love with her. Instead, he pretends to be in love with Andree and fakes indifference to Albertine.



Albertine prepares to visit her aunt, Mme. Bontemps. She spends the night before her departure at the narrator's hotel, and she promises to spend the evening with him. She excites the narrator by telling him that she does her hair the way that she knows he likes it. She tells him to visit her after she is in bed. The narrator goes to Albertine's room after she is in bed. He attempts to kiss her, and she threatens to ring the bell for help. When he ignores her, she rings the bell! The narrator believed Albertine was unchaste but is proved wrong. Albertine forgives him when she returns from visiting her aunt. The narrator discusses Albertine's general attraction and the many mothers who are jealous of Albertine's social successes. Albertine does not like the attention. The narrator is astounded that Albertine pulled the bell, and Albertine is angry that the narrator is astounded. Albertine gives the narrator a golden pencil case as a mark of her favor, even though she insists that the narrator is in love with Andree. The narrator turns to dreaming of other girls, but Andree is too much like him. He admires the similarities and beauty of all of the girls. The girls begin to leave Balbec and return to Paris, starting with Albertine. Françoise is impatient to return home as well. The narrator makes new friends but always reminisces about the time he spent with Albertine and the other girls. Finally, the narrator, Grandmother, and Françoise leave Balbec.

Seascape, with Frieze of Girls Analysis

Saint-Loup's frequent absences foreshadow his pending departure from Balbec. The narrator's encounter with the cluster of six impertinent girls and his admiration for them foreshadows his introduction to them and the resulting friendship. The narrator's attraction to many girls is indicative of his lechery. His introduction to Elstir foreshadows his friendship with the painter. It is ironic that the narrator avoids visiting Elstir due to his fear of not seeing the girls; however, it is through Elstir that he finally meets the girls. The painting of Mme. Swann is ironic because it leads the narrator to associate Elstir as the painter at the Verdurins' parties. The narrator's expectation of being introduced to the girls is disappointed the first time that Elstir encounters them with the narrator in company. This insinuates that the girls may be repulsed by the narrator, which makes his desire for Elstir to invite Albertine to a tea party and introduce them very ironic.

Grandmother displays her love for Saint-Loup by her gift of autographed letters of Proudhon. Saint-Loup demonstrates his dislike of Bloch by his two-sided invitation to visit him in Doncières. When the narrator meets Albertine at the tea party, she is very polite, but at their next encounter, she resumes the pert tone of the gaggle of girls. This demonstrates her multiple personalities. It is ironic that Albertine disapproves of the narrator's acquaintance since he believes she is immoral. Albertine's jealousy of the narrator's attention to Gisele foreshadows her falling in love with him. The love note she gives him and his attempts to hold her hand during their game of Ferret foreshadows a romance between the youths. The narrator's feigned indifference to Albertine is an example of a love-game, which parallels the games he played with Gilberte as well as the love-games that M. Swann and Odette de Crecy played while they were courting. Albertine's refusal to kiss the narrator parallels his earlier disappointed hope of being introduced to the girls. It is also ironic since it proves her virtue which the narrator doubted. Albertine forgives him, however, and she gives him a gift that foreshadows her

continued affection for him. The narrator's disinterest in anyone except the girls is indicative of his romantic notions and parallels the other romances in the novel: narrator and Gilberte, M. Swann and Odette, and Robert de Saint-Loup and Rachel.



Guermantes Way, Part I

Guermantes Way, Part I Summary

Back in Paris, the narrator's family moves to a flat that is part of the Hotel de Guermantes. The narrator and Francoise are sad to leave their old home, but it is necessary because Grandmother is sick. Francoise reminisces about Combray, praising everything about her former home, even her former mistress, Aunt Leonie, and Eulalie. The narrator spends a lot of his time imagining things about Mme. de Guermantes because of the legendary air of the Guermantes' name. He learns things about Mme. de Guermantes from Francoise, who spies on the comings and goings at the nearby Guermantes' home since she has become interested in the titles of nobility. She also gets gossip from her friend M. Jupien, the local coatmaker, and other servants. The servants ponder about the Guermantes and envy them. The narrator yearns to know Mme. de Guermantes and her high-society friends. He idealizes her home and everything about her. M. Guermantes introduces himself to Father, but Father does not introduce the narrator because he believes his son should avoid society because of his ill health.

Father's friend gives him a ticket to the opera, which Grandmother persuades Father to give to his son. The narrator describes the finery that people wear and the commoners' fascination with the nobility. The Princesse de Guermantes also attends the opera. The narrator is less indulgent with the actors on this visit and is able to admire Berma's talent because of his lessened desire and expectations. M. de Guermantes enters the Princesse's box with his wife. Mme. de Cambremer is also present, and the narrator compares her to Mme. de Guermantes. Mme. de Cambremer seems surprised to see Mme. de Guermantes. Mme. de Guermantes smiles at the narrator and he falls in love with her immediately. After the opera, he sets himself in place to run into Mme. de Guermantes every day. Francoise lets the narrator know that Mme. de Guermantes is tired of meeting him daily; she always warns him of social embarrassments by her expressions. The narrator is unsure whether Francoise loves him or loathes him. He is in love with Mme. de Guermantes and hopes for her ruin so that she will seek refuge in him. He considers leaving Paris to avoid annoying Mme. de Guermantes but cannot bear being separated from her.

The narrator values Saint-Loup's friendship more than ever because of his relation to Mme. de Guermantes. He wants Saint-Loup to inform her of their friendship, but his friend has not been to Paris for a long time. The narrator decides to visit Saint-Loup in Doncières. When he arrives, Saint-Loup laments that he is unable to spend the narrator's first night with him at the hotel. Saint-Loup sends his visitor to wait for him in his room. The narrator feels as though someone is there, but the room is empty. He finds Saint-Loup's room comfortable. He especially admires the picture of Mme. de Guermantes that is in Saint-Loup's room. Saint-Loup joins his guest and tells him that the Captain has granted permission for the narrator to spend his first night in Saint-



Loup's room. The narrator is ecstatic. Saint-Loup sends his other friends away so that he can enjoy the narrator's society alone.

The narrator fears being sad and lonely at the hotel, but he is never alone. He explores the admirable hotel. At times, he misses his grandmother and his worries overwhelm him. In these times, he sends for Saint-Loup, who comes and comforts him. The narrator wants to see Saint-Loup and his regiment on parade, but he falls asleep before they pass. The narrator often visits Saint-Loup in the barracks and meets the Captain and other soldiers. He finds the Captain common compared to some of the soldiers. He dines with Saint-Loup every night. One evening, the narrator joins Saint-Loup and several other soldiers to attend a fair. He pulls Saint-Loup aside and asks him about Mme. de Guermantes. Saint-Loup ponders if the narrator knows his aunt. The narrator informs his friend that Mme. de Guermantes thinks he is an idiot and asks Saint-Loup to inform her of his good opinion of the narrator. He suggests trying their friendship by Saint-Loup obtaining a dinner invitation for the narrator to Mme. de Guermantes'. The narrator also suggests that they call each other by the familiar form of "you". Saint-Loup agrees to these requests, but hesitates at the narrator's request for a picture of Mme. de Guermantes, stating he must ask her permission first.

Saint-Loup wants his military buddies to be as impressed with the narrator as he is, and so he initiates philosophical discussions, calling the narrator the "cleverest man [he] knows". The narrator enjoys talking to the soldiers about military strategies. Saint-Loup envies the narrator's side conversation with another man. They all discuss the influence of a man's intellectual environment. The narrator is not always in a good mood because he is preoccupied with hopes of meeting Mme. de Guermantes. Saint-Loup ceases to be in a good mood when he quarrels with his mistress. He is grieved by their rupture and hopes she will return to him. She writes to ask his forgiveness, but she forbids him to return to Paris for the New Year. Saint-Loup will not be in Paris until Easter, so he tells the narrator he must put off the introduction to Mme. de Guermantes until then. Unfortunately, the narrator will be in Balbec on Easter, so the introduction must be further postponed. The narrator expresses his desire to see a painting by Elstir that Mme. de Guermantes possesses, and Saint-Loup promises to get permission for the narrator to see it before he can solicit an introduction.

The Captain gives Saint-Loup permission to go to Bruges with his mistress. The other soldiers invite the narrator to visit them at Doncieres even when Saint-Loup is gone. Saint-Loup tells the narrator he has written to Grandmother, who plans to telephone the narrator at the post office. The narrator receives the call and finds that Grandmother's voice is different without access to her facial expressions. The connection breaks and the narrator goes back to the hotel, missing his grandmother. A servant calls the narrator to the phone, saying his grandmother has called, but it is the grandmother of another man with a similar name. Saint-Loup asks the narrator to tell him good-bye the next morning, but the narrator oversleeps and misses Saint-Loup. The narrator is sad he cannot tell his friend good-bye, but he is anxious to see Grandmother.

The narrator sees Grandmother immediately upon his return to Paris and notices that she has aged significantly. He does not receive an invite from Mme. de Guermantes to



see Elstir's paintings, which makes him anxious to go to Balbec. Even though he is ashamed to constantly put himself in Mme. de Guermantes' way, he takes walks daily in the mild weather. He fears being unable to sleep because of his anxiety; he is also irritated by Françoise's frequent absences from the house. Saint-Loup finally comes to Paris, but is unable to introduce the narrator to Mme. de Guermantes because he says she has changed and is no longer very nice. He offers to introduce his friend to his cousin Poitiers instead, who is cleverer than Mme. de Guermantes.

Father learns that M. de Norpois plans to visit Mme. de Villeparisis and believes that he may have advice for the narrator about his writing career since he is still unable to write. Father believes his son may find inspiration at Mme. de Villeparisis' "school of wit" that she entertains. He also wonders if M. de Norpois's influence will help him politically. Saint-Loup comes to Paris and plans to take his friend to Mme. de Villeparisis' parlour where the narrator hopes he will finally meet Mme. de Guermantes. On his way to meet Saint-Loup, the narrator encounters and greets M. Legrandin. Saint-Loup introduces his friend to his mistress, Rachel, and the narrator is shocked and disturbed to find that she is one of the prostitutes from a brothel that he used to frequent. On the way to dinner, the three run into two tarts who are intimate with Rachel, which makes Saint-Loup question Rachel's past. Saint-Loup adores his mistress and praises her as being very literary. Rachel chides Saint-Loup for drinking too much wine on the train, and this causes the narrator to think she may be healthy for his friend.

The restaurant where they dine happens to be the one where Aime from Balbec works. He greets Saint-Loup and the narrator, and the men catch up on their lives. Rachel stares at Aime, making her lover jealous. Saint-Loup warns Rachel that Aime is a scoundrel. They discuss theatre and the narrator finds Rachel malicious, but she defends Berma's talent. Rachel angers Saint-Loup by making eyes at a young student. M. de Charlus arrives in front of the restaurant and asks for Aime. Because Saint-Loup does not want to see his uncle, Aime sends an underling to tell M. de Charlus that he is busy, but Saint-Loup is not there. Rachel believes that the narrator and Saint-Loup's conversation is about the student, so she becomes angry and praises the student to her lover. Saint-Loup gets angry and leaves, demanding to be left alone for a while. Rachel talks to Aime and asks the narrator what he thinks of Aime. Then, Saint-Loup summons Rachel to him, leaving the narrator alone at the table until he is likewise summoned. He is uncomfortable in the private room where Saint-Loup and Rachel are kissing. Saint-Loup is irritated that his friend is not more brilliant for Rachel's amusement. The group goes to the theatre, where the narrator is bored. He realizes that Saint-Loup is a victim of Rachel's illusion. Before Rachel's act, Saint-Loup and the narrator move onto the stage where Rachel makes Saint-Loup jealous by paying close attention to her friend, a male dancer. The couple argue, and Saint-Loup threatens to leave forever, which Rachel says is more than she could wish for. Saint-Loup declares he will not give her the necklace he has promised her if she persists in attempting to make him leave her. Rachel angers him by praising the dancer again. A nearby journalist smokes a cigar, and Saint-Loup asks him to extinguish it for the sake of the narrator's health. The journalist refuses. Saint-Loup tells the man he is rude and slaps him. Shortly after, he talks to a shabbily dressed man and pummels him. Saint-Loup feels the need to be



alone again and sends the narrator to Mme. de Villeparisis' house alone, promising to join him soon.

As soon as the narrator arrives at the party, he begins to notice the vast differences between Mme. de Villeparisis and Mme. de Guermantes. He finds Mme. de Villeparisis' immense knowledge very impressive; all present seem to be fascinated with her knowledge. There are many interesting people at the party. Bloch is present also. One lady, Alix, is very kind to the narrator and invites him to her box the following Friday. When Mme. de Villeparisis shows a historian a picture of the Duchesse de Montmorency, Alix suggests the picture is a copy, but Mme. de Villeparisis quickly rebuffs that suggestion. The Duchesse de Guermantes arrives, followed by a gentleman who was never invited. As the man enters, the narrator recognizes M. Legrandin, who exchanges general civilities with everyone. M. Legrandin then spends some time flattering Mme. de Villeparisis and attempting to ignore the narrator. Mme. de Guermantes and Mme. de Villeparisis mock M. Legrandin and his sister, Mme. de Cambremer. The narrator finally talks to M. Legrandin, but offends him accidentally by expressing his joy at seeing him at Mme. de Villeparisis' party. Mme. de Guermantes makes her aunt proud by displaying her wit through insulting others. She then discusses her admiration for Bergotte's wit and expresses her desire to meet him. This upsets the narrator as he considers that he could have procured an introduction to Mme. de Guermantes by asking Bergotte to accompany him to the theatre. Several other people join the party. Mme. de Villeparisis paints and the party gathers around to watch, discuss, and admire her handiwork. The narrator notices that Mme. de Villeparisis does not treat her noble relatives with the same courtesy that she reserves for intellectuals.

Bloch irritates Mme. de Villeparisis by alluding to Saint-Loup's mistress. She insists that her belief that Saint-Loup's love for his mistress has cooled is an accurate portrayal of the state of their relationship. Bloch attempts to impress her by praising Saint-Loup. The narrator is disgusted by Bloch's ill-breeding as he asks about Saint-Loup's money and complains when Mme. de Villeparisis objects to his opening the windows. When M. de Norpois comes up in conversation, Mme. de Villeparisis summons her lover to meet Bloch. The two are introduced. The narrator also greets M. de Norpois and tries to solicit an invitation through him to Mme. de Guermantes. M. de Norpois condemns the narrator's father's intentions of running for political office as Mme. de Guermantes and Mme. de Villeparisis gossip about Rachel, Mme. Swann, M. Legrandin, and Mme. Cambremer. The narrator is disgusted with Mme. de Guermantes' understanding. Bloch makes many enemies at the party, but M. de Norpois flatters his writing. They discuss Dreyfus, Rachel's influence on Saint-Loup, and politics until M. de Norpois attempts to end the conversation by talking to Mme. de Villeparisis about an upcoming ball. Bloch continues to talk about Dreyfus, which annoys Mme. de Villeparisis, and she makes it clear that he is not invited to return to her house before he leaves.

Mme. de Marsantes, Saint-Loup's mother, arrives, and the ladies discuss Mme. Swann again. They mention the possibility of Saint-Loup's visit just as he arrives. Saint-Loup talks to Mme. de Guermantes and acquaints her with his friendship, which causes her to briefly talk to the narrator. Saint-Loup feigns ignorance of society. Prince von Faffenheim-Munsterburg-Weinigen arrives to solicit M. de Norpois' vote. When Mme.



Swann arrives, Mme. de Guermantes leaves. The narrator has been anxious to see her since Charles, the son of Uncle Adolphe's servants, visited him and informed him that the beautiful lady in pink that the narrator was introduced to at Uncle's Adolphe's house so long ago was Odette Swann nee de Crecy. M. de Charlus arrives and sits next to Mme. Swann. Saint-Loup comments that things are "getting warm" between the pair. The narrator greets Mme. Swann who returns the greeting in a cold manner. Saint-Loup is bothered by his mother's affection. A bit later, Mme. Swann motions the narrator to sit by her, and they discuss the people at the party. He learns from her that M. de Norpois told Mme. de Guermantes that the narrator is a "hypocritical little flatterer". When the narrator asks Mme. Swann if she noticed Mme. Guermantes, she says she did not notice her, that she does not know her, and that she is too old for new acquaintances. The narrator prepares to leave but first asks Saint-Loup to dine together the next day. Saint-Loup tells him it must be with Bloch because he has already accepted an invitation from the Jew. As the men talk, Mme. de Marsantes mentions that Bloch's uncle was great friends with Saint-Loup's father, verifying his earlier story. Mme. de Marsantes also praises the narrator and Saint-Loup's friendship. Saint-Loup asks to speak with the narrator in private. He tells his friend that he has decided to give the necklace to Rachel, but she will not accept it. The narrator mourns that his friend is blind to Rachel's infidelity, even though she has already ruined two other men.

As Saint-Loup tells his mother good-bye, M. de Charlus approaches the narrator and asks him to leave with him so he can explain his desire for a visit. Saint-Loup's departure upsets his mother and the narrator tries to comfort her. She says she will refrain from keeping him, but the narrator tells her that he must wait for M. de Charlus before he can leave. This vexes Mme. de Villeparisis, who insists that the narrator does not wait for her nephew. The narrator leaves but is quickly joined by M. de Charlus, who accuses him of not waiting for him. M. de Charlus offers to explain to the narrator what "it has taken [his] whole life to attain". He hopes that by teaching the younger man the secrets of diplomacy, he may regain his interest in society. They encounter M. d'Argencourt, who exchanges greetings with M. de Charlus but is cold to the narrator. M. de Charlus rebuffs the narrator's attempts to praise Mme. de Guermantes; he also informs the narrator that Mme. de Villeparisis is not aristocratic, that she invented her title. M. de Charlus commands the narrator not to go into society until he has received the training that lays in wait for him. He insists that this will damage his position. M. de Charlus allows the narrator several days to consider his offer and hails a cab. The narrator returns home to overhear the servants arguing about Dreyfus. He finds that his grandmother is not well. Her temperature is 101 degrees. The family gives her an aspirin, which lowers her temperature, but she rarely leaves her bed. Mamma sends for Dr. du Boulbon, who promises that Grandmother will be well as soon as she realizes that nothing is wrong with her and resumes her normal life. Mamma and the narrator are relieved. Grandmother joins the narrator for a walk but is late meeting him. As she excuses her tardiness, he realizes that she has had a slight stroke.



Guermantes Way, Part I Analysis

The narrator's admiration of Mme. de Guermantes and seeking information through Françoise foreshadows his falling in love with her. Françoise's warning that he annoys the Duchesse by meeting her daily demonstrates her dislike of the narrator. It is paradoxical that the narrator can only enjoy Berma's acting when he no longer greatly admires her. His lessened expectations contribute to his greater enjoyment. His value of Saint-Loup's friendship due to his friend's association with Mme. de Guermantes displays his preoccupation with society, and his infatuation with women overshadows every other aspect of his life. This preoccupation with society serves as a foil to Saint-Loup's preoccupation with intellect. The narrator's visit to Saint-Loup and their discussion about Mme. de Guermantes foreshadows the narrator's introduction to Mme. de Guermantes. The conversation also foreshadows the narrator's introduction to Rachel. When the narrator does meet Saint-Loup's mistress, it is ironic that he recognizes Rachel as a prostitute from the brothels he used to frequent. This association creates the likelihood of Rachel's infidelity to Saint-Loup. Saint-Loup and Rachel's relationship parallels M. Swann's courtship of Odette de Crecy. Saint-Loup's irritation that the narrator is not brilliant for Rachel parallels his irritation at the narrator's not being brilliant for the soldiers at Doncières.

The narrator insults M. Legrandin by expressing joy to see him at Mme. de Villeparisis' party which exhibits M. Legrandin's knowledge of his own social shortcomings. Mme. de Guermantes' desire to meet Bergotte is ironic since the narrator could have easily procured an introduction to her by appearing with Bergotte. Mme. de Villeparisis and Mme. de Guermantes gossip about Rachel and Mme. Swann; the general dislike of the two mistresses parallels one another. The narrator's disgust at Mme. de Guermantes' understanding foreshadows the end of his infatuation with her. Saint-Loup finally arrives and introduces the narrator to the narrator which foreshadows their future friendship. M. de Charlus' invitation to the narrator foreshadows their pending meeting. His behavior also elaborates upon the oddity of his personality.

There are many factors in this chapter that foreshadows Grandmother's pending death. First, the necessity for the family to move due to her health foreshadows her death. Also, the narrator worries about his grandmother while he is in Doncières, and, upon his return to Paris, he immediately notices that she appears to have aged in the short time that he was gone. Finally, the last portion of the chapter finds Grandmother with a fever that is easily cured. Then, she refuses to get out of bed, which parallels Aunt Leonie's last days. The narrator's realization that his grandmother had a slight stroke seems to doom Grandmother to death.



Guermantes Way, Part I continued

Guermantes Way, Part I continued Summary

The narrator insists that Grandmother rest while he hails a cab. He already feels like he is alone. He runs into Professor E, who refuses to go to the narrator's house to examine Grandmother but agrees to let the narrator bring her to his office. The narrator rushes Grandmother to the doctor, as he imagines her sliding into the abyss. The narrator is hopeful, but Professor E tells him that the case is hopeless. When he returns home, the narrator tells Mamma who sobs, goes to Grandmother, and kisses her. Francoise puts Grandmother to bed, where Grandmother chides Mamma for her lack of pity. Mamma messes up the bedding while trying to comfort Grandmother. Mamma and the narrator refuse to admit that Grandmother is seriously ill. Francoise is very useful during Grandmother's illness, as she often goes without sleep in order to care for Grandmother. Grandmother is on morphine and experiences intense pain without it. When Mamma sees Grandmother's discomfort, Grandmother insists that she is just upset because she cannot go outside. Mamma tries to comfort Grandmother.

Grandmother's sisters refuse to leave Combray to visit their dying sister; however, all of their friends visit. Bergotte visits daily and spends several hours each day. Bergotte is also sick and dying. Bergotte has become famous, but the narrator no longer has the same admiration for Bergotte. He now emulates a new writer, but gains a distaste for this man when Bergotte tells him that he looks like Bloch. Mme. Cottard offers the assistance of her waiting woman while the Grand Duke of Luxembourg offers whatever assistance he can provide. Mamma finally goes to sleep, and Francoise leaves Grandmother to tend to an electrician. Francoise is glad that Grandmother is not on very many medications.

Grandmother's eyes are affected. She tries to get out of bed continually but the narrator, Francoise, and Mamma stop her. Francoise fixes Grandmother's hair, but when she tries to show her what it looks like, the narrator snatches the mirror away from Francoise to prevent Grandmother from seeing how ill she looks. Things take a turn for the worse when Grandmother does not recognize her grandson. Dr. Cottard is called in and prescribes leeches. When the leeches are removed, Grandmother's health worsens. The narrator is shocked that Francoise keeps disappearing and discovers that she has ordered mourning.

In the early morning, Mamma wakes her son to tell him that he now only has a mother and father to help him. They go to Grandmother's room but she does not know them. Mamma tries to make her mother comfortable. M. de Guermantes arrives to offer his condolences. Mamma and the narrator leave M. de Guermantes alone in the hallway while they tend to Grandmother. Saint-Loup arrives, and he and M. de Guermantes leave together. Grandmother's half-brother, a clergyman, sits by her bed, praying for her. Grandmother's breath comes easier. Francoise is overwhelmed with grief.



An obnoxious cousin is there daily and ignores Mamma's requests that he does not come so often. Father, Grandfather, and this cousin talk about common events at Grandmother's deathbed. Dr. Dieulafoy arrives as Grandfather expresses his surprise and discontent concerning Grandmother's sisters' refusal to visit their sister. Dr. Dieulafoy promises that the oxygen will help for a while. Grandmother rises half way off the bed, Francoise begins to sob, the oxygen ceases, and Grandmother is dead. Francoise arranges Grandmother's hair and clothes and lays her out in her coffin like a beautiful young maiden.

Guermantes Way, Part I continued Analysis

The narrator's insistence that Grandmother rests while he hails a cab demonstrates his love for his grandmother. His sentiment that he is already alone shows his feeling that she is the only one who pays attention to him and truly loves him. Mamma's reaction to the news of her mother's hopeless condition is the only instance of emotion she provides throughout the novel. Grandmother tries to protect Mamma's feelings by insisting that she is only pained by the prohibition of her going outside. This displays her love and unselfishness. Grandmother's sisters' refusal to leave Combray to visit their dying sister demonstrates the cold nature of the narrator's family. Paradoxically, the friends of the family all love Grandmother and visit her to offer their assistance to increase her comfort and help the rest of the family. Mamma and the narrator refuse to accept Grandmother's illness, showing their romanticism, while paradoxically, Francoise proves herself very rational by her acceptance of Grandmother's condition, her dealing with the electrician, and her ordering mourning clothes. Grandmother's death is foreshadowed throughout this chapter by her decreasing health. Dr. Dieulafoy's promise that the oxygen will prolong Grandmother's life for a while paradoxically signals the end of her life shortly after. Francoise shows her affection for Grandmother by arranging her corpse for the viewing, which the narrator describes as a beautiful young maiden, showing his romanticized view of things as well as his affection for his grandmother.



Guermantes Way, Part II

Guermantes Way, Part II Summary

The narrator's parents visit Combray. The narrator reminisces about the time he spent at Doncieres with Saint-Loup. He plans to go to a play that evening at Mme. de Villeparisis' house, but before he leaves, he receives a letter from Saint-Loup. Saint-Loup has separated from Rachel. He has been angry at the narrator for a long time because Rachel told him that his friend had been romantically interested in her. Now that Saint-Loup no longer loves Rachel, he forgives the narrator. He tells the narrator that Mme. de Stermaria will be in Paris and advises him to contact her to schedule a dinner together which the narrator does immediately.

As the narrator considers his loneliness, Albertine visits unexpectedly. She has returned to Paris from Balbec earlier this year than usual. The pair gossip and update one another on their lives. The narrator is no longer in love with Albertine, but he notices that she is no longer a little girl. Her vocabulary has changed quite a bit as well. In an effort to convince her to test the truth of his words, the narrator tells Albertine that he is not ticklish. She lays on him to tickle him, and Francoise walks in. The narrator laments Francoise's talent at approaching at precisely the wrong moment. She has come to bring a lamp, but the narrator tells her that it is still light outside and she leaves. The narrator tells Albertine he's tempted to kiss her, and she replies that it is a "fine pity", very seductively to the narrator's ears. He decides to wait but tells her that he wants a voucher for later. He wishes he could fill her with the mystery of the unknown before kissing her. He kisses her cheek and asks why she would not allow it at Balbec. She tells him that she didn't know him properly then. The narrator lays Albertine on his bed and fondles her. When he suggests that they have been together too long and she will miss dinner, she insists that there is plenty of time left for dinner. He persuades her to go, but she wants to see him again. He promises to call for her when he can. She offers her cheek to him at the door to receive a good-bye kiss.

After Albertine leaves, the narrator receives a letter from Mme. de Stermaria accepting his dinner invitation. He then goes to Mme. de Villeparisis' party but is too late and misses the play. Now that he is no longer in love with Mme. de Guermantes, she no longer despises him and friendship is possible. She enters the room and sits down beside the narrator. Mme. de Guermantes asks him about Saint-Loup and invites him to dinner at her house on Friday. She is curious about him because of his friendships with Saint-Loup and Mme. de Villeparisis. He is surprised and she thinks he may have forgotten who she is so she reminds him that she is Saint-Loup's aunt. He accepts the dinner invitation, and Mme. de Guermantes leaves. The narrator introduces Bloch to M. de Charlus, which embarrasses Bloch and he does not speak to his friend for six months.

The narrator is anxious for his dinner with Mme. de Stermaria, which he plans on Swans' Island where he can imagine the romantic sound of the waves. The day before



his date, he visits the island to secure a table and order food. Albertine arrives, and he invites her to go with him. The narrator expects to obtain certain liberties from Mme. de Stermaria. He imagines the scene of their dinner together with pleasure. The day finally arrives and he goes to pick her up. She sends a note to him giving her apologies but she is unable to accompany him. Later, the narrator learns that Mme. de Stermaria made a sudden match with another young man. The narrator sobs in disappointment when he returns home.

Saint-Loup arrives, and he and the narrator go to dinner together. The narrator is angry at his friend for telling Bloch that the narrator finds him vulgar at times. There is a general roar of gossip at the restaurant concerning nobility. The narrator enters first and alone. He is given a bad table and the proprietor refuses him a better table. When Saint-Loup enters and sits with the narrator, the proprietor fawns over him. He locks the main doors to avoid the cold and makes his customers enter and exit through the other doors that connect to the room reserved for the nobility. Prince de Foix greets Saint-Loup and they leave the narrator to gossip for a bit. The narrator is upset when he overhears the peasantry talking poorly of the Grand Duke de Luxembourg. When Saint-Loup returns, he mentions that M. de Charlus has requested to speak with the narrator the following evening. Saint-Loup and the narrator pass the evening pleasantly discussing manners, politics, and society. The narrator notes the difference between his friend and the other Guermantes.

Friday arrives and the narrator goes to Mme. de Guermantes' house for dinner. As soon as he arrives, he requests to see Elstir's painting, and M. de Guermantes directs him to their location. The narrator loses track of time because he is so engrossed in the paintings. He is amazed at the respect shown to him by the servants and the guests at the Guermantes' house. Many of the guests belong to the nobility. Princesse de Parme is especially friendly to the narrator. He is impressed by civility and quality of the Guermantes and their guests. There is much gossip, some discussion of morality, and a general desire of all to flaunt their intellect. The Guermantes' ideal guest renounces all company except the Guermantes' company. The Guermantes imitate people and share anecdotes. Mme. de Guermantes decries intelligent wives of shy bumpkins. The narrator learns much about the politics of the Guermantes at the party. The Guermantes spend much time insulting one another, and M. de Guermantes is annoyed with his wife. The narrator is confused when he learns that M. de Charlus told the Guermantes that he does not know the narrator. The party discusses writers, poetry, and art. The narrator learns that Mme. de Guermantes hates Elstir's paintings and is shocked by her misconceptions about artwork. He reflects that she is the opposite of Saint-Loup because her personality is the result of the Guermantes' upbringing. Prince de Foix announces that he found Rachel in Saint-Loup's room that morning. He tells the narrator that Rachel is jealous of him but praises him. Princesse de Parme praises the nice things in Mme. de Guermantes' house. The group discusses Mme. de Villeparisis and M. de Norpois' romance. Mme. de Guermantes tells the narrator that M. de Norpois values him greatly. The narrator is disappointed with the party, annoyed with the gossip, and more interested in the genealogies than the anecdotes. He tries to slip away several times, but the Guermantes prevent him; he is unable to leave before royalty.



The guests begin to filter out, praising the party, and the narrator is finally able to leave. As he does, Mme. de Guermantes invites him to come another time.

The narrator goes to M. de Charlus' house where he is left waiting for quite a while. When he offers to come the next day, M. de Charlus summons him. M. de Charlus yells at the narrator about his choice of chairs and states that this will be their last interview. Someone has told M. de Charlus that the narrator spoke negatively about him and now M. de Charlus disdains the friendship. He is also offended that the narrator did not write to him in response to his prior offer. The narrator believes M. de Charlus is insane. M. de Charlus grows upset when the narrator threatens to leave but insists that his affection for the younger man is dead. M. de Charlus orders food, invites the narrator to stay the night, and decides the young man is nice. He takes the narrator home and, on the way, they discuss nobility, and the narrator praises Mme. de Guermantes. Because of what M. de Charlus tells him, the narrator begins to value Princesse de Guermantes. He realizes that Mme. Montmorency is a better friend to him than Mme. de Guermantes.

The narrator goes to Mme. de Guermantes' house again several days later, but she is dressing to receive Swann. She has told the narrator that he is invited to Princesse de Guermantes' house. M. Swann arrives, and M. de Guermantes, M. Swann, and the narrator discuss art and the Dreyfus case. M. de Guermantes exits to hurry his wife, while M. Swann and the narrator discuss Saint-Loup. When Mme. de Guermantes descends, M. Swann offers his compliments. They all discuss their preference to stay at home since there are such fools in company at parties. They consider the entertainment planned for the evening, and M. de Guermantes calls a coach to take them to the party. Mme. de Guermantes invites M. Swann to join them in a trip to Italy, but he declines. M. de Guermantes points out that he and his wife must leave to get to the party on time. M. Swann and the narrator exit together, and the narrator learns the M. Swann is sick and dying.

Guermantes Way, Part II Analysis

The letter from Saint-Loup suggesting that the narrator invites Mme. de Stermaria to dinner foreshadows their planned date. Albertine's arrival suggests that she still loves the narrator, while her actions indicate that she is no longer as virtuous as she was in Balbec. It is ironic that she states she did not know him properly then while she has not seen him in a long time at this point and therefore knows him less now. The ability for the narrator and Mme. de Guermantes to be friends now that he is no longer in love with her is ironic, as is her sudden curiosity about his friendship with her relations since he was friends with them before he met her. It is comic that she fears he has forgotten who she is when she formerly wished he would forget her. It is ironic, as well as ill-bred, that the narrator invites Albertine to accompany him to Swans' Island to make plans for his dinner date with Mme. de Stermaria.

Bloch's embarrassment at being introduced to M. de Charlus by the narrator seems to indicate that perhaps he told M. de Charlus that the narrator said bad things about him. The narrator's dream to be invited to the Guermantes' house is fulfilled finally as is his



desire to see Elstir's paintings; ironically, Mme. de Guermantes does not like those paintings very much. The Guermantes' desire for the ideal guest to renounce all company except their own parallels the Verdurin set with the same rule. It is very ironic that the narrator does not like Mme. de Guermantes very much once he finally becomes acquainted with her. Mme. de Guermantes' character serves as a foil to Saint-Loup's character with regard to their pretensions. Saint-Loup has a higher social status but does not care for it at all, and he is friendly to everyone. Mme. de Guermantes is the polar opposite. M. de Charlus' announcement of his value for the narrator is very odd because his behavior and attitude toward the narrator throughout the entire novel is odd; he seems to like him one day and despise him the next. The end of the chapter and the novel states that M. Swann is ill and dying, which seems to foreshadow his death.



Characters

Narrator

Narrator is a young boy who recounts his autobiography in this book. He tells the story of his youth, beginning with his time spent at his great-aunt Leonie's house in Combray. He recounts his affection for his mother and his avid reading. His descriptions of his family show an acute observation inherent in his activities. Upon his return to Paris, he reminisces about his encounters with Gilberte Swann and their friendship, which blossomed into his love for her. The narrator details his friendship with the Swanns, his first encounter with Berma, and his introduction to Bergotte. The romance dies when he sees Gilberte walking with another young man. Then, he travels to Balbec for the summer with his grandmother where his grandmother's friend, Mme. de Villeparisis introduces the narrator to her nephew, Robert de Saint-Loup, who becomes the narrator's good friend. He also meets the painter, Elstir, who introduces him to a group of girls, one of whom he falls in love with: Albertine Simonet.

The narrator returns to Paris and his family moves into a flat that is attached to the Hotel de Guermantes. He falls in love with Mme. de Guermantes and his obsession causes him to stalk her by casually running into her everyday, for which she hates him. He visits Robert in Doncières and asks Robert to introduce him to his aunt. Robert's visit to Paris includes introducing the narrator to his mistress, Rachel, who the narrator recognizes from the brothels he used to frequent after Gilberte Swann broke his heart. Albertine comes to visit the narrator in Paris and they have a bit of a physical relationship. Because he no longer loves Mme. de Guermantes, her curiosity about him is piqued due to his friendships with Robert and Mme. de Villeparisis and she becomes his friend as well.

The narrator is a young boy and grows into a young man. He is obsessed with women and his obsessions are very single-minded. His family is cold to him but as a child he yearns for his mother's good night kiss every evening. He is also very attached to his grandmother and mourns greatly when she dies. He reads a lot and has aspirations to be a writer. He is sickly and unable to travel very much. He does not sleep well. He admires Berma, Bergotte, and Elstir and yearns to be accepted into good society.

M. Swann

M. Swann knows the narrator's family because his father and the narrator's grandfather were very good friends. He is well-bred and associates with the aristocracy. He has an unfortunate tendency to be attracted to low women. He meets Odette de Crecy and falls in love with her for loving him. At the same time, he is dating a sweet little working girl and he organizes his evenings to spend time with each. When he arrives too late to see Odette one evening, he searches through town for her before encountering her and escorting her home. On their ride, he flirts by adjusting her flowers, leading to their



physical relationship which includes visiting her every night. He is very jealous and suspicious of Odette. When he finds out for certain that she has had other lovers while she has been his mistress, he renounces her.

Evidently, they run into each other later on and marry. They have a daughter, Gilberte Swann. There is a general disapproval concerning M. Swann's marriage to Odette de Crecy and his social status is lowered considerably as a result. The narrator's family is appalled by his marriage and disassociate themselves from him. He is very intimate with the Guermantes, especially Princesse de Guermantes, whose approval of his marriage is the only opinion he cares for. Unfortunately, Princesse de Guermantes will not meet Odette or Gilberte until after M. Swann's death. M. Swann is unhappy with Gilberte's friendship with the narrator at first, but grows to like the narrator and becomes friends with him as well.

Gilberte Swann

Mlle. Swann/Gilberte is the daughter of M. Swann and Odette Swann nee de Crecy. The first time she meets the narrator is in the garden at her parents' house at Combray, where she is very rude to him. They run into each other again at Champs-Elysees and become friends. When the narrator becomes ill and they no longer see each other at the park, she invites the narrator to her tea parties. She admits that they are the greatest friends. She is very willful and is irritated when her parents insist upon her foregoing a dance lesson because the narrator came to visit. She insists to the narrator that she loves him, but he does not believe her. They distance themselves from one another and eventually cease seeing each other, though they continue to correspond through friendly letters.

Marquis de Saint-Loup-en-Bray (Robert) is Mme. de Villeparisis's nephew, which means that he is related to the Guermantes. He visits his aunt at Balbec where she introduces him to the narrator. They cultivate a very warm friendship. Robert has been raised to the aristocracy but he disdains high society and the rules that he lives by. He is very well-bred and polite. He is very interested in philosophy and is kind to everyone around him. He is in the military and stationed in Doncieres. His mistress is Rachel, formerly a prostitute, and he is absolutely smitten with her. He does not like Bloch much but is very fond of the narrator. They correspond regularly and the narrator even visits him in Doncieres. When Robert comes to Paris, he introduces the narrator to Rachel and the three attend dinner and play together. He promises to introduce his friend to his aunt Mme. de Guermantes but is unable to because she has changed so much.

Mamma

Mamma is the narrator's mother. She is cold and distant but, as a child, the narrator looks forward to her good-night kisses every evening.



Grandmother

Grandmother is the narrator's grandmother. She is very loving and worries a lot when he gets sick. She travels with him to Balbec. In book two, Grandmother gets sick and dies.

Father

Father is the narrator's father who restricts his son's activities due to his health. He works in politics. He is cold and easily agitated.

Grandfather

Grandfather is the narrator's grandfather. He is cold. He is upset when his sisters-in-law do not come visit his wife on her deathbed.

Francoise

Francoise is the family's servant. She alternately loves and hates the narrator. She loves "her people" but is cold to others.

Mme. Swann/Odette de Crecy

Mme. Swann/Odette de Crecy is M. Swann's wife and Gilberte's mother. The narrator first met her at his Uncle Adolphe's house when she was an actress. She torments M. Swann during their courtship by taking other lovers. They marry and she continues having affairs, specifically with M. de Charlus.

Marquise de Villeparisis

Marquise de Villeparisis is Grandmother's friend and M. de Norpois's lover. Her nephew is Marquise de Saint-Loup, who she introduces to the narrator. She stays in the same hotel as the narrator and his grandmother in Balbec. She has a "school of wit" in her parlor in Paris that the narrator visits.

M. de Charlus

M. de Charlus is Robert de Saint-Loup's uncle and Mme. Swann's lover. He is very odd and offers to teach the narrator what it took him his entire life to learn.



Aunt Leonie

Aunt Leonie is the narrator's elderly, bedridden aunt who owns Combray. She bequeaths much of her estate to the narrator.

M. Legrandin

M. Legrandin is a vulgar hanger-on to high society. The Guermantes mock him at Mme. Villeparisis's house. His sister is Mme. de Cambremer.

Eulalie

Eulalie is Aunt Leonie's friend and charity. Aunt Leonie gives Eulalie money every Sunday.

Uncle Adolphe

Uncle Adolphe is the narrator's older uncle who he visited often when he was young. When the narrator arrives unexpectedly and meets one of his female companions, the narrator's parents fight with Uncle Adolphe and the family never see him again.

M. Vinteuil

M. Vinteuil is a vain musical composer. He grieves to death over his daughter's reputation. It is implicitly expressed that he wrote the sonata that M. Swann greatly admires.

Mlle. Vinteuil

Mlle. Vinteuil is M. Vinteuil's daughter, who causes him to grieve to death. She tries to imitate her vulgar friend.

Bloch

Bloch is the narrator's Jewish friend. He is loud, boisterous, annoying, and offensive.

Bergotte

Bergotte is a writer that the narrator greatly admires. They meet at the Swanns' house and become friends.



Mlle. Albertine Simonet

Mlle. Albertine Simonet is a girl at Balbec who is part of a group of girls that the narrator admires. She is the daughter of a rich merchant. She and the narrator become friends and he falls in love with her. She visits him in Paris the next year.

Elstir

Elstir is a painter at Balbec who the narrator befriends. It is discovered the Elstir was the painter at the Verdurins' parties. While Mme. de Guermantes has some of his paintings in her house, she does not like his work.

Andree

Andree is Albertine's sweet friend who is very much like the narrator, which he gives as the reason he cannot love her.

Mme. de Guermantes

Mme. de Guermantes is Robert de Saint-Loup's aunt. The narrator is fascinated with her and goes out of his way to run into her in public. He is in love with her and she hates him. Once he no longer loves her, she grows intrigued with the narrator because of his friendship with Robert and Mme. de Villeparisis, and she becomes his friend. The narrator criticizes her poor taste in art.

Verdurins

Verdurins are a vulgar set of people who have a parlor where they entertain their devotees. This parlor is the scene of M. Swann and Odette's love.

Dr. Cottard

Dr. Cottard is the doctor who frequents the Verdurins's circle. He is very talented and becomes much sought after. He successfully treats the narrator and attempts to the treat Grandmother.

Mme. de Cambremer

Mme. de Cambremer is a vulgar hanger-on to high society. The Guermantes mock him at Mme. Villeparisis's house. Her brother is M. Legrandin.



M. de Norpois

M. de Norpois is an ambassador who is friends with Father. He is also Mme. de Villeparisis's lover. He encourages the narrator to write but he dislikes his style of writing. He tells Mme. de Guermantes that the narrator is a "hypocritical little liar".

Berma

Berma is a famous actress who the narrator admires. He is disappointed the first time he hears her but grows to appreciate her talent.

Rachel

Rachel is Robert de Saint-Loup's mistress. She is an actress and quite literary. When the narrator first meets her, he recognizes her as one of the prostitutes at a whorehouse he used to frequent with Bloch.

Marquis de Saint-Loup-en-Bray (Robert)

Marquis de Saint-Loup-en-Bray (Robert) is Mme. de Villeparisis's nephew, which means that he is related to the Guermantes. He visits his aunt at Balbec where she introduces him to the narrator. They cultivate a very warm friendship. Robert has been raised to the aristocracy but he disdains high society and the rules that he lives by. He is very well-bred and polite. He is very interested in philosophy and is kind to everyone around him. He is in the military and stationed in Doncieres. His mistress is Rachel, formerly a prostitute, and he is absolutely smitten with her. He does not like Bloch much but is very fond of the narrator. They correspond regularly and the narrator even visits him in Doncieres. When Robert comes to Paris, he introduces the narrator to Rachel and the three attend dinner and play together. He promises to introduce his friend to his aunt Mme. de Guermantes but is unable to because she has changed so much.



Objects/Places

Combray

Combray is Aunt Leonie's country home where the narrator and his family visit every summer.

The Magic Lantern

The magic lantern is a lantern that the narrator imagines projects images of the story of Golo and Genevieve de Brabant across his walls while he is banished to his bedroom.

Little Room

The little room beside schoolroom is the room where the narrator sneaks away to read during times when he is not supposed to be reading.

Mamma's Good Night Kiss

Mamma's good night kiss is craved by the narrator and he looks forward to it all day. Unfortunately, when guests dine at Combray, Mamma does not come upstairs to kiss him good night.

The Garden

The garden is where grandmother walks every day and urges the narrator's parents to allow him to join her.

School

School is in Paris where the narrator lives and he fears being sent back to school early every time he displeases his parents.

Paris

Paris is the city where the narrator and his family live, along with most of the characters in the play.



Guermantes Way

Guermantes Way is the walk that the narrator and his family take at Combray that takes them along the river and past the Guermantes's property.

Swann's Way

Swann's Way is the walk at Combray that takes the narrator and his family through the plains past M. Swann's house.

The Vivonne

The Vivonne is the river that winds along the Guermantes Way.

Balbec

Balbec is a beach town that the narrator visits in book two. This is where he meets Robert de Saint-Loup and Albertine.

Verdurins's House

Verdurins's house is the popular parlour where Odette brings M. Swann and their romance is first initiated. After their marriage, M. Swann forbids Mme. Swann to attend the parties at the Verdurins's house.

Flowers on Odette's Dress

The flowers on Odette's dress is the way that M. Swann first approaches Odette on a physical level. Offering to adjust her disarranged flowers on his way to take her home, he leans in to kiss her, starting their physical relationship. For a long time afterward, he uses this approach to initiate their sexual acts.

Vinteuil's Sonata

Vinteuil's sonata is a piece of music that M. Swann heard once and greatly admired. He hears it again the first night that he joins Odette at the Verdurins's house, and it becomes the anthem of their love.



Champs-Elysees

Champs-Elysees is a park in Paris where the narrator encounters Gilberte Swann daily, and the place where they initiate their friendship.

Allee des Acacias

Allee des Acacias is the alleyway that Mme. Swann walks through daily and the narrator often visits to see her when he cannot find Gilberte.

Allee de la Reine Marguerite

Allee de la Reine Marguerite is the other alley that Mme. Swann visits when she is not at Allee des Acacias. The narrator often sees her there with different men.

Swanns's Home

Swanns's home is idealized by the narrator because of his love for Gilberte. He is ecstatic when he is finally invited to a tea party at the Swanns's house.

La Raspeliere

La Raspeliere is the town that the narrator and his grandmother stop at to visit a friend of his grandmother's on their way to Balbec.

Grand Hotel

Grand Hotel is the hotel that the narrator and his grandmother stay in at Balbec.

Rivebelle

Rivebelle is the restaurant where the narrator and Robert de Saint-Loup eat dinner almost daily while in Balbec.

Autographed Letters of Proudhon

The autographed letters of Proudhon are a gift that the narrator's grandmother buys for Robert de Saint-Loup before his departure from Balbec. Proudhon is a philosopher who Saint-Loup admires greatly.



Doncieres

Doncieres is the town in which Robert de Saint-Loup is stationed. The narrator visits Saint-Loup for a while when he falls in love with Mme. de Guermantes.

Hotel de Guermantes

Hotel de Guermantes contains a flat where the narrator and his family move after his return from Balbec because of his grandmother's health. It is here that he first sees and falls in love with Mme. de Guermantes.

School of Wit

Mme de Villeparisis's "School of Wit" is a gathering of intellectuals that the narrator's father encourages him to visit, while his grandmother disdains the idea.

Guermantes's home

Guermantes's home is located in part of the Hotel de Guermantes, near the narrator's home in the third book. He yearns to visit their home and idealizes the way they must live.



Themes

Social Status

Aristocracy and social status plays a major part in this novel. The narrator is preoccupied with the aristocracy that he knows, and longs to expand his acquaintance in the aristocracy. Even as a child at Combray, he daydreams about being accepted by the Guermantes. Mme. de Villeparisis becomes more interesting to him when he learns of her association with the Guermantes. The narrator longs to be friends with Marquise Robert de Saint-Loup because not only is he a marquis, he is related to the Guermantes as well. He is in love with Mme. de Guermantes primarily because of her name.

Other characters who are obsessed with social status like the narrator are M. Legrandin, the Guermantes, and the Verdurins. Also, Dr. Cottard is impressed when he first meets M. Swann because of M. Swann's friend in high society. The younger M. Swann is not at all interested in titles and rank, but after his drop in status due to his marriage, he has a tendency to brag about mediocre social connections. The Guermantes only associate with each other, famous people, and intellectuals.

Paradoxically, Saint-Loup, who is among the highest social status, disdains his own caste and treats everyone respectfully. He is particularly interested in people who he deems intellectual. Similar to Saint-Loup, Grandmother is indifferent to social status. At Balbec, Grandmother is not interested in socializing with her friend, Marquise de Villeparisis, because she is more interested in being outside while on vacation.

Artwork

Art, music and literature play a large part of the novel. The humanities are discussed in many scenes in the novel. The narrator is very interested in art of all kinds. There is a painter at the Verdurins's parties who later appears by his name, Elstir, and befriends the narrator. Interestingly, Mme. de Guermantes has several paintings by Elstir in her house, but she does not like the paintings. M. Swann's interest in "Vinteuil's sonata" causes it to be considered his and Odette's love anthem. M. Vinteuil at Combray is a composer, supposedly the composer of the sonata.

The narrator is an avid reader and greatly admires the writings of Bergotte. He discusses Bergotte's works with Bloch, M. Swann, and M. de Norpois. Gilberte Swann's friendship with Bergotte results in the narrator's desire to meet her. The narrator is very excited when he meets Bergotte, even though the writer does not physically live up to the narrator's expectations. Later, Bergotte becomes famous and everyone wants to know him, including Mme. de Guermantes. However, by this time, the narrator is more interested in another writer, until Bergotte tells him that the younger writer looks like Bloch. M. Legrandin is a writer, though his works are never discussed. Also, the narrator



aspires to be a writer, but he is unable to write because of his obsessions with different women.

Finally, the narrator idealizes the actress Berma, but is disappointed when he finally sees her act. He is only able to appreciate her talent when his expectations have been lowered to a reasonable level. The discussion of art, literature, and music permeates the novel and colors the narrator's opinions of characters in the novel.

Lechery

Lechery and adultery pervade the novel. Bloch angers the narrator's family by telling the narrator that his great-aunt, Leonie, led a gay life when she was young and was even a kept woman. It is insinuated that Uncle Adolphe's actress friends are also his lovers. M. Swann has a mistress, Odette de Crecy, who cheats on him with many other men and several women. He later marries her, only for her to continue taking lovers, including M. de Charlus. The narrator learns from his best friend, Robert de Saint-Loup, that M. de Charlus led a quite actively lecherous youth. Similarly, Robert de Saint-Loup has a mistress, Rachel, who was formerly a prostitute and who the narrator met in a bawdy house.

The narrator frequents whorehouses while he is in love with Gilberte Swann. His entire life, he lusts after many women and girls that he encounters on the streets. He is attracted to the cluster of girls he sees in Balbec and later falls in love with Albertine. He is also interested in Andree and Gisele. He attempts to kiss Albertine when he finds himself alone in a bedroom with her in bed. The narrator falls in love with Mme. de Guermantes, but is unable to pursue his interest. He intends to dine with Mme. de Stermaria because he expects that she will permit certain liberties. When Albertine does not rebuff his advances, he takes the opportunity to instigate a physical relationship and states that they later become lovers.

It is also common knowledge that M. de Swann dated a working girl while he was courting Odette de Crecy. He finally ceases being jealous of Mme. Swann when he has another mistress. She has many extramarital affairs. It is casually mentioned that M. de Guermantes has a mistress. It is also deemed normal that most of the men in the novel frequent whorehouses. It is also discussed at several parties that Mme. de Villeparisis is M. de Norpois's mistress.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in the novel is first person. The point of view is fairly reliable since it is retrospective through flashbacks. Due to the novel being told through flashbacks, the point of view is nearly omniscient as well. This is important in order for the reader to be able to understand different aspects of the characters' personalities. This insight into the characters' thoughts and motivations serves to provide evidence of the parallels and paradoxes in the story.

The story is mostly told through exposition, primarily the narrator's thoughts and his translations of other's thoughts. Dialogue mainly occurs during the highly social scenes, such as at parties. Since the narrator is reflecting on his past, this makes sense because it would be difficult to accurately portray the conversations that occurred a long time in the past. This would compromise the narrator's reliability because the reader would be likely to doubt some of his statements. Most of the novel is told through the narrator's experiences, with several portions that describe the lives of other characters before the narrator was born. Because the narrator had not yet been born, it can safely be assumed that these passages are retold by the narrator from stories that he has heard from other characters.

Setting

The novel is set in France in Europe. It is set in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The world of the novel is the real world that the author wrote in for the most part. He invented several locations in France that the narrator visits, but it is clear that it is supposed to be realistically believable that the world is the real world.

The first book is set mostly in the country at the narrator's great-aunt's house in the fictional town of Combray. This rural setting contributes to the isolation the narrator feels at Combray. The narrator takes daily walks with his parents through one of two paths. The Guermantes Way takes him through a beautiful river landscape that includes the Vivonne River, while Swann's Way passes some of the most beautiful plains in France, according to the narrator. The rest of the first book is told retrospectively about Swann's courtship of Odette de Crecy, and is set in Paris in the past before the narrator was born.

The second book is set in Paris, where the narrator becomes friends with Gilberte Swann when they play together in the park, Champs-Elysees. Much is set specifically in the Swanns's home as well it being where Gilberte and the narrator's friendship grows. Later in the book, the narrator travels to Balbec, a beach city. The major scenes in this section occur in the hotel, at the front, at Elstir's house, and in the country where the narrator picnics with Albertine and her friends.



The third book takes place primarily in the narrator's new home in Paris, in a flat attached to the Hotel de Guermantes. The narrator also visits Robert de Saint-Loup in Doncières. Another location that the narrator frequents in book three is Mme. de Villeparisis's house. He goes to the theatre several times and he visits Mme. de Guermantes's house toward the end of the novel. The final scene occurs outside of the Guermantes's house on the street where the narrator learns that M. Swann is dying.

Language and Meaning

This novel was originally written in French and has been translated into English. The language is somewhat stiff and reads slow due to the massive amounts of exposition interrupted with very small amounts of action. The language is very easy to understand but somewhat monotonous. At times, the amount of text is somewhat overwhelming and can be tiresome when the narrator describes certain events that seem repetitive.

Different characters tend to speak with different vocabulary due to their professions and interests. The narrator tends to be involved in more literary discussions, whereas Mme. de Guermantes tends to participate in conversations that are primarily concerned with gossip. The language serves to show the narrator's idealization of the aristocracy while exhibiting the aristocracy's snobbishness to the lower classes. This is further highlighted through Saint-Loup's tendency to speak more like the narrator's grandmother, who does not disdain any class of people; Saint-Loup and Grandmother are more open-minded to everyone.

Structure

This novel is separated into two volumes. Volume one is broken into three books. The first book is four chapters long, the second book is four chapters long, and the third book is three chapters long. Each chapter names the primary focus of the chapter in the first two books of the novel. The third book is simply given chapter numbers. The majority of the chapters are quite long, several in excess of one hundred pages. A few chapters are a more acceptable length. The book in total numbers about eleven hundred pages.

The plot of the novel encompasses the whole novel. Additionally, each book is broken down into subplots and each chapter is further broken into subplots. The novel recounts the narrator's youth and growing up with his family. He tells the story of each of his three romances. The first book contains a lot of background information about the narrator's childhood and the past of several main characters with their connections to one another. The second book focuses more on the narrator's youth, including the fulfillment and renouncement of dreams. The third book seems mostly ironic because a lot of the narrator's unfulfilled dreams come true at a time when he is no longer interested in them.

The pace tends to be slow because of the narrator's descriptive passages as opposed to dialogue and action. At the same time, the narrative encompasses a large amount of

time in a short amount of space by giving a lot of generalizations and highlighting the most important events in the action while ignoring the insignificant details. The story is told primarily through flashbacks, usually told in the present tense. The story is amusing once the action is extracted from the exposition.



Quotes

"Behold, one of the moments whose series will go to make up their sum, a moment as genuine as the rest, if not actually more important to ourself because our mistress is more intensely a part of it; we picture it to ourselves, we possess it, we intervene upon it, almost we have created it: namely, the moment in which he goes to tell her that we are waiting there below." Swann's Way, Overture, p. 17

"I felt that I had with an impious and secret finger traced a first wrinkle upon her soul and made the first white hair shew upon her head." Swann's Way, Overture, p. 21

"At Combray a person whom one 'didn't know at all' was as incredible a being as any mythological deity....On first noticing them you have been impressed by the thought that there might be in Combray people whom you 'didn't know at all,' simply because, you had failed to recognize or identify them at once." Swann's Way, Combray, p. 72

"None of the feelings which the joys or misfortunes of a 'real' person awaken in us can be awakened except through a mental picture of those joys or misfortunes; and the ingenuity of the first novelist lay in his understanding that, as the picture was the one essential element in the complicated structure of our emotions, so that simplification of it which consisted in the suppression, pure and simple, of 'real' people would be a decided improvement." Swann's Way, Combray, p. 87

"Hardly even does one think of oneself, but only how to escape from oneself." Swann's Way, Combray, p. 129

"How often had his credit with a duchess, built up of the yearly accumulation of her desire to do him some favour for which she had never found an opportunity, been squandered in a moment by his calling upon her, in an indiscreetly worded message, for a recommendation by telegraph which would put him in touch at once with one of her agents whose daughter he had noticed in the country, just as a starving man might barter a diamond for a crust of bread." Swann's Way, Swann in Love, p. 142

"In his younger days a man dreams of possessing the heart of the woman whom he loves; later, the feeling that he possesses the heart of a woman may be enough to make him fall in love with her." Swann's Way, Swann In Love, p. 144

"'Why,' she wrote, 'did you not forget your heart also? I should never have let you have that back.'" Swann's Way, Swann in Love, p. 160

"Besides, she doesn't care for him in that way, she says; it's an idea love, 'Platonic,' you know; she's afraid of rubbing the bloom off." Swann's Way, Swann in Love, p. 167

"Every kiss provokes another. Ah, in those earliest days of love how naturally the kisses



spring into life. How closely, in their abundance, are they pressed one against another; until lovers would find it as hard to count the kisses exchanged in an hour, as to count the flowers in a meadow in May." *Swann's Way*, *Swann in Love*, p. 187

"Swann's love had reached that stage at which the physician and (in the case of certain affections) the boldest of surgeons ask themselves whether to deprive a patient of the vice or to rid him of his malady is still reasonable, or indeed possible." *Swann's Way*, *Swann in Love*, p. 206

"Nothing is impossible to the eye of a friend." *Swann's Way*, *Swann in Love*, p. 259

"To think that I have wasted years of my life, that I have longed for death, that the greatest love that I have ever known has been for a woman who did not please me, who was not in my style!" *Swann's Way*, *Swann in Love* p. 287

"On the mantle of snow that swathed the balcony, the sun had appeared and was stitching seams of gold, with embroidered patches of dark shadow." *Swann's Way*, *Place-Names: The Name*, p. 295

"when one is in love one has no love left for anyone." *Swann's Way*, *Place-Names: The Name*, p. 296

"[Odette de Crecy] is now Mme. Swann, the wife of a gentleman in the Jockey Club, a friend of the Prince of Wales. Apart from that, though, she is wonderful still." *Swann's Way*, *Place-Names: The Name*, p. 308

"But when a belief vanishes, there survives it—more and more ardently, so as to cloak the absence of the power, now lost to us, of imparting reality to new phenomena—an idolatrous attachment to the old things which our belief in them did once animate, as if it was in that belief and not in ourselves that the divine spark resided, and as if our present incredulity had a contingent cause—the death of the gods." *Swann's Way*, *Place-Names: The Name*, p. 310

"It is because they imply the sacrifice of a more or less advantageous position to a purely private happiness that, as a general rule, 'impossible' marriages are the happiest of all." *Within a Budding Grove*, *Madame Swann at Home*, p. 344

"I think it's perfectly absurd to worry about other people in matters of sentiment. We feel things for ourselves, not for the public." *Within a Budding Grove*, *Madame Swann at Home*, p. 390

"After all, the old forms of speech must in their time have been images difficult to follow when the listener was not yet cognizant of the universe which they depicted. But he has long since decided that this must be the real universe, and so relies confidently upon it." *Within a Budding Grove*, *Madame Swann at Home*, p. 394



"Nervous men ought always to love, as the lower orders say, 'beneath' them, so that their women have a material inducement to do what they tell them." Within a Budding Grove, Madame Swann at Home, p. 400

"And this strain of waiting, according to the strength of her memory and the resistance of her bodily organs, either helps her on her journey through the years, at the end of which she will be able to endure the knowledge that her son is no more, to forget gradually and to survive his loss, or else it kills her." Within a Budding Grove, Madame Swann at Home, p. 417

"Moreover, whatever discomfort there may be in such a course of physical detachment and isolation grows steadily less for another reason, namely that it weakens while it is in process of healing that fixed obsession which is a state of love." Within a Budding Grove, Madame Swann at Home, p. 436

"Life may have parted us; the memory of the days when we knew one another will endure. Life may have parted us; it cannot make us forget those happy hours which will always be dear to us both." Within a Budding Grove, Madame Swann at Home, p. 443

"An important social question, this: whether the wall of glass will always protect the wonderful creatures at their feasting, whether the obscure folk who watch them hungrily out of the night will not break in some day to gather them from their aquarium and devour them." Within a Budding Grove, Part I: Place-Names: The Place, p. 476-477

"For in order to understand how beautiful an elderly woman can once have been one must not only study but interpret every line of her face." Within a Budding Grove, Part I: Place-Names: The Place, p. 489

"A new life was opening before me; without making a single movement, for I was still shattered, although quite alert and well, I savoured my weariness with a light heart; it had isolated and broken asunder the bones of my legs and arms, which I could feel assembled before me, ready to cleave together, and which I was to raise to life merely by singing, like the builder in the fable." Within a Budding Grove, Seascape, with Frieze of Girls, p. 570

"Although we are justified in saying that there can be no progress, no discovery in art, but only in the sciences, and that the artist who begins afresh upon his own account an individual effort cannot be either helped or hindered by the efforts of all the others, we must nevertheless admit that, in so far as art brings into prominence certain laws, once an industry has taken those laws and vulgarised them, the art that was first in the field loses, in retrospect, a little of its originality." Within a Budding Grove, Seascape, with Frieze of Girls, p. 578

"Variance of a belief, annulment also of love, which, pre-existent and mobile, comes to rest at the image of any one woman simply because that woman will be almost impossible of attainment." Within a Budding Grove, Seascape, with Frieze of Girls, p. 589



"There is no man," he began, "however wise, who has not at some period of his youth said things, or lived in a way the consciousness of which is so unpleasant to him in later life that he would gladly, if he could, expunge it from his memory. And yet he ought not entirely to regret it, because he cannot be certain that he has indeed become a wise man—so far as it is possible for any of us to be wise—unless he has passed through all the fatuous or unwholesome incarnations by which that ultimate stage must be preceded." *Within a Budding Grove, Seascape, with Frieze of Girls*, p. 592

"I was satisfied with her; it was when I admired too keenly not to be disappointed by the object of my admiration, whether that object were Gilberte or Berma, that I demanded in advance, of the impression to be received on the morrow, the pleasure that yesterday's impression had refused to afford me." *The Guermites Way, Part I, Chapter 1*, p. 695

"And, the moment our call has sounded, in the night filled with phantoms to which our ears alone are unsealed, a tiny sound, an abstract sound- the sound of distance overcome- and the voice of the dear one speaks to us." *The Guermites Way, Part I, Chapter 1*, p. 749

"A woman sees herself dying, in these cases not at the actual moment of death but months, sometimes years before, when death has hideously come to dwell in her." *The Guermites Way, Part II, Chapter 1*, p. 894

"I stood on the land gazing at a grandmother for whom there was not the slightest hope. Each of use is indeed alone." *The Guermites Way, Part II, Chapter 1*, p. 894

"My poor boy, you have only your Papa and Mamma to help you now." *The Guermites Way, Part II, Chapter 1*, p. 904

"But now on the contrary it was they alone that set the crown of age on a face grown young again, from which had vanished the wrinkles, the contractions, the swellings, the rains, the hollows which in the long course of years had been carved on it by suffering. As at the far-off time when her parents had chosen for her a bridegroom, she had the features delicately traced by purity and submission, the cheeks glowing with a chaste expectation, with a vision of happiness, with an innocent gaiety even which the years had gradually destroyed. Life in withdrawing from her had taken with it the disillusionments of life. A smile seemed to be hovering on my grandmother's lips. On that funeral couch, death, like a sculptor of the middle ages, had laid her in the form of a young maiden." *The Guermites Way, Part II, Chapter 1*, p. 910

"My affection for you is quite dead. Nothing can revive it. I believe that it is not unworthy of me to confess that I regret it." *The Guermites Way, Part II, Chapter 2*, p. 1025



Topics for Discussion

What is the cause of the public disapproval of M. Swann's wife?

Compare and contrast the narrator's three loves: Gilberte, Albertine, and Mme. Guermites.

Discuss the importance of the different classes in society throughout the novel.

Each book has different settings: country, beach, and city. Discuss the differences in the narrator's experiences in each society.

Discuss the political theme throughout the novel.

List and describe the distractions that prevent the narrator from beginning his career as a writer.

Compare and contrast the narrator's parents and grandmother regarding their affection for the narrator.

The narrator seems fascinated with famous people and the nobility. Describe instances of this in the novel.

Compare and contrast Bloch and Robert Saint-Loup.

Explain Mme. Guermites' antipathy for the narrator and the reason that she befriends him.