Reviving Ophelia Study Guide

Reviving Ophelia by Mary Pipher

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

In Reviving Ophelia, clinical psychologist Dr. Mary Pipher discusses the social and cultural pressures faced by today's adolescent girls. She analyzes the case histories of her young patients in an attempt to understand them and make recommendations for change. She explains why girls suffer from eating disorders, the desire to hurt or even kill themselves, friction with their parents, and problems in school. Dr. Pipher discusses the changes that occur when girls enter adolescence. Her observations provide valuable insight into the reasons why many confident, well-adjusted girls suddenly become sad and angry.

Dr. Pipher draws upon her years of experience teaching and counseling young women in order to show how each girl is uniquely affected by the changes that take place. She compares the theories of many psychologists and philosophers. Girls today are accomplishing goals that many of their mothers find impossible. Yet many of these girls are still hindered. They may not reach their full potential unless serious changes are made in the way that young women are educated and treated in America. Dr. Pipher also stresses that boys need to learn how to treat young girls fairly. Young girls should not be belittled and objectified. Their accomplishments and goals should not be pushed aside. As burgeoning young women, they deserve to be respected as much more than decorative sex objects. Dr. Pipher also discusses the cult of thinness and its impact on young women.

Dr. Pipher lists many ways in which parents can help their daughters through this difficult period. She points out the difference between dangerous behavior and the typical behavior that adolescent girls exhibit as they test new boundaries. She encourages healthy exploration and autonomy, but reminds parents to listen to their daughters and maintain supportive relationships with them. She explains the delicate balance that parents must strike as they encourage their daughters to be independent and autonomous, yet cautious and mindful of danger.

Dr. Pipher fears that women are now much more oppressed compared to years past. She is concerned about the influence that the mainstream media is having on American culture. Girls now face increased pressure to use drugs and become sexually active as early as junior high. Influences from popular music, television, and movies, along with sexist advertising, are damaging their delicate psyches. Dr. Pipher writes Reviving Ophelia to share her thoughts and suggestions for cultural change with parents and others who play an influential role in these girls' lives.

Chapter 1, Saplings in the Storm

Chapter 1, Saplings in the Storm Summary and Analysis

Dr. Pipher remembers her cousin Polly as a young girl. She describes her as energy in motion. A tomboy, Polly dances, plays sports with the neighborhood boys, and rides horses. Once Polly enters adolescence, however, other children begin teasing her about her tomboyish ways and insist that she be more ladylike. The boys exclude her from their activities, and the girls isolate her because she is different. Polly becomes confused and withdrawn.

Later, Polly begins wearing stylish clothes and trying harder to fit in. She again becomes accepted and popular. Dr. Pipher feels that she is the only one saddened by Polly's transformation from force of nature to submissive follower. Dr. Pipher discusses Freud's analysis of girls in the latency period, the years between ages six or seven through puberty. She praises their ability to accomplish anything during this period because they are androgynous, neither masculine nor feminine. They can shrug off male and female stereotypes and just do whatever they want. Dr. Pipher points out that androgynous adults are the most well adjusted.

Few pre-adolescent girls come to her for therapy, and the ones that do are courageous and resilient. She notes that girls go through multiple personality changes when they enter adolescence, none of them positive. Their IQ scores go down, as do their math and science scores. They become less curious and more cautious. They are less tomboyish and become unhappy with their own bodies. Psychology has no explanation for these changes.

Dr. Pipher explains the depiction of this phenomenon in fairy tales. She notes that young women eat poisoned apples or prick their fingers with poisoned needles and fall asleep for a hundred years. They have to be rescued by a prince in order to survive, and they emerge from the story with passive, docile personalities. She reflects on the character Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet. As a girl, Ophelia is happy and free, but she loses herself during adolescence. She stops caring about her own needs and desires and instead strives to please Hamlet and her father. When Hamlet eventually rejects her for being obedient to her father, she goes insane. She eventually drowns in a flower-filled stream while wearing elegant clothes that weigh her down.

Dr. Pipher observes that her young female patients are angry and easily offended by the adults in their lives. They suffer significant mood swings and behave unpredictably. Dr. Pipher also notes that these issues are not confined to her patients. Many of the young women that she meets at speaking engagements are struggling with the same obstacles. Dr. Pipher laments the fact that psychologists do not have any conclusive theories regarding treatment of girls this age. The girls are difficult to study due to their secretive natures. They do not enjoy discussing their problems with adults.

Dr. Pipher describes adolescent girls as female impersonators whose mission in life is to please others. The pressure to become someone they are not angers them and makes them lash out at the adults in their lives. Popular culture forces them to assume both a true and a false self. They put their false self on display for the adults while they suppress their true selves. Dr. Pipher compares these girls to saplings in a hurricane. She lists three factors that make them vulnerable to the storm.

First, they are changing in every way - physically, mentally, and emotionally. They experience intense anxiety as they try to find their place in the world. Second, American culture subjects these girls to sexism, capitalism, and lookism, the evaluation of a person solely based on physical appearance. Third, American culture demands that adolescent girls distance themselves from their parents at the exact time that they need them most. The close parent-child bonds fall away, and girls turn to their peers for reassurance. Parents also suffer from the loss of this important relationship.

Adolescent girls may refuse to discuss their problems with their parents, but they still blame their parents for the hardships that they experience. They still expect their parents to protect them from the dangers of society. Parents may blame themselves for their daughters' behavior. They may also feel isolated, and believe that they are the only parents who feel this way. Dr. Pipher stresses that many of these problems will improve during the girls' late high school years, but they can have lasting consequences on the girls' adult lives as well. Dr. Pipher treats many adult women who never recover from the pain that they experience during adolescence. Some of these women completely lose touch with their own needs. They grow into angry adults that feel betrayed. They believe that they are following all of the rules, but they are not experiencing the perfect life that they want.

Dr. Pipher reports alarming suicide statistics. She blames several factors, including an increased divorce rate, negative sexual influences in the media, and increased violence against women. Dr. Pipher stresses that girls today face more pressure than their mothers and grandmothers, and asks readers to bring about the cultural changes needed in order to protect these young women. Girls mature faster now, and consequently face more risks to their safety. She urges readers to realize just how bad the situation is, and what must be done in order to resolve it.

Chapter 2, Theoretical Issues - For Your Own Good

Chapter 2, Theoretical Issues - For Your Own Good Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, the reader meets fifteen-year-old Cayenne. As a young girl, Cayenne is enthusiastic and feisty. She enjoys sports and gets along well with people of all ages. Ambitious and bright, Cayenne is a good student with a great imagination. When she reaches puberty, however, Cayenne begins to struggle. Her classmates tease her, and she becomes very self-conscious about her appearance. She withdraws from her family, and her grades fall. By the time that she begins treatment with Dr. Pipher, she is already sexually active and knows that she has herpes.

Dr. Pipher reveals her own frustration in trying to help girls like Cayenne. She recalls that psychology professors are mostly men who do not study girls. She finds that some common themes, including preoccupation with weight, fear of rejection, and the need for perfection, appear to be rooted in cultural ideals rather than each girl's individual personality. Adolescent girls are faced with conflicting messages. They are pressured to be beautiful, but told that beauty is only skin deep. They should be sexy, but not sexual. They should be honest, unless it hurts someone's feelings. They should be independent, but nice. Finally, they should be smart, but not so smart that they threaten the boys.

In The Drama of the Gifted Child, Alice Miller states that young children face a choice: either they can be authentic and honest, or they can be loved. If they choose wholeness, they will be abandoned by their parents. If they choose love, they will be abandoning their true selves. In order to fit in, Ms. Miller's patients disown that which is not tolerated. If their parents do not tolerate anger, the children suppress that emotion. If the parents disapprove of sexual urges, the children will deny that they have them. Miller believes that a child's "false" self is elevated every time that they deny their true self. The false self can only be happy when validated by others. If the child senses approval, the false self is temporarily happy. The false self cannot derive happiness from within, however. It can only be happy based on others' perception of it. Without their approval, the false self becomes easily dismayed.

Miller describes a state of psychological health called vibrancy. Vibrancy occurs when "authentic" adults experience all feelings, including pain, in an honest way. They accept themselves rather than wait for others to accept them. Miller encourages her patients to acknowledge childhood trauma in order to move past it and become authentic adults. Dr. Pipher disagrees with Miller's theory on one point. While Miller holds the parents responsible for the split that occurs in early childhood, Dr. Pipher believes that American culture is to blame. She sees the parents of her patients fighting to save their daughters in spite of the cultural forces that are moving against them. Unfortunately, parents have

limited influence over their daughters during adolescence. Girls this age begin to emotionally distance themselves from their families and turn to their peers for support.

Dr. Pipher defines authenticity as the owning of all experience, including emotions and thoughts that are not socially acceptable. Girls lose confidence as they abandon their true selves. Dr. Pipher discusses one of Cayenne's nightmares. In the dream, Cayenne's body is cut into pieces and fed to a goat. Dr. Pipher points out that many adolescent girls dream about drowning, being paralyzed, or being stuck in quicksand. These dreams represent the girls' realization that they are losing themselves, fighting forces beyond their control.

Dr. Pipher asserts that Cayenne is experiencing what all girls go through during adolescence. They are being rigorously trained for the adult female role. They must sacrifice anything about themselves that popular culture considers masculine. Girls learn that they must be attractive, ladylike, unselfish, and of service. They are responsible for making relationships work, and they must be competent without complaint.

Dr. Pipher explains that adolescent girls find it impossible to be both feminine and adult. She cites psychologist I.K. Broverman's study, in which male and female participants check off a list of adjectives describing the characteristics of healthy men, healthy women, and healthy adults. Most people describe healthy men and healthy adults in the same way. Healthy women, however, are described very differently. Healthy women are described as passive, dependent, and illogical, while healthy adults are active, independent, and logical. Indeed, it is impossible to score as both a healthy adult and a healthy woman in this study.

Today's adolescent girls struggle to learn the rules of becoming a young woman in our society. Girls who speak out are labeled bitches. Unattractive girls are scorned. These behaviors are reinforced by visual images in pornography, song lyrics, criticism, and teasing. Teen magazines focus on diet, makeup, and the pursuit of boys. They do not discuss sports, hobbies, or current events. When girls study history, they read mostly about men. They study a Constitution that grants only white males the right to vote.

Dr. Pipher's patients complain that they are expected to do more chores than their brothers do. One gymnast patient observes that only female gymnasts are subjected to weigh-ins at practices. Many of the girls' literary influences also reinforce the message that females are inferior. The writings of Tolstoy, Schopenhauer, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Aristotle are clearly anti-female. Yet young girls study these literary masters every day. Dr. Pipher stresses the importance of exposing young girls to more female writers in school. They also need to see more realistic female role models on television. Women are often portrayed in skimpy clothing in comparison to their male counterparts. Highly sexualized popular advertisements send the message that women are to be desired, not admired.

Dr. Pipher laments that bright, sensitive girls are more at risk for problems, since they are often more keenly aware of the conflicting forces in their lives. She lists four ways in

which girls can react to cultural pressures. They can conform, withdraw, be depressed, or get angry. Young women who blame themselves for their problems may become depressed, but those who blame the adults become angry. Most girls react with some combination of these four ways. Some girls who strive for perfection go too far. For example, the desire to be slender can lead to anorexia. Dr. Pipher encourages readers to resist cultural pressures in order to remain authentic.

Chapter 3, Developmental Issues - I'm Not Waving, I'm Drowning

Chapter 3, Developmental Issues - I'm Not Waving, I'm Drowning Summary and Analysis

This chapter begins with an account of fifteen-year-old Charlotte's treatment. Charlotte's biological father, an abusive alcoholic, divorces Charlotte's mother, Sue, when Charlotte is only three. Sue begins working long hours, and the family struggles financially. When Charlotte enters therapy, she is flunking the ninth grade. She smokes cigarettes, drinks whiskey, and uses pot. Her mother and stepfather disapprove of her relationship with boyfriend Mel, who is twenty-two. Charlotte hates the students and teachers at her school.

In contrast, Dr. Pipher discusses twelve-year-old Lori. Lori is not a patient, but Dr. Pipher knows her well. Lori is highly gifted and qualifies for a special tutor, but prefers to take a mixture of regular and advanced classes at the junior high school with her friends. When Dr. Pipher interviews her, Lori says that she is known for being independent and funny. When asked how she feels about movies and music that portray teenagers engaged in casual sex, Lori says, "I turn that stuff off. I don't have time for TV anyway. With music, I don't pay attention to the words".

Dr. Pipher compares Lori to her troubled patients. She asks herself why Lori is so well adjusted, so different. She points out Lori's strengths. Lori makes conscious choices about everything. She looks within herself for guidance and answers. She understands what she can and cannot control, and she knows how to screen out what is beyond her control. She has a sense of who she is and an orientation toward the future.

Dr. Pipher explains the difference between the surface structure of behaviors and the deep structure of meaning. Surface structure is what others can see - awkwardness, energy, anger, moodiness, and restlessness. Deep structure refers to the internal struggle to find oneself. Surface behaviors actually work to camouflage the deep struggle within. This conflict makes communication difficult, since parents often focus on a girl's surface behavior without realizing the root cause.

Adolescent girls have an enormous preoccupation with their bodies. Dr. Pipher states that the luckiest girls are those that are neither too plain nor too beautiful. Their identities are not based on appearance alone. They are confident in their sense of humor, intelligence, and strength of character. Young girls strive to look like the celebrities that they view in the media. According to Dr. Pipher, American beauty queens are getting taller and thinner, thereby widening the gap between the real and the ideal even further.

Young girls suffer from immature emotional systems. Their emotions are extreme and inconsistent. Even the smallest remark, especially one related to the girl's appearance, can be emotionally devastating. Dr. Pipher notes that girls often lose perspective at this age. They really do think that even the tiniest details are life and death issues.

During the early years of adolescence, most young girls cannot grasp abstract concepts. The girls' immaturity makes it difficult to reason with them. They read too much meaning into everything. Dr. Pipher explains that girls also suffer from what is called the imaginary audience syndrome. Girls think that people are always watching them, scrutinizing their every move.

Dr. Pipher sees a difference in how today's girls perceive the world in which they live. Girls watch and read the news. They know that they are in danger. American girls speak of death, and have violent dreams. Dr. Pipher compares Charlotte and Lori's differing attitudes toward life. She believes that Charlotte chooses not to think about her fears and problems. She gravitates to others with similar attitudes and runs from her parents rather than confront difficult issues. In contrast, Lori also feels overwhelmed at times, but she looks within herself for the answers.

Dr. Pipher discusses the relevance of a study entitled "How Schools Shortchange Girls". According to this study, school-age boys are twice as likely to be seen as role models, five times as likely to receive attention from their teachers, and an astounding twelve times as likely to speak up in class. Boys are praised for their academic efforts, while girls receive praise for their appearance and proper behavior. Boys are criticized more for inappropriate behavior, while girls are criticized for intellectual failings. Since a boy's failure is often attributed to external factors, he remains confident even in the face of failure. Girls, however, hear the message that they are inadequate. Their success is often attributed to good luck or hard work, not natural ability. Dr. Pipher believes that this distinction is the reason that many adolescent girls struggle with math.

When boys have trouble with a math problem, they may feel that the work is difficult but not impossible. When girls try to solve a tough math problem, they become frustrated. Some assume that they are stupid and give up. Dr. Pipher stresses that girls must be encouraged to persevere. In contrast to the perfectionism that many adolescent girls struggle with, math is one area in which girls need to be told that it is normal to make many mistakes before eventually solving the problem.

Dr. Pipher points out that today's adolescents face many obstacles. Many parents are divorced. Half of all children spend part of their childhood in a single-parent home. Many families are overburdened by their own problems and do not protect their children from the temptations of society. Parents often complain that their teenage daughters intentionally start arguments. Dr. Pipher explains that fighting is a way to stay close and assert distance at the same time. Parents often misunderstand this behavior, partly because the old rules no longer apply. Today's young girls are exposed to a media onslaught of what Dr. Pipher terms "junk values". Parents no longer help ease their children's transition into adult culture. Now they fight against it.

Adolescent girls may withdraw from their parents, but their relationships with their peers become all-important. Other adolescents validate their actions and encourage their independence. Unfortunately, some of the girls who provide this encouragement are also the first to shun those who fail to conform. They punish each other for failing to meet the standards that they trying so hard to meet themselves. Since most girls do not learn to express their anger constructively, they take it out on each other by targeting a specific girl and making her miserable.

As if fighting each other were not enough, girls also have to face new pressures. Drugs and alcohol are more widely available than ever before. Teenagers begin drinking earlier and drink more. Most have access to drugs by the seventh grade, and they face more sexual harassment. Dr. Pipher discusses the results of a study entitled "Hostile Hallways," in which seventy percent of all girls report being harassed, with fifty percent experiencing unwanted sexual touching at school. Some girls, like Lori, find a way to resist the pressure. They acknowledge that giving into it would mean giving up too much of themselves. Charlotte, on the other hand, is so dependent on her peer relationships that she goes along with their inappropriate behavior and loses herself in the process.

Dr. Pipher mentions that many of the great heroines from history, including Anne Frank and Joan of Arc, are adolescent girls. Many young women begin spiritual journeys during their adolescence. They embark upon a mission to find their own place in the world. Many girls become vegetarians and are interested in animal rights issues. Dr. Pipher does not find it a coincidence that many young girls relate particularly well to gentle, defenseless creatures that have no voice. Girls who remain authentic to their true selves take pride in their spirituality and try to make the world a better place. Girls who succumb to their false selves, however, may be more cynical since they no longer have hope.

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher identifies the many different changes that adolescent girls experience. She compares different girls' coping mechanisms in order to determine why one succeeds when another fails. Dr. Pipher points out that all girls suffer under the pressures of a media-driven culture that continually sends girls the wrong messages and keeps them from becoming authentic adults. She reminds the reader that all girls are in danger of drowning like Hamlet's Ophelia if cultural changes do not occur.

Chapter 4, Families - The Root Systems

Chapter 4, Families - The Root Systems Summary and Analysis

This chapter begins with a review of fourteen-year-old Franchesca, an adopted Native American girl with white parents. Franchesca is a happy child, but when she enters puberty, she begins to think more about her heritage and her biological parents. She loves her adoptive parents and does not want to upset them by discussing these issues. Her grades begin to suffer, and she stops spending time with her childhood friends. She also begins drinking and staying out all night. Dr. Pipher believes that her curiosity about her ancestry is perfectly normal at this age. She encourages her to read Native American authors.

Franchesca follows Dr. Pipher's advice. She visits an abandoned Native American school with her parents. She also attends a conference for Native Americans, and begins volunteering at the Native American center. She learns to center herself by meditating and praying to the Great Spirit, and she becomes an advocate for the Native American students at her school. Dr. Pipher points out that Franchesca is not only dealing with typical adolescent issues like sex, alcohol, school, and religion. She is also confronting race and adoption issues as well. Once Franchesca begins to find herself, her behavior improves.

Dr. Pipher points out that most people imagine teenagers growing up in traditional families with a working father and a mother who stays home with the children. In the 1990s, however, only fourteen percent of all families fit the traditional dynamic. Thirty percent of all families are now headed by single parents, ninety percent of whom are mothers. Parents are overworked, overcommitted, tired, and poorer than previous generations. Two financial extremes exist. Some children wear designer clothes and attend private schools and camps. Others walk dangerous streets to inadequate schools. Children are no longer raised by extended families. The television is now their babysitter.

Parents blame their daughters' problems on themselves, but Dr. Pipher believes that American culture is to blame. She believes that some of the families that she sees in therapy are not actually dysfunctional. The culture in which they live is dysfunctional. Parents share their values and ideals with their daughters, but the mainstream media sends them an entirely different message. Children may blame their parents for their unhappiness during adolescence. They still expect their parents to protect and care for them, even as they push them away. They are not yet mature enough to understand that society is to blame.

Dr. Pipher compares the goal of mass media to make money with the parents' goal of helping their children stay happy and well adjusted. These two goals are not compatible. A delicate balance must be struck. Parents need to protect their children, but they

should also allow them to develop their individuality. Psychologists study different types of families in order to determine the best parenting techniques. There are two dimensions. Dr. Pipher states that the first dimension is related to affection. On one end are parents who are accepting, responsive, and child-centered. At the other end of the spectrum are parents who are rejecting, unresponsive, and parent-centered.

The second dimension is about control. Some parents are undemanding and exert little control over their children. Others are demanding and strict. The children of parents exercising low control and low acceptance may become delinquent or addicted to drugs. Authoritarian parents high in control and low in acceptance may have children who struggle in social settings and lack confidence. Indulgent parents low in control and high in acceptance have teenagers that are impulsive, irresponsible, and dependent. Strict but loving parents high in control and high in acceptance have teens who are independent, socially responsible, and confident. Dr. Pipher uses the case studies in this chapter to demonstrate examples of adolescent girls with parents that are high in affection, but have varying degrees of control.

Fifteen-year-old Lucy is recovering from leukemia. Lucy is entering puberty late due to her poor health. She remains close with the family that helped her through her illness, but she struggles to fit in with her peers now that she is back in school. Dr. Pipher explains that the closeness that helps children when they are ill can also hold them back. It may be harder for them to become independent and develop their own interests away from the family upon which they rely.

Eighteen-year-old Leah is a Vietnamese girl now living in the United States. Vietnamese culture treats adolescents quite differently. Young people are protected by the extended families that they will continue to live with as adults. Vietnamese girls usually go on to live with their husband's parents. When Dr. Pipher asks Leah if she ever fights with her mother, Leah answers, "Why would I fight with my mother? She gave me the gift of life". Leah says that she never disobeys her mother's rules because she owes her mother obedience. She believes that her mother knows what is good for her, and that her mother's rules will help her. Leah does not feel the need to distance herself from her family. She does not really become her own person, either.

Dr. Pipher next discusses a similar situation concerning a girl named Jody. Jody's family is very strict. Her father does not let her date, even though she is sixteen years old. Girls like Jody have few choices, so they may not feel as overwhelmed by all of the options presented to them. Jody seems happy, but Dr. Pipher worries that she does not really think for herself. She speculates that other teens raised in more liberal households may become more creative and independent as adults.

Sisters Abby and Elizabeth have very loving, low-key parents. The family discusses all problems openly. Abby and Elizabeth's parents give them a lot of freedom. They trust the girls and want them to make their own choices. Abby struggles with depression and stress-related illnesses that keep her out of school and regular activities. Her parents suspect that she is using drugs. Elizabeth is distant, preferring to have just one close friend, Colin. Both girls blame their parents for their problems. Elizabeth gets pregnant

during her junior year of high school and decides to keep the baby. Dr. Pipher believes that girls like Abby and Elizabeth would benefit from more structure in their home as children. Girls who are raised to be open-minded and curious are often overwhelmed by the turmoil of adolescence. Both girls are doing well as adults, however. They seem happy now.

Rosemary has New Age parents. They allow Rosemary to be her own person, and they do not want to mold her in any way. They establish few limits for Rosemary's behavior. During puberty, Rosemary becomes obsessed with her appearance and boys. Rosemary sees the world through very simple eyes. Faced with too many choices, Rosemary is struggling to find herself.

All of the families discussed in this chapter are high in the affection dimension. Some, however, exert more control than others do. Families like Jody and Leah's censor their daughters' ideas. Jody and Leah fare well during adolescence, but may not live up to their full potential as adults. Lucy and Franchesca's parents fall somewhere in the middle. Their daughters still struggle, but Lucy and Franchesca handle the conflict better than Abby, Elizabeth, and Rosemary. Abby, Elizabeth, and Rosemary's parents provide very liberal upbringings, and the girls are troubled during adolescence. They need more structure and guidance from their parents. All of these families are trying to find the perfect balance of control and affection with which to raise their daughters.

Chapter 5, Mothers

Chapter 5, Mothers Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher reflects upon some of the mothers and daughters that she sees in therapy. She points out that Western civilization places unrealistic expectations on mothers. Mothers are held responsible for their children's happiness and the overall well-being of the entire family. Childhood relationships with fathers are viewed as productive and growth-oriented, while relationships with mothers may be seen as regressive and dependent. Fathers are praised for taking an interest in their children's lives. Mothers, however, are criticized for either being too distant or too overprotective and smothering. Daughters are expected to love their mothers, but not to be too much like them.

Adolescence requires daughters to distance themselves from the person with whom they are most closely identified. This happens at a time when girls need their mothers the most. Mother-daughter conflicts are not new, but today's mothers do not understand the world that their daughters now face. When girls complain that they are being teased by boys at school, mothers do not realize that traditional teasing is now actually sexual harassment. It is much more graphic and mean-spirited than they remember. Girls shock their mothers by becoming sexually active at a much younger age.

The first case involves fifteen-year-old Jessica and her mother, Brenda. Jessica's refusal to go to school has her mother in a tailspin. Brenda is now under pressure from the authorities, and she and Jessica cannot agree on anything. After meeting with the two women, Dr. Pipher realizes that they are everything to each other. Both mother and daughter are isolated and rely on each other for all support. Dr. Pipher believes that Brenda is trying so hard to be good to her daughter that she is denying her a chance to grow up. When Jessica tries to put some distance between them by rebelling, Brenda understands her behavior. That infuriates Jessica, and she rebels even more in order to establish her independence. Jessica feels smothered. Dr. Pipher has to encourage both mother and daughter to pursue their own interests so that they will not be so dependent upon each other.

Mother Fay and her sixteen-year-old daughter Sorrel are a different story. Fay brings Sorrel to therapy because Sorrel says that she is a lesbian. Fay accepts her daughter's homosexuality, but thinks that she should speak to a professional in order to understand what being a lesbian will mean for her life. Sorrel is independent and intelligent. Her mother encourages her to find herself and express her individuality. Fay does not pressure her daughter to conform to others' expectations.

Sixteen-year-old Whitney and her mother Evelyn have a terrible relationship. Evelyn refuses to acknowledge that her daughter is growing up in a different environment. Whitney is a good student and seems well rounded. Evelyn seems lonely and jealous of the attention that her husband Sam pays to Whitney. She actually tells Dr. Pipher that

she does not want Whitney to touch or speak to her. She is literally counting the days until Whitney moves out. Evelyn disapproves of the fact that Whitney is sexually active at her age, even though Whitney is in a committed relationship with her boyfriend of over a year, and practices birth control. As Evelyn says, "That's not the way things were done in my family".

Chapter 6, Fathers

Chapter 6, Fathers Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher discusses fathers and daughters. Today's fathers are often ill equipped to foster healthy relationships with their daughters since they do not remember relationships like that with their own fathers. In contrast to the sexist, patriarchal values of yesterday, today's fathers need to teach their daughters to resist sexism and harassment. Dr. Pipher explains the double standard that Americans have. People believe that mothers are capable of doing great harm to their children if they mistreat them. Fathers, however, are praised for any attention that they give their children. Dr. Pipher points out that often fathers are the ones that receive the most credit for raising a strong daughter. However, her years of practice show that strong daughters often come from families with strong mothers.

Dr. Pipher lists three types of father-daughter relationships: supportive, distant, and abusive. Most fathers fall into the distant category. Girls perceive distant fathers as more rigid than mothers, less understanding, and less willing to listen. Supportive fathers raise daughters who are more apt to like men and feel confident in relationships with men. These daughters describe their fathers as fun, deeply involved, and companionable. Abusive fathers call their daughters names, ridicule and shame them when they make mistakes, and physically hurt or molest them.

Dr. Pipher describes the relationship between sixteen-year-old Katie and her father, Pete. Katie's mother is long deceased, and Pete suffers from muscular dystrophy. An invalid, Pete works from home while Katie takes care of him. Pete and Katie are very close. In fact, Katie is so attentive to Pete that he fears that she is missing her youth. Dr. Pipher encourages Katie to develop relationships outside of the home, but she does not interfere too much. Dr. Pipher explains that she is determined not to "pathologize" a loving relationship.

Fourteen-year-old Holly and her father Dale have a very different relationship. Holly remembers her mother abandoning her. Dale loves Holly, but does not have the social skills to maintain a strong relationship with her. Holly becomes independent and learns to take care of herself. She feels isolated at school, preferring Prince to her peers. She falls in love with another loner, Lyle, and becomes sexually active. When Lyle breaks up with her, Holly is so distraught that she attempts suicide. Dr. Pipher believes that Holly's attachment to Lyle stems from her desire for affection. Lyle's rejection reminds her of the loss of her mother.

Kurt and his fifteen-year old daughter, Klara, first meet Dr. Pipher at the insistence of Klara's school counselor. Klara is very thin and struggles in school. Klara's mother is deceased. Kurt is very sexist. He tells Dr. Pipher that they do not need her help. Klara feels stupid at school and is very concerned about her appearance. Dr. Pipher works

with Klara to raise her self-esteem. She encourages Klara to express herself by talking about her feelings instead of holding them inside.

Chapter 7, Divorce

Chapter 7, Divorce Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher discusses divorced and divorcing parents seeking treatment for their adolescent daughters. The first patient is fourteen-year-old Julia, who is arrested for possession of alcohol. Julia's parents are divorced. Her father is married to a younger woman and has a new baby. Julia is not spending much time with him. Now attending a different school, Julia is cut off from her closest friends. Her mother Jean is also remarried, and Julia has three new stepbrothers. Julia complains that she has to clean up after the boys and shoulder most of the chores. Julia expresses frustration with her mother after she comments that times are different now from when she was a girl. "You have the same stupid rules for me that your mother had for you. Don't you understand that I can't live by those rules and have any friends?" she cries.

Dr. Pipher questions whether divorce is truly better for children than an unhappy marriage between two unloving partners. She sees that children may not always know when their parents are unhappy, but divorce shatters their lives. She tries harder now to help families stay together by counseling the parents and teaching them relationship skills. Dr. Pipher is concerned that many children of divorce end up in single parent homes. Single parents often work long hours and encounter financial difficulties. They lack the support of a second parent to help them reinforce house rules.

Adolescent children of divorce suffer the most. They miss the chance to see how couples function in relationships. These children are often forced to move away from everything and everyone that they know. This happens at a time when they desperately need the familiarity and security of routines and long-term friendships more than ever. Adolescents already feel self-conscious, as if everyone is watching every move that they make. They struggle to fit in with their peers and earn their acceptance. When their parents divorce, the divorce makes them appear different, and they feel embarrassed, abandoned, and angry.

Teenagers view their parents' divorce as a failure of immense proportions. Many teens reject their parents' authority after a divorce. Most teens are not mature enough to understand that their parents are suffering, too. Subconsciously, they may fear that a parent capable of ending a marriage might abandon the children as well. Teens manipulate their parents by pitting them against each other. Divorce is especially tough for adolescent girls, who are already faced with so many other pressures. Dr. Pipher discusses several families who are struggling with divorce.

Lois and her fourteen-year-old daughter Myra seek treatment after Myra physically attacks her mother. Myra's parents are already divorced when this happens. Her mother divorces Myra's father after having an affair with another man. Myra is tired of being shuttled back and forth between her two parents' homes. Dr. Pipher informs Myra of several anger management techniques that will help her express her feelings without

becoming violent. She asks Myra to begin writing her feelings down in a journal. Once she begins doing this, Myra's anger toward her mother gradually subsides.

Joan brings her twelve-year-old daughter Amy to see Dr. Pipher because she is concerned about the stress that her divorce with Amy's father is causing. As a small child, Amy is lively and happy, but now she is quiet, withdrawn, and serious. Joan and her husband Chuck are literally at war with one another, and Amy is caught in the middle. She is ashamed of the divorce. She is unhappy that her friends know about it, and begins avoiding them in order to keep from being asked about the divorce. Amy tells Dr. Pipher that she wants to run away from home. Dr. Pipher suggests that Amy be allowed to stay with her grandmother while her parents receive counseling. Dr. Pipher hopes that Amy's parents can learn to put their own pain aside in order to help their daughter.

Joe and Georgeanne are going through an amicable divorce. They both love their thirteen-year-old daughter, Jasmin, and want to avoid causing her any pain. Jasmin is shocked to learn of the divorce because her parents seem to be getting along so well. Joe is so concerned about Jasmin's well-being that he moves into an apartment in the same neighborhood. It is so close to Georgeanne's home that Jasmin can walk there. She does not have to be separated from the familiarity of her school or her close friends. She takes her beloved cat Orange with her everywhere she goes. Dr. Pipher points out that Joe and Georgeanne, unlike the other parents, are doing their best to focus on Amy's happiness even though they are suffering as well.

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher demonstrates how hard divorce can be on adolescent girls. For many, everything that matters to them is forever changed. Parents are the root system for girls. As saplings in the storm, they need their parents in order to survive and flourish. The girls that handle divorce best are those whose parents continue to maintain a civil relationship and similar economic circumstances after the divorce. Girls need to be reminded that both of their parents still love them. Divorce, as devastating as it is, can be an opportunity for growth if it is handled properly by the parents.

Chapter 8, Within the Hurricane - Depression

Chapter 8, Within the Hurricane - Depression Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher discusses depression. The first case is Monica, a chubby, highly intelligent fifteen-year-old. Monica's parents are concerned about her depression and lack of friends. Monica's main social outlet is her computer modem. She communicates with teenagers around the country. Those kids do not know that she is chubby. She can impress them with her wit and intelligence without ever having to meet them face-to-face. Monica is mature for her age, and she understands that her peers have shallow, superficial ideas about appearance and popularity. This knowledge does not make her feel any better, though.

At Dr. Pipher's urging, Monica begins to try harder to make friends at school. She becomes involved in new activities and finds a niche that she can fit into without denying her ideas, intelligence, or talents. Monica's parents are very supportive. They appreciate Monica's intelligence and nurture it by discussing politics, philosophy, and science with her. They stress to her that character is more important than appearance. Monica has a classic case of mild depression caused by the stresses of adolescence and her isolation from her peers.

Dr. Pipher reviews the case of Cindy, a fourteen-year-old girl with special needs. Cindy's school counselor refers her to Dr. Pipher because Cindy is not growing in any way - physically, socially, emotionally, or intellectually. Her baby teeth are not even falling out. Cindy's parents, Delores and Joe, are not very attentive to Cindy's needs. Delores discloses that Cindy is retarded due to fetal alcohol syndrome. Cindy spends most of her time alone while her parents work or drink in bars. Dr. Pipher believes that Cindy is also depressed. She is able to help Cindy by enlisting her school counselor, a teacher, and a volunteer to spend time with Cindy on a regular basis. Cindy improves quickly once she receives the attention that she needs.

Penelope is a sixteen-year-old who visits Dr. Pipher following a nearly successful suicide attempt. Penelope is used to getting what she wants from her parents. When her parents refuse her request for a new car, she overdoses on pills. Dr. Pipher recommends that Penelope begin recording each time that she handles frustration in a positive way. Unfortunately, Penelope tries to kill herself again the next time that she does not get something that she wants. Dr. Pipher does not see her again.

Dr. Pipher explains that some girls cope with their internal pain by hurting themselves externally. She says that just as depression is anguish turned inward, self-mutilation is psychic pain turned inward in the most physical way. Girls that self-mutilate soon become reliant on this grisly habit to calm themselves. One patient explains that she

cannot relax unless she does it. Dr. Pipher hopes that one day girls will no longer live in a culture so detrimental that it drives them to self-mutilate. In the meantime, she teaches her patients coping skills so that they can find a better way to express and reassure themselves.

Seventeen-year-old Tammy's parents bring her to Dr. Pipher's office after they catch her cutting her breasts with a razor. Tammy tells Dr. Pipher that she cuts herself whenever she and her boyfriend have a fight. Dr. Pipher explains to Tammy's parents that Tammy's cutting is a bad habit that Tammy uses to hurt herself physically when she is suffering emotional pain. Fifteen-year-old Gail burns herself with cigarettes. Highly gifted and sensitive, Gail worries about the environment in addition to other typical adolescent concerns. Her thoughts are consumed with worry about the rain forests, oil spills, and ethnic cleansing.

Dr. Pipher explains that many highly gifted girls experience these types of problems. Adults often expect girls like Gail to be emotionally mature, but they are not. They still react to world events with the emotional intensity of a child. They may be perceptive enough to reject the empty, superficial values of their peers, but they also crave support and friendship just like any other teenager. At Dr. Pipher's suggestion, Gail begins writing down her thoughts whenever she is upset or angry. She volunteers at a soup kitchen for the homeless in order to feel that she is contributing in some small fashion. Gradually, Gail learns how to express her thoughts in a less damaging way.

Chapter 9, Worshiping the Gods of Thinness

Chapter 9, Worshiping the Gods of Thinness Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher discusses the increase in eating disorders among adolescent girls. She starts by introducing Heidi, a sixteen-year-old bulimic gymnast. Heidi describes weekly weigh-ins where the young gymnasts count each other's ribs. As she explains, "If they are hard to count, we're in trouble". Girls like Heidi are at high-risk for developing disorders since their identity is based on being thin. Many models, gymnasts, dancers, and actresses begin dieting in order to be successful, but soon their bulimic behaviors become addictive. They binge and purge to relieve stress and feel in control. Dr. Pipher says that Heidi will have to acknowledge that her perfectionism is damaging both her physical and emotional health. She will have to strive to be just ordinary, not perfect. She needs to give herself a break. Dr. Pipher recommends that Heidi find other ways to express herself when she feels the urge to binge. She can talk to someone, write in a journal, listen to music, or learn some effective relaxation techniques.

Anorexic girls are usually perfectionists, but bulimic girls are impulsive and out of control. They are also more prone to alcoholism than anorexics. Dr. Pipher says that both bulimic and anorexic women are the ultimate people pleasers. She adds that bulimic girls lose their true selves. They are so eager to please that they become obsessed by an addiction that destroys their central core.

Sixteen-year-old Prudence is also bulimic. Prudence is silently grieving a brother who has passed away. She begins binging and purging to deal with her pain. Dr. Pipher encourages Prudence to talk about her brother with others. Prudence notices that she binges less on the days that she does.

Dr. Pipher describes anorexia as a problem of Western civilization. Quoting Peter Rowen, she says that anorexia is "a question of being thirsty in the rain". Anorexia is the way in which some women react to cultural norms that dictate female thinness. It is one of the most difficult disorders to treat, and it has a higher fatality rate than any other psychiatric illness. Dr. Pipher says that "good" girls, dutiful daughters, and high achievers are at greatest risk. The one thing that anorexic girls can control is their eating. No one can make them gain weight.

Sixteen-year-old Samantha is five feet, six inches tall and weighs ninety-nine pounds. Samantha loves the high that she gets from fasting. She feels superior when she resists food that other people are eating. Her life revolves around her weight and her sense of control over it. She believes that the people who want her to eat are just jealous of her thinness. She mistakenly believes that anorexia is her friend.

Dr. Pipher explains that young women must learn to identify their true needs instead of labeling all needs as hunger. Compulsive eaters must learn to control their eating, often with the help of a support group like Overeaters Anonymous. Dr. Pipher points out that compulsive eating, unlike anorexia, is not just a problem of the middle class. It can affect anyone. Dr. Pipher introduces eighteen-year-old Violet as an example.

Violet is a homeless girl that Dr. Pipher meets while volunteering at a homeless center. Violet tells Dr. Pipher about her past, which includes many foster homes and physical and sexual abuse. Violet confides in Dr. Pipher that she is a compulsive eater. She associates food with happier times from her childhood, including visits to her grandmother's house, where good food was always available to her. Food is the one thing that she can count on. She suspects that she eats in order to make herself unattractive to men who might pursue her.

According to Dr. Pipher, beauty is the defining characteristic for American women. Girls feel the most pressure about their appearance during their adolescent years. Pipher points to several reasons for this. First, girls are now living in cities where they have a greater number of secondary relationships instead of a smaller group of primary relationships. In a small community, people get to know each other for their personalities, their intellect, and their character. In cities full of strangers, teenagers are exposed to a much larger group of people, and those people may make snap judgments based on appearance alone.

Secondly, American media continues to portray thin women as the most attractive. Dr. Pipher lists the example of the White Rock mineral water girl, who at five feet ten inches tall and one hundred and ten pounds is now six inches taller and thirty pounds thinner than the White Rock girl from the 1950s. A recent study shows that eleven percent of Americans would abort a fetus if they believed that it carried a tendency to be obese. Other studies report that half of all teenage girls are dieting, and one in five has an eating disorder. Eight million women have eating disorders in America.

Chapter 10, Drugs and Alcohol - If Ophelia Were Alive Today

Chapter 10, Drugs and Alcohol - If Ophelia Were Alive Today Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher talks about adolescent girls struggling with drug and alcohol issues. Tracy is a thirteen-year-old girl who is expelled from school after the principal finds a bottle of alcohol in her book bag. Tracy's parents both come from alcoholic homes, and they worry that Tracy might be at risk. They are strict and overprotective to the extent that Tracy has no privacy and no personal space to call her own. Dr. Pipher explains that Tracy's parents are relying on rules to keep their daughter safe, but rules in the absence of loving relationships simply inspire rebellion in adolescents. Dr. Pipher works with Tracy to help her find other activities in which to channel her energy and frustration. She also promises to talk to Tracy's parents about giving her more privacy and independence so that she will not be so angry and miserable.

Dr. Pipher explains that not all teens who use drugs and alcohol are addicts. Experimentation is normal. Teens use chemicals for many reasons. Some, like Tracy, may be biologically predisposed to abuse certain chemicals, like alcohol. Others have psychological problems. Many are simply dealing with the pressures of growing up in American society and getting along with their families. Still others are just trying to fit in and do what the other kids are doing. Drugs are readily available to American teens.

Research shows that adolescents use chemicals for three main reasons. The first is expanded awareness, or the desire to increase sensitivity and insight. The second is thrill seeking and new experiences with peers. The third is the actual high that they get from the drug. Alcohol and marijuana are very popular with teenage girls because they offer a quick way to feel good. Girls take caffeine and amphetamines to lose weight. Finally, chemical use is a way for girls to fit in and become popular, especially with their peers who are also using chemicals.

Dr. Pipher illustrates several examples that demonstrate the difference between normal experimentation among teenagers and an abusive situation that requires intervention by adults. Heredity is important. Thirty percent of all children with alcoholic parents will become alcoholics themselves. Girls who have other problems are clearly more at risk of developing an addiction. Friendships also play a role. If a girl's closest friends are using drugs and alcohol, she probably will, too. If they choose to abstain, she may as well. Dr. Pipher says that she is concerned about girls who drink alone, drink to get drunk, drink more than their friends, or drink to escape reality. Sometimes these behaviors may be symptomatic of other problems.

Sixteen-year-old Rita visits Dr. Pipher following an arrest for drunken driving. Rita's father is an abusive alcoholic, and Rita does not want to end up like him. Rita's mother

is disabled, and Rita takes care of her and her younger siblings. She has too much responsibility for a girl her age. She takes care of everyone else's needs and neglects her own. Her boyfriend, Terry, is also an alcoholic, and Rita knows that she should not be dating him. Dr. Pipher points out that this is normal for daughters of alcoholic fathers. They choose men like their fathers in the subconscious hope that this time things might be different. Terry's problems are familiar to Rita.

Eighteen-year-old Casey's parents bring her to Dr. Pipher's office after they discover diet pills in her purse. Casey is chubby and admits that she uses diet pills to lose weight. She also drinks excessively. Dr. Pipher believes that Casey's parents are overprotective as a result of losing another child. They protect Casey so much that she is ill equipped to handle adult life. She lacks confidence. Casey is desperate for boys to like her, even if that means that she has to have sex with them. She gets drunk every time that she has sex. With Dr. Pipher's help, Casey learns how to establish healthier dating relationships that do not rely on the presence of alcohol or sex.

Danielle is the sixteen-year-old daughter of blind parents. Danielle is concerned about a recent arrest for possession of alcohol. When Dr. Pipher speaks with Danielle and her family, she notices how loving and close they are. Danielle agrees not to drink and drive again, but she likes the high that she gets from alcohol and marijuana. She does not feel addicted or unhappy. After visiting the family in her home, Dr. Pipher agrees. She feels that Danielle is using chemicals in an experimental and recreational way.

Fifteen-year-old Kelli sees Dr. Pipher after her parents discover marijuana in her bedroom. Kelli's parents are conservative. Her adult sisters are very successful, and Kelli's parents cannot understand why she is different. Kelli is interested in Buddhism and takes mushrooms and acid to feel high and enlightened. She likes the way that LSD heightens her senses. Kelli says that she hates alcohol and cigarettes, though, because they destroy consciousness. Dr. Pipher discusses nonchemical ways that Kelli can alter her consciousness.

Dr. Pipher explains in this chapter that experimental alcohol and drug use is normal in adolescents. It does not mean that the teenager has a substance addiction problem. When parents or teens speak to her about alcohol and drug problems, she tries to determine which problems could be inspiring the use of chemicals. She prefers not to label all alcohol and drug users as addicts. According to Dr. Pipher, research shows that girls are less likely to become heavy drinkers if they are introduced to moderate drinking in their homes. If moderate alcohol use is permitted at home, girls may not turn to drinking as a form of rebellion.

Dr. Pipher believes that American culture encourages the improper use of chemical substances. The media associates sophistication with self-destructive, out-of-control behavior. People who exercise self-restraint are portrayed as boring geeks. Corporate America convinces people that they would be happy if they just bought a certain product. Pain is treated as a problem that must be eliminated. Rather than avoid pain by consuming drugs and alcohol, adolescents need to learn that pain is a part of life. Teens do not have to fear it and suppress their feelings at all costs. They can learn to cope

with it in healthy ways. Dr. Pipher says that Americans need to teach their children that adulthood means more than just being old enough to have sex, consume harmful substances, and spend money.

Chapter 11, Sex and Violence

Chapter 11, Sex and Violence Summary and Analysis

In the first half of this chapter, Dr. Pipher discusses teen sexuality and all of its implications. In the second half, she speaks of the effect that sexual violence has on young women, and what must be done in order to reduce the number of rapes committed in America every day. As an example of the sexual pressure that girls face today, she introduces the reader to Christy, a fourteen-year-old gifted child. Christy is a year younger than most of her classmates. Christy is not ready to become sexually active. Many of her friends are sexually active, though, and they are pressuring her to have sex, too.

Dr. Pipher points to two major sexual issues facing girls in the 1990s. First, they are coming to terms with their own sexuality. Second, all women face the danger of sexual assault. Compounding these problems is the fact that society does not have clear rules for sexual activity. Families, churches, schools, and the media all send different sexual messages to young girls. Girls have to assimilate it all and then make up their own minds. Couples are also unclear on what to expect. Problems occur when two people enter a sexual relationship with very different ideas about its meaning. Dr. Pipher cites the classic example of a man and woman who wake up after having sex the night before. One may believe that sex is just for fun. The other may feel that sex exists only in a loving relationship, and that sex is a step on the road to a long-term commitment.

American culture is full of mixed sexual messages. Families may raise their daughters to be whole, but the media reduces them to bodies. Dr. Pipher points to a recent study that reflects the confusion among teens. Eighty percent believe that a man has the right to force his wife to have sex. Seventy percent think that force is permissible if the couple plans to marry. Many teens believe that women are asking for it if they dress provocatively or lead the man on. They do not yet understand that no one has the right to force sex upon an unwilling participant.

Women are also subject to unrealistic ideals about how sexual they should be. While men are encouraged to act sexy and sexual at all times, women are, as Dr. Pipher puts it, supposed to be "angels sometimes, sexual animals others, ladies by day, and whores at night". According to Dr. Pipher, girls receive two distinct types of sex education. One happens in the classroom, the other in the hallways. Most sex education classes focus on the biology and anatomy of sex. Young people receive no instruction about the emotional impact of becoming sexually active. Girls are still subject to a double standard. The same boys who coerce them into having sex will call them sluts afterward.

Girls are unprepared for the emotional trauma that results from having sex too soon. Their sex education classes do not address their fears. Girls worry about their lack of experience and fear being unable to please a sexual partner. Girls do not share these

feelings with their families and friends. Dr. Pipher explains that it is not sophisticated to be fearful.

Today, more girls are becoming sexually active at a younger age. They are also having sex with more partners. Many need help distinguishing true affection from sex. Many young women are unsure how to stop sexual activity before it goes too far. Some avoid sex altogether because they do not feel that they can control what happens once they begin to explore. Dr. Pipher describes a sexual decision-making course that helps delinquent girls. In the course, Dr. Pipher pretends to be the male, the seducer, and the girls learn how to resist advances that go too far - with force, if necessary.

Dr. Pipher reviews the case of Lizzie, a seventeen-year-old girl referred by her school counselor after she requests a transfer to a different school. Lizzie is shunned and shamed by her friends for cheating on her boyfriend with another boy. Lizzie understands that her friends are treating her unfairly. She knows that she has the right to decide whom she wants to date. She resents being called names at school. Lizzie is unhappy, but strong. During her treatment, she learns how to face the disapproval of others. She also learns to make better sexual choices in the future, and she decides not to let other people's bad behavior ruin her senior year. She remains in school.

Sixteen-year-old Angela is four months pregnant when she begins seeing Dr. Pipher. She has sex with many boys in her search for acceptance. She admits that she is looking for love since her parents' divorce. She looks forward to the birth of her baby, and becomes a good mother, even after the baby's father abandons her. She learns to establish long-term goals that will make her happy, and she stops trying to live for others. Dr. Pipher helps her establish meaningful relationships that will last.

One out of two women will be battered at some point in their lives. In 1991, over a million women report being a victim of a violent crime committed by their husbands or lovers. Four thousand women are killed. Police estimate that over six million of these crimes actually occur each year. Dr. Pipher treats so many sexual assault victims that she sometimes leaves her office thinking that all women suffer acts of sexual assault. She says that several factors determine the severity of the trauma that each girl faces in the wake of sexual violence. It is worse if the victim is young. Assault that occurs frequently and over a long period is violent, or is committed by a family member, can be especially traumatic. Girls react in a variety of ways following an assault. They will generally cope better if they tell someone right away. They need support from their family and friends. All victims can benefit from treatment for post-traumatic stress disorders.

Fifteen-year old Ellie sneaks out of her house one night to meet a friend. While she is out, she is abducted by a group of four teenage boys and raped. Ellie does not tell her family about the rape, but she does tell a school counselor. When the family enters therapy, they are in shock. Dr. Pipher works with the entire family to help them recover. Dr. Pipher points out that Ellie is actually very fortunate. She is not seriously injured. She does not become pregnant or contract an STD. Her family provides her support and reassurance. Many victims are not so lucky.

Sexual assault by a friend or acquaintance is especially traumatic. It destroys a girl's trust in the world and the people around her. She begins to fear all relationships as potentially dangerous. Women in this situation are less likely to report the assault, and the attackers are more likely to claim that the sex was consensual. The victim often feels responsible for the attack.

Fifteen-year-old Terra is referred to Dr. Pipher by her school counselor. She is failing her classes and seems depressed. When asked about a black eye, Terra explains that her boyfriend "accidentally" hits her. During Terra's therapy, Dr. Pipher learns that Terra is an incest survivor. Dr. Pipher tells Terra's mother that adolescent issues often trigger earlier traumas. Dr. Pipher also believes that sexual assault by a family member injures the very soul of the family. Victims of childhood sexual abuse must often work through their trauma as teenagers. Their burgeoning sexuality and onset of puberty can bring up old memories and create harmful ideas about sex. If girls do not recover from their trauma, they may seek boyfriends similar to the men that abuse them.

Dr. Pipher believes that rape is a personal problem that cries out for a political solution. Helping the victims is not enough. She wants to prevent the attacks from happening in the first place. She believes that young men need to be socialized to believe that rape is as unthinkable as cannibalism. She feels that rape is on the increase because negative cultural messages about sex are also increasing. Rape hurts everyone, not just the victims. All women live in a state of constant fear. Men know that women fear them, and they fear for the safety of their female friends and family. Young female rape victims suffer from post-traumatic stress. They may feel vulnerable for the first time. Eighty-two percent of all rape victims say that their lives are never the same. Women need a safer sexual environment in which they can explore their sexuality without being traumatized.

Chapter 12, Then and Now

Chapter 12, Then and Now Summary and Analysis

This chapter describes how adolescent culture in the 1990s differs from that of previous generations. Dr. Pipher contrasts her own adolescent experiences with those of fifteen-year-old rape victim Cassie. Dr. Pipher's childhood takes place in a small town where everyone knows each other. Her community is not materialistic at all. In fact, talking about wealth is considered to be in poor taste. Dr. Pipher quotes Garrison Keillor, saying, "Nobody gets rich in a small town because everybody's watching". Dr. Pipher does not even see a television show until she is six years old, and it frightens her.

Alcohol and drugs are hard to obtain during the 1950s, but cigarettes are abundant. Divorce is uncommon, and family problems are kept private. Women are considered inferior. Racism and intolerance toward people who are different is common. Even Dr. Pipher's teachers pressure her to pursue traditional female roles. While boys are encouraged to go to law school or practice medicine, Dr. Pipher is pushed toward a career in teaching. She is taught that if she cannot say something nice, she should not say anything at all. Incredibly, adults tell her that it is not smart to be smart.

Too much education and/or ambition is considered unfeminine in Dr. Pipher's community. She is embarrassed when she receives a science award at a school assembly. The scariest aspect of sex is the possibility of becoming pregnant. Girls that do are sent away without a word. One girl's father tells her, "Don't get pregnant, but if you do, come to me and I'll load up my gun". Boys are encouraged to have sex with loose girls, but good girls should avoid it. Pregnancy is embarrassing. Pregnant female teachers have to stop teaching once their pregnancy starts to show.

Cassie's life in the 1990s is very different. She swears, yells, and threatens to run away when she is upset with her parents. Dr. Pipher does not believe that earlier generations would tolerate this open expression of anger from their child. Cassie has liberal access to drugs and alcohol. Anyone who is not drinking alcohol by the eighth grade is shunned and labeled a geek. She is also more knowledgeable about politics and the world around her. Her world is bigger.

Cassie does not read much, but she communicates with people around the country on her computer. She is constantly exposed to popular advertising, and she likes to spend money on expensive things. It is difficult to avoid the topic of sex. Dr. Pipher believes that the Hollywood model of sexual behavior is extremely misleading and harmful. Cassie's world is more tolerant and open about sex. Girls who become pregnant are not ostracized from their communities like girls from the past. One-fifth of all babies are now born to single mothers.

Even with so much information available about sex, however, some of the most important questions for adolescent girls remain unanswered. They still do not know

what a healthy sexual experience looks like. They receive conflicting messages from their families, churches, and the media about when to have sex. Some still do not understand how to say no to sex. In Cassie's world, more girls are exposed to the dangers of rape and AIDS. She lives in a society that openly defines the haves and have-nots. Money is all-powerful. Greed and materialism are the norm. Her world is more sexualized and driven by addictive forces. At fifteen, she is already facing many of the same issues that college girls from yesterday face.

Dr. Pipher stresses that the childhood she remembers is not perfect. Women are undervalued, and minorities and strangers are shunned. If families are in trouble, they must handle it alone. Help is expensive and not readily available. Cassie has more autonomy, but less safety. An ideal world would combine the best of both of these communities. Dr. Pipher's Utopia is a place where teenage girls are safe and free to explore their dreams. They grow into adulthood in an atmosphere of tolerance and diversity, with adults who have their best interests at heart.

Chapter 13, What I've Learned From Listening

Chapter 13, What I've Learned From Listening Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher discusses her strategy for helping adolescent female patients. She says that human beings can do three things: think, feel, and behave. She tries to make an impact in all of these areas. Dr. Pipher believes that maintaining an accepting, empathic, and nonjudgmental stance is critical to helping her patients heal. She prefers "solution talk" over "problem talk". She admires the work of therapists Michael White and David Epston because "they take the pathology and shame out of therapy."

Dr. Pipher strives to help all patients increase their authenticity, openness to experience, competence, flexible thinking, and realistic appraisal of their environment. Dr. Pipher disagrees with psychologists who blame all problems on a person's childhood and are quick to label a family dysfunctional. Dr. Pipher believes the blame for many problems lies not with parents, but with popular culture. She also faults psychology itself. She feels that it offers parents conflicting and ever-changing advice. Parents are so afraid of causing irreparable damage to their children that they fail to establish clear and firm boundaries for behavior.

When counseling adolescent girls, Dr. Pipher believes in supporting parents efforts to keep their daughters safe while still encouraging girls to discover positive ways in which to assert their independence. Dr. Pipher stresses that society must change in order to produce healthy young women. She teaches girls awakening therapy, in which they learn to raise their level of consciousness. They learn to become whole adults, even while living in a culture that strives to objectify them and define them based on their value to others. Dr. Pipher stresses that she must form a bond with her young patients before they trust her and speak openly about their problems. She resists the urge to offer advice or too much sympathy. She encourages them to acknowledge and evaluate their feelings.

Dr. Pipher asks that patients ask themselves thoughtful questions, like "What are my values?" and "When do I feel most myself?" She encourages them to keep journals. She believes that writing down their thoughts and feelings strengthens their sense of self. Dr. Pipher asks girls to evaluate the culture around them with open eyes. Only after they understand the rules will they be able to resist negative cultural forces that could hurt them. She teaches patients to find a quiet place to think and reflect each day so that they feel centered. Dr. Pipher also asks girls to separate thinking from feeling, and to make decisions slowly and carefully.

Dr. Pipher teaches girls to establish and enforce reasonable boundaries. They learn to say "no" when someone tries to convince them to cross the line that they draw in the

sand. One of the areas that Dr. Pipher focuses on is the skill of defining relationships. Girls are socialized to think about other's needs before their own. They often find it difficult to voice their own needs. Dr. Pipher also shows girls that they can cope with pain. She teaches them how to process it and learn from it. Girls who do not learn this invaluable skill will run from their pain or express it in damaging ways. They may turn to alcohol, drugs, food, or self-mutilation to numb themselves.

Dr. Pipher helps girls cope with adolescence in other ways as well. She encourages them to use "time travel", a technique in which girls reflect on their past or future when they are having a bad day. Thinking about a happier time or even a difficult time can help them put things into perspective. Focusing on long-term goals helps them remain patient in spite of their frustration. Finally, Dr. Pipher teaches altruism. When girls focus on helping others, either through volunteer work or community service, they become less self-centered. They learn to look past the little tragedies of each day and see the bigger picture. They feel proud of their contributions to society. Dr. Pipher stresses that all girls need to find, define, and maintain their true selves. They must find a balance somewhere between being true to themselves and being nice to others.

Chapter 14, Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom

Chapter 14, Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom Summary and Analysis

In this chapter, Dr. Pipher reviews the histories of several strong young women. These are strong girls know who they are and value themselves. Girls who already have a purpose in life, like taking care of an ill parent or helping others, tend to fare better in adolescence. Strong girls usually have a close relationship with at least one family member, even in dysfunctional families. They maintain their childhood relationships and interests. They may be more perceptive than other girls their age. Some realize that they are being pressured by unhealthy cultural influences in their lives.

Ironically, Dr. Pipher notes that many female leaders, including Marie Curie, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Maya Angelou, describe being isolated as adolescents. As young girls, all refuse to acknowledge gender limitations. Dr. Pipher explains that isolation is often a blessing because it allows girls to develop a strong sense of self. Their happiness is not dependent on their relationships with others. Interestingly enough, Dr. Pipher points out that the girls who appear happiest in junior high do not necessarily become the healthiest adults. They may be less perceptive, less aware of all that is going on around them. They may be relatively comfortable, but their growth is limited.

Girls who participate in sports are often emotionally healthy. They see their bodies as functional, not decorative. They are involved in a peer group that is not defined by popularity, drug or alcohol use, wealth, or appearance. They learn that it is normal to lose sometimes and win at other times. They understand how to cooperate with others, and to handle stress and pressure. Their athletic skills may give them added confidence.

The first girl portrayed in this chapter is Margaret. Margaret develops at an early age, and the boys at her school begin making suggestive remarks around her. Her girlfriends are jealous, and they begin shunning her as well. Margaret begins avoiding school. She tries to commit suicide and eventually runs away. Ultimately, school officials intervene and Margaret returns to school. Dr. Pipher admires the way that Margaret resists the culture that she knows is wrong. Margaret vows that she will never let fear rule her life again. She promises to stand and fight.

Next, the reader meets June. June is twenty-seven years old, but she is new to dating. June describes a tragic adolescence. June's mother dies when she is a freshman in high school. Her father is distant and unloving. June often goes hungry and is isolated by her peers because she is overweight. June still becomes a strong woman, however. She works hard and knows that she is worthy of love. June's memory of her mother's love sustains her.

Caroline also describes a horrendous childhood filled with abuse and dysfunction. Caroline forms a lasting bond with another strong girl. The friends vow to help each other resist the temptation of drugs and sex. They both excel in school, in spite of their hellish home lives. Caroline's friendship and her drive to succeed make her strong and successful.

Next are Evonne and Maria. Evonne is African-American, and Maria is Hispanic. Both are unhappy in junior high, and both encounter racism. Yet both girls manage to excel and are happy by the time that they reach high school. They are bolstered by positive role models and extended family members that provide support. Unlike many adolescent girls, Evonne and Maria respect their parents and understand that they have lives of their own. They do not believe that their parents exist solely to make them happy.

Chapter 15, A Fence at the Top of the Hill

Chapter 15, A Fence at the Top of the Hill Summary and Analysis

Dr. Pipher opens this chapter with a description of a self-defense class that she attends with her daughter Sara. The class instructor shows a video about date rape to the all-female group. One in four women will be raped in her lifetime. Dr. Pipher explains that classes that teach women how to defend themselves against male attackers are not enough. This society needs classes that teach men how not to rape and hurt women. Dr. Pipher suggests workshops that teach men how to be gentle and loving.

In this final chapter, Dr. Pipher lists what parents can do to help their daughters. Parents need to listen to their daughters. It is important for them to validate their daughters' independent behavior. If problems arise, parents should remain calm. If daughters sense that their parents cannot handle stressful situations, they may stop confiding in them. Parents need to understand that adolescent girls are going through a developmental stage that may make them appear selfish and difficult. If girls suddenly seem out of sorts, parents should calmly ask them if something is wrong. They should seek out the real reason for their anxiety instead of focusing on their surface behavior.

Parents can educate their daughters about the critical choices that they face every day. This means discussing options, risks, implications, and consequences. They can teach intelligent resistance. Good parents model healthy male and female roles. Girls need to see the women in their homes treated as equals in order to demand that same treatment for themselves. It is a good idea for parents to become attentive to what goes on at their daughters' school. They should visit the school and get to know the girls' teachers.

Friendships with other kids of both sexes should be encouraged and kept low-key. Girls need to interact with boys in healthy ways that do not carry any expectations of sexual activity. Parents should downplay the importance of appearance and stress positive interests and peer relationships. Girls that travel, pursue hobbies, and interact with adults of different ages soon learn that life does not revolve around junior high.

Dr. Pipher also points to several necessary cultural changes. Parents can only do so much. Schools need to include more women's studies in their curriculum. Adolescent girls who are known for something other than their appearance or fame should be spotlighted for their achievements. Schools should promote science and math studies to young girls. Girls tend to be more comfortable in all-girl math and science classes. Schools that foster positive peer relationships through group activities might discourage abusive and mean-spirited cliques. Schools could teach more core values to offset the media onslaught of lookism and sexism.

Teachers need equity training. Even well-meaning teachers may be unintentionally reinforcing deeply ingrained gender stereotypes. Boys need help, too. Dr. Pipher suggests that American society needs to find a way to teach boys to be men without demeaning women. Boys need a model of manhood that is caring and bold, adventurous yet gentle. They need to feel good about themselves without objectifying or being violent toward young women. Young people need safe, supervised places where they can go to talk, dance, and play together, regardless of income. Adolescents need more positive media influences. They should be able to find more television programs that educate and enlighten them, not just persuade them to buy, buy, and buy. In order for adolescent girls to regain the happiness of their childhoods, many cultural changes are in order.

Characters

Dr. Pipher

Dr. Pipher is a clinical psychologist and best-selling author with over twenty years of counseling experience. She writes Reviving Ophelia from her own personal perspective and clearly defines the cultural changes that she feels are most needed. She describes her own adolescence growing up in a small community in the 1950s and '60s. Dr. Pipher is frustrated that she cannot draw upon her own childhood memories to help her young adolescent patients, but she feels that they are now living in a different world. In Chapter 12, Then and Now, Dr. Pipher recalls her own childhood in detail, including simple, expensive pleasures like bicycles, Hula-Hoops, and Monopoly games. She contrasts these recollections with the hobbies of her modern patients. Dr. Pipher recalls her first experience watching a television program at age six. Her patients now have access to countless cable channels.

Dr. Pipher remembers children growing up "outside of the money economy". Materialism is frowned upon in Dr. Pipher's small community, and people do not discuss each other's wealth or lack thereof. Alcohol use and divorce are uncommon. Dr. Pipher blames the American media for an increase in sexism, lookism, and violence against women. She suggests stronger controls over the programming and images to which young women are continually exposed. She believes that the constant objectification of women is directly responsible for increasing rape statistics.

Dr. Pipher also focuses on America's "cult of thinness" as a driving force in the lives of all women, especially young girls. She sadly points out that none of her female patients are comfortable with their bodies. Dr. Pipher refers to previously authored books on this subject, in which she explains why so many young girls develop eating disorders. Again, she faults the media and encourages social leaders to focus less on girls' appearance and more on their accomplishments. She asks for more realistic female role models on television as well. She quotes one of her patients who notices that even very intelligent female characters usually look "like Playboy bunnies" on television. Dr. Pipher believes that sweeping cultural changes, including sensitivity training for teachers and young boys, will have to be made in order to improve the lives of young adolescent girls.

Alice Miller

Dr. Pipher sometimes refers to Alice Miller's description of the process through which children must go in order to become whole. Miller believes that they are pressured to deny parts of themselves in order to please their parents. Dr. Pipher applies this idea to the development of adolescent girls as well. She imagines that Miller would describe strong girls as those who acknowledge every part of their true selves, not just the socially acceptable ones. Dr. Pipher describes Ms. Miller as "an expert on the sacrifice of wholeness".

In Miller's book, The Drama of the Gifted Child, she explains that some of her young patients lose their true selves as children. They seek parental approval instead of self-awareness. They will "disown" any traits that their parents do not embrace, including sexuality and anger. Miller believes that the loss of the child's true self is so traumatic that patients repress the experience. She compares adults with "false" selves to authentic adults who acknowledge all emotions, including pain, in an honest way. She calls the authentic self's state of acceptance as "vibrancy".

Dr. Pipher believes that Miller's depiction of this process is accurate, with one exception. While Miller blames parents for the split between the true "authentic" self and the false self, Pipher blames popular culture. She sees her patients' parents struggling to protect their daughters, not condemn them for expressing their emotions. Parents encourage their daughters to stay involved in childhood activities, but society urges them to grow up all too soon.

Margaret Mead

Dr. Pipher often refers to the beliefs of Margaret Mead. Mead believes that the ideal culture is one in which a place can be found for every human gift. Dr. Pipher feels that Western culture falls far short of this ideal. She also describes Mead as one of the famous women studied in Chapter 14. She states that all of the strong women in the study have in common time by themselves, "the ability to fall in love with an idea", and a refusal to acknowledge gender limitations.

Polly

Polly is introduced at the beginning of the book as Dr. Pipher's young cousin. Pipher describes Polly as "energy in motion". Polly is active, confident, and androgynous as a child, but she struggles with adolescence. Polly becomes less of a tomboy and more submissive in order to be accepted and again welcomed by her peers. Dr. Pipher lists Polly's case as an example of the type of androgynous existence that most young girls experience before their teen years change them forever.

Simone de Beauvoir

Dr. Pipher refers to author Simone de Beauvoir's observations about adolescent girls. Simone de Beauvoir believes that girls realize in adolescence that men have all of the power in society. They learn that they must be submissive in order to be accepted. They do not suffer from the penis envy of which Freud speaks. According to Simone de Beauvoir, these girls suffer from power envy. They all become "female impersonators", whose sole concern is pleasing others. De Beauvoir defines female strength as remaining the subject of one's life and resisting the cultural pressure to become the object of male experience.

Hillary Rodham Clinton

In the preface to Reviving Ophelia, Dr. Pipher refers to several other prominent women, including Hillary Rodham Clinton, who share her concerns regarding adolescent girls. She laments the fact that Hillary Rodham Clinton is called a "bitch" just because she is a competent, healthy adult female. Dr. Pipher hopes that famous, powerful women like Hillary Rodham Clinton will act as catalysts for change in the future of popular American culture. She believes that young adolescent women could be empowered by seeing prominent, strong female figures in the media.

Dr. Pipher's Patients

Dr. Pipher presents numerous patient case histories in the book. Some of her patients are recovering from the trauma of sexual violence or suffering from eating disorders. Many come from broken families, but all adolescent patients report struggling with the same issues. They are constantly under assault at school, from their male peers, female peers, and even their teachers. Their smallest disappointment can become a major trauma. One patient attempts suicide after her parents refuse to buy her a car. Another hates her mother because she has to clean her room and eat meals. Dr. Pipher provides the reader with a unique insight into the circumstances facing each patient, along with recommendations for change.

Barbara Kerr

Barbara Kerr is the author of a book entitled, Smart Girls, Gifted Women, in which the lives of several famous female figures are examined. Kerr notes that each of the women, including Marie Curie, Gertrude Stein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Mead, Georgia O'Keeffe, Maya Angelou, and Beverly Sills are rejected by their peers during adolescence. Dr. Pipher speculates that this social isolation actually insulates the women from some of the peer pressure that other girls face. With time to themselves, these women have the opportunity to reflect upon their innermost thoughts and develop their unique gifts.

Young Women in America

Dr. Pipher writes this book in the hope that counselors, educators, and other influential members of society will address the problems that are damaging America's young adolescent girls. Dr. Pipher explains the enormous pressure placed upon these girls in great detail. It is not surprising that some girls fail to thrive in this environment. Eating disorders, depression, self-mutilation, promiscuity, and alcohol and drug abuse are rampant. These young women are being asked to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to become adults. Dr. Pipher suggests exposing girls to more positive female role models, incorporating more female-driven works into their studies, and working with teachers and parents to improve the situation.

I.K. Broverman

A psychologist, Broverman conducts a now classic experiment in which men and woman are asked to categorize the characteristics of healthy adults, healthy men, and healthy women. Results show that the participants believe that healthy men and healthy adults have the same qualities. They are active, independent, and logical. In contrast, healthy women are described as passive, dependent, and illogical. In fact, it is impossible to score as both a healthy woman and a healthy adult in Broverman's experiment.

Objects/Places

Lookism

Dr. Pipher describes lookism as a determination of woman's value based solely on appearance. Dr. Pipher cites lookism, especially in the media, as a contributing factor in the increase in eating disorders in America.

False Self

Dr. Pipher often refers to Alice Miller's work in which children split into two selves. The false self is the face that they present to the world, while the true "authentic" self is repressed.

Authentic Self

As the opposite of the false self, the authentic or "true" self is the ideal for all people, not just girls. A person is only truly authentic when he/she acknowledges all feelings honestly and does not suppress them.

Acquaintance Rape

Acquaintance rape is the ultimate sexual violation committed on a woman by a man whom she trusts. Dr. Pipher observes that often after an attack, girls who are raped by someone that they know fear everyone. Able to trust no one, they are often permanently traumatized. In addition, many acquaintance rapists claim that the sex is consensual, which can have huge social repercussions for girls who may be shunned by their peers when this occurs.

Bulimia

Bulimia is the most common eating disorder in the United States. Dr. Pipher explains that bulimia is a highly addictive behavior that is very difficult to treat. Bulimics are often out of control and secretive about their eating habits. Many adolescent girls binge and purge to calm themselves. Bulimics have an increased risk of alcohol abuse as well.

Anorexia

Anorexia has the highest rate of fatality of all mental disorders. Many anorexic girls are bright overachievers with tendencies toward perfectionism. When their lives feel out of control, anorexics comfort themselves by controlling their eating. Dr. Pipher believes

that popular culture's emphasis on lookism and membership in "the cult of thinness" reinforces the distorted concepts that may increase girls' risk for anorexic behavior.

Self-Mutilation

Oddly enough, young girls may cut or burn themselves to reduce anxiety. Girls who constantly suppress their emotions in an attempt to appear more "ladylike" may use self-destructive behaviors in order to express their pain. Over time, self-mutilation can become an addictive behavior such as bulimia. Girls must learn positive ways to express their emotions and relieve stress in order to break the addiction.

Support Groups

Dr. Pipher advises many of her young patients to attend a support group, especially if they find themselves caught in the throes of an addiction. Often, girls feel reassured once they realize that they are not the only girl who has problems. Women who are struggling can be an enormous source of support for one another. By talking about their feelings, support group members stop suppressing their emotions and begin to heal.

Misogyny

Misogyny is the hatred of women and all things female. American culture is very misogynistic in that it values the accomplishments of men more than those of women. Dr. Pipher points out that this concept is so ingrained into American life that most people act in misogynistic ways without even realizing it. Even teachers subconsciously favor male students and reinforce gender stereotypes in the classroom.

Feminism

Feminism, or the women's movement as it is often called, is a term used to describe all programs and initiatives created to abolish women's inequality in America.

Themes

Trees

Throughout the book, Dr. Pipher describes adolescent girls as fragile young trees swaying in the onslaught of an ominous storm or hurricane. Indeed, the first chapter is entitled, "Saplings in the Storm". The storm threatening the girls represents the weight of popular culture as it tries to force them to become less than their true selves. The girls' families are the root systems that will either hold the girls steady or contribute to their decay. Parents represent the girls' shelter from the storm. Dr. Pipher points out that girls whose parents divorce often witness their root systems literally being split apart. She also observes that strong girls manage to hold onto some sense of themselves, even in the face of the storm's high winds. These girls have a strong sense of place that gives them roots. They know themselves, and they know that the negative influences surrounding them are clearly wrong. Dr. Pipher repeatedly refers to the winds of adolescence that girls are forced to weather as they attempt to establish their own unique identities without losing their true selves.

It is clear that young girls must suffer through the storm in order to travel safely to the promise of adulthood on the other side. They must hold onto whatever they can in order to stay firm, rooted, and grounded. Dr. Pipher also warns that the storm is intensifying in America. She explains, "This book is an attempt to share what I have seen and heard. It's a hurricane warning, a message to the culture that something important is happening. This is a National Weather Service bulletin from the storm center".

Dr. Pipher points out, however, that no storm lasts forever. Although it may feel like the storm will never end, girls that survive junior high usually notice that "the winds of the hurricane are dying down". They become more mature at this time and less self-centered. They learn how to weather change more effectively as they emerge into the sunlight. Dr. Pipher hopes that one day American culture will encourage young girls to "flourish like green trees under the sun and the stars".

Flowers

Chapter 14 is entitled, "Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom". Dr. Pipher repeatedly describes young girls as different types of flowers. One of her early patients explains, "I'm a perfectly good carrot that everyone is trying to turn into a rose. As a carrot, I have good color and a nice leafy top. When I'm carved into a rose, I turn brown and wither". Dr. Pipher describes twenty-seven-year-old June as "one of those succulent desert flowers that remain dormant for so many reasons and then bloom lavishly when there is a smattering of rain". June has a difficult childhood full of neglect and suffering, but she comes into her own as an adult and begins to flourish.

Dr. Pipher returns to the flower analogy when she expresses concern over the results of an exercise that asks young girls and boys to select which living creature they would most like to be. While boys primarily choose predatory animals like lions and bears, most girls select cuddly, small animals like koala bears. One girl actually wants to be a rose. This choice upsets Dr. Pipher most of all, for she believes that this girl is already giving up. As she points out, a rose has no power and no voice. It is beautiful, but fragile. It does not feel anything. Sadly, it cannot even move.

Dr. Pipher also warns against the creation of girls suffering from the "princess and the pea syndrome". She calls these girls hothouse flowers. If girls are protected too much, they become unable to withstand stress. They cannot handle the challenges of the outside world. Girls must gradually experience autonomy in order to bloom. Parents must provide a home base while resisting the urge to smother their daughters. Too much protection will stunt girls' growth just as easily as a life of neglect would. Girls must endure pain in order to learn how best to cope with it. By surviving it, they learn that pain will not kill them. They can overcome it and work through it.

Getting Lost at Sea

Dr. Pipher advises her young female patients to make North Star decisions. When they feel as though they are drifting in a storm of emotion and confusion, she directs them to locate true North. The North Star represents their true selves, and the voices of their parents, friends, and the media are symbolized by the winds on either side. They must listen to their true selves in order to chart their course in life. They cannot allow their boat to be tossed about on rough seas. Instead, they must stay the course, resisting the temptation to go whichever way the wind blows. The winds are not constant and true, but the North Star is always in the same part of the sky where they can find it. It keeps them from getting lost at sea. Dr. Pipher explains that true freedom can only be obtained by following the North Star. If girls succumb to the voices and temptations blowing in the winds around them, Dr. Pipher warns them that they will not find freedom, but simply toss their boats about in circles upon the water. She describes freedom as "sailing toward your dreams".

Dr. Pipher also depicts young girls as boats drifting without centerboards. They are struggling to find themselves in a world with little guidance. Chapter Three is subtitled, "I'm Not Waving, I'm Drowning", in reference to the Stevie Smith poem that describes a woman frantically waving for help as she is pulled under, only to have the witnesses on the shore smile and wave back at her, unaware that she is dying. This description accurately depicts the behavior of adolescent girls, since they tend to be very secretive about their pain. They internalize painful emotions in order to appear more pleasing and feminine. Dr. Pipher repeatedly laments the fact that young American girls are expected to distance themselves from their parents at the precise time that they most need to grasp their hands.

In a reference to the title of the book, Dr. Pipher describes Hamlet's tragic Ophelia. As a girl, Ophelia is happy and free. When she reaches adolescence, however, she begins to

lose herself. She falls in love with Hamlet and bases her happiness solely upon his approval. When Hamlet eventually rejects her, Ophelia loses her mind. She, too, is lost at sea. The weight of her beautiful, feminine clothing weighs her down, and Ophelia sadly drowns in a flower-filled stream. Dr. Pipher explains that Ophelia dies because she is unable to grow. By becoming the object of others' lives, Ophelia loses herself in every way.

Style

Perspective

Dr. Pipher is a clinical psychologist with over twenty years of experience. She grew up in a small Midwestern town in the 1950s, and she strives to help her patients overcome the obstacles in their lives today. She wrote Reviving Ophelia with the hope of reaching parents, educators, and other youth leaders with her concerns about the environment in which these girls are growing to adulthood. She dispels traditional gender stereotypes.

Dr. Pipher points to many conflicting forces that make young girls miserable. Schools are inadequate. Girls study primarily about men in class. They read His-tory. They learn about the evolution of Man-kind. Teachers are inevitably biased toward the boys in the classroom. Sexual harassment and cliques are prevalent in American junior high schools. Many adolescent girls direct their pain toward alcohol, drugs, or self-mutilation. The threat of rape is chillingly real.

Families also often reinforce negative gender stereotypes. Girls are expected to do more chores than boys do. Parents may focus more on their daughters' appearance than their accomplishments. Popular culture plays a powerful role. The mainstream media sends negative messages to young, impressionable girls. Dr. Pipher believes that broad cultural changes are in order if the problems of adolescent girls are to be resolved.

Tone

The book is written in a very subjective tone. Although the author comes from a very conservative background, her ideas are liberal. She defensively explains that she writes about girls because she is familiar with them. Dr. Pipher is an ardent feminist. She disapproves of corporal punishment, and finds it perfectly acceptable for teenagers to illegally experiment with alcohol and drugs. She describes a lesbian teenager as a success story because she is so self-aware and accepted by her mother as an individual.

As a woman, a daughter, and a mother, Dr. Pipher empathizes with all of these groups. Her views do appear somewhat biased. Although she acknowledges that some families are dysfunctional, she blames most of her patients' problems on popular culture. The mainstream media is a particular point of contention for Dr. Pipher. She speaks out against movies like Pretty Woman, and is dismayed by her clients' idolization of Prince and Madonna. She explains her particular disgust with popular music videos and lyrics. She is repulsed by corporate American and all of its commercial goals. She blames the media for teenagers' predisposition to materialism and greed.

Readers of this book may have very polarized feelings about it. This book may really strike a chord with female readers who see themselves in the text. Although Dr. Pipher

clearly cares about her patients and wants to help them, her tone can appear condescending at times, however, even smug. Due to her liberal political views and defense of polarizing political figures like Hillary Clinton, some more conservative readers may be offended. Her writing is definitely pro-female. She does not stoop to overt male bashing, but the picture that she paints of teenage males is not that attractive. She clearly empathizes more with the females in the book, especially mothers. The book is written as a guide for parents, educators, and other psychologists, and Dr. Pipher is clear about what needs to be done to solve the problems of America's adolescent girls.

Structure

The format of the book is fairly simple. The book is comprised of a preface and fifteen chapters. Most of the chapters discuss one of the major forces affecting the lives of young adolescent women. An entire chapter is dedicated to divorce. One chapter discusses mothers, and the next covers fathers. Most of the information is presented in the form of patient case histories. Dr. Pipher usually summarizes each chapter, but not always, so occasionally the reader is left wondering what conclusions they should draw from the last case study.

Dr. Pipher sometimes previews a case study that has not been presented yet, which can be a bit disconcerting for the reader. There is a bit of obscenity in the book, mainly in the form of the girls' ravings about life and their families. It is not widespread, but it can be a bit shocking at times. The book is exceptionally easy to read. The adolescent girls portrayed in the book would probably have no difficulty reading it themselves.

Quotes

"You all die at 15." Chap. 1, p. 19

"Young girls slowly bury their childhood, put away their independent and imperious selves and submissively enter adult existence." Chap. 1, p. 21

"Girls stop being and start seeming." Chap. 1, p. 22

"The world tells us what we are to be and shapes us by the ends it sets before us. To men it says, work. To us, it says, seem. The less a woman has in her head the lighter she is for carrying." Chap. 1, p. 22

"All geniuses born women are lost to the public good." Chap. 1, p. 22

"This is when girls learn to be nice rather than honest." Chap. 2, p. 39

"Girls are supposed to smile. If I'm having a bad day, teachers and kids tell me to smile. I've never heard them say that to a guy." Chap. 2, p. 39

"America today is a girl-destroying place." Chap. 2, p. 44

"It is what we cannot see that makes us sick." Chap. 2, p. 44

"Intelligent resistance keeps the true self alive." Chap. 2, p. 44

"I hurl you into the universe and pray." Chap. 3, p. 51

"Every day in the life of a woman is a walking Miss America Contest." Chap. 3, p. 55

"To have a self, daughters must reject parts of their mothers." Chap. 5, p. 104

"I understand my parents' point that looks aren't that important in adulthood, but I'm not in adulthood." Chap. 8, p. 147

"I figure that if I'm fat enough, maybe guys will leave me alone." Chap. 9, p. 182

"Life is suffering." Chap. 10, p. 202

"They want me to have sex so they won't feel guilty. I won't help them out that way." Chap. 11, p. 204

Topics for Discussion

Discuss your own memories of adolescence. How do they compare to the experiences described in the book? Do any of the patients or families mentioned seem familiar? If so, which ones?

Dr. Pipher blames popular culture, especially the media, for many of the problems facing adolescent girls today. Do you agree or disagree? Explain why.

Do you feel that females are valued less than males at your school? Do teachers call on boys more often? Are female students encouraged in science and math classes? Discuss and provide examples.

Do you agree with Dr. Pipher's recommendation to introduce moderate drinking in the home? Why or why not? What impact do you think it would have on drunken driving arrests among teenagers?

For which patient do you feel the most empathy? The least? Why?

Dr. Pipher describes the American culture of thinness. Do you feel pressure to be thin? Do you know anyone with an eating disorder? What do you think causes anorexia and bulimia?

Do you feel that sports and other activities help adolescents relieve stress? Why or why not?

Which patient's case seemed the worst to you? The best? Explain.

Do you feel that boys need to be socialized to avoid rape and violence against women? Discuss how that would best be accomplished.

Reviving Ophelia was written in the 1990s before the Internet explosion. Discuss how you think that the Internet has made the problem worse or better.