The Satanic Verses Study Guide

The Satanic Verses by Salman Rushdie

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

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

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

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* rapidly became one of the most widely known and controversial books in the world when it was published in 1988. Reviled by much of the international Muslim community, the novel was banned in India and protested across the world for its portrayal of certain sensitive topics such as the wives of the chief Islamic prophet Muhammad and the infallibility of the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an. After the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini issued a "fatwa," or Islamic judicial decree, that Rushdie and those involved in the publication of the book be killed, the novel made headline news across the globe and inspired a diplomatic crisis between countries, including Britain and Iran.

Although *The Satanic Verses* does address the religious beliefs and practices of Islam, this is only one aspect of a complex and highly allusive novel that produces a broad and ambitious commentary about the philosophical and religious problem of good and evil. In fact, Rushdie's novel is steeped in commentary about British and South Asian politics and culture; it takes on a diverse variety of themes involving cultural and racial identities (particularly Asian and African immigrant identities), and it is concerned with literary aesthetics and the nature of truth. All of these ideas are incorporated into an eventful storyline involving Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, two characters with complex British/Indian identities caught in an epic battle that takes place between London and Bombay in the 1980s. Both of the main characters begin to take on supernatural qualities and visit alternate worlds, such as that of Gibreel's extended dreams about the Islamic prophet Muhammad. *The Satanic Verses* has been widely misunderstood and defamed, but it has also fascinated its readers, opened up an international debate about censorship and the function of literature, and confirmed Rushdie's status as one of the most important contemporary writers in the English language.

Author Biography

Rushdie was born on June 19, 1947 to a prosperous family in Bombay, India. Although his background was Muslim, Rushdie was not brought up as a believer. He was sent away when he was thirteen to a private education in England, where he was harassed by his peers, and Rushdie's family joined him in Kensington, London, between 1962 and 1964 before moving to Pakistan. Rushdie attended King's College, Cambridge, graduating in 1968 with a master's degree in history. After living briefly in Pakistan, Rushdie moved back to England and worked in advertising, publishing, and television.

Rushdie wrote one novel that was rejected and abandoned two others before publishing his first novel, *Grimus* (1975). This debut was unsuccessful, and Rushdie began to work for the Camden Committee for Community Relations assisting Bangladeshi immigrants. *Midnight's Children*, his second novel, was published in 1981 and won Britain's prestigious Booker Prize, launching Rushdie to fame in Britain and South Asia. While this novel takes India and Indo-British relations as its main subject, *Shame* (1983) focuses on Pakistan. During the 1980s, Rushdie also wrote a travelogue about Nicaragua and pursued his interest in film, producing two documentaries.

The infamous series of events that followed the publication of *The Satanic Verses* in 1988 began when, immediately after its publication, Muslims across the world began to protest. The novel was banned in India, copies of it were burned publicly, and a number of demonstrators were killed or injured when protests turned violent in India and Pakistan. In February of 1989, the Ayatollah Khomeini, who was the Muslim religious and political leader of Iran, issued a fatwa that the author and all those involved with the publication of the book were sentenced to death. Rushdie went into hiding, not to emerge until 1995, while three people involved with the book were attacked, including the Japanese translator, who was killed. Since then, Rushdie has continued to publish short stories and novels including *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995). He splits his time between London, New York, and India, where he was granted a visa to return in 1999 after years of exile.

Plot Summary

The story of *The Satanic Verses* chronicles an ancient legend about the Prophet Muhammad, founder of the Islamic religion. Legend has it that Muhammad, who received the Word of God directly from the Archangel Gabriel, was one day tricked by the devil into including satanic verses in the holy book of the Qur'an. Salman Rushdie's fictional version of this tale features the Prophet Mahound, founder of a religion called Submission. The social and political pressures faced by the very human Mahound tempt him to speak false verses to the people of Jahilia in the hopes of gaining personal power and prestige. Mahound repents of his actions and recants the satanic verses. His disciples applaud his courage in standing up to the pressures placed upon him by the evil Grandee of Jahilia and his beautiful wife, Hind. As Mahound's power grows, he triumphs over his former enemies and all the citizens of Jahilia become his converts. The beautiful, yet vicious, Hind seeks revenge against the prophet. She kills him on behalf of the goddess Al-Lat, but her revenge comes too late. Mahound's death does not stop the spread of Submission and he leaves behind countless followers to continue along his path.

The story of the prophet is the heart and soul of the novel, but it is just one of many stories in this ambitious, sweeping saga. The primary plot line, from which all of the other tales spring, is the story of Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta. These two men, both Indians and both actors, are in every other respect polar opposites. Together, they miraculously survive a fall from an exploding airplane, yet their survival comes at a price. When they wake up on the shores of the English Channel, they find themselves transformed. Farishta has taken on the appearance of an angel and Chamcha has grown the horns and cloven hoofs of the devil. Through this remarkable story of transformation, the author explores the prejudices which immigrants face in the Western world. Ultimately, it is clear that appearances can be deceiving, since Farishta's angelic aspect masks a violent rage. Saladin Chamcha's satanic look proves to be merely a projection of the negative image he harbors about his Indian roots. By the end of the novel, Chamcha decides he will not be judged by his looks and embraces the ethnic diversity which he once found loathsome. Through these two memorable characters, *The Satanic Verses* explores a peaceful resolution of the tensions caused by the collision of two religions and two diverse cultures.

Plot Summary

The Angel Gibreel

The Satanic Verses begins with a description of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha falling from a plane into the English Channel and surviving. Gibreel is flying to London to find his lover, Alleluia Cone, while Saladin is coming home from an acting gig in Bombay. Before blowing up the plane, terrorists hijack their jumbo jet and hold them captive for one hundred and ten days, during which time Gibreel fights against the sleep that brings him vivid religious dreams.

Mahound

Chapter 2 dramatizes Gibreel's dream about the experience of the chief Islamic prophet Muhammad, whom the narrator calls Mahound, in the city of Jahilia. It refers to Muhammad's period of persecution in Mecca and the episode in which several "satanic verses" were alleged to have been told to Muhammad and later expunged from the Qur'an. After several confrontations with the Grandee of Jahilia, his wife, and the poet Baal, Mahound flees the city.

Ellowen Deeowen

An old Englishwoman named Rosa Diamond finds Gibreel and Saladin washed up on the seashore and nurses them back to health. Saladin has begun to take on the features of the devil while Gibreel appears to have a halo around his head. Saladin calls home, but quickly hangs up after a man answers, and then the police come to arrest him and beat him brutally. A physiotherapist named Hyacinth nurses Saladin back to health and then escapes with him; Saladin returns home to find his wife in bed with his friend, Jumpy Joshi. Meanwhile, Gibreel escapes from Rosa Diamond, who had been immersing him in the secret love story of her past. Gibreel wanders through London until he finds Allie Cone.

Ayesha

Chapter 4 is another of Gibreel's dream visions, beginning with the Imam of Desh, who is an exile in London until he forces Gibreel to accompany him to witness the revolution in his home country. This episode refers to the 1979 Islamic fundamentalist revolution in Iran. Gibreel then dreams of Mirza Saeed Akhtar's passion for Ayesha, who claims to be a prophet, and informs Mirza Saeed that his wife Mishal has cancer. Ayesha convinces the entire village to go on a pilgrimage by foot to Mecca, announcing that God will part the Arabian Sea for them.

A City Visible but Unseen

Jumpy takes Saladin□who is becoming more and more like the conventional image of the devil□to the Shaandaar Bed & Breakfast, where Saladin discovers that he has lost his job, that his wife has become pregnant by Jumpy, and that Gibreel is going to make his dreams into movies. Enraged, Saladin becomes larger and is taken to the Hot Wax nightclub, where he loses his supernatural qualities and swears revenge on Gibreel. Gibreel, meanwhile, lives passionately with Allie but becomes consumed by jealousy and leaves her apartment to wander London believing that he is an archangel. He fails in his quest to announce the message of God and finds his way back to Allie's doorstep.

Return to Jahilia

The next section of Gibreel's dream narrative□which many Muslims consider offensive and blasphemous□describe Mahound's conquest of Jahilia. Salman the Persian complains to Baal of the problems and absurdities of Mahound's sacred verses, particularly their treatment of women. Mahound spares the lives of all of his former enemies in Jahilia, except Baal, who hides in a brothel and marries its twelve prostitutes that have taken the names of Mahound's wives in order to attract clients. Baal is eventually found and executed, but Hind, who pretended to convert to Islam, has been practicing black magic and manages to summon the devil Al-Lat to kill Mahound.

The Angel Azraeel

Saladin goes home and informs Pamela that he will live in the house for the time being, despite her continued affair with Jumpy. Jumpy is deferential to Saladin and invites him to partake in their protests against the incarceration of Uhuru Simba for the series of "Granny Ripper Murders" that have shaken London. Saladin then meets Gibreel again at a party hosted by S. S. Sisodia and begins to take his revenge by arousing Gibreel's mad jealousy. Soon, Saladin drives Gibreel to smash Allie's precious possessions and leave her, which Allie will not forgive. Gibreel comes to believe that he is the angel of destruction, Azraeel, while riots involving Asians and Blacks break out after Uhuru Simba is killed in prison and revealed not to have been the murderer. Jumpy and Pamela die in a fire related to the riots, and Saladin attempts to save the Sufyan family from a fire in the Shaandaar Café but he collapses and is saved instead by Gibreel.

The Parting of the Arabian Sea

In the hospital with Saladin, Gibreel dreams the conclusion of the narrative involving the pilgrimage of Ayesha and the villagers of Titlipur. Mirza Saeed follows the pilgrims in his station wagon, urging them to turn back, but they follow Ayesha despite a number of calamities and walk into the sea. Some say they walked directly into heaven, but the episode is based on the real events of 1983 in which thirty-eight Muslim pilgrims

drowned in the Arabian Sea believing that the waters would open for them. Mirza Saeed returns home, where he starves to death.

A Wonderful Lamp

Eighteen months after the fires, Saladin flies home because his father is dying of cancer, and they are reconciled. Saladin inherits his father's fortune and takes up with Reeny Vakil. Meanwhile, Gibreel has begun an unsuccessful comeback tour, making movies of his dreams; he is haunted by his jealousy and Allie's refusal to be reconciled with him. After killing Sisodia and throwing Allie from Everest Vilas, Gibreel shows up in Saladin's father's home, takes a revolver out of Chamcha's magic lamp, and shoots himself.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Two men free-fall toward the sea from a great height. They are Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, both actors and the only two men destined to survive the explosion of Flight A1-420. As pieces of the burning wreckage crash all around the falling men, they hold onto each other for dear life. Gibreel sees the specter of a former lover, Rekha Merchant, who curses him to a life from hell. Chamcha does not see her, but he is gripped with some indescribable power and commands Gibreel to sing. Gibreel sings and the song gives him the power to fly. He flaps his arms and the two men descend safely to the beach. After relating this miracle, the narrator intrudes to pose the central questions of the story: "Chamcha willed it and Farishta did what was willed.

"Which was the miracle worker?

"Of what type - angelic, satanic - was Farishta's song?

"Who am I?" (pg. 10)

Gibreel Farishta has already chosen to vanish from his life shortly before his plane goes down over the English Channel. He leaves behind a farewell note in his home in Everest Vilas that says, "*We are creatures of air, Our roots in dreams And clouds, reborn In flight*." (pg. 13) He also leaves behind an extremely successful film career. Born Ismail Najmuddin in British Poona, he has become the face of the gods in Indian film. As a budding actor, he takes his stage name in tribute to his mother, who called him her *farishta*, her angel. The first name, Gibreel, he takes in honor of Archangel Gibreel (Gabriel). After the death of his parents, the young Farishta is taken in by the head of his father's guild, Babasaheb Mhatre, who arranges for Gibreel to audition for a major film magnate. Babasaheb, an amateur psychic, also first introduces Gibreel to the spirit world and interests him in the concept of reincarnation. When Gibreel decides to leave behind his life in India, he is seeking rebirth.

Throughout his career, Farishta has routinely filmed eleven movies at once using an organizational system which he learned from his father, who had been one of the fabled lunch-runners of Bombay working under Babasaheb. After a dramatic bout with illness, Gibreel has in recent years reduced his schedule to only seven movies at a time. Because of this, upon his disappearance, there are seven panicked movie producers left in the lurch. The tabloids print speculative rumors and a copy of his farewell note. Gibreel's former mistress, Rekha Merchant, reads the note and jumps off the roof of Everest Vilas, where she lives with her husband and three children. She tosses her children over the side to their deaths before jumping herself.

Once he vanishes, Gibreel's image gradually fades from the public consciousness, but Rekha does not fade from Gibreel's mind. Of all the women Farishta has loved and left

over the years, Rekha is the only one who ever demanded respect. He does not give it, of course, but Rekha always makes him suffer before giving her forgiveness, unlike the myriad other women who have always forgiven him everything instantly. She is also practically the only woman in India who does not visit him at his bedside when the famous actor is brought to the point of death by a mysterious disease. Farishta recovers from that illness, but loses his faith, believing that Allah has abandoned him. Three days before he decides to disappear from his life by boarding Flight A1-420, he makes a public spectacle of himself by eating forbidden bacon in an apparent protest or rebellion against Allah. That night he also meets and instantly falls in love with a woman who witnesses the bacon incident. Her name is Alleluia Cone. Allie reminds him that Allah gave Farishta his life back from his deadly disease. He spends three days locked away in her passionate embrace. When Rekha offers to forgive Farishta for his dalliance with Allie Cone, Gibreel tells her he does not want forgiveness. He leaves Rekha forever, or so he thinks, for Rekha's suicide coincides with Gibreel's plunge from Flight A1-420. Her ghost promises to haunt him for his sins.

Saladin Chamcha also flies out of India on Flight A1-420, after his first visit back to the land of his birth in many years. Born Salahuddin Chamchawala, he has spent his life ridding himself of all traces of his Bombay accent with the intent of fitting into Western society. Even as a boy, he dreams of London, spelling it out: *Ellowen deeowen*. Partly his desire to leave India behind stems from his conflict with his father, Changez. The elder Chamchawala stifles Saladin's desires, as symbolized by the story of the lost wallet. Saladin, as a boy, finds a wallet filled with cash. His father confiscates the wallet, saying his son should avoid dirty things like money. A few years later, Saladin's father offers his son a British education. Saladin leaps at the chance. When they arrive in London, his father returns the wallet, complete with cash, to Saladin, but he then insists that Saladin pay all the bills. By the time Changez returns to India, Saladin is left penniless. Their relationship continues to deteriorate. Saladin's first visit home from school leaves his parents feeling that Saladin is ashamed of them and of his Indian heritage. Shortly after that visit, his mother dies and within a year, Saladin's father remarries another woman with the same name as his first wife, Nasreen. This inspires an exchange of vicious letters between father and son. By the time of Saladin's graduation from college, he and Changez are estranged.

Changez Chamchawala develops an obsession with religion in later years and believes the estrangement between father and son is because Saladin is possessed by demons. Saladin finds his father's new faith unsettling, since Saladin had been raised with very little discussion of Allah. Saladin turns away from his past and creates a new life with his trophy wife, Pamela Lovelace. Pale-skinned Pamela represents to Saladin everything British. By winning her hand, he feels his transformation is complete. The marriage is rocky because he neither loves nor respects her, but he does not allow himself to see this because he needs Pamela to complete his role as a Western guy. He surprises himself when he goes to bed with a dark-skinned Indian woman within forty-eight hours of landing in Bombay. Saladin has come back to his former home to perform a British play on-stage. Zeeny Vakil, his sudden mistress, tempts him to reclaim his Indian heritage. She teases him about his re-emerging Bombay accent and makes no secret of

her desire to bring him back into the fold. Zeeny laughs at his Westernization of the name Chamchawala; Chamcha, in their native tongue, means toady.

One night, Zeeny takes Saladin out to a bar with a couple of her friends. She tries to shelter him from the violent stories they tell. After a few drinks, Zeeny admits to liking Saladin partly because "foreign goods" like him are more attractive than her local friends, who are all poor, have drinking problems and mistreat their wives. Conversation at the bar turns into an impassioned, angry debate about local crime and Saladin is overcome with the feeling that India does not welcome him back and seeks to punish him for his desertion. Later, he lies in bed with Zeeny, telling her of his mansion back home and his life with Pamela. When Zeeny finds out he is a voice-over actor, she mocks him for allowing the English to use his voice while hiding his face. She begs him to come home to India, where his handsome face can grace the big screen along with his voice.

Saladin replies that he has only returned to see his father. Five days a week, Changez lives with his second wife, Nasreen, in the movie star district of Pali Hill, but on weekends, he lives at the house where Saladin grew up, in Scandal Point, with the memory of his first wife, Nasreen. Zeeny insists on accompanying Saladin to Scandal Point. On the way, Saladin tells Zeeny about the tradition in his hometown of planting a walnut tree when a child is born. When the child comes of age, he or she can chop down their birth tree and sell it to finance a wedding or start a nest egg. Saladin's walnut tree is still in the garden at Scandal Point and his father claims to keep Saladin's soul in the tree to protect it from the demons which inhabit Saladin. When Saladin arrives at the door, he is greeted by his childhood servant, Vallabh. The entire house is a moldering memorial to Saladin's mother, Nasreen. His father has left everything exactly the way Nasreen kept it.

When Saladin learns that his father pays Vallabh's wife, Kasturba, to pretend to be Nasreen, he is disgusted and screams out a lifetime's worth of complaints about his father. Changez responds that it's time Saladin lets go of his anger over the past and becomes his own man. Changez has a complaint, too. He tells it to Zeeny, asking her to decide who is right. His complaint is that Saladin has burned his bridges with India and left Changez without a son to follow in his footsteps. Zeeny sides with Changez and Saladin leaves the house. A few days later, Saladin gets a package from his father that contains the ashes of the walnut tree plus the money from its sale. Saladin refuses to see Zeeny again, but she shows up for one last try at converting him to the Indian lifestyle. "'I didn't want you to stay for me,' she said. 'For some reason, I wanted it for you.'" (pg. 72) They part with bitter words.

On the plane, Saladin feels his voice return to its normal English refinement. However, he is unsettled to see a familiar woman on the plane, a woman he dreamt about the night before. In his dream, she was a bomb-carrying hijacker and when he sees her pace the aisles with a baby, he fears the baby is nothing more than a bundle of dynamite. Saladin puts the superstitious thought out of his mind and makes conversation with his neighbor, an American anti-Darwin religious missionary named

Eugene Dumsday. Saladin laughs at the American, realizing that the man has failed to recognize why he was mocked and disliked in India.

Just then, four armed hijackers storm the aisles. The three men and one woman force the pilot to land. The plane and fifty of its passengers become stranded for one hundred and one days, as negotiations with the hijackers drag on. Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta are among the unlucky fifty. During the long days, Chamcha and Farishta get to know each other. Chamcha learns that Farishta has hideously bad breath and a bad habit of insulting people without noticing. Farishta jokes about Saladin's Anglicized name, teasing him that Chamcha means spoon in their language. Farishta avoids sleep whenever possible and eventually reveals to Chamcha that he has been plagued with dreams in which he becomes the Archangel Gibreel. He is afraid he's going mad. Chamcha doesn't think much of it under the circumstances, but as time wears on, Farishta develops a theory that they and all the hostages are actually dead and undergoing reincarnation. Farishta also speaks obsessively of Allie Cone. He thinks he left her behind because he was afraid of their love. Chamcha and the others get increasingly irritated by Farishta and by the long wait. Eventually, the hijackers take off in the plane on a suicide mission and the female hijacker blows the airplane sky high with her vest of dynamite.

Chapter 1 Analysis

In the timeless moment when the two protagonists fall from the wreckage of Flight A1-420, the author reveals their history and the turning points that brought them aboard the ill-fated flight. Both men have chosen to leave India behind in favor of a life in England and for both men, the author implies, the choice is a mistake. Saladin Chamcha actually left India behind several years ago to make a new life for himself in the West. He is returning to Britain now after a long-overdue visit to his native land. For Chamcha, his return to England signifies turning his back on his heritage. He has become westernized, from his flawless accent to his trophy wife, Pamela. Chamcha has transformed himself to such a degree that he has lost all sense of his self and his heritage. Chamcha has created precisely the type of life he set out to create, but it is an artificial life. Chamcha is so out of touch with himself that he does not realize that he is unhappy or that he does not love his trophy wife. His first clue is the fact that he winds up in bed with the dark-skinned, Indian Zeeny Vakil. In Zeeny, he sees the part of himself he left behind. Chamcha thought he hated that part of himself and is surprised to find himself embracing Zeeny Vakil.

This plot thread, introduced in the very first chapter, will become one of the dominant, overriding themes of the book. The concept of ethnic self-hatred is not new to literature, but Salman Rushdie explores it with warmth and humanity through the character of Chamcha. Many ethnicities throughout the world, from Latino to African to Indian, maintain an internalized sense of prejudice which favors their light-skinned members over their dark. Chamcha actually learns his self-hatred in India, from his own people, long before he ever moves to England. In England, however, Chamcha's prejudice turns to self-shame as he tries desperately to fit into his new world by becoming something

he's not. He succeeds in making himself thoroughly English and returns home to show off his successful transformation. Rather than being impressed, his countrymen feel insulted by Chamcha's transformation. Both Zeeny and his father, Changez, try to lure him back to India for good. Zeeny admits, though, that she loves Chamcha in part for his Western ways and she is embarrassed by the violence and prejudice demonstrated by her countrymen. Chamcha can sense the darkness which underlies the violence and feels threatened by his fellow Indians, including Zeeny, who are angry that he turned his back on his country. Instead of accepting and loving his countrymen for all their flaws, Chamcha judges them as harshly as they judge themselves. By turning his back on his homeland, he has incurred the wrath of his people. Part of Chamcha, the part that loves Zeeny Vakil, identifies with India and longs to return. He is too far along his path of self-denial to immediately recognize the value he's found in his new life with Zeeny. If he had, perhaps he would not have been on the plane when it went down.

Gibreel Farishta is both similar to Chamcha and his polar opposite. They are flip sides of the same coin, functioning as literary foils. Both men are actors, but Chamcha's face is not seen on the screen. His looks are too "ethnic" for British television or film. Farishta, on the other hand, is the face of the gods in Indian film. His good looks make him a natural for Indian film, yet if he lived in England he too would be banned from the screen as Chamcha has been. India, Farishta's homeland as well, has been good to him. He is rich, successful, admired and beloved by women. So why is Farishta running away from all of this? He has lost his faith. Unlike Chamcha, Farishta is unable to live an artificial life. How can he continue portraying gods on the screen when he no longer believes? Farishta loses his faith while he is on his sickbed with a deadly wasting disease. He blames God for punishing him with the illness and upon his recovery, he turns his back on Allah. Allie reminds him that Allah saved his life in the end. Allie Cone represents, for Farishta, not only true love, but renewed faith, as well. In Allie, Farishta finds hope, love and faith. Although he barely knows her, he decides that she is what has been missing from his life and sets out to join her in England. His abrupt departure from his life is an unnatural act, which foreshadows the mental illness that will ultimately possess him.

At the beginning of Chapter 1, the author introduces the narrator as well. The author teases the reader with hints that the narrator may be the devil himself, but the narrator's identity is ultimately left for the reader to decide. The author mimics the legend of the satanic verses by introducing the question of the narrator's origins. Certainly the survival of Farishta and Chamcha constitutes a miracle, or some sort of supernatural intervention. The source of this intervention in their lives remains anonymous. Will Farishta and Chamcha have sufficient powers of discernment to determine if their guidance is coming from God or the devil? In this way and through the parable of the satanic verses, author Rushdie questions the evil despots in the world who commit murders and other atrocities in the name of God or Allah. In the next chapter, the reader will meet Mahound, who symbolizes the historical Prophet Muhammad and Rushdie will pose the very same question: Whose guidance is Mahound (or Muhammad) following? How much of the Qur'an derives from Allah? Could Satan's words have made their way into the holy book? Could this explain why tyrants use their holy books to justify their murderous, power-hungry plans? These are disturbing questions, certainly, for anyone

of the Muslim faith. It leads to other questions. Is one not responsible for one's own actions? If a voice tells a person to kill in the name of God, should one listen to that voice? How can one tell if God is truly speaking, or if one is plagued by mental illness or demonic voices? Salman Rushdie clearly objects to tyranny and murder in the name of God and this book challenges the individual's sense of spiritual discernment and personal responsibility.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

When Farishta transforms into the Archangel Gibreel, he feels his mother's presence. He thinks he is going insane and can understand the reaction of the people he visits as the angel, who also feel insane upon seeing Gibreel. This time, he visits a forty-four year old businessman on his birthday. His name is Mahound. Mahound makes his way up Cone Mountain to a cave high above the city of Jahilia. The citizens of Jahilia are only three or four generations removed from nomadism. They are now a city of urban merchants and businessmen. Class consciousness exists in Jahilia and the most despised citizens are the water carriers, including a man named Khalid. On the upper end of the spectrum is Karim Abu Simbel, Jahilia's leading citizen and husband to the most beautiful woman in the land, the great and terrible Hind. Hind's lover is the satirist Baal, one of the many bards of Jahilia. Jahilia is a colorful, loud city filled with people and commerce. "In this city, the businessman-turned-prophet, Mahound, is founding one of the world's great religions; and has arrived, on this day, his birthday, at the crisis of his life." (pg. 95)

The divine revelations which Mahound has personally received from the Archangel Gibreel and which he wishes to share with the world, teach that there is but one god, Allah. Mahound has converted very few disciples in Jahilia because the town's idolatrous citizens insist on worshipping their three favorite goddesses, Uzza, Manat and the supreme mother-goddess, Al-Lat. Al-Lat they hold up as the feminine counterpart - and equal - to Allah. The temple of Al-Lat in Jahilia is managed by the Grandee, Abu Simbel and his wife Hind. Abu Simbel sees Mahound's teachings as a potential threat to his income. Under his stewardship, the town of Jahilia has become known for its street gangs, which Simbel is rumored to run and for its licentiousness. In his home, the Grandee surrounds himself with more than a dozen concubines. He knows Hind has taken Baal for a lover, but he values her strength and her family connections too much to make an accusation of adultery. Abu Simbel knows he has not reached the top alone and he has too many sexual appetites to begrudge Hind hers. He does, however, use his knowledge of the affair to coerce Baal into writing a poem designed to humiliate Mahound.

In this increasingly tense environment, Mahound's disciples worry when he doesn't return from a meeting with the Grandee. His disciples are Bilal, Salman and the water carrier, Khalid. Baal mocks them with his poetry until Mahound returns from the meeting and informs them the Grandee has offered him a deal. The Grandee has offered to officially recognize their religion and appoint Mahound to the city council if Allah can acknowledge and allow the worship of Lat, Uzza and Manat. His disciples are incensed, proclaiming that there is only one god. Mahound tries to persuade them that it is a small concession for a greater gain. They reply that the people will not take them seriously if they back away from their first principle. Mahound laughs and insists that the people don't take them seriously in any case. Mahound's uncle Hamza settles the argument by

telling Mahound he must climb Cone Mountain and ask Archangel Gibreel. It is in this frame of mind that Mahound meets Farishta on the mountain.

Farishta, in his dream, has been watching this whole scene like a movie. When Hamza points at his nephew and invokes the name of Archangel Gibreel, Farishta is pulled into the plot, becoming the star actor. Farishta quakes with fear as Mahound approaches. How can he, a film star, advise the great prophet Mahound? Farishta resents the fact that Allah is absent from his dreams. The one who should have all the answers refuses to show up and help Farishta in his role as Gibreel. In the cave, Mahound slips into a trance and wakes to find himself bound to the archangel by a cord of light emanating from his navel. Farishta feels that he is himself and Mahound all at once. Mahound grabs at his navel and through sheer force of will makes Archangel Gibreel speak the words Mahound wishes to hear.

Back in Jahilia, Mahound enters the poetry tent, followed closely by his disciples. Abu Simbel looks on as Mahound takes the floor and addresses the assembled. He tells them he is a Messenger of God and that his words reflect the Divine will, not his own desires. Mahound quotes verses revealed to him by Gibreel which accept and encourage the worship of Lat, Uzza and Manat. Cheers greet his words and the citizens of Jahilia prostrate themselves before Mahound's God. That night in Jahilia is the final night of the festival of Ibrahim. Jahilians walk the streets in costume, carousing late into the night. Fearing trouble, Hamza brings his sword. He stalks the streets in his lion mask until he sees men masked as red lions, the symbol of Hind's family. The red lions attack Khalid, Salman and Bilal and uncle Hamza rushes into the fray, killing two of the assailants before the other two run away. Hamza removes the dead men's masks to discover that they are Hind's brothers.

Mahound begins the evening pacing his courtyard, unable to face his wife. His nearly seventy-year-old wife watches from the windows. "She has long ears; has already heard what he said about Lat, Uzza, Manat. So what? In the old days he wanted to protect the baby daughters of Jahilia; why shouldn't he take the daughters of Allah under his wing as well?" (pg. 119) Mahound leaves without entering the house and proceeds to pass out in the street. Hind finds him there and brings him home to her house. The next morning, she mocks his weakness for recanting his belief in one god. She tells him that as the guardian of the Al-Lat temple she sees him as her enemy. However, she desires her enemy to be strong. They are equals, she says, like Allah and Al-Lat. She tells him she does not want peace between their religions. There can be no truce because Allah patronizes and condescends to Al-Lat. Mahound asks if the Grandee feels the same way. Will he betray his pledge? She replies that not even the Grandee knows the answer to that question yet. Mahound leaves the house before the messengers arrive with news of her brothers' deaths.

Gibreel wrestles with the Prophet in the cave on Mount Cone. Naked, they wrestle for days or perhaps weeks. Finally Gibreel pins Mahound to the ground. It is what Mahound wanted, says Gibreel. Mahound cannot believe that an angel could lose and therefore Mahound wills Gibreel the strength to win the fight. Mahound weeps for joy at the confirmation of his beliefs when the angel pins him to the ground. Then Mahound once

again forces the angel to speak the words he wishes to hear. For his part, Mahound only remembers waking up in the cave. Mahound has received another message from Archangel Gibreel telling him that Mahound has been tricked by Shaitan (Satan). The verses Mahound had been given to recite in the poetry tent were not given by Allah, but by the Devil. Mahound returns to Jahilia as fast as he can to expunge these satanic verses from the record. Meanwhile, Gibreel hovers overhead, aware that both the satanic verses and the repudiation came from the angel, but both times Mahound has forced the angel to speak. As he rushes back down the mountain, Mahound convinces himself that the most recent message must be the accurate one. The angel has proven himself Divine by wrestling Mahound to the ground.

Mahound makes his announcement in the poetry tent then quickly returns home. He finds his wife, dead and believes her death is a punishment. Who is punishing him, though, God or Shaitan? The Grandee recognizes the new religion but institutes a policy of persecution, to Hind's approval. Nonetheless, the faithful multiply in number and eventually a neighboring town offers them sanctuary from persecution. The faithful abandon Jahilia and after a time, Mahound joins them. Only Gibreel is left behind to suffer the revenge of Lat, Uzza and Manat, who attack him endlessly where he sits on the summit of Mount Cone.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 defines the core of the controversy surrounding Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. The Prophet Mahound represents the Prophet Mohammed, who founded Islam. According to Islam, Muhammad went to the mountain and returned with the word and the knowledge of the one supreme divinity, Allah. At the time Islam was founded, the concept of one god competed with pantheism and Lat, Uzza and Manat were worshipped by the pantheists. In this work, Salman Rushdie studies the political and social pressures present in that era. He puts himself in Muhammad's shoes and imagines how difficult it must have been for him to espouse the concept of a single God when the world around him believed strongly in multiple gods. Rushdie questions whether the satanic verses truly came from the devil, or if they were simply the result of pressure applied to the Prophet Muhammad. The satanic verses, had they not been repudiated by Muhammad, would have made his life considerably easier. Did Shaitan tempt Muhammad by providing him satanic verses, or did Muhammad make them up himself in response to political pressure?

Rushdie's fictionalized version of events shows Mahound forcing the Archangel Gibreel to speak the words he wishes to hear. Gibreel is not even a real angel in this version of events. He is Gibreel Farishta, actor and madman. Thus Rushdie's Archangel Gibreel is an instrument to be used by those around him. As an actor, he speaks others' words. Gibreel's will is not his own to command. He is an instrument of Mahound's delusion, forced to speak the words Mahound wishes to hear. By forcing an "angel" to speak these words, Mahound convinces himself that his words and his belief come from the one God, Allah. Allah, though, is notably absent from *The Satanic Verses*. Gibreel Farishta, forced to play the role of Archangel Gibreel, wonders where God is and why

God does not show up to answer Mahound's questions. With this, Rushdie establishes the existentialist subtext of his novel. God plays no part in the forming of the religion Submission, which represents, in the novel, the religion of Islam. Rushdie points out the spiritual disconnect between organized religion and God, a disconnect which has led to much violence perpetrated in God's name throughout history. Although he toys with the reader by implying the novel is narrated by Shaitan, through the events of the novel Rushdie communicates his belief that mankind, not Shaitan, is the author of societal evil.

Is Rushdie calling Muhammad a false prophet, or does he wish simply to portray him as a fallible human being? Rushdie's novel poses a series of questions regarding the wisdom of taking the Qur'an literally. This line of questioning occurs in Christianity as well and in modern times some Christian factions believe in taking the Bible literally while others find its wisdom to be a parable, subject to interpretation. Islam has not yet undergone the scrutiny and intense reform to which Christianity has been subject over the centuries and as one of the first voices to speak up for reform, Salman Rushdie is considered by many Muslims to be a subversive agitator. Freedom of religion does not exist in fundamentalist Islamic countries. Once someone has accepted Islam as one's religion, abandoning or even questioning the beliefs of Islam may be considered the crime of apostasy. Muslims were encouraged to burn this book and kill its author, to prevent the spread of the ideas it contains. Does this imply a lack of faith in the Qur'an? If leaders are confident in their faith, why would they oppose openly questioning ideas of the faith?

Compare Salman Rushdie's work to controversial works of other periods and areas. Throughout history, tyrants have used both religion and philosophy to enslave their people. Christians were once killed for the crime of heresy. In early Soviet Russia, citizens were persecuted for speaking ill of the government. Russian science fiction of the time, such as Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What Is to be Done?* and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* used metaphor in science fiction to mask criticism of the government. In Nazi Germany, people who spoke ill of the Nazi regime or befriended a Jew could be executed. How did literature reflect this? How was literature treated during this time? Why do tyrants ban free speech? Can a bad idea, presented in a vacuum, without opposition, sound good? Presented against a good idea, with its flaws pointed out, will a bad idea stand up to scrutiny?

Evolution is a key concept in Rushdie's book and he introduces it though Eugene Dumsday, the missionary Chamcha meets on the plane in Chapter 1. Dumsday is a Christian who vociferously denies Darwin's theory of evolution, since it conflicts with his Christian belief that God created the universe. Dumsday's anger at this theory and his refusal to discuss it allow Rushdie to make the broader point that not only Islam hesitates to question its ideals. Many Christians did and still do, try to discredit Darwin and yet Darwin's theory of evolution has caused many modern-day Christians to *evolve* a spiritual theory encompassing both science and spirituality. Rushdie makes the point that Christians should not have feared science, for how could science disprove God? If their ideas about God are good ones, then Christians should be confident that science will further enlighten humanity as to the nature of God. Through references to

fundamentalist Christians and the theory of evolution, Rushdie appears to sympathize with Muslims by showing the reader that people of all religions can take offense when their ideals are questioned. Rushdie also seems to be saying that people of faith should not fear such scrutiny, because the best ideas of their faith will stand up to any enquiry.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Rosa Diamond watches out the windows of her beachfront property home for the ghosts of Norman conquerors. The widow, eighty-eight years old, has long had the second sight that has given her glimpses into human battles of the past. She does not fear ghosts. She considers their presence to represent nothing more than unfinished business. Her house is built near the site of a castle conquered by the Normans and each night she sees their ghost ship sail through her living room as it heads toward the receding ocean. All her life, she has seen ghosts and other strange things with her second sight. When she sees Gibreel and Chamcha on the beach, she is mesmerized by Gibreel. She grabs her cane and rushes to greet them. On the snowy bank, Gibreel and Chamcha are dazed from their fall. Gibreel is exultant, dancing and singing, while Chamcha leaks tears from his eyes and wonders if he's dead. When Rosa Diamond arrives at their side, she comments that Chamcha's breath is repugnant. The narrator calls the reader's attention to the fact that Chamcha has been given Farishta's bad breath. Chamcha has also been given a pair of small, budding horns and Gibreel wears an angel's bright halo. The narrator takes credit for causing them to transform during their fall from Flight A1-420.

Inside Rosa's house, Chamcha stares at the discolored bumps on his forehead. He is gripped by a surreal feeling, as if his previous life never existed. Chamcha reminds himself that he is a high-minded man of integrity with a wife and a job. When he imagines calling Pamela to tell her he has miraculously survived the plane crash, he imagines that she will not recognize his name or voice. Saladin Chamcha sets aside his fears and unsettled feelings and dials his wife. Although it is the middle of the night, a man's voice picks up instead of Pamela. Saladin claims to be a wrong number and hangs up the phone.

The next night, Rosa Diamond stares out her windows thinking of her long-lost lover, Martín de la Cruz, whom Gibreel strongly resembles. When the ghost ships arrive, she goes out to chase them away, but as she does so, policemen arrive at her door. They have received reports of a suspicious man spotted on the beach and when they see Saladin Chamcha standing on the stairs with his newly sprouted pair of horns, they handcuff him. Chamcha protests that he's not an illegal immigrant, but the policemen don't believe his story of falling thirty thousand feet from an airplane. Gibreel appears on the stairs and Chamcha begs for his help. The policemen see Gibreel's halo and become instantly compliant to his wishes. However, this does Chamcha no good, because Rosa Diamond has caught Gibreel's eyes and seems to have him in her power. He retreats up the stairs without helping Chamcha. Chamcha refuses to give them his wife's number to verify his identity because of the man who answered his wife's phone. The police have no quarrel with Rosa or Gibreel, but they haul the luckless Chamcha out to their van.

In the following days, Gibreel gradually comes to realize he is under Rosa's power. He realizes his dream visions have bled into his waking life. He now looks like an angel while awake and is forced to do Rosa's bidding just as in his dreams the Archangel Gibreel is forced to obey the commands of others. Gibreel has been lulled into some sort of trance by Rosa and several days pass before he even musters up the curiosity to ask her if she noticed Chamcha's horns. Rosa advises him that there are many strange things in the universe and then drops the matter. Gibreel is shocked that he hasn't tried to call Allie Cone yet, now that he has miraculously survived, since thoughts of starting a new life with Allie kept him going through the hostage crisis. He feels strangely content to pass the days with Rosa.

Rosa tells Gibreel about her past. She married Don Enrique of Los Alamos in 1935, not because she loved him but because she was a spinster of forty and had no other options. He took her from her native England to live with him in Argentina. There they had a huge estate which employed thirty gauchos and their dinner table routinely served fifty. The passion of the country gripped Rosa, but she tried to stay faithful to her passionless husband. On Rosa's eighty-ninth birthday, she and Gibreel dance until dawn and she recounts stories of the balls she attended in Argentina. Her memories are a work in progress. Rosa cannot tell the difference between real memories and wishes and so as Gibreel experiences her story with her, the memories constantly shift as Rosa decides how she prefers to arrange her life story.

Two central figures besides Rosa's husband, Don Enrique, are Aurora del Sol and Martín de la Cruz. Martín is one of her husband's employees. Betrayed by his fiancée, Aurora, Martín kills her lover, Juan. Don Enrique, at Rosa's request, covers up Martín's crime and shows public support for his employee. His trust turns out to be misplaced, however, as Martín begins an affair with Rosa. Don Enrique kills Martín over the affair, assuming the affair actually happened and was not just a product of Rosa's wishful thinking. Martín may, on the other hand, have been killed by Aurora as payback for the murder of Juan, or because Martín had taken up with Rosa. Whatever the truth, the passion of Rosa's memories ensnares Gibreel, who cannot escape her. The night she dies, he is able to walk out of her house, but Rosa's spirit begins singing some unknown song. It drags Gibreel back into her arms and they make love.

Meanwhile Saladin Chamcha, after he is dragged into the police van, is stripped naked to reveal that his body, from the waist down, is that of a goat. He has also been given an exceedingly large phallus and cloven hooves. Chamcha is horrified to see that he has defecated in the van in the form of many small, goatish pellets. The policemen beat Chamcha mercilessly and force him to eat his own feces. Eventually, they run his name through the computer and realize, to their horror, that he is not an illegal immigrant after all, but a British citizen in good standing. Instead of releasing him, the policemen plan how best to cover their tracks. They knock Chamcha unconscious and when he wakes up he is in a medical facility recovering from pneumonia. One of the immigration officers who administered the beating in the back of the police van tells Chamcha that nine officers will vouch that Chamcha simply passed out in the back of the van due to illness and the officers had no choice but to transport him to the hospital. He warns Chamcha

not to file a complaint and informs him that Rosa Diamond has been found dead in bed. Gibreel has mysteriously vanished.

That night, Saladin meets the other inmates of the medical ward. They are all changing into strange beasts as well, but they blame their shared condition on the hospital staff. A manticore, or man-tiger, explains to Chamcha that the staff creates the strange mutations by describing the conditions until they manifest in the patient. The manticore wants to know if Chamcha plans to put up with this, or if he will join them in their conspiracy. When Hyacinth Phillips, Chamcha's physical therapist, informs him she is part of the plan, Chamcha decides to join forces with the conspiracy. Hyacinth has improved Chamcha's lung condition and his gratitude towards her is mingled with desire. Chamcha has never desired a black woman before and he attributes this desire to his metamorphosis. Several nights later, the conspirators escape the hospital together. Chamcha flees into the night with Hyacinth, who guides him toward the east.

Jumpy Joshi, Saladin's old college pal, is the man Saladin hears on the phone when he calls Pamela in the middle of the night. Jumpy and Pamela have just become lovers on the night Pamela is informed of her husband's death in a plane crash. Recognizing the voice of his dead friend on the line, Jumpy is so disturbed he reverts to sucking his thumb. In college, Jumpy had been jealous of Saladin's luck with women. Saladin, the actor, is able to make himself into anything the British girls want. Jumpy thinks Saladin gets the girls by selling out his Indian heritage, but admits he covets Saladin's ability to blend in as well. Jumpy doesn't tell Pamela right away, but eventually decides to wake her with the news that Saladin is alive. Upon hearing this, Pamela flies into a rage and hits Jumpy repeatedly before accepting the news. The next morning when the airline insists that there are no survivors, Pamela orders Jumpy out of the house before she loses control again and hits him or worse. She thinks Jumpy is playing a practical joke on her, like the phone prank Saladin once played on Jumpy in college.

Pamela drives recklessly as she considers what death has meant to her life. Her parents were very conservative and very British, but when they killed themselves in a double suicide by jumping off a building, Pamela decided to become as unlike them as possible. To escape her stuffy, conservative roots, she married an exotic Indian man. Over time she, has discovered that Saladin only loves her for her Britishness, which she sought to escape by marrying him. Conversely, he hated about himself all the things that attracted her. "It had been a marriage of crossed purposes, each of them rushing towards the very thing from which the other was in flight." (pg. 180) She had decided to end the marriage, but before she could tell him, Saladin's plane exploded. Now her careless driving sends her car into a swerve. Pamela sees certain death before her. Somehow, she regains control of the car and survives the near wreck. Pamela decides to celebrate her new life at an expensive hotel and that night, in her room, she toasts the death of Saladin. She talks out loud to her presumed-dead husband, telling him how much she resents the way he objectified her. She has felt like a slave to him and the way he treated her in public made his disrespect for her obvious. Pamela toasts her new freedom. She toasts life.

Meanwhile, Jumpy Joshi seeks solace at the Shaandaar Café, which is run by his friend, Mr. Sufyan. Through his conversations at the café, the reader learns that Jumpy is an atheist and an aspiring poet. For several days, despite the kind attentions of Sufyan, his wife and two daughters, Jumpy remains morose. Finally, he receives a call from Pamela and the joy returns to his heart. Jumpy and Pamela spend seven days in bed together, where they discover their love for one another. For the first time in either of their lives, they both feel safe, that is, until an intruder breaks in on the seventh night. The lovers creep downstairs together to discover Saladin Chamcha, alive and transformed into a goatish beast.

With Rosa's death, Gibreel regains his freedom. He hops a train to London and spends the ride wondering about his incredible transformation into the Archangel Gibreel. He tells himself the hostage situation and the plane crash have simply sent him into a delirium, from which he can now emerge and pick up the threads of his life. His first thought is Allie. He says her name, "Alleluia," aloud and attracts the attention of a fellow passenger. The man introduces himself as Maslama and Gibreel quickly learns he is a delusional man and a religious fanatic. Maslama recognizes Gibreel and at first Gibreel does not know if Maslama recognizes the man or the angel. Maslama turns out to be a fan of Gibreel Farishta movies and assumes the actor is as godly as the parts he plays. Maslama demands that Gibreel reveal the true name of God and when he fails to do so, Maslama turns on him. He calls Gibreel a fake and that's when Gibreel's halo becomes visible. Maslama drops to his knees and begs to hear the judgment of God on the earth. Gibreel tells him judgment is pending and that Maslama should keep Gibreel's presence a secret for the duration. Then, Gibreel escapes to the other end of the train with his hat jammed firmly over his halo. He thinks of Alleluia, but just then Rekha Merchant's ghost flies past his window. She smiles at him as she rides by on her magic Bokhara rug.

Thirty-three year old Allie Cone delivers a lecture to a group of schoolchildren. The topic is her ascent to the summit of Mount Everest. The children are captivated by this beautiful blond woman who speaks of the ghosts who inhabit Everest, spirits of the men who died climbing the mountain. She claims she and her friend were warned away from certain death by one such ghost and explains that the ghosts who reached the summit before dying are less bitter than the men who died on their way up to the summit. She thinks of Farishta as she speaks about her passion for climbing. Farishta had appreciated her passionate nature.

Meanwhile, Farishta spends the day trying to lose the specter of Rekha Merchant in London's underground train system. She pursues him on her flying carpet, turning up everywhere he goes. Finally, Farishta gives up and exits the train at a random station. He walks down a desolate road to an unfamiliar park and falls to the ground under the night sky. The dark figure of a woman approaches and he assumes it's Rekha until he hears "a shocked cry escape the woman's lips, a gasp in which disbelief, joy and a strange resentment were all mixed up" (pg. 202). It is Allie. Farishta worries that Rekha is only allowing him to be with Allie now so that Rekha's ultimate revenge will feel even worse. Nonetheless, he falls asleep at Allie's feet with a smile on his face.

Chapter 3 Analysis

In Chapter 3, Salman Rushdie ties together the threads of his two plot lines. There is the present day story of Farishta and Chamcha, begun in Chapter 1 where the author reveals their backstories to the reader. Then, there is the second plot line, which begins in Chapter 2 with the Prophet Mahound. This second plot line is less linear in nature than the main plot and its episodic nature has contributed to criticism that *The Satanic Verses* is structurally confusing. Here in Chapter 3, Rushdie shows the reader how everything interconnects. Farishta and Chamcha have magically transformed into angel and devil, respectively and Farishta's transformation into the Archangel Gibreel generates a nightly dream life in which he stars as Gibreel in a series of stories, like television episodes, but real. Rushdie is considered by some to be an author of the magic realism genre made famous by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, because Rushdie freely mixes reality with mystical elements to tell his story.

The dream stories vary in time and space, as the angel goes wherever he is called and recites the lines he is given by the humans who unknowingly author their own story line. This concept of creating one's own reality is a very modern perspective on spirituality. It has been espoused by groups ranging from the nihilistic existentialists, who believed man authors his own life because God is absent from the world, to New Thought religions, which believe man authors his own life by the grace of God. Rushdie seems to come from the existentialist camp, in which God is absent and the forces of the universe are commanded by selfish people like Rosa Diamond. Farishta, as Gibreel, is not God's instrument, but man's. Rosa's powerful spirit keeps Farishta enthralled and he is unable to disobey her wishes. Similarly in Chapter 2, the prophet Mahound loses his battle with Gibreel only after Mahound *wills* Gibreel to win the fight. Man creating his own reality in the absence of God is a recurring theme set up in the first chapter when the narrator tells the reader that Chamcha willed their survival, giving Farishta the power to save them.

In Rushdie's book, not only God is absent. Although Satan is perhaps present as the narrator, he is absent from the story line, where evil is created by men. The medical facility where Chamcha is held symbolizes how man can be the author of his own reality in the creation of evil. The patients are all transforming into whatever negative image their captors hold of them. The author is saying that discrimination and prejudice help create a negative self-image in minorities and a negative self-image creates all sorts of negative consequences for the individual. Chamcha's transformation, for example, is a result of Chamcha's self-hatred. He sees himself through prejudiced eyes, as the foreign devil whose dark skin and strange passions are a threat to the lily-white, less emotional British. He literally becomes that negative image, which he has been taught from prejudiced people in both England and India. The scene in the back of the police van is a darkly humorous look at the demonic image that prejudiced people project on foreign immigrants. Chamcha's demonic looks are merely a symbol of the way he feels he is perceived, with his dark skin and foreign language. His transformation into the devil has less to do with religion than with social prejudice and represents the author's biting commentary on the treatment of ethnic immigrants by the Western world.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Gibreel Farishta's nightly dreams of being the Archangel Gibreel continue and he travels a great deal in this dream world. He travels to Kensington, in London, where he finds the Imam in a rented flat. The Imam is an exile, an ex-patriot of a land he calls Desh. In his bedroom, he keeps a portrait of his enemy, the Empress Ayesha, who has forced him into hiding. "On this island, the exiled Imam and at home in Desh, She. They plot each other's deaths." (pg. 206) The Imam lives with a retinue of bodyguards and helpers, including his son, Khalid. He lives behind closed curtains to keep out the lust, greed and vanity of London's depravity and also to avoid snipers and the enemies who seek the Imam. The Imam condemns the Empress to eternal damnation for drinking wine and in his daily radio messages to Desh, the Imam accuses her of various nefarious practices including sexual relations with lizards. His daily addresses urge the people of Desh to rise up against Empress Ayesha. To better communicate his message, the Imam has arranged for it to be spoken and sung by the voice of Bilal, who was once a popular American singer.

The Imam summons Archangel Gibreel and seemingly without volition, Gibreel Farishta appears in the Imam's study. In this dream, Gibreel looks no different than in his waking life. He quakes in the powerful presence of the Imam. The Imam does not need to move. He is so powerful that the world around him moves and bends to his wishes. Now the carpet fibers in the London apartment grow long and wrap themselves around Gibreel to keep him from leaving. Gibreel tries to convince the Imam that he doesn't need an archangel's help, but the Imam demands to be flown to Jerusalem. He jumps onto Gibreel's shoulders, digging in with fingernails that have suddenly become claws. Gibreel realizes that "Jerusalem" could mean different things to different people. Is it a place or a goal? "Where is the Imam's Jerusalem? 'The fall of the harlot,' the disembodied voice resounds in his ears." (pg. 212)

Gibreel has no choice. He is compelled by the Imam and they fly to a place and time in Desh when the people rise up against the Empress. They march in rows towards the palace guards, who mow them down with their guns. The people keep coming, sacrificing themselves willingly, out of love for the Imam, says the Imam. Out of hatred for the Empress, replies Gibreel. At last the steady march of the people overwhelms the palace walls and the Empress, with a wail, casts off her human shell and becomes the Goddess Al-Lat. The Imam, still controlling Gibreel's movements, sends him into the sky to battle Al-Lat to the death. Gibreel, who now looks like the archangel again, knows the Imam will sacrifice him without a second thought. In self-defense, he summons the strength to kill Al-Lat. As she falls to the ground, crushed, the large palace entryway becomes the Imam's mouth. The people walk steadily into his wide maw and he swallows them all. Gibreel watches this desolate scene, hoping his nighttime journeys as Archangel Gibreel will now fade into harmless nocturnal dreams. To his dismay, he appears in the next vision again as an angel. Resigned to his fate of being Archangel

Gibreel by night, Gibreel Farishta is slightly comforted by his next dream. Farishta is an atheistic existentialist struggling to define and accept God and the dream of *Titlipur* provides him hope that God might be loving as well as vengeful and angry.

Some one hundred and twenty years ago, the village of *Titlipur* was home to a holy woman named Bibiji. During Bibiji's lifetime, chameleon-like, color-changing butterflies accompany her everywhere she goes. After she dies, the village continues to prosper, but the butterflies disappear. The villagers lose heart without their butterflies, but one hundred and one years after Bibiji's death, the butterflies miraculously return. A beautiful young woman named Ayesha is born the year the butterflies return and by her nineteenth year, the villagers believe that she is the miracle that the butterflies portended. Ayesha claims to lie with the Archangel Gibreel and to receive guidance from him. Her hair turns white as snow overnight and since her first encounter with Gibreel, she wears only butterflies. Archangel Gibreel denies laying a finger on her or giving her advice, although he does admit to visiting her at night in his dreams. Two local men lust after Ayesha: the married village zamindar, Mirza Saeed Akhtar and a local boy, a former untouchable who has converted to Islam and taken the Muslim name Osman.

Ayesha correctly predicts the deadly cancer that invades the zamindar's wife, so when she announces to the village that Archangel Gibreel has commanded the entire village to make a religious pilgrimage, they believe her and make preparations to leave. Ayesha promises that when the pilgrims reach the ocean that separates them from their destination, the water will part to allow their crossing. Only the zamindar is against the proposition. He claims to be an atheist, but he believes Ayesha has caused his wife's cancer with her powers. Ayesha and the zamindar's wife Mishal have become friends and the zamindar's guilt over his lust for Ayesha causes him to blame her for his troubles. He believes Ayesha is punishing him for his lust by killing his wife. The zamindar believes Ayesha is leading the entire village into certain disaster with her crazy pilgrimage idea. The zamindar's wife and Ayesha prevail upon him to accompany them. Ayesha has promised the zamindar's wife that if she makes the several hundred mile pilgrimage on foot, her cancer will disappear. The zamindar vows to accompany them only to be the voice of reason on the trip. Ayesha and Mishal joyfully accept his decision to come along. Osman, as well, decides to come, although he asks the question, "'Who is madder, [...] the madwoman, or the fool who loves the madwoman?'" (pg. 240)

Chapter 4 Analysis

The story of the Imam is Rushdie's political commentary about real-life tyrannical leaders who use religion to control their people. Allah and Al-Lat are set against each other by the tyrannical leaders who each use their own religion to support their political power. Both Allah and Al-Lat are shown as evil in the opening parable of this chapter, which is an interesting testament to the author's Western perspective. Unlike some Muslim countries, India, Rushdie's birth land, houses various religions. In his story, Al-Lat represents the pantheistic worship of gods and goddesses, while Allah represents the male-dominated God of Islam. Everyone in the story is focused on choosing

between these two sides. Rushdie's broader perspective seeks to show the flaws on both sides. The question central to Islam is whether one accepts that there is only one God. By accepting Allah as the only God and by accepting Muhammad as the Prophet of God, one can become a Muslim. Rushdie discredits both of these notions. His existentialist perspective is that man can create whatever kind of God he desires in service of man's own desires. It follows, then, that if man made up God, then Muhammad the Prophet created the Qur'an from his own imagination out of a desire to dominate and control the populace through religion. By contesting, even in a fictional venture, the two fundamental tenets of Islam, Rushdie has garnered many enemies.

Rushdie's criticism is equally vehement of polytheism. Al-Lat is the equal of Allah in his story and both God and Goddess are represented by the people who war in their names. Even though his criticisms of religion are harsh, Rushdie's book is about two protagonists who are desperately searching for God. Rushdie, like many Western authors, separates God from religion. He takes organized religion to task for brutalizing the populace, but his characters never give up their search for God. In some of the book's lighter moments, they appear to have found the divinity they so desire. This divinity, not surprisingly, also manifests itself through human beings. For Farishta, Allie is the face of God. Chamcha will ultimately find redemption through the loving forgiveness of Zeeny Vakil. It is not God, in any form, which Rushdie seeks to discredit. Rushdie discredits *religion* as an instrument of man's will to power. The story of the seer Ayesha parallels the story of Mahound, the Prophet and both of these stories show mankind twisting God's words and putting religion in service of tyranny.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Jumpy Joshi brings Chamcha to the Shaandaar Café. Jumpy believes the proprietor, Muhammad Sufyan, will be able to help Chamcha transform back into himself. However, they arrive late at night and Chamcha's demonic appearance frightens Hind, Muhammad's portly wife. Hind harbors many resentments. She resents her husband for becoming a communist, for giving up his prestigious teaching job in their home country and for moving to England. She resents him for no longer being the primary breadwinner and for making a living off her cooking. A religious woman who believes sex is only for procreation, Hind is disappointed because she conceived two daughters but no sons and now that her daughters, Mishal and Anahita, have taken on English ways, Hind's disillusionment is complete. Hind considers everything about England to be sinful and the sudden appearance of Chamcha in her kitchen late at night is absolutely the last straw.

The residents of the Shaandaar gather in the kitchen to assess the situation. Sufyan is kind to Chamcha, offering him hot chicken soup. He quotes Darwin and Lamarck, trying to find a reason for Chamcha's transformation. Jumpy talks about Chamcha's wrongful arrest and subsequent hospitalization until everyone except Hind is sympathetic to Chamcha. Sufyan offers Chamcha his hospitality and sets him up in the attic bedroom, believing that Chamcha will be able to recover here at the Shaandaar, amongst his own people. Chamcha waits until he is alone in his room to say aloud, "'You're not my people. I've spent half my life trying to get away from you.'" (pg. 253) His dreams that night torment him with memories of the escape from the hospital. Chamcha realizes when he awakes that the dream, in its symbolic way, told the truth about him and Hyacinth.

In the dream, Hyacinth metamorphoses into a repugnant, animalistic creature. Even as Chamcha grows repulsed by her dream self, Hyacinth continues to leer at him lecherously. As she tries to pull him into darkness with her, Chamcha escapes into a church. Inside he finds the pews filled with Hyacinth look-alikes wearing virginal white ladylike clothes. Hyacinth sees something else now when she looks at Chamcha and her leer is replaced by horror. The Hyacinths in the church call him Satan the Goat and recoil from him. Incensed, Chamcha calls them *Hubshees*, an insult in his discarded mother tongue and berates Hyacinth for the darkness of her skin. He calls it a stain and proof of her inferiority. The Hyacinths rush him as a group and beat him mercilessly until he realizes he has the power to scare them away. The dream ends and after a while, Chamcha has another dream in which he recalls all the words Pamela used to reject him when he returned to her home and found her there with Jumpy. Throughout the nightmare-plagued night, Chamcha struggles with the idea that he has become the devil. He wonders what happened to Farishta. Chamcha hates that he's staying amongst *his people*, whom he rejected long ago in favor of the lily-white English. Now due to his rebirth and transformation, he has become everything the English hate and

fear. Chamcha reaches a decision through the long night. He will no longer think of himself as the devil. He refuses to be judged by his cover.

The next morning, Chamcha is greeted by Sufyan's daughters, Mishal and Anahita. They express their approval of his transformation and ask him if he has thought about developing his powers. Chamcha, who has decided to disregard his transformation as much as possible, is irritated that these two young Indian girls are so enthralled by it. Mishal and Anahita, however, claim to be British and profess no memory of their parents' Bangladesh. Mishal, the eldest, is nearly eighteen, flirtatious and alluring. Chamcha refocuses his mind on picking up the pieces of his life. Chamcha gets in touch with his co-worker, Mimi Mahoulian, who is pleased that he's survived, but informs him that they've both been fired. Mimi has taken up with a con artist named Billy Battuta, an Indian. Chamcha warns her away, but Mimi insists she has her eyes open. Chamcha is irritated by the British fascination with criminals like Battuta and disapproves when Mishal and Anahita laugh at Billy's criminal antics. Chamcha and Mimi realize their comradeship has come to an end and Chamcha laments that his rebirth has led to the end of everything.

He calls his old boss, Hal Valance, to get his job back, but Valance informs Chamcha that his presence on the animated television series *The Aliens Show* gave the show too much of an ethnic feel and the show is better off without him. Chamcha recalls his first meeting with Valance to celebrate the success of an ad campaign for which Chamcha had done the voiceover. "'You've done well,' Hal congratulated him, 'for a person of the tinted persuasion.'" (pg. 267) Hal had made his position clear. He would hire no one who sounded ethnic. Hal even fired a white singer for sounding too black on one occasion. Chamcha had last seen Valance at Valance's mansion, which he shares with his much-younger wife. Valance spoke of his distaste for the Prime Minister's attempts to replace the white middle class with a new and diverse middle class composed of immigrants and foreigners. In retrospect, Chamcha realizes Valance had given him notice that day of the changes to come in the show. He is resigned now, as Valance informs him that Chamcha and the Jewish Mimi have been replaced by a Nordic muscleman and a big-breasted blond woman.

Days pass into months as Chamcha remains in exile at the Shaandaar bed and breakfast in England. He reads in the papers that Gibreel Farishta is alive and scheduled to make a comeback movie funded by Billy Battuta. Farishta tells the press he survived by missing the ill-fated flight and Chamcha is furious with this deception. Chamcha is becoming more and more goatish each day. The only time his condition seems to get better is when he focuses his rage on thoughts of Farishta. Chamcha's rages cause him to fear that he is indeed turning into something bad. He is depressed to be trapped in an ethnic enclave of Indians and even more depressed that his only remaining friend, Jumpy, continues to cuckold him with Pamela. Jumpy feels intense guilt over sleeping with his friend's wife and pressures Pamela to divorce Chamcha so that Chamcha can at least get a portion of his estate back. Pamela, however, refuses to discuss Chamcha, preferring to believe him dead. She also refuses to discuss her growing dependence on alcohol, which makes her less attractive to Jumpy.

Jumpy, a usually moral man, cannot control his passion for Pamela. A martial arts teacher, Jumpy tries every day to wear himself out in classes so that he will be too tired to sleep with Pamela. Mishal Sufyan is one of his martial arts students and reveals to Jumpy that she is sleeping with Jumpy's friend, Hanif Johnson. Jumpy is judgmental towards Hanif for sleeping with a seventeen-year-old girl, but mainly he is jealous of Hanif's conquest of Mishal. Jumpy is ruled by his passion these days and despite his efforts to avoid Pamela, every night he finds himself at her door. Fortunately for him, Pamela takes the moral decision out of his hands by becoming pregnant with Jumpy's child. Now Jumpy's moral choice is clear; he must stay with Pamela. Chamcha's only consolation through all this is the indefinite delay of Farishta's movie due to the arrest of Billy Battuta and Mimi for scamming elderly people out of their money.

Chamcha begins to visit people in the outside world through his dreams, which are of a serial nature, much like Gibreel's dreams of being the archangel. He appears to people in his demonic form and his frequent appearances add to the racial and religious tension between the ethnic Indian neighborhood and the native British people. While his dream appearances routinely frighten the British, Chamcha finds himself, as the devil, becoming popular with the neighborhood Indian population. The establishment, led by Chamcha's media savvy wife Pamela, is cracking down on ethnic devil worship. They attribute a recent spate of serial killings, coined the Granny Ripper Murders in the press due to the age of the victims, to devil worship. This ethnic witch-hunt leads the Indian neighborhood to adopt the devil, in the form of Chamcha, as their mascot, a symbol of rebellion against the intolerant whites. Anahita and Mishal warn Chamcha that he can no longer hide away from society in his attic bedroom.

One night Hanif Johnson arrives at the Shaandaar with the news that a dark-skinned man named Uhura Simba has been arrested for the murders. Hanif is unaware the Anahita has informed her mother, Hind Sufyan, about his affair with Mishal. Hanif is unprepared when Hind slaps him on the face and throws him out of the Shaandaar, where he rents a room. Hanif, in his anger, calls the Sufyan family immoral for the ridiculously high rents they charge to illegal Indian immigrants who have few other options to find housing. Hind's husband stares at his best friend, stunned. He hadn't known of the exorbitant rents charged by his wife. Mr. Sufyan, a pious man, has recently returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca and expected his life to, if anything, improve. Instead, he has lost both friend and daughter, since Mishal packs her bags and informs Hind she is leaving. Hind implores her husband to throw Chamcha out of the house, blaming all their troubles on the fact that they're harboring the devil under their roof. Just then, Chamcha appears. He has grown tall and even more monstrous. Only Mishal has the courage to challenge him, asking him how he expects to survive in the real world looking like a devil.

Mishal convinces Chamcha to let her help him. She and Hanif enlist the help of their friend Pinkwalla, a deejay at the hotspot where Mishal and Hanif like to hang out, Club Hot Wax. Pinkwalla has dreamt of Chamcha in his devil's guise and in his dreams Chamcha is a potent hero. Pinkwalla agrees to let Chamcha sleep in the club after hours. In the darkened club filled with waxwork figures, Chamcha's hatred for Gibreel Farishta bubbles to the surface. All of the wax figures now bear Farishta's likeness and

Chamcha screams with rage and pain. Upstairs in the deejay's apartment, Mishal and Hanif wait for the screaming to stop. When it finally does, they venture downstairs to find the club destroyed and Chamcha, looking like his old human self, sleeping like a baby in the midst of the wreckage.

Allie Cone's father was a Polish Jew and a concentration camp survivor. He never spoke the name of the camp, but he did shorten his name, Cohen, to blend into his English refuge. The lifestyle he imposed on his family was one of artificiality. As a husband, he had been unfaithful to his passionless wife, but he loved his daughter dearly. He died in his seventies, a possible suicide who fell or jumped down an elevator shaft. After his death, his widow, Alicja, changed her last name back to Cohen and returned to the synagogue as well. The passionless Alicja is sorry to hear about her daughter's great love for Gibreel Farishta and the fact that Farishta has been miraculously restored to life is far too romantic for Alicja's tastes. She wishes she could spare her daughter this great passion.

Allie has mixed feelings about the return of Farishta. Her initial passionate encounter with him has moved her so deeply she feels betrayed when he fails to contact her afterwards. Their passion is so true she cannot believe he could deny it. On some level, it is a relief to learn that he died while flying to England, flying to her. To have his love confirmed at the very moment of his death torments her worse. When she learns he's alive, she is thrilled. She also thinks him selfish and spoiled for presuming to show up at her door without even telling her he was coming. Did he expect to just move right in with her? Her questions go unanswered for seven days after finding him on the ground in the park. She drags his inert body through the snow to her house, his heaviness feeding her resentments. He sleeps for a solid week, occasionally jabbering something about Lat, Jahilia and Hind. Allie calls her mother in to take a look at her sleeping lover. Alicja suggests they call a good exorcist. Allie thanks her mother sarcastically and sends her away. When Gibreel finally wakes up, he reaches for her and initiates a spate of lovemaking which lasts on and off, mostly on, for days.

While they lie in bed, Gibreel confesses the truth of his resurrection. Allie, having seen the wonders of Mount Everest, is prepared to believe he could fall from a plane and survive. For the first time in her life, she confesses to some of the visions she has had. She tells him of the climbers' ghosts on Everest and other visions she sees. She tells him of her dead sister, Elena, who lived a model's life of drugs and parties and skimpy clothes, but died still a virgin from a drug overdose. Allie risked the health of her own brain cells, not with drugs, but by climbing Mount Everest without oxygen. She suffers some physical symptoms of memory loss and continues to see visions. She does not tell Gibreel about the ghost of a climber named Maurice Wilson who continues to haunt her here in London. Maurice wants Allie to climb Everest again, alone. Similarly, Gibreel does not tell Allie about the dangerous ghost of Rekha Merchant.

Gibreel and Allie's sexual connection remains electric for the next several weeks as they get to know one another. Allie has become famous as the only good looking blond woman to ever make the summit of Mount Everest. She and her public relations firm hide the fact that she has developed an extremely painful case of fallen arches which

debilitates her more and more each day. Farishta irritates Allie by acting like a movie star and treating her like the hired help. He even complains about how small her apartment is after she has kindly taken him in. Allie soon learns that Farishta is an exceedingly jealous man. One night they fight over one of Allie's former suitors, a man in whom she had had no interest. Farishta becomes enraged and refuses to believe Allie hadn't slept with the man or that she doesn't intend to in the future, the moment his back is turned. Infuriated, Allie asks him to leave.

In that very moment, Farishta sees God. God explains to Farishta that he is the Archangel Gibreel and that he should not have sexual congress with a human female. God is angry and impatient with Farishta for shirking his duties to shack up with Allie when he could be out on the streets saving the city's lost souls. Allie watches nonplussed as Farishta speaks seemingly to himself. She gently suggests he forget about their argument. She tells him she loves him and she fears he is not well. These words drive Farishta out the door. The Prophet Muhammad, upon seeing visions of God, was encouraged by his wife to believe in his powers. Allie's intimation that he is not well seems to Farishta to be a betrayal of his God-given vision and powers. He walks out on her and, unable to pursue him because of her painful feet, Allie drops to the floor in grief and pain, much as Rekha Merchant had when Gibreel left her.

Gibreel spends several days and nights wandering the streets. He begins to look like a vagrant and his preaching is not taken seriously. He prays for guidance and is tormented by visions of the city falling to Shaitan. Rekha Merchant turns up to laugh at his efforts. She tells him she is the one who torments him by visiting satanic insanities on the city of London. She claims to have rights since she died of love for him and offers him a compromise. If he will come to her once a week and make love to her on the spiritual plane, if he will profess to love her even a little bit, he can have his peaceful London and his Alleluia Cone back. He can even go back to being a star if he so desires. She tells him she can come to him in any form he desires and reveals that it was Rekha in the guise of Rosa Diamond who made love to Gibreel on the night Rosa died. Gibreel asks for a little time to think about Rekha's offer. The voice of the poet Baal from Jahilia whispers in Gibreel's ear. Baal mocks him, asking if he is the type of man who compromises or stands on conviction. The next morning Gibreel tells Rekha he, like Mahound, will not compromise. There is only one God. "'You are neither the Entity nor Its adversary, but only some caterwauling mist. No compromises; I won't do deals with fogs.'" (pg. 335)

Gibreel feels triumphant, as if he has passed some great test from God. He can feel the life force of the Archangel Gibreel filling his being. He makes his image vast and great, intending to show Londoners the majesty of his being and thus save their souls. He screams out, "'I am Gibreel,'" (pg. 336) but no one notices. Gibreel walks out into traffic feeling all-powerful. He is hit by a slow-moving limousine that takes him back to Allie Cone's house. Allie's career has picked up and she is now a client of the same Valance talent agency which dropped Saladin Chamcha because of his ethnic appearance. Allie also keeps herself in shape by attending martial arts classes at Jumpy Joshi's studio. When Gibreel is delivered to her door by Sisodia, the well-known movie producer whose

limousine hit Gibreel, Allie is initially irritated that Gibreel seems to use her only to pick himself up after a fall.

Allie warms to Gibreel when he admits, thanks to Sisodia's prodding, that his visions have developed into a full-blown mental illness. His former brashness is now a soft vulnerability which charms Allie. Sisodia and Allie support Gibreel through his recovery. Sisodia spends a lot of time by Gibreel's bedside, listening to his dream ravings. About the time the doctors decide Gibreel's anti-hallucinogenic drug dosage can be reduced, Sisodia tells them of his plan. Sisodia has made inquiries of the seven movie producers who Gibreel left in the lurch when he vanished. There was talk of lawsuits, but Sisodia has made them see the fact that Gibreel being alive could be very lucrative for all of them if they play their cards right. The old projects are dead and gone, but Sisodia has entered negotiations with all seven of the jilted producers to go in with him on a new Gibreel Farishta movie.

Gibreel is to play the Archangel Gibreel. The movie could develop into a trilogy. Billy Battuta is one of the key financiers. Initially Allie is upset with Sisodia, who has stolen the material for the movie from Gibreel's nightly dream mutterings. Gibreel convinces her that returning to work will be good for him and that casting his dreams on the screen will help him remember that they are fictional, not real. Allie decides to support the project after all but quickly comes to regret it. Gibreel is sucked back into his star's life. His retinue puts him up in a luxury suite which Allie is not welcome to share because the public relations people want Gibreel to appear single and available. The final straw for the couple comes when Allie discovers that Farishta, ever jealous, is having her followed. She leaves him a farewell note. Gibreel, preparing for his big comeback, throws himself further into his work, refusing to ask Allie for a reconciliation. The only consolation for Allie is her renewed relationship with her mother. Mother and daughter grow closer over discussions of Allie's painful love for Gibreel and Alicja's joyful new relationship with a Stanford professor named Boniek, which could be bound for the altar.

Gibreel's comeback is live on stage. He is to be lowered to the stage in a box, proclaiming that he has returned. As he waits in the box, his certainty of being Archangel Gibreel returns. He feels when he steps out on stage he will be given a choice to be the angel or to continue as a man. The crowd gets their first look at the miraculously alive actor and swarms the stage. The first man to reach him is the crazy man from the train, John Maslama, who addresses him as the archangel. Gibreel mysteriously vanishes from the stage and the public, entranced by this show-stopping disappearance, begins to sell, purchase and wear halos like the one Gibreel wore on stage. There are now as many halo-wearers as people wearing Shaitan's horns. Gibreel feels himself rise high above the city, in full command of his powers.

Gibreel decides to transform London into a tropical city, a place where East meets West. He believes that England's weather makes its people so indifferent to wrong or right. Not being subject to the extremes of weather has sunk England into a moral morass. Gibreel feels that by changing the weather he can save all of England. In the moment he calls on his powers to change the weather, he sees the face of Saladin Chamcha and knows him as the Enemy, Shaitan. When Gibreel opens his eyes, he is on his

knees, once again, at Allie's door. He weeps with shame, telling her he's been suffering from delusions again. She puts him to bed and calls her mother for advice. Alicja insists she put Gibreel into a mental institution, which Allie had refused to do before. While they are on the phone, Allie's mother complains about the unusual tropical weather pattern that is now hovering over England.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The identity of Gibreel Farishta is a central question of the novel. He is the same Archangel Gibreel who visited the Prophet Muhammad and gave him the Word of God. By casting doubt upon Farishta's identity, Salman Rushdie casts doubt about who inspired Muhammad to write the Qur'an. Was it Allah? Was it Shaitan? Or was the Qur'an a construct of man? Gibreel looks like an angel and Chamcha looks like a devil, but the narrator reminds the reader that looks can be deceiving. Gibreel Farishta's mental illness seems to represent the confusion of man with regards to God's will. Farishta, when the illness is upon him, believes that his relationship with Allie is sinful and a distraction from his service to Allah. Rushdie shows us that their relationship represents love and if God *is* love, then God could not tell him to abandon Allie. Rushdie's story line indicates that Shaitan whispers in the ears of men, convincing them that what is good is evil, what is evil is good. What is done in the name of God is often a product of Shaitan, as the satanic narrator implies when he takes credit for the 'Godly' works of Gibreel Farishta.

However, Chapter 5 focuses more on the author's social than religious agenda. The ongoing adventures of Saladin Chamcha represent the struggles of ethnic minorities to fit into their new homelands while retaining pride in their roots. The Shaandaar Café is the center of Indian culture in London and represents Chamcha's ethnic roots. Chamcha is at first horrified to find himself surrounded by the very people he has spent his life running away from. As he settles in, he begins to appreciate his roots and in the younger generation of Mishal and Anahita he finds a blending of his two cultures. His desire for Mishal symbolizes his desire to find a balance within himself between Eastern and Western cultures.

Chamcha is still greatly conflicted, as shown by his nightmare about Hyacinth. In the nightmare, he finds Hyacinth physically attractive, which is strange to him because she is black and he has always been repelled by dark skin, even his own. The dream reveals this ambivalence when Hyacinth suddenly transforms into a demonic, repulsive creature. Despite her dark skin, which he both loathes and is attracted to, Hyacinth is still more Westernized than Chamcha. In the dream, when they run into a Christian Church, the pews are filled with Hyacinths who stare in fear at the foreigner, Chamcha, calling him the devil. Suddenly it is not her dark skin which is at issue, but his. In Chapter 3, when Hyacinth and Chamcha escape from the medical facility, she guides him towards the East. This establishes her character as representing Chamcha's ethnic roots (the East) and the dream in which he both loathes and desires her is an accurate reflection of Chamcha's view of himself.

The dream also presents a key clue as to why Chamcha has transformed into a demonic figure. The dream scene in the church shows that Chamcha desires to be English partly because he shares the Westerner's prejudice against his own ethnicity. Chamcha sees himself as the devil. He has learned to see himself that way because of the prejudice leveled against him both at home in India and in his new home, England. He has become a reflection of that prejudice. His entire life demonstrates his self-hatred. He has done his best to eradicate every trace of Indianness from his voice and from his life. The only problem is that he himself is Indian and this he cannot eradicate.

Fortunately, at the Shaandaar, he starts to embrace his real identity. The devil becomes a symbol for all the dark-skinned people in this ethnic part of London who have been shunned as foreign devils. The people turn the insult into a point of pride and embrace it by wearing plastic devil's horns as a social statement. They do not in any way behave evilly. Their horns are simply an acknowledgement of the fact that others judge them evil because of their foreignness. This spirited response to prejudice is the author's way of showing pride and solidarity with his roots. Given the religious theme of the book, Rushdie has been greatly misunderstood on this point by both Muslims and Indians. His statement of solidarity with his own ethnic roots has been misperceived by some as an insult to Indians and to Islam. Ironically, Saladin Chamcha's fears that the dark emotional underbelly of India will turn on him if he leaves the country seems to have been realized in Salman Rushdie's own life.

Writing about the subject of prejudice stirs up anger. Social prejudice and religion are both targets of Rushdie's tongue-in-cheek satire and it is no surprise his book caused such a raging controversy. He faces the difficulty of trying to describe ethnic differences without making generalized, clichéd pronouncements. What is universal to a culture and can these "universals" be defied by individuals within the culture? What is universal to all men?

Carl Jung wrote of the collective (shared) unconscious and universal dream symbols (symbols that mean the same thing in every culture, like motherhood or birth). In some of Jung's universal symbols geographical locations represent personality traits. For example, dreaming of tropical countries represents strong emotions. Psychologically, Jungian symbolism can be said to lead to generalizations about certain cultures. Taking the same example, people associated with tropical countries (such as Hispanics) are associated with strong passion.

Rushdie utilizes the metaphor of the tropical country of India when Gibreel changes the weather in London to tropical weather, thinking that a dose of strong passion will be good for the stuffy, stiff Brits. Again, the idea of British people being stuffy and emotionally guarded is another generalization. To what extent are such generalizations accurate? Are they dangerous? Cultural generalizations form the basis of prejudice. Rushdie goes out of his way to disprove any negative generalizations he makes, such as presenting the incredibly passionate Allie Cone as a representative of those stuffy Brits. His characters defy the very stereotypes his book is concerned with.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Twenty-five years have passed in Jahilia since the exile of Mahound. The satirist, Baal, is aged and decrepit, as is the city itself. Mahound, in his absence, has prospered and his power has long since become great enough to choke off all progress in Jahilia, which still refuses to convert to the Prophet's ways. The Grandee is an old man incapable of consorting with his concubines these days and the city looks more and more to his still-beautiful, still-young, still-ferocious wife Hind for leadership. Word has reached Baal that the Prophet Mahound intends to return to Jahilia after all these years. Baal is afraid of Mahound. Jahilia has become an even more dangerous place and so when a stranger approaches Baal as Baal enters his home, he fears the stranger means to kill him. His fear disappoints the stranger, who has come to see Baal regarding Mahound's return. The stranger is Mahound's former disciple, the Persian Salman. Salman tells Baal they have common ground, as both are afraid of Mahound. Baal asks why Salman, once so close to Mahound, is afraid of him. "'The closer you are to a conjurer,' Salman bitterly replied, 'the easier to spot the trick.'" (pg. 362)

Salman explains what occurred to change his mind about Mahound. After he and his followers leave Jahilia, the members of Submission, Mahound's new religion, are forced to deal with poverty. To survive, they attack the caravans of goods headed into Jahilia. When the Jahilian army comes to stop them, Salman himself comes up with the idea of surrounding them with a moat, filled with spears to impale the onrushing army. The moat saves their lives and decimates the Jahilian army, but Salman gets no credit either from Mahound or from the archangel who gives Mahound his messages. Salman begins to get suspicious of Mahound because the divine messages begin to sound more and more like government and business rules. Whenever Mahound's people question him, Mahound simply returns with a new law from God supporting his position.

Salman criticizes Mahound for his taste in women. He always seeks out either very old woman to play the mother role in his life or very young women who will submit to his every whim. He does not seem capable of taking on a woman who is his peer and Mahound's 'divine' decrees begin calling for greater and greater submission from the women. Salman is galled by Mahound's 'divine' decree that the men can marry as many women as they like. One night, Salman dreams that he is the voice in the cave which speaks to Mahound. Upon awakening, Salman realizes that the voice which guides Mahound could just as easily be Shaitan as the Archangel Gibreel. Salman decides to test Mahound's divine guidance. As the most educated disciple in the group, Salman is the official scribe. He begins to change Mahound's words, expecting Mahound to correct him. Mahound never notices that the word of God has changed. Salman chooses to flee instead of remaining with the group and exposing Mahound as a fraud. He returns, at length, to Jahilia, where he now seeks alliance with Baal.

Baal is old and tired and does not want any trouble. He hopes Mahound has forgiven him for the satirical verses he wrote about the Submission religion. Baal had, after all, been forced to write them by the husband of his former lover, Hind. It has been many years since Hind or anyone has desired Baal's company and he hopes he is not important enough for Mahound to seek revenge against. Meanwhile Hind and her husband wage a public battle for the soul of Jahilia. The Grandee has succumbed to the stronger power and surrendered the city to Mahound. What is more, the Grandee has embraced the Submission faith. Hind calls out to the people to worship Al-Lat and to tear the Grandee limb from limb for his treachery. The people of Jahilia realize quite suddenly that Hind's grand vision of their strength is "built on clouds" (pg. 372) and that surrender is the safest course of action. They closet themselves in their homes as instructed by the Grandee. The Grandee, in his triumph, reminds Hind that she is in the most danger of retribution from Mahound, for Hind revenged her brother's deaths by eating the liver and heart of Mahound's uncle.

To the relief of many, Mahound's conquest of Jahilia is accomplished peacefully. No one takes arms to defend the goddess temples, which are destroyed upon Mahound's orders by Khalid, the water carrier. Khalid's first attempt to destroy the temple of Al-Lat is uncontested by Al-Lat and Mahound sends him back to try again. During the second attempt, Khalid reports, Al-Lat appears to him and is vanquished. That satisfies Mahound and he declares the city of Jahilia clean. Hind surrenders publicly and takes the vows of Submission and so Mahound spares her life. He also spares the life of Salman, despite Salman's previous "blasphemies" of changing Mahound's words, because Salman distracts Mahound by offering him Baal. Mahound is tormented by the memory of Baal's mockery and searches for his former enemy. Baal hides out as a eunuch in the local whorehouse, called The Curtain. Here he remains for two and a half years. Baal listens in to the conversations between the local men and the whores and discovers that Mahound has not won their hearts. Secretly, they still pray to the goddesses. Baal, ever the satirist, comes up with the idea that the twelve women should play the parts of Mahound's twelve wives. The locals are excited by this blasphemous play-acting and business at the Curtain increases.

By the time Mahound decides to put a stop to prostitution in Jahilia, Baal has become husband to the twelve whores of The Curtain. Baal begins to write again, inspired by his new wives. His favorite is young Ayesha, who styles herself after Mahound's youngest and favorite wife. Mahound's forces arrest the women and sentence them to death. Baal posts love letters to each of the twelve women on the walls of the jail and because he refers to them by the names of Mahound's wives, he is arrested. When Baal reveals his identity, Mahound sentences him to jail. Baal chides him for being able to forgive everyone except for whores and writers. Mahound responds that there is no difference between a writer and a whore.

Meanwhile, Hind has closeted herself in the tower of her palace and has spent the previous two and a half years studying the occult. When she emerges, she is as young and beautiful as ever. She goes to her husband, the Grandee and invites him to her celebration. When he asks what she is celebrating, she tells him revenge. That very day it is revealed that Mahound lies dying in Ayesha's arms. He is given the choice to go to

Heaven or return to life on earth. Mahound tells Ayesha he has chosen Heaven. Just before he dies, Mahound learns that his fatal illness has been caused by Al-Lat. He thanks Al-Lat for sending him to Heaven and dies. Ayesha dries her tears and tells everyone to rejoice, for Mahound is in Heaven and God, as always, is alive.

Chapter 6 Analysis

In Chapter 6 the author tells the story of Muhammad [Mahound] in the form of a Shakespearean play. This dramatic tale of treachery, politics and murder is evocative of *Othello*, *MacBeth* or *Henry V*. By mixing the story of the Prophet Muhammad with the tradition of Western literature, Rushdie casts a new light on the story of Muhammad and satirizes it in the same manner as Shakespeare satirized Europe's historical kings, queens and power struggles. However, Shakespeare did not satirize the life of Jesus and if he had, he most likely would have faced retaliation similar to what Rushdie faces for his writing. In Chapter 6, Rushdie states that Mahound forgives everyone except writers and whores and Mahound comments that there is no difference between the two. This comment foreshadows the real-life contempt in which fundamentalist Muslims hold the author for writing this book.

The disciple Salman's complaints against the religion of Submission are Salman Rushdie's thinly veiled complaints against the fundamentalist interpretation of the Qur'an. Mahound's decrees about women seem self-serving to Salman, as do many of the prophet's other decrees. This criticism is akin to the criticism the Catholic Church faced in Europe centuries ago for such convenient interpretations of the scripture as promising salvation in exchange for money. Holy scriptures from any religion are subject to interpretation by the human beings who read them, just as laws are subject to interpretation by judiciary officials. Even people who consider themselves fundamentalists and choose to follow the letter of the law, the letter of the Bible, the letter of the Torah or the letter of political documents like the U.S. Constitution must still interpret what those letters mean.

No human being exists in a vacuum. Everyone to some extent sees the world through the lens of their experience, their beliefs and their prejudices. Ironically, even repudiation of the so-called satanic verses has been interpreted through a culture that, at the time especially, valued male offspring much more highly than female offspring. The lines in the Qur'an which supposedly replaced the satanic verses are, "Are yours the males and His the females? That indeed were an unfair division!" This has been widely interpreted by a misogynistic culture as meaning that it would be unfair if Allah were stuck with female progeny (the goddesses) instead of male progeny (with which Allah blesses mankind). A feminist interpretation would be quite different. The same Qur'anic verses could be interpreted to read that it would be unfair for Allah to deprive mankind of females! Whether or not one agrees with Rushdie's views on the religion of Islam, those who believe in free speech would certainly grant him his right to his own interpretation.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Restored to his former appearance, Saladin Chamcha decides to return to his life. His stunning transformation at Club Hot Wax has made hero-worshippers of Mishal, Hanif Johnson and the deejay, Pinkwalla. They drive him to the house he formerly shared with Pamela, taking care to arrive during the early afternoon when Jumpy would still be teaching his martial arts class. He assures them he will be okay and they wish him luck rejoining his life. He has lost all of his dreams, including his secret dream to father a child with Pamela, but in the midst of his pain he looks like his old self again. He decides to reclaim his rights. Pamela is shocked and guilty when she sees her husband at her door. Inside over coffee, Chamcha informs her that he is moving back into his house while his lawyers clear up his affairs, after which they will sell the house and she can have her divorce. He congratulates her on her pregnancy and hides his bitterness that Jumpy had been able to get her pregnant while he, Chamcha, suffers from incomplete chromosomes which prevent him from having a child. Pamela offers no argument to his plan and he settles back into his house.

Chamcha watches television compulsively, disgusted by most of the images he sees. Chamcha realizes that the evils of society are man's own doing and cannot be explained away by the workings of Shaitan. One televised image, however, brings him hope. On a gardening show he sees a tree which has been bred from two different species of trees. He sees it take root and thrive in the English earth and he takes from this hope for his own hybrid life. A new optimism colors his perspective and Chamcha gets to work reclaiming his legal status and his bank accounts. He enjoys his favorite cultural pursuits. When the art and operas he once loved fail to thrill him, he reminds himself he's been through a shock and to just give it time. He tells his lawyers that he had suffered a break down after his amazing survival to explain his prolonged absence from his life. Over time, his animosity towards Gibreel lessons and the symptoms of his transformation into a goat-devil do not recur. Jumpy, on the other hand, becomes jumpier than ever when he learns Chamcha will be living with him and Pamela. Chamcha, however, has lost all desire for his former wife and gives Jumpy his blessing. Jumpy thinks he's a saint and makes a point of including his old friend Chamcha in meals and conversations, much to Pamela's annoyance.

One night, Jumpy invites Chamcha to join him and Pamela at a black power rally which has been called to free Dr. Uhura Simba, who had been arrested for the Granny Ripper Murders. People of various ethnic descents arrive to protest *the Man*. Chamcha still holds the British government too dear to protest it, but the rally provides him an excuse to see Mishal Sufyan. Mishal, along with Zeeny Vakil, has been haunting Chamcha's dreams. When he sees her at the meeting, he has a flash of intuition that if he pursues her, he will die. Chamcha realizes, as Gibreel did before, that his transformation is not going to go away. He, like Gibreel, feels he has a choice to make and, like Gibreel

before him, Chamcha chooses the left-hand fork in the road. He embraces his transformation.

The tropical heat wave continues to grip London. A breath of fresh air in the midst of the cloying heat is Billy Battuta and Mimi Mamoulian's coming out party, which they throw to honor their release from jail. The guests are mainly A-list celebrities and movie money men. Mimi invites her former co-worker Chamcha and when he arrives he is bowled over by a horrifying vision. Gibreel Farishta stands on a party-sized mock London Bridge with Chamcha's former agent and the beautiful, blond Allie Cone. To Chamcha, this represents the loss of everything he desired. Gibreel has it all now and he, Chamcha, has nothing. Not sensing the enmity between them, Farishta calls out to Chamcha to join him on the bridge.

Chamcha does not know about Farishta's diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, nor about the medications he is forced to take, nor that Allie begged him not to come to the party, fearing the movie crowd would send Gibreel into a relapse. Chamcha sees only his enemy standing on the London Bridge as if he owns the town. It takes little for Chamcha to undo Gibreel. He tells Gibreel that Jumpy Joshi has impregnated Pamela and the jealous monster within Gibreel snaps to attention. Allie has been working out at Jumpy Joshi's martial arts school. Chamcha tells him that all the women want to have a child with Jumpy and Gibreel remembers Rekha Merchant telling him that Allie secretly wanted a child. Gibreel spots Jumpy in the crowd. He disappears from the party, hot on Jumpy's trail.

Jumpy is rescued from the water, where he nearly drowned after Gibreel knocked him unconscious. Allie spirits Gibreel out of the city, hoping he can better recuperate in privacy. She contacts Chamcha, desperate for help. She says Gibreel has been asking for him and she could really use help dealing with her crazy, paranoid lover. In the car on the way to Allie and Gibreel's hideout in a tiny village called Durisdeer, Chamcha lends a willing ear to Allie, hoping to gain her trust, which he can later use to get the revenge he desires against Gibreel.

Farishta is happy to see Chamcha. He gets Chamcha alone and explains that the real reason they're hiding in Durisdeer is to keep Allie away from all the men who flock after her. Chamcha realizes in that moment just how close Gibreel is to coming apart at the seams and Chamcha also realizes he can use Gibreel's jealousy over Allie to get his revenge. He continues to play friend to them both, even as he begins to work his plan. The visit goes well and Allie encourages Chamcha to stay in close touch with them.

Gibreel comes to visit Chamcha in London and Chamcha takes him to the Shaandaar Café, hoping to bring him face to face with the man Gibreel almost killed, Jumpy Joshi. To Chamcha's disappointment, neither Jumpy nor Mishal are at the café. Only Mr. Sufyan welcomes Chamcha. His wife Hind and daughter Anahita do not give him a warm greeting. To make matters worse, a group of white British punks are in the restaurant, getting drunk and mocking the Indian food. Despite this failure, Chamcha manages to get plenty of intimate sexual details from Gibreel about Allie. Gibreel cannot stop talking about their sex life and Chamcha puts all of that information to use. Shortly

after Gibreel's trip, the phone calls start. Chamcha, who as a voiceover actor was once known as the Man of the Thousand Voices, begins tormenting Allie and Gibreel with a series of telephone calls. Each call is supposedly a different man whom Allie is sleeping with and the personal details Chamcha reveals about her sexual preferences are enough to convince the jealous Gibreel that Allie is cheating all over town. Gibreel walks out on Allie, but not before vengefully destroying every one of her invaluable Mount Everest keepsakes, including the hand-made plaque given her by the sherpa, Pembra, who accompanied her to the top.

Meanwhile, Dr. Uhura Simba dies in police custody, apparently the result of a violent nightmare. The ethnic tensions within London increase even more, since the ethnic minorities don't believe that Simba died from a bad dream. Whites, however, are convinced that the Granny Ripper Murderer got what he deserved. The escalating tensions lead to riots when the Granny Ripper strikes again after Simba's death. Things get even worse when a white man is caught in the act and arrested as the Granny Ripper Murderer. The police institute martial law to combat the rioting in the streets and Club Hot Wax is raided. Pinkwalla, John Maslama and Anahita Sufyan are arrested for narcotics trafficking. Pamela is called to a secret late-night meeting in which the family of Uhura Simba gives her documents which supposedly prove that the policemen of Brickhall are devil-worshipping warlocks. Jumpy insists on escorting her and together they take the documents to the Brickhall Community Relations Council building where Pamela works so that they can make copies to distribute in the morning. By morning, Pamela and Jumpy are both dead, victims of arson at the CRC building. The police pin the arson on the dead man, Jumpy, because the Shaandaar Café where Jumpy lives also goes up in flames that night. However, Pamela and Jumpy were actually followed to the CRC building by a van full of unknown men who had earlier followed them to the meeting with Uhura Simba's family.

Shortly before the arrest, Maslama, owner of Club Hot Wax and Gibreel's crazy disciple whom he met on the train, provided Gibreel with a golden trumpet. Now Farishta wanders the streets as Archangel Gibreel. He encounters a group of whores whom he recognizes from his dream of Jahilia. In response to their prayer, he bends to their will and destroys the group of men who act as their pimps by blowing heavenly fire from his trumpet. Gibreel sees the fires in the riot-torn streets and believes it is a purifying, celestial fire. At the Shaandaar, Gibreel arrives in time to witness Chamcha run into the burning building to rescue the Sufyan family. Their eyes lock and Gibreel suddenly realizes that Chamcha, the Man of a Thousand Voices, had been the one to call his house with sexual details about Allie, sexual details which Gibreel now recalls sharing with Chamcha. Gibreel, as the archangel, realizes that Chamcha's transformation into the devil is not and never was merely a physical transformation. Despite seeing his enemy in Chamcha, Gibreel also sees that Chamcha is willing to sacrifice his life to save the Sufyans. Gibreel enters the Shaandaar and, parting the walls of fire like the Red Sea, he carries Chamcha outside to safety. In the ambulance with Mishal, Hanif and Chamcha, Gibreel tells Mishal he is the archangel. Having already seen Chamcha transform into a devil and back, Mishal is willing to consider this true, but Hanif persuades her to live in the real world with him and forget about Gibreel's claims.

Gibreel falls asleep and in the midst of what will be the very last of his archangel dreams, he calls out Mishal's name.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 7 contains the heart of the author's beliefs and the reason he wrote the novel. The passage near the beginning of the chapter in which Chamcha flips channels on his television set gives us the analogy critical to understanding the author's intent. First, Chamcha notices the prevalence of evil in the world, as represented by the news and by the violent and sexual content of many of the shows. As Chamcha watches this display, he realizes that humanity, not Shaitan, is the cause of the evils in the world. If humanity is the problem, though, then humanity must also be the solution. In the very next image the author presents his solution to the problem. The image of the hybrid tree, bred from two different species, taking root in foreign soil, is the answer to mankind's problems. As an Indian-born English writer, Salman Rushdie can appreciate the benefits and problems inherent in different cultures. He believes that a careful combination of multiple cultures can provide humanity the best which the entire world, combined, has to offer. His message is one of multicultural unity and it is delivered with warmth and affection for both of the countries he calls home.

The tropical heat wave which hits London is another symbolic example of this cultural cross-pollination. The heat seems to bring the ethnic tensions to their boiling point and although matters get worse before they get better, the increase in tension ultimately forces a resolution of the situation. Both Farishta and Chamcha's transformations resolve themselves in a dramatic climax in this chapter. This chapter is the single point in which every character and every situation reaches its dramatic climax. In the previous chapter, Chamcha, refusing to be judged by outward appearances, fights off his demonic appearance, but he has not succeeded in quelling his dark nature. He spends most of Chapter 7 plotting and carrying out revenge against Farishta. Only when a fire ignites at the Shaandaar does he ultimately redeem himself by risking his life to save the Sufyan family.

Gibreel's situation also reaches its boiling point as he descends completely into violent, vengeful madness and 'becomes' the avenging angel, Gibreel. However, he, too, redeems himself by sparing Chamcha's life in the burning Shaandaar. Chamcha believes the fire symbolizes purification and he feels that the devil has been burned out of him. He believes Gibreel's madness has also been purified by the fire, but he will learn in a later chapter that this is not the case. Gibreel's situation is indeed resolved in this chapter, but the resolution is not a happy one for Gibreel, who permanently and irrevocably gives in to his madness.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The villagers of *Titlipur* embark on their pilgrimage to Mecca. They arrive in nearby Chatnapatna, led by Ayesha and shaded from the sun by thousands of butterflies. In Chatnapatna lives the toy maker, Srinivas, who had once employed Ayesha. She had whittled dolls for him to make a meager living before discovering her powers as a seer. The zamindar, Mirza Saeed, accompanies the villagers in the hopes of making them see reason before they attempt to part the waters of the Red Sea. Saeed tries to talk Srinivas into helping him dissuade Ayesha, since Ayesha likes and respects Srinivas. Srinivas, a Hindu, believes that Ayesha looks just like the poster of the goddess Lakshmi which is on his wall. Srinivas refuses to help Saeed dissuade Ayesha. Srinivas feels called to join the pilgrimage and leaves his distraught wife and child to walk with Ayesha.

Gibreel dreams that a drought befalls the pilgrims. On the eighteenth day of the journey, an old woman dies. Her widower, Sarpanch, blames Ayesha for leading his wife to her grave. Ayesha merely reminds him that because she died en route to Mecca, his wife is assured a place in Paradise. Sarpanch, unwilling to give up the quest which his wife had believed in, nonetheless defects to Saeed's point of view and forgoes walking to ride in the air-conditioned Mercedes with the zamindar. Unhappy with the doubt stirred up by this defection, Ayesha disappears into the desert for a day and a half. Upon her return, her hair is gold and she admonishes the villagers on behalf of Archangel Gibreel. She tells them that if they lose their faith simply because God called one of them home then the angel will refuse to part the waters for them and will plague their town with drought forever. The villagers bow to Ayesha, calling her Bibiji in honor of the holy woman who first brought the butterflies to *Titlipur* two centuries ago.

As the weeks pass, the marchers' health suffers greatly. As they pass through towns, Hindu townspeople line up to throw stones and hurl insults at the Muslim pilgrims. Three more old people and one six-year-old child all die and are left behind. Osman, the formerly untouchable water carrier who joined the pilgrimage out of love for Ayesha, confronts her about the needless deaths. Ayesha responds by imposing stricter regulations on the pilgrims. Osman realizes he does not love whatever it is she's become and joins the defectors in the zamindar's car. Saeed and his growing group of followers stay behind as needed to take care of burying the dead. Saeed's wife Mishal becomes Ayesha's "chief lieutenant and most devoted disciple." (pg. 484) She and Saeed have a falling out over the doubts she blames him for spreading amongst the people and Mishal refuses to sleep next to her husband anymore at night. Instead, she rolls out her bedroll next to her mother, Mrs. Qureishi. Her father, an important banker, drives up to meet the pilgrimage one day and his wife, upon seeing her husband, is ashamed of her bedraggled appearance. Mr. Qureishi, upon seeing his daughter Mishal's advanced cancer, offers to fly her to Mecca if she so desires. Mishal insists on

walking, but Mrs. Qureishi can no longer justify this insane pilgrimage. After her husband leaves to return to his banking, she joins the dissenters in Saeed's car.

By nine weeks into the pilgrimage, word has gotten out to the local press about the villagers intent on walking through the Red Sea to Mecca. Social unrest accompanies them as they pass through towns and cities on their way to the Red Sea. One town very near the Red Sea awaits the pilgrims with a blockade of miners carrying pickaxes. The day the pilgrims enter that particular town, the butterflies desert them. Ayesha commands her followers to continue regardless, although the butterflies' defection lowers their morale considerably. As they approach the armed blockade of miners, a tremendous wall of rainwater falls from the sky. Saeed races his vehicle into the intersection to save Ayesha and Mishal, who are unhappy to be tossed in his car. Ayesha, however, is mollified when she learns that the flooding rains drowned fifteen thousand men in the underground mines. Although the dead miners were not the same men who had lain in wait for her procession, she feels they got what they deserved. Just then, the butterflies return with the sunshine and Ayesha leads her followers forward into the flooded city streets. Saeed is forced to abandon his Mercedes and walk, after all, as the roads are impassable to vehicles.

After the miracles of the rains and the butterflies, the city opens its doors to the pilgrims. City officials confer with Ayesha on planning the route through the city and they offer the pilgrims nightly lodgings at the city's mosques, where the city's faithful come to meet the pilgrims. After one such night, an illegitimate baby is found abandoned on the mosque's doorstep. The mosque's imam and Ayesha speak words which incite the crowd to stone the baby to death because it was conceived in sin. None of the *Titlipur* villagers take part in the stoning. They lose their faith in Ayesha and begin to discuss returning home, hopefully to save part of the harvest they all abandoned. Saeed tempts Ayesha with an offer to pay for the flight to Mecca for a dozen of the pilgrims. In this way, Saeed says, Ayesha can avoid the potential downfall awaiting her at the Red Sea if the waters do not part as she expects. She is tempted, but in the morning she addresses the pilgrims, tells them of Saeed's offer and announces that she has refused the offer. "'How could I choose between you? It is all of us, or none.'" (pg. 498) Her certainty inspires the pilgrims to continue their march.

A crowd of two hundred watches the pilgrims approach the sea. Ayesha calls the butterflies, which form high above into the shape of an angel. The on-lookers do not see the butterflies, but the *Titlipur* villagers do and all rush into the water except Saeed and his defectors, including Mishal's mother. The villagers walk until their heads drop below the surface of the water. Everyone is drowned despite the defectors' attempts to save them. When Saeed awakes in the hospital, he finds he is the only survivor who did not see the waters part. His mother-in-law, the toy maker Srinivas and even Oslama swear that they saw the waters part to allow their loved ones to walk to Mecca. Still, the bodies wash up on shore. Alone, Saeed returns home to his abandoned village, content to starve himself to death in isolation. As he lies dying, Ayesha's spirit visits him, commanding him to open and accept salvation. In death, he does so and joins the other pilgrims of *Titlipur* on their march across the Red Sea.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The tale of Ayesha and the villagers of *Titlipur* is concluded in this chapter. The vision of Ayesha leading her followers to their watery graves shows the folly of following a visionary who claims God requires the stoning to death of an infant and the drowning deaths of 1,500 innocent miners. Rushdie's parables of Mahound and Ayesha decry the violence called for in the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. *The Satanic Verses* protests religious violence and this protest has found favor with many peace-loving Muslims. Ironically, this same book which protests violence was itself met with death threats by Muslim fundamentalists who believe that the Qur'an requires man to murder in God's name, just as Ayesha and Mahound believe.

Rushdie's pseudo-religious parables again contain an existentialist flavor. He reaches no definite conclusions and presents the audience with no discernible moral. Ayesha certainly has some kind of power, since she is capable of performing butterfly-related miracles. Whether that power is divine or satanic is, purportedly, the question posed by Rushdie's novel, but the story doesn't bear out the question. Ayesha's behavior is shown in turns as being right and being misguided. She is both evil and a true prophet, alternately. That Rushdie presents his prophets as both powerful and evil does not make him an existentialist. What lends his writing an existentialist feel is that he presents no option in terms of a loving God. His writing implies that Satan is a product of man and if God's enemy does not exist, then it follows that God does not exist. Chapter 8 ends with a desolate conclusion about religion and spirituality. In the final chapter, Rushdie will give the reader some reason to hope for a positive worldview by presenting Chamcha as a human being who has the capability of transcending his personal demons in favor of his finer human qualities. Existentialism gives way to humanism in this oddly secular book about religion.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Saladin Chamcha receives an urgent telegram that his father is dying. He drops everything to catch a flight to Bombay. At the airport, however, he is plagued by memories of the hijacked flight. Sisodia, Gibreel's producer friend, strikes up a conversation intending to ease Saladin's obvious fear. They continue to chat during the flight and Sisodia mentions that Gibreel's comeback has been a flop. He remembers that Saladin is an actor and offers to get him work "back home" in India. Saladin thinks about what he's left behind and what awaits him back home. The Shaandaar has been rebuilt by Mishal and her new husband, Hanif. Saladin is comforted to know that all the bogus racketeering charges were dropped against his friends at the Hot Wax Club, too.

As for what awaits him in India, the local papers are full of political, ethnic and religious tensions. He laments the racism within his own people that leads them to prefer light-skinned Indians over dark-skinned. He also reads in the paper that Hal Valance's *The Aliens Show* had tanked in America and Hal is now out of a job. Saladin wonders if Zeeny Vakil will meet him at the airport. He has wired ahead to let her know of his arrival, but he is not sure if she will consider his previous departure unforgivable. The plane lands and Zeeny is not at the airport. Sisodia offers him a ride and drops Saladin off at his childhood home on Scandal Point.

Nasreen the second greets Saladin at the door, along with Kasturba, the widow of the servant Vallabh. Kasturba had impersonated Nasreen the first for the gratification of Saladin's father. The two women are obviously close and Saladin realizes that his father's impending death has washed away any jealousy between them. Nasreen the second has moved into the house on Scandal Point with her husband and warns Saladin that Changez is not long for the earth. When Saladin enters his father's room, Changez holds out an uncertain hand to his son. "To fall in love with one's father after the long angry decades was a serene and beautiful feeling; a renewing, life-giving thing," thinks Saladin (pg. 522). Cancer has stripped Changez of his surliness and his cheerful, fun-loving spirit shines through. Saladin wishes for more time, or perhaps to change the past and begins to think of himself again as Salahuddin Chamchawala.

The next morning, Salahuddin's father asks for a shave and Salahuddin lovingly complies. Salahuddin relieves the women of many of their sickbed duties. He administers his father's medicine and watches over him in the night. Salahuddin sees his father's magic lamp, an object of boyhood fascination which his father had promised him he would one day inherit. However, the rift between them had subsequently caused Changez to tell his son he would never get the magic lamp. Now Salahuddin is tempted to rub it three times and ask for his father's life to be spared. The son, however, puts aside his fanciful thoughts and gives his father his modern medicine.

Changez' spirits are uplifted by all the love and care he's receiving and he asks his family to open the house to his friends. Friends and family, young and old, arrive to visit with Changez. He is treated with honor and love and reassured of his place in the community. Changez has not yet been told about his terminal cancer diagnosis and after the party, Salahuddin insists it is time he is told.

The doctor speaks to Changez privately and afterwards, Changez announces to his family that he has a terminal cancer. Changez impresses his son with his manful acceptance of the news. The women, however, are upset that he's been told. They feel the light of hope has gone from his eyes. Salahuddin is taught by his father how to look death in the face. Changez absolves Salahuddin of their past rancor and tells his son the magic lamp is his after all. The end comes that very day. Salahuddin insists on rushing his father to the hospital, hoping for a last minute miracle, but the ambulance returns to Scandal Point bearing Changez' body. Again, the house is filled with people, mourners this time. After the funeral, Salahuddin returns to Scandal Point and rubs his magic lamp, once, twice, three times. On the third rub, the lights go on in the house and Zeeny Vakil enters the room.

Zeeny asks for his forgiveness, saying she had stayed away to hurt him and now realizes what a terrible time she'd picked to be so childish. When he sees her, he realizes he loves her and tells her so. She looks pleased but tells him she won't hold him to those words because he is in an emotional state at the moment. Nonetheless, for the first time in their relationship, she invites him to her apartment. Zeeny is thrilled that he is using the name Salahuddin Chamchawala again and that he can now live as a real person instead of the artificial act he lived so long in England. Salahuddin's new life glows for him and England fades away in his memory. He inherits a vast fortune from his father and Zeeny involves Salahuddin in local social politics. Zeeny explains that due to the rise in community violence, it is necessary that they show their country that there are forces for good, as well as darkness. She convinces him to take part in the formation of a human chain for peace.

Salahuddin's past is not finished with him yet. Rumors about the actor Gibreel Farishta's strange behavior begin to surface. In their last conversation together, Gibreel informed Salahuddin that he was returning to India in the hopes that he would never see Chamcha, Allie or London ever again. Gibreel's comeback attempt has garnered much criticism, as his stories of the Prophet Mahound and of the butterfly girl, Ayesha, are seen by many as blasphemous. No longer the face of God on film, Gibreel's religious views are now in question. His halitosis has returned and his most recent mistress is quoted in the tabloids that kissing Gibreel is like '"kissing the Devil."' (pg. 539) Salahuddin is tormented by guilt over Gibreel's fall from grace. He had permitted himself to believe that the cleansing fire at the Shaandaar Café had cured both of them of their demons. However, the break-up he caused between Gibreel and Allie was permanent, thanks to Gibreel's destruction of Allie's prized mementos and Salahuddin feels responsible for Gibreel's troubles.

When Salahuddin reads in the papers that an international team of mountaineers, including Allie Cone, is coming to town, he realizes that his destiny is calling upon him to

act. "'Now I know what a ghost is,' he thought. 'Unfinished business, that's what.'" (pg. 540) He feels a deep sense of foreboding which Zeeny misinterprets as his regret over returning to Bombay and to her. The dark event he fears occurs on the same day as the human chain rally. The rally, which moves participants and spectators alike to tears, goes unreported by the newspapers. It is bumped off the front page by the sensational deaths at Everest Vilas, where Farishta lives and the sight of Rekha Merchant's suicidal plunge some years ago. The movie producer, Sisodia, is discovered dead in Farishta's apartment, with a hole where his heart should have been. Allie Cone takes a mysterious and deadly plunge from the roof of Everest Vilas. Farishta is suspected of the murders, but he has vanished from sight. Salahuddin excuses himself from the human chain rally, telling Zeeny he needs to spend a few days at his old home in Scandal Point. Zeeny, mistaking his reasons, draws away from him, angry and rejected.

That night at Scandal Point, Gibreel Farishta arrives to see Salahuddin. In the room where his father died, Gibreel awaits him. He tells Salahuddin to listen to his story. Gibreel explains how Sisodia showed up at his penthouse with Allie in the hopes of reuniting the two lovers. Gibreel is still plagued by the Archangel Gibreel, who has become these days an avenging angel. Gibreel could not look at Allie without remembering the doggerel verses which Chamcha had planted in his mind about Allie Cone. Gibreel in his passion had called her a slut and a whore and shot Sisodia through the heart, with his finger, he claims. Then Rekha Merchant's ghost appeared to Gibreel and encouraged him to take Allie to the roof. By this point in the story, Salahuddin believes that Gibreel is about to kill him, too. Gibreel implores Salahuddin to believe him that it was Rekha, not Gibreel, who pushed Allie off the roof. Gibreel removes a revolver from the magic lamp, but instead of shooting Salahuddin, Gibreel puts a bullet into his own mouth. Amazed at the number of second chances life has granted him, Salahuddin leaves his childhood home behind and returns with Zeeny to their new life.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The ashes of the fire at the Shaandaar give rise to renewed life. The police drop all the illegitimate charges against Chamcha's friends and the Shaandaar is rebuilt by Mishal, who represents the peaceful combination/hybridization of Eastern and Western cultures. Chamcha, purified by the fire, returns to India and slowly begins to reclaim his heritage. No longer does he have to hide his "ethnic" face. As an actor in Indian films he can proudly show his handsome face to a world which will appreciate him for who he is. Zeeny Vakil takes him back and offers redemption through her forgiveness. Similarly, his father's forgiveness redeems Chamcha, who reverts to using the name his parents gave him at birth. For all of Rushdie's talk of hybridization and mixing of cultures, Chamcha, or Chamchawalla, only gains his redemption by renouncing England in favor of his native culture.

Gibreel Farishta, on the other hand, fails to redeem himself. The fire at the Shaandaar is a turning point for him as well, but one which sends him irrevocably into the depths of madness. Now that he is a true believer, he murders Allie Cone and his friend Sisodia.

This action is reflective of the insane honor-killings perpetrated by some Muslim men in the name of Allah.

." . .Gibreel the avenger always vengeance why

"I can't be sure something like this for the crime of being human

"especially female but not exclusively people must pay

"Something like that." (pg. 544)

Rushdie presents to the reader the logical outcome: if this is what religion tells mankind, that men and women are sinners who must pay for the crime of being human, then self-hatred and violence must surely follow. To this argument Rushdie presents no theological alternative, but he provides a hopeful counterpoint in the fate of Salahuddin Chamchawala. "It seemed that in spite of all his wrong-doing, weakness, guilt - in spite of his humanity - he was getting another chance. There was no accounting for one's good fortune, that was plain." (pg. 547)

Characters

Mirza Saeed Akhtar

A zamindar, or land-owner, Mirza Saeed is the descendent of an ancient family who desperately attempts to convince his beloved wife and the other villagers to turn back from her pilgrimage with Ayesha. He feels great lust as well as hate for Ayesha.

Mishal Qureishi Akhtar

Mirza Saeed's wife, Mishal is terminally ill with cancer and convinced that Ayesha is a holy prophet.

Ayesha

Ayesha is the name of four characters. The first mentioned is the empress whom the Imam forces Gibreel to help him destroy in Gibreel's dream. The second is the butterfly-eating would-be prophet from another of Gibreel's dreams. This Ayesha is characterized by her great beauty and the complete and uncompromising certainty of her visions from the angel Gibreel, and she leads her entire town of pilgrims over hundreds of miles and into the Arabian Sea. The third Ayesha is Mahound's young and beautiful wife, who (Salman the Persian implies) was unfaithful to Mahound, and the fourth is the prostitute (and Baal's favorite wife) who takes the name in order to attract customers.

Baal

Baal is the greatest satirist of Jahilia. "A sharp narrow youth" during chapter 2, he writes jeering verses about Mahound at Abu Simbel's command. In chapter 6, however, at fifty years old, Baal experiences "a thickening of the tongue as well as the body" and, after hiding in a brothel and marrying twelve prostitutes who pose as Mahound's wives, he is discovered and executed. His name is associated with a variety of pagan gods in the Hebrew Bible.

Billy Battuta

A "whiz-kid tycoon" who Saladin describes as a "Playboy Pakistani" and a "con-man" who exploits women, Billy invests in re-launching Gibreel's career and gets into trouble with the police in the United States and Britain.

Bilal

Bilal is an "enormous black" slave whom Mahound frees and makes his disciple. Bilal (or Bilal X) is also the name of the American singer and convert to Islam (a parody of the folk star and convert Cat Stevens) who is close to the Imam of Gibreel's dream.

Pimple Billimoria

"The latest chilli-and-spices bombshell," Pimple is Gibreel's co-star before he vanishes from Bombay and during his unsuccessful comeback.

Pamela Lovelace Chamcha

Saladin's wife, Pamela falls out of love with him when he leaves for India, and she takes Jumpy Joshi as a lover when she believes that Saladin has died. Saladin describes her as "frail as porcelain, graceful as gazelles." She has an aristocratic English voice, but she is not actually a stereotypical upper-class English woman at all, having been abandoned by her parents when they committed suicide. She works in community activism and dies along with Jumpy, whose baby she is carrying, in a fire in the Brickhall Community Relations Council building.

Saladin Chamcha

One of the two main characters of Rushdie's novel, Saladin is defined throughout much of the novel by his desire to become entirely English and his association with evil. Called Salahuddin Chamchawala when he was born, Saladin dreams of escaping from his father and their Bombay home throughout his childhood, and he associates all that he dislikes about India with an incident in which an old man forces Saladin to masturbate him. He goes to England to study, resolves to become completely English largely out of resentment towards his father, becomes an actor with an amazing capability for vocal impersonations, and assimilates completely (or so he thinks) into British culture.

Saladin begins to experience an identity crisis, however, during his extramarital affair with Reeny Vakil, and this is one of the explanations behind his estrangement from his English identity and his transformation into the devil. He begins associating with the oppressed groups of Asian and African immigrants to England who are living in London during a time of racial strife. Despite all of his bitterness and anger, Saladin rarely does anything truly evil or demonic, and he grows to have a much more mature understanding of his bifurcated Indian and British identity.

Saladin's relationship with Gibreel is quite complex, despite the fact that it is often referred to as a fight between evil and good. Saladin resents Gibreel because of his effortless luck and because Gibreel abandoned Saladin to the police after their fall from

the plane. Eventually, Saladin takes revenge on Gibreel by placing a series of phone calls in which he pretends to be Allie Cone's lovers. Saladin's abbreviated last name, Chamcha, means "spoon" in Hindi, which is why Gibreel calls him "Spoono."

Changez Chamchawala

Saladin's father, Changez is a brilliant and mischievous man who also has a tyrannical and domineering side. Changez's relationship with his son is extremely important to Saladin's development, and it disturbs Saladin deeply that Changez remarries another woman named Nasreen less than a year after his first wife's death, then takes his former maid as a kind of concubine who dresses up as his first wife. Saladin is estranged from his father for much of his adult life, but they are reconciled as Changez is dying of cancer.

Nasreen Chamchawala

"The slightest, most fragile of women" who dresses with "excessive verve," Nasreen is Saladin's mother and Changez's first wife.

Alicja Cone

Alicja is Allie's spirited mother, who frowns upon her relationship with Gibreel and moves to California to marry a professor.

Allie Cone

Allie, short for Alleluia, is a "climber of mountains, vanquisher of Everest, blonde yahudan [Jew], ice queen," and lover of Gibreel. She feels silenced after climbing Everest, as though everything else in her life will be downhill, and she is plagued by painful flat-footedness that will make it impossible to be a mountain climber any longer. Although she loves Gibreel and takes care of him, she cannot stand his extreme jealousy and eventually leaves him. Eventually, Gibreel goes insane and murders her, pushing her to her death from Everest Vilas in Bombay.

Elena Cone

Allie's sister, Elena, is a model and a drug addict who drowns in her bathtub at twenty-one.

Otto Cone

Allie's father is a Polish émigré to England and a survivor of a Nazi death camp. He is a captivating and somewhat quirky art historian who attempts to assimilate entirely into English culture.

Martín de la Cruz

The Argentine Martín is Rosa Diamond's would-be lover.

Henry Diamond

Known as "Don Enrique of Los Alamos" in Argentina, Henry is Rosa's husband.

Rosa Diamond

Rosa is the old woman who finds Gibreel and Saladin after their fall into the English Channel. She sees visions of English history and draws Gibreel into the secret story of her past in Argentina.

Sarpanch Muhammad Din

Sarpanch is the pilgrim of Titlipur who takes Mirza Saeed's side in the station wagon after his wife dies early in the voyage.

Eugene Dumsday

Dumsday is the anti-Darwin creationist who sits next to Saladin on the *Bostan*.

Gibreel Farishta

Born "Ismail Najmuddin" in British Poona, Gibreel moves to Bombay when he is thirteen to work with his father as a food carrier. Babaseheb Mhatre takes Gibreel in after his parents die and arranges for him to work in the movies. Eventually becoming a star in theological movies, Gibreel begins to sleep with many different women, including Rekha Merchant, and rises to enormous fame. He is nearly killed by a bout of seemingly inexplicable internal bleeding, during which he loses his religious faith. After meeting and falling in love with Allie Cone while eating a great deal of pork at a famous Bombay hotel, Gibreel flies to London to find her.

One of Gibreel's definitive characteristics is that he gets away with everything and is entirely effortless in his approach to life, but this is contradicted by his severe episodes

of supernatural visions and insanity in the course of the novel. He dislikes England and English culture and has a vicious jealous streak that eventually drives him to insanity and murder. Since Gibreel leaves Bombay within a week of his fortieth birthday, the new life he attempts to start with Allie Cone can be seen as a mid-life crisis of sorts. Gibreel is associated with the Biblical archangel Gabriel and seems to represent the forces of good for much of the novel, but this changes at certain key points, which reveals that good and evil are not clear-cut categories.

Salman Farsi

Salman the Persian is Mahound's disciple until he becomes disillusioned with the prophet and falsely transcribes some of the verses of the Qur'an. He flees from Mahound, but the prophet finds him in Jahilia and allows him to travel to Persia.

Bhupen Gandhi

Bhupen is a sensitive poet and journalist who, along with his friends George Miranda and Reeny Vakil, is an example of a Bombay intellectual.

Girls of the Curtain

The twelve prostitutes of the Curtain brothel take the names of Mahound's wives and marry Baal the poet.

Hamza

Mahound's uncle, Hamza is a renowned warrior who fights for Mahound. Hind butchers him and eats his heart.

Hind

Hind is the "ferocious, beautiful" wife of Abu Simbel of Jahilia. She remains everlastingly young and powerful, devouring men literally as well as sexually. She survives Mahound's conquest of Jahilia.

Imam

The Imam, or Muslim religious leader, from Gibreel's dream narrative is an exile who despises London but is forced to live there until he returns in triumph to a revolution in his homeland. His character is based on the Iranian fundamentalist leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini, who sentenced Rushdie to death.

Hanif Johnson

A "smart lawyer and a local boy made good" who is generally disliked, Hanif maintains an office above the Shaandaar Café. When she learns that he is involved with Mishal, Hind furiously kicks him.

Jumpy Joshi

Jumpy is Saladin's friend who feels extremely guilty about his ongoing affair with Saladin's wife. Although his real name is Jamshed, he is known as Jumpy because of his "enormous capacity for nervous agitation," his thinning hair, and his unique giggle. He is a martial arts instructor.

Kasturba

Saladin's caretaker when he was young, Kasturba begins to act and dress as Changez Chamchawala's late wife Nasreen at some point after Changez's remarriage.

Khalid

Water-carrier of Jahilia and disciple of Mahound, Khalid becomes a general in Mahound's armies.

Inspector Stephen Kinch

Inspector Kinch is a corrupt police officer involved in the death of Uhuru Simba.

Madam of the Curtain

A nameless madam who runs the brothel in Jahilia.

Mahound

Mahound is a long-disused European term for Mahomet or Muhammad, the founder of Islam and the final, most important prophet of God in the Islamic faith. Said to be a merchant who was born in Mecca, Muhammad claimed to have been visited by the Archangel Gabriel and told to memorize the verses that became the Islamic Qur'an. In 622, he was forced to flee from Mecca to Medina, both cities in Northern Arabia, but eventually his armies conquered Mecca and the other pagan tribes of Arabia.

Mahound appears in chapters 2 and 6 of Rushdie's novel, which are versions of the religious history of Mecca, known in the book as Jahilia, which is an Islamic term for the

ignorance of God's message. The novel implies (very controversially) that Mahound manufactures the messages of Gibreel to suit his temperament and desires, and that Mahound was a jealous man who disliked women.

Mimi Mamoulian

Saladin's Jewish costar on British television and radio, Mimi has a wide range of impersonations. She becomes involved with Billy Battuta despite Saladin's warning that he will exploit her, and she spends some time in jail for participating in one of his con-artist schemes.

John Maslama

Owner of the Hot Wax nightclub, Mr. Maslama meets Gibreel on the train to London and believes that Gibreel is the archangel of God.

Rekha Merchant

Gibreel's most serious lover in Bombay, Rekha appears to him after her suicide as a vision on a flying rug. Gibreel continually returns to her because, unlike his other lovers, she both abuses him and consoles him, which Gibreel cannot resist. She is married to a man summed up by the narrator as "a mouse with money and a good squash wrist," and she has three children whom she throws to their deaths, along with herself, as a result of Gibreel's departure to London. Gibreel finally makes her apparition disappear by telling her that there is no God but God.

Babasaheb Mhatre

Grand Secretary of the Bombay Tiffin Carriers' Association, the Babasaheb takes the orphaned Gibreel into his home and arranges for him to be in the movies.

George Miranda

A fat, "young Marxist film-maker" with a waxed mustache, George is Reeny's friend. He hates the "disembodied, invisible" power of America and knows all of the Bombay film gossip.

Nasreen II

Changez's second wife has the same name as his first, as well as the same "birdlike" body type.

Ooparvala

Ooparvala (God), who may also be Neechayvala (Satan), appears to Gibreel and tells him to get back to work as an angel.

Osman

A Hindu convert to Islam, Osman earns his living as a clown and is in love with Ayesha.

Sherpa Pemba

Pemba is Allie's friend and fellow-climber. They climbed Everest together and reached the peak without oxygen tanks.

Hyacinth Phillips

Hyacinth is Saladin's physiotherapist in the hospital. She escapes with him and the other monsters but then changes shape inside a church and attacks him along with a number of similar creatures.

Pinkwalla

Pinkwalla is the D. J. at the Hot Wax nightclub.

Mr. Qureishi

Mishal Akhtar's father, Mr. Qureishi is a rich banker who finds his daughter and wife on their pilgrimage and tells them to abandon it.

Mrs. Qureishi

Mishal's mother, Mrs. Qureishi undertakes the pilgrimage, but eventually comes to Mirza Saeed's side and attempts to dissuade her daughter from continuing.

Dr. Uhuru Simba

Formerly Sylvester Roberts, Uhuru is the black activist leader who is falsely accused of committing the serial "Granny Ripper Murders." He is murdered in jail, presumably by the police.

Karim Abu Simbel

Abu Simbel is the Grandee of Jahilia until he surrenders his city to Mahound. A tall man in white robes whose "gait contains the lilt, the deadly elegance of power," he forces Mahound to flee the city. The crisis in Jahilia strips Abu Simbel of his grandiloquence and, in chapter 6, he has grown into a "soft and pursy old age."

S. S. Sisodia

Sisodia is the rich and enigmatic Indian film producer who speaks with a stutter.

Aurora del Sol

Aurora is Martín de la Cruz's jealous fiancé.

Sri Srinivas

Srinivas is the Brahmin toy-maker who accompanies Ayesha and Mirza Saeed on the pilgrimage.

Anahita Sufyan

Anahita is Mishal Sufyan's slightly jealous younger sister.

Hind Sufyan

Sufyan's bitter wife, Hind despises England and blames her husband for all of her problems. She is the cook and money-maker at the Shaandaar Café and Bed & Breakfast.

Mishal Sufyan

Mishal is the Sufyans' attractive teenage daughter who falls out with her mother and marries Hanif Johnson. She is the best student in Jumpy's martial arts class.

Muhammad Sufyan

The mild and kind-tempered owner of the Shaandaar Café, Sufyan is devastated when he discovers that his wife has been overcharging the immigrants he thought he was helping.

Tavleen

Tavleen is the chief hijacker of the *Bostan*. She speaks with a Canadian accent and blows up the plane.

Zeeny Vakil

Zeeny is the exciting and attractive dark-skinned Indian woman involved with Saladin. They met when they were teenagers, when Zeeny was a "rash, bad girl," and she retains a streak of craziness in her adult life. She is a doctor who works in a hospital and with the homeless as well as an art critic and Bombay socialite, and she has made it her project to return Saladin to his Indian roots.

Hal Valance

Hal is Saladin's bigoted, rude, and greedy producer who cuts him out of *The Aliens Show* because he believes the market for ethnic actors is shrinking.

Vallabh

Vallabh is Changez Chamchawala's old and faithful servant.

Maurice Wilson

The ghost who haunts Allie, Maurice Wilson is the yogi (practitioner of yoga) who died on Mount Everest while attempting a solo ascent.

Objects/Places

The Curtain

The whorehouse in Jahilia where Baal hides out for two and a half years.

Durisdeer

The village where Allie takes Gibreel Farishta to hide out after his mental illness leads him to attack Jumpy Joshi.

Everest Vilas

Everest Vilas is the name of the skyscraper on Malabar Hill which houses Gibreel Farishta's penthouse home in India. Rekha Merchant had been his neighbor in Everest Vilas and after Farishta abandons her, she jumps off the roof to her death after first throwing her children over. Rekha's ghost haunts Farishta and plants the seed in his mind which leads him to toss his girlfriend, Allie Cone, off the roof to her death. Allie had once climbed the summit of the real Mount Everest. The sherpa who accompanied her to the top warned her that if she ever climbed Everest again, she would surely die. The sherpa is proved right when she plunges off the roof of Everest Vilas to her death.

The Hybrid Tree

While watching an otherwise depressing television lineup, Chamcha stumbles across an image of a hybrid tree taking root in English soil. In his mind, the tree symbolizes a healthy marriage between two different cultures. As a cultural hybrid himself, the image gives Chamcha hope that he will find a way to blend his English lifestyle with his Indian roots.

Pemba's Plaque

A commemorative plaque given to Allie Cone by the sherpa, Pembra, who accompanied her to the summit of Mount Everest. The handmade plaque stands as both a commemoration and a warning. Its inscription reads: *To Ali Bibi. We were luck. Not to try again.* This is the sherpa's warning that Allie should be grateful to have reached the summit once and not push her luck with a second attempt.

Pali Hill

Pali Hill is an upscale residential district in Bombay, India, where Chamcha's father and second wife own a home.

Scandal Point

Salahuddin Chamchawalla's childhood home is located at Scandal Point. Here, his birth tree was planted and here his father chooses to live out his final days.

Shaandaar Café

The ethnic restaurant and rooming house in England owned and run by Hind Sufyan and her husband, Muhammad. The Shaandaar is a popular meeting place in the Indian district within the city of London. In the novel, it represents the heart of the Indian community in England. The fire which burns it to the ground represents the flames of anger fed by cultural misunderstandings. When the Shaandaar is rebuilt by Mishal, the Sufyan's eldest daughter, it represents a rebirth from the ashes of the past.

The Walnut Tree

Saladin Chamcha's birth tree, planted the year he was born in the garden of his childhood home at Scandal Point. In Kashmir, where he grew up, the local tradition was to plant a walnut tree which would mature with one's child. When the child becomes an adult, he or she can cut down the tree and sell it to get a financial start in life. However, Chamcha never cuts down his tree. His father keeps watch over the walnut tree after Chamcha moves away to England. Changez claims that the tree guards Saladin's soul and implies that his son can only reclaim his soul if he comes back home to India.

Social Sensitivity

The Satanic Verses has a convoluted plot, or perhaps it is better to describe the novel as having a complex main framing plot which allows Rushdie to include a number of subplots or embedded stories. The main plot concerns the coming together and falling apart of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. Both of them are Indian actors, but whereas Gibreel has become a superstar in his country by playing the role of gods in "theologicals," or films based on religious subjects, Saladin has had less spectacular success in England by lending his voice to television commercials and a situation comedy called The Aliens Show. The two men meet under extraordinary circumstances: they are on an Air-India jumbo jet which is taken over and then blown apart by Canadian Sikh terrorists.

Their fates are conjoined as they miraculously survive the crash and fall down on an English beach. But if they manage to escape death, both Saladin and Gibreel undergo a weird transformation as they descend: Gibreel has a halo around his head and fancies himself an angel who will blow the trumpet of doom while Saladin is metamorphosed into a goat, complete with horns, legs, and hoofs. In his altered state, Gibreel spends most of his time having visions and exhibiting the symptoms of a paranoid schizophrenic.

Saladin, however, is captured by police on the lookout for illegal immigrants, despite the years he has spent in England and his attempt to become an Englishman. Since at the moment of his arrest, Gibreel refuses to identify him, Saladin finds himself with twin goals: to regain his human identity and to take revenge on Gibreel for failing to stand by him. Soon Saladin finds himself in Brickhall, an Asian ghetto in London, where he becomes something of a cause celebre. Ultimately, Saladin does manage to destroy Gibreel through devilish cunning. Paradoxically, however, Saladin is not condemned for his part in the death of Gibreel. In fact, at the end of the novel Saladin positively grows in humanity as he rediscovers the power of love when he visits India to be at the bedside of his dying father.

The subplots of The Satanic Verses have to do with the visions Gibreel has after his fall. In a few of these dreams, cast in the "epic" style of Indian "theologicals," he re-visions the founding days of a religion that is unmistakably Islam. Gibreel dreams thus of the episode of the satanic verses, a controversial event in the early history of Islam, when according to some disputed sources, the prophet Muhammad (here renamed Mahound), is misled for a while by the devil into compromising with the polytheists of Mecca (here Jahilia) but recovers in time to reassert the oneness of God and reject the temptations of Satan.

In another of these episodes, the scribe Salman and the poet-satirist Baal reveal the disillusion of some after Mahound has set himself up as a lawgiver. Salman, for instance, retells the story about his attempt to corrupt the sacred words dictated to him by Mahound as the messenger of God. Two other of Gibreel's dreams that constitute the subplots of the novel are also "theological" in nature, but are taken from recent

history. One of them is the portrait of an obsessive religious leader in exile, strikingly similar to the Ayatollah Khomeni in London awaiting the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. The other religious tale based on a recent event is the haunting story of a visionary butterfly-eating girl called Ayesha who, Pied-Piper-like, leads almost everyone in an Indian village to the Arabian Sea, which she is convinced will part and take them to Mecca, the holiest city of Islam.

There are, in addition, many other stories that are linked in one way or another to the main plot. The best of them has to do with Rosa Diamond, the lonely old woman in whose house Gibreel and Saladin find themselves after their fall, and her dreams of the romantic moments of her life in the Argentine pampas. In the story of the Sufiyan family, typical Asians experience the stresses and transformations of immigrant life in England. Both Gibreel and Saladin have their love interests and these provide the occasions for more twists in the main plot.

Gibreel, for example, has rejected his Indian mistress, Rekha Merchant, and pursues the beautiful mountain-climber, Alleluia Cone. Saladin is estranged from his wife, Pamela Lovelace, and goes back at the end of the novel to his Indian girl friend, Zeeny Vakil. All in all, The Satanic Verses is a potpourri of tales and episodes held together by the framing story of the emotional adventures of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha.

Under extraordinary attack ever since the novel was published, Rushdie has been at some pains to clarify his thematic concerns. For instance, in an interview given in the Observer (September 25, 1988), Rushdie has called The Satanic Verses a novel "about transformations, about religious faith, from the point of view of someone who would no longer describe himself as religious," and about "imported cultures, that is to say, the immigrant experience." In another interview, broadcast on BBC television (February 14, 1989) Rushdie claimed that he intended to show in his novel the conflict "between the sacred text and the profane text, between revealed literature and imagined literature." In still another interview (India Today, September 15, 1988), Rushdie declared that one of his major themes is "religion and fanaticism" and that another was the "fact that an idea or a new thing in the world must decide whether to compromise or not."

After his book was banned in India, Rushdie committed himself to explaining his thematic intentions in a number of written statements. In one of them, an open letter to the prime minister of India, he affirms that "the book is not actually about Islam, but about migration, metamorphosis, divided selves, love, death, London, and Bombay" and "the phenomenon of revelation, and the birth of a great world religion."

From hiding, and a year after the controversy had peaked, Rushdie published an extended essay in Newsweek (February 12, 1990), in which he reiterated his view that his novel is about the "immigrant condition" and called it a celebration of "the hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformations that come of a new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs."

At the same time, he admitted that his novel is "a secular man's reckoning with the religious spirit," written not to insult Islam, but to question it from the perspective of a radical dissenter.

If Rushdie's comments on his novel are accepted, The Satanic Verses deals seriously with two major themes: the phenomenon of immigration and the nature of religious faith. There can be little doubt that Rushdie is effective in his depiction of the situation of Indian immigrants in present-day England.

Among the issues he explores with considerable sensitivity are the immigrant's encounter with racial prejudice and police brutality, the life of South Asians and West Indians in London ghettos, and the kind of subcultures sprouted by cultural migration. Rushdie also focuses on other aspects of the immigrant's experience: the tendency of first-generation Indians in England to hold on to their heritage; the defiant ways of second generation AngloAsians who must make a place for themselves in Britain despite their skin color and parental prohibitions; and the "Uncle Tomism" of an immigrant such as Saladin who at one point of his life is willing to do anything to be accepted by English society.

Rushdie also uses the novel form to comment on issues of faith and doubt and the question of religious truth.

These issues, and topics such as the nature of prophecy and the origins and spread of Islam, are explored in the chapters devoted to Gibreel's dream visions. Rushdie is also interested in underscoring the thin line that divides good and evil, angel and devil, a theme embodied in the linked destinies of Gibreel and Saladin. In the episodes of the Imam in exile and the narrative of the butterfly-eating Ayesha, Rushdie's gaze is on people who become monomaniacs because of a sense of religious mission.

But Rushdie's tongue-in-cheek treatment of the Prophet Muhammad and the history of the birth of Islam undermine to some extent the claim that he has made that The Satanic Verses is a spiritual novel. He might have felt, as Melville did after completing MobyDick, that he was as innocent as a lamb; but he must have known that, from the point of view of many orthodox Moslems, he had written a wicked book.

Episodes, such as the one in which a group of prostitutes adopt the name of the Prophet's wives to attract customers, irreverent references to people and practices sanctified in Islam, and Salman the scribe's cynical comments about Mahound, make Rushdie vulnerable to charges that he was being deliberately provocative and offensive.

Techniques

As in Midnight's Children (1981) and Shame (1983), Rushdie resorts to a variety of narrative techniques to present his story. At times he parodies the excessive, artificial, melodramatic, and garish aspects of popular Indian films; on other occasions he adopts the selfreflexive strategies of the metafictionist.

Characteristically, The Satanic Verses blends straightforward narrative with authorial commentary. Gibreel's visions are presented as parables or allegories and have the feel of dreams, while the frame story of the Indian star and Saladin is presented with a mixture of fantasy and realism. Readers who are familiar with the style of Rushdie's earlier novels will not be surprised to find in The Satanic Verses the same kind of slap-stick, comic excess, and satiric energy that he has previously used. But they may be unprepared for the simple realism of this novel's ending and the pathos of the deathbed scene.

Linguistically, Rushdie once again shows himself to be endlessly inventive. The novel is filled with puns, metaphors, and exact mimicry of different voices and dialects. Rushdie manages to move between Gibreel's visions and the present-day world with consummate skill. Nevertheless, there are stretches of the novel, especially near the middle when Gibreel and Saladin are trying to situate themselves in London, which are less than satisfying.

Themes

Transformation

The subject of transformation is presented in a fascinating way by the imaginative author of *The Satanic Verses*. Salman Rushdie takes his cue from the literary style of magic realism by transforming his characters into mystical creatures in an otherwise ordinary, non-magical setting. The transformations of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha are not only magical, they are symbolic as well. Both men have been judged by their outward appearances in life. Gibreel Farishta, handsome star of the silver screen, made his name by portraying gods and religious figures. He has come to be associated in the minds of the Indian public with divinity and angels and even his stage name, Gibreel Farishta, translates into English as Gabriel Angel.

Saladin Chamcha also boasts a handsome face and an acting career, but because he has chosen to transplant himself to England, his ethnic looks are not appreciated and he is associated not with angels, but with the scourge of foreign devils who have immigrated to English soil. When the two characters undergo physical transformation, it is not surprising that Gibreel takes on the outward aspect of an angel, while Chamcha grows horns and cloven hooves.

As Saladin Chamcha fights to prove, he does not deserve to be judged by his appearance. Gibreel hardly minds being judged by his, for his angelic good looks and bright shiny halo make him welcome wherever he goes. Unfortunately, Gibreel's violent and licentious temperament does not match his outward appearance. Chamcha, before the transformation, is a decent, if soulless, man whose moral behavior is, on the whole, far superior to Gibreel's (with the exception of the affair he carries on while still married to his trophy wife, Pamela.) As Chamcha transforms, he casts aside his morality and begins to live down to his reputation. As a dark-skinned immigrant in a lily-white culture, Chamcha suffers from prejudice which paints him as a devil. His character is deeply affected by the negative views of others until he finally allows the dark side of his nature to surface. In a memorable scene in Chapter 3, his fellow foreigners, all inmates at an experimental medical facility, explain to him how the transformation is effected:

"'But how do they do it?' Chamcha wanted to know.

"'They describe us,' the other whispered solemnly. 'That's all. They have the power of description and we succumb to the pictures they construct.'" (pg. 168)

To Chamcha's credit, he fights off the illusion created by others and regains both his normal aspect and his self respect in the end. Gibreel, sadly, succumbs to the belief that he is indeed divine and allows his violence to go unchecked because he believes himself to be God's avenging angel. The polarity between the characters of the two men and the appearances they assume is an interesting parable about the deceptiveness of

outward appearances. As Rushdie shows through the redemption of Chamcha's character, true transformation comes from within.

Religious Hypocrisy

Religious hypocrisy is the major theme of *The Satanic Verses* and the novel's pointed criticisms of Islam have been called heretical apostasy by Muslim extremists. Ironically, this reaction from the Muslim extremists is precisely the type of religious hypocrisy which the book seeks to address. Fundamentalist Muslim extremists interpret the Qur'an as giving all Muslims a directive from Allah to kill anyone found guilty of apostasy, or abandoning the Muslim faith. This literal interpretation of the Qur'an creates quite a few scenarios in which faithful Muslims should kill in the name of Allah. These extreme beliefs form the philosophical basis of terrorism: killing human beings in the name of Allah. Unfortunately for peace-loving Muslims, extreme fundamentalists attempt to disallow anyone from speaking out against them and so cries for reform are repressed.

Salman Rushdie speaks out for human rights in *The Satanic Verses* by questioning the divinity of any directive to kill another human being. His parable of Ayesha shows her followers losing faith after she sentences an infant child to death for the crimes of its parents. Rushdie's parable of the Imam is meant to depict tyrants who use religion to further their cruel aims and to repress the rights of the human beings in their charge. As a citizen of the world, conversant with both Eastern and Western cultures and religions, Rushdie is in a unique position to criticize the hypocrisy of Islam. He places his criticisms within the historical perspective of other major religions which have made similarly grievous mistakes in the past or present. Unfortunately for Rushdie, his criticisms, in the eyes of Islamic extremists, are punishable by death. The death sentence, or fatwa, leveled against Rushdie nearly twenty years ago is still backed today by Muslim extremists.

Self-Hatred and Prejudice

Salman Rushdie explores the connection between self-hatred and prejudice in this groundbreaking novel. The character of Chamcha is loosely based on Rushdie's own life experience as an Indian-born man who has acquired English citizenship. Through Chamcha's character, Rushdie discusses the internal, self-hating prejudice found within many world cultures. In India, as in many non-white cultures, an internal prejudice exists against the darker-skinned members of the race. This phenomenon has been seen in Latino cultures as well as in African-American culture. The internal prejudice amounts to cultural self-hatred. This self-hatred may have initially been caused by the prejudices of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture, particularly in the case of African-Americans who were forced to join the American culture as slaves and who had the white man's prejudices force-fed to them for generations. Psychologically it makes sense that at some point this negative reflection would be internalized by African-Americans. During the Black Power movement of the 1960s, African-Americans addressed this negative

self-image by proudly proclaiming the beauty of their black skin. Such a display of cultural pride is necessary to combat prejudice and such pride can break the destructive link between the self-hatred and prejudice. *The Satanic Verses* shows a similar display of cultural pride when the 'foreign devils' begin proudly wearing devil horns and satanic t-shirts as a tongue-in-cheek way of displaying their cultural pride and laughing at the prejudiced Englishmen.

Saladin Chamcha's character arc takes him away from the self-hatred and prejudice he displays at the beginning of the novel. After transforming into a devil, he is no longer able to maintain his illusion of Englishness. Instead of being treated as a fellow countryman by the English, his transformation causes him to be mistreated and abused by English society, which now sees him as a foreign devil. He is forced to take refuge in the heart of the Indian community in London and is treated kindly by the countrymen he long ago abandoned. At the Shaandaar Café, he begins to learn ethnic pride and by the time he returns to India to see his father on his deathbed, he is ready to embrace his roots. Saladin Chamcha reverts to using his birth name, Salahuddin Chamchawalla, with great pride. His Indian lover, Zeeny Vakil, accepts him back into the fold and Salahuddin becomes, at last, a man of integrity who takes pride in himself and in his culture.

Good and Evil

The Satanic Verses touches on a great variety of political, cultural, abstract, and theoretical themes. Many of its most central ideas relate to philosophical and religious notions of good and evil. The narrator tends to view the plot as an epic battle between Gibreel, the angel of good, and Saladin, the devil of evil. Rushdie reinforces this framework by giving these characters their supernatural qualities.

Good and evil in the epic battle between Gibreel and Saladin often refer to two main areas: national/ethnic identity and religious faith. Gibreel's status as an angel is closely related to his crisis of faith, and his transformation begins shortly after he develops the conviction that God does not exist. Meanwhile, Saladin's metamorphosis into the devil is inextricable from his quest to assimilate entirely into British culture and his association with oppressed Asian and African immigrants in England. Like the other magically deformed creatures who escape from the hospital, Saladin assumes his devilish shape because English racism has transformed him with its "power of description." Why exactly Gibreel embodies good, while Saladin embodies evil, is never made entirely or explicitly clear, and as the reader rapidly becomes aware, notions of good and evil are hopelessly jumbled by the end of the first chapter.

Countless other situations also take the form of a fight, or confrontation, between good and evil ideas, labeled as such for a variety of reasons including religious faith, political persuasions, racial identities, and positions of power. In Gibreel's dream world (where prophets battle non-believers, pagans and poets), in the volatile political context of 1980s London (where immigrants are demonized, oppressed, and harassed), and in the lives of the many supporting characters (in which, for example, lovers such as Allie and

Pamela are variously idealized and degraded), there is often an interplay and battle between notions of good and evil, or of the demonic and the angelic. In all of these situations, the novel strongly suggests that good and evil are rather confusing and shifting categories. At various points, Rushdie seems to be implying that good and evil are nothing more than man-made notions defined and based on what is most convenient for the group or person in the position to judge.

Racial and Cultural Identity

Rushdie's exploration of race, culture, history, ethnicity, and nationality takes many forms. One of the ways in which this commentary is most apparent is in the identity crises of several of the novel's main characters. Before the plane crash, Saladin is initially defined by his desire to assimilate entirely into British culture. Gibreel, on the other hand, seems to feel entirely comfortable and complete in his Indian identity and persona, while disliking and insulting British culture and identity. Both characters change markedly in the course of the novel as they find that their identities are split between two worlds and cultures. Gibreel's ultimate madness and death can be attributed in large part to his inability to reconcile his love for Allie (characterized by paleness, whiteness, and Englishness) with his Indian race, nationality, history, and culture.

Rushdie is particularly concerned with the situation of immigrants to Great Britain, and many of the major characters go through a difficult process of acceptance and assimilation into English society. In fact, the plot of the novel can be seen as a metaphor for the British immigration experience, as though each immigrant, particularly those that are Indian, must endure a journey like that of Gibreel and Saladin. Rushdie considers how the experience of voice- and personality-shifting immigrants like Saladin is different from that of somewhat more uncompromising and unchanging immigrants like Gibreel.

Both types of immigrants find themselves confronting a brutal and oppressive system of authority in Britain. Racism is rampant among white English characters, particularly the police, who are extremely violent and unjust towards Asians and Africans. Rushdie, therefore, comments not just on abstract and philosophical questions about identity; he considers in depth the actual situation of groups of people trying to negotiate their place in a difficult and racist society. He also offers a glimpse of the ways in which identity is also complex and difficult to negotiate amongst Bombay intellectuals such as Reeny and her friends, who find that foreign cultures strongly impact their beliefs and their understandings of themselves.

Islam

The aspects of the novel that some consider inflammatory and controversial are all related to its allusions to, and commentary about, the religion of Islam. Rushdie implies that the Qur'an, like many human achievements, was formed as a result of human history and human fallibility. He also refers to elements of Muslim history, such as Muhammad's multiple wives, in a manner that criticizes the conventional treatment of

women in Muslim society, and can be construed as satirical of the prophet. Rushdie's treatment of Islam is an important theme that is not as simple as a condemnation or satire, however. He makes lengthy allusions to Islamic beliefs and traditions not simply to convey his opinions about the negative, hypocritical, or absurd aspects about the religion, but to explore, for example, his commentary on good and evil in another context.

Style

Point of View

The omniscient narrator of *The Satanic Verses* is reputed to be Satan himself. He intrudes into the narrative in the first person on only a few occasions. During these occasions, the narrator teases the reader with hints as to his identity. This clever ploy by the author works because it literally mimics the historical legend of the satanic verses. Was it Satan or the Archangel Gabriel who spoke to the Prophet Muhammad in his mountain cave? Does the holy book of Islam contain satanic verses? Do all holy books contain Satan's words? By not directly revealing the identity of his narrator, Salman Rushdie intentionally leaves his audience to contemplate these questions. This remarkably witty plot device drives the reader to deeply consider whether such holy books should be adhered to literally. At the same time, this clever literary scheme leaves Rushdie open to the criticism from fundamentalist Muslims that his book is the product of Satan, or alternatively, that the author places himself on a level with the Prophet Muhammad.

The author never directly reveals the answer to the narrator's question, "'Who am I?'" (Chapter 1, pg. 10) However, through the character of Saladin Chamcha, the author reveals a philosophy that the world does not need Satan to create evil. Mankind is responsible for all evil on the planet, as well as for all good. The very question inherent in the saga of the historical satanic verses, whether Muhammad's inspiration was divine or satanic, becomes a moot question. The narrator cannot be Satan, if Satan does not exist. If Satan is but a creation of humanity, then the narrator too must be human. The conclusion to be drawn from this philosophy is that the Prophet Muhammad inspired himself and merely attributed his words to divine influence. Despite the fact that *The Satanic Verses* is a fictionalized exploration of the life of Muhammad, this very secular conclusion has angered many readers, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. To appreciate Rushdie's clever exploration of accepted religious principles requires a belief in both freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

Setting

Much of *The Satanic Verses* is set in modern day England and India and the hybridization of these two cultures is a central theme of the plot. The author uses the setting of India to represent strong emotional content. India is seen as a land of brooding, dark passions, as well as the embodiment of the positive aspects of passion, compassion and love. England, by contrast, presents a symbolic stiff upper lip. The British natives are portrayed as passionless and yet they represent the light of wisdom and knowledge. The two cultures are shown in both positive and negative lights and the settings are key to these portrayals. Most notable is the Indian enclave within the city of London, represented by the Shaandaar Café and Club Hot Wax. The café and the club are frequented by Indian immigrants and first generation British-Indians. The flavor of

this neighborhood evokes the melting pot of New York City during the early twentieth century. In this Indian neighborhood in the heart of London, the two cultures collide with disastrous effect, but ultimately a new cultural hybrid is built from the ashes.

The secondary plot line of *The Satanic Verses* is set in the distant past, in the Middle Eastern region of the world at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, when Islam was a fledgling religion. The author's allegorical fable of the butterfly girl also seems to be set during the time of the Prophet Muhammad but features the fictional seer Ayesha. This hotly debated story line owes much of its controversy to its setting. Author Salman Rushdie researched and presented the type of civilization which existed during the time of Muhammad and his historically accurate representation of the political dynamics of the times makes his character, Mahound, seem all too fallibly human. Mahound, Rushdie's fictional version of the Prophet Muhammad, is portrayed as man caught up in the politics of the day, whose religious principles are put in service of his bid for power and prestige.

Language and Meaning

The language in *The Satanic Verses* defines it as a product of Eastern culture. Author Salman Rushdie takes pleasure in crafting dexterous wordplay which is likely to confuse a Western reader. Born an Easterner but educated and transplanted in the West, Rushdie knows how it feels to be an outsider looking in on a different culture. Most literature is written from a Western perspective and Rushdie has turned the tables on Western civilization by writing a book designed to make the Westerner feel like the outsider. Westerners are likely to misunderstand or even completely miss many of the cultural references in the book, although the author explains some references. For example, the protagonist Anglicizes his last name from Chamchawalla to Chamcha. Rushdie explains through dialogue that "chamcha" is a play on words which means both "spoon" and "toady." Despite this explanation, the reader would still have to research a bit further to clarify that "toady" does not refer to an adjective for frog-like. It carries the other English connotation of sycophant, suck-up or brown-noser. In short, Rushdie substitutes Eastern slang for Western slang, causing confusion amongst his Western readers and hopefully inspiring sympathy in them, as well, for the challenges immigrants must face in order to blend into a wholly different culture.

The other notable use which the author makes of language is in the names he gives his characters. He uses the same names to describe different characters in totally different plot lines. Each time he chooses to use the same name to describe different characters, the reader is aware that the author intends to create an association between them. The precise intended association remains unexplained. The author's only comment on the matter comes through the character of Baal, in Chapter 6, who says, "Our names meet, separate and meet again, [...] but the people going by the names do not remain the same." (pg. 359) Names are important in the book, but the author leaves it up to the reader to make his or her own associations based on the qualities of the similarly named characters and on their relation to the plot.

Structure

The Satanic Verses has been criticized by many readers for its lack of discernible structure. The major plot is ostensibly linear but travels back and forth in time and many of the major events are revealed in flashback or simply spoken of after they occur, although the events are not shown in the narrative. The secondary plot is intertwined with the present day events through the dreams of protagonist Gibreel Farishta. These parallel plots present a ponderous, dense and confusing first impression for the reader. For religious, cultural and literary scholars, a pattern can be found which illuminates the structural ambiguities. Every person, place and object has been carefully placed by the author to allow the reader to make visceral associations between characters, settings and events. *The Satanic Verses* is a product of considerable research into both Western and Eastern cultures and to fully appreciate its complex structure, the reader must be grounded in both.

Several structural associations come to mind upon reading *The Satanic Verses*. The chapters which are told in parable form and without discernible chronology actually mimic the structure of the holy Qur'an, which is also told in parabolic verse with a difficult to define chronology. These same parable chapters additionally evoke the rich tradition of Arabic storytelling, as in the famous *Thousand and One Nights* tales told by Scheherazade. Meanwhile, the primary story line, which encompasses modern day events, evokes the farcical and dramatic works of William Shakespeare. The primary story line mirrors the *Arabian Nights* motif as well, through the character of Rosa Diamond. Her adventures in Argentina, told in the present day to Gibreel Farishta, evoke not only the Arabian tales but also the magic realism and lush tropical settings of master storyteller Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Magic Realism

The literary device of "magic realism," or the use of supernatural elements within an otherwise realistic narrative, is one of the most important stylistic aspects of *The Satanic Verses*. Gibreel's transformation into an angel, and Saladin's into a goat-man/devil, are examples of this device, as are other impossible or magical events such as Rekha's appearance on a flying carpet and Gibreel's trumpet of fire.

Magic realism, which is popular among Latin American postmodern writers such as Gabriel García Márquez, is useful in several main ways. First, it allows the author great flexibility in elaborating on the meaning of the story; by imbuing Gibreel and Saladin with magical characteristics, for example, Rushdie is able to emphasize much more directly and physically how and why they are connected to ideas of good and evil. Also, magic realism is a useful authorial technique for challenging the reader's assumptions and encouraging him/her to think about the themes of the work in a new and different way. Finally, the use of supernatural occurrences can make a work appear to take the form of an epic tale, since classic and religious epics often include supernatural events and deities. Because it challenges its readers' understandings of conventional reality, and

because it seems to read like a classic or religious text, *The Satanic Verses* is able to more convincingly address ambitious themes such as human truth, religion, and history.

Narrative Voice

The majority of *The Satanic Verses* is written from an omniscient, third-person narrative perspective, which means that the narrator describes the events of the novel from an all-knowing, external standpoint. In chapter 7, over four hundred pages into the novel, the narrator makes a first, mysterious appearance in the first person. Asking the reader not to ask him/her to "clear things up," the narrator says that he/she previously appeared to Gibreel, meaning that the narrator is Ooparvala (God), Neechayvala (the devil), or both. This mysterious and interesting detail (and joke) implies that God has control over the narrative of the novel, and it relates to Rushdie's commentary on religion, and good and evil.

Historical Context

Britain in the 1980s

Rushdie was living in London when he wrote *The Satanic Verses*, and 1980s London is also the main historical context of the novel. Throughout the 1980s, the conservative Margaret Thatcher was prime minister of England. Known for her policies of reducing government spending on everything except defense, as well as privatizing government-controlled industries, Thatcher was ideologically akin to the American President Ronald Reagan.

The early 1980s in England were marked by rising unemployment, but Thatcher's government remained popular and won the 1983 election largely because of Britain's involvement in the Falklands War. Argentina, which had long claimed ownership over the British territorial islands on its shores, sent forces to the island in 1982, and Thatcher responded by sending a British naval task force that defeated the Argentines.

After the 1983 election, Thatcher presided uncompromisingly over a series of domestic disturbances beginning with the Miner's Strike of 1984—85. Because the government announced that it was closing twenty large mines, and because unions were concerned about Thatcher's actions to reduce their power, the unsuccessful strike began and went on for nearly a year amidst police violence and intimidation. Meanwhile, in the fall of 1985, a series of confrontations between white police officers and predominantly black youths began in London and Birmingham. Two possible causes of these violent confrontations were the difficult economic circumstances, and the conservatism and intolerance of the British government.

India in the 1980s

The party of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru (the first prime minister of independent India), was elected back into power in 1980. Gandhi had a series of key meetings with foreign leaders, while dealing with several insurgencies in India. She was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards in 1984 because of her previous decision to storm a sacred Sikh temple in Punjab that was being held by insurgents. Also in 1984, the infamous industrial disaster occurred in Bhopal, India, when the Union Carbide pesticide plant located near the city leaked toxic gas that killed thousands of people and injured hundreds of thousands.

The Satanic Verses

Rushdie's novel is brimming with allusions to historical and contemporary events, philosophies, and people, but perhaps the most important extended reference in the novel is to several verses that Satan allegedly tricked Muhammad into including in the Qur'an, and which Muhammed later expunged from the Islamic holy text. The main

source for the controversial story, which is rejected by nearly all major Muslim scholars, is the biography of Muhammad by the Arabian historian Ibn Ishaq, written 120—130 years after the prophet's death. Now available only in a heavily revised version, the biography claims that Muhammad included verses of revelation that accepted the divinity of three pagan goddesses of Mecca. Gratified, Meccans ceased their persecution of the prophet until the Angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad and instructed him that the verses were profane. Muhammad took back his words, claiming they were inspired by Satan, and instructed his scribes (Muhammad is said to have been unable to read or write) to remove the verses from the Qur'an. The incident is so sensitive amongst Muslims because the belief that the Qur'an is an infallible transcription of God's word is at the heart of the religion.

Critical Overview

An enormous amount has been written about Rushdie's extremely controversial novel, although only a segment of the reaction to *The Satanic Verses* and its effects around the world involves any literary analysis of the work. Writings about the novel can be roughly separated into several main categories, the first being its prominent place in the news media. Newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* carried the story of the controversy on the front page and quoted Khomeini's original fatwa (in "Khomeini Says Author of '*Satanic Verses*' Should Be Killed," by Charles P. Wallace and Dan Fisher): "I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that the author of '*The Satanic Verses*,' a book which is against Islam, the prophet and the Koran, and all those involved in its publication who were aware of its content, are hereby sentenced to death."

Rushdie's novel has been widely denounced and condemned by Muslims who consider it blasphemous. The most influential of these condemnations was that of Khomeini, but numerous other Muslim scholars and leaders condemned the novel and its author. In their 1989 anthology *The Rushdie File*, Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland collect the most important writings and speeches by both sides of the debate about *The Satanic Verses*. Another category of writings about the novel is that of the historians and cultural theorists that have taken Rushdie's novel as their subject, using the events surrounding its publication to explore relations between Islam and the West, and to explore as well postcolonial politics and intercultural attitudes.

The final category of writings about *The Satanic Verses* involves critical analysis of the literary content of the novel, although this style of writing was initially overshadowed by the furor following the book's publication. In the fall of 1988, the novel received the Whitbread Prize for the best novel in England that year, and some critics lauded the book's literary merits. In his 1988 review for *London Review of Books*, Patrick Parrinder writes that the book is "damnably entertaining, and fiendishly ingenious." American newspapers and magazines such as *The New York Times* printed mixed reviews, however, and some critics criticized Rushdie for his indirectness and incomprehensibility. However, *The Satanic Verses* is generally considered a key novel in Rushdie's oeuvre, and many literary critics have written at length about its theological, philosophical, political, and cultural meanings.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Trudell is an independent scholar with a bachelor's degree in English literature. In the following essay, Trudell discusses Rushdie's commentary on Islam in The Satanic Verses*.*

The fatwa ordering Muslims around the world to murder Rushdie and his collaborators has irrevocably affected how Western readers approach the novel. Because of the dangerous and sensitive political context, many Western critics have downplayed the work's direct engagement with the Islamic religion so as not to seem to be giving credence to the Islamic fundamentalist outcry against it. Rushdie himself, in a series of understandable attempts to save his own life, claimed to the press that his novel should not be seen as insulting Islam. At one point, he even went so far as to embrace the central tenets of the religion, although he later rescinded this position.

The fact is that the novel's commentary on Islam is at the center of its thematic agenda. *The Satanic Verses* is, first and foremost, about how humans develop and practice notions of good and evil, and, specifically, how these notions are determined by religion. Islam is the religion that Rushdie uses to explore these universal themes and, in the process, he makes a number of specific and satirical criticisms about common Muslim practices, including the typical treatment of Muslim women, the connection between Islamic fundamentalism and violence, and the persecution of writers in the name of Islam. Tracing all of these topical themes back to their historical and ideological origins, Rushdie provides a substantial criticism of the tenets and contemporary practices of the religion.

This commentary begins explicitly, as "The Angel Gibreel" and Saladin fall from the heavens "To be born again," a clear and common metaphor for spiritual rebirth. Rushdie's references to religion then remain explicit and evident throughout the novel, as Gibreel transforms physically into an angel and experiences extended dreams about Muslim prophets, while Saladin becomes a goat man imbued with the features of the devil. Their epic battle, which eventually comes in the form of Saladin haunting Gibreel with the "satanic verses" of prank phone calls that make him, like the prophet Mahound, fiercely jealous, is portrayed in terms of a fight between good and evil.

What good and evil actually entail, and whether Saladin and Gibreel can be said to conform to these notions has become indistinguishably complex by the time of final confrontations. Gibreel is depressed, schizophrenic, plagued by doubt, and when he does believe he is the angel of God his actions are often not just insane but destructive, as when he blows fire on London through his magic trumpet. Saladin, meanwhile, is revealed to be not so much an evil monster as a sympathetic victim of an identity crisis whose career, wife, and respectability are suddenly taken from him. His only act that can be considered "evil" is his revenge on Gibreel, and the terrible results of the prank phone calls are mainly a result of Gibreel's own consuming jealousy.

In fact, nowhere in the novel is the meaning of good and evil entirely clear, and the sacred is very often closely associated with or mistaken for the profane. Gibreel becomes the angel of God immediately after he has lost his faith and stuffed himself with pork, Ayesha the prophet stones a baby and then leads her followers to a watery death, Mahound's wives are doubled in the brothel of Jahilia, and holy Imam of Desh, a parody of the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, is a bitter and "monstrous" figure fueled by hate and shown swallowing his people whole. Rushdie establishes with examples such as these that holy is by no means good and profane is by no means evil. The chapters about Mahound suggest explicitly that the Qur'an is by no means the infallible word of God and that good and evil are, in fact, entirely human constructions.

A skeptic who dismisses the idea that the sacred and religious are morally good, Rushdie suggests that the chief prophet of Islam is much like a poet, which is perhaps why Mahound feels so threatened by Baal. *The Satanic Verses* suggests that the monotheistic, absolutist text of Islam is a fiction of verses just like that of Baal's. Its only essential difference is paraphrased early in the novel by the Islamic terrorist Tavleen: "History asks us: what manner of cause are we? Are we uncompromising, absolute, strong, or will we show ourselves to be timeservers, who compromise, trim and yield?" In other words, the difference between the cause of art and literature and cause of the Islamic faith is not that one was inspired by God via the Angel Gabriel. Rather, the Qur'an is different from the words of a shape-shifting, multi-voiced and flexible poet only in that it claims to rigidly pin down exactly what is good and evil, for all time.

Indeed, the narratives from Gibreel's dream cycle establish that religious "good" and "evil" are simply categories that Mahound, Ayesha, and the Imam of Desh define based on what is most expedient for their personal desires. Since Gibreel has no answers from God, who appears as a combination God/Satan figure to clarify that there is no distinction between Al-la and Al-lat, it is clear that these devout figures have produced their certainties for themselves. Mahound (like Ayesha and the Imam of Desh) manufactures his timeless transcription of the will of God entirely from his own head, and he does so in order to impose his own ideas of authority and uncompromising power upon the world.

It is because of this absolutism that Islam, to Rushdie, produces so many evils. Inflexible ideology is responsible for most of the evils in the novel, from the destructive religious impulses of Mahound, Ayesha, and the Imam, to the brutal and inflexible immigration policies of Margaret "the Iron Lady" Thatcher's Britain. The inability of the British police to understand or accept diversity, as well as the harshly bigoted ideology of Britons like Hal Valance, is the true cause of the violence and mayhem in London, as well as the fact that immigrants are transformed into monsters by the "power of description."

Rushdie's most fluent and specific condemnation of absolutism, however, remains in the context of Islam. One of the most important explications of the author's attitude towards the religion comes during Salman Farsi's conversations with Baal in which he condemns Mahound and the Qur'an. Salman (it is no coincidence that he shares his name with Rushdie) begins by ridiculing the many extremely specific and businesslike aspects of

the Qur'an that make him suspect that Mahound is simply conjuring up the verses himself. He then traces the fact that the Qur'an gives men the right to have multiple wives back to Mahound's desire to convert the widows of Jahilia, and the common Islamic practice for men to dominate women, to Mahound's bitterness at the women of Yahtrib (Medina).

This section is not merely a criticism of certain specific Islamic traditions; it is an attack at the entire premise of the moral authority of a religious text such as the Qur'an. Rushdie's implicit argument is that uncompromising, faith-based morality is extremely dangerous because it does not need to answer to any rational critique and is easily crafted to suit one all-powerful authority. This criticism could apply, by extension, to religions such as Christianity and Judaism, but the analogy is less perfect because the belief that the holy text is a direct transcription of God's will is uniquely important to Islam.

To Rushdie, therefore, the moral system of Islam is nothing more than an extremely effective method by which individuals and groups gain absolute power and authority without the need to justify themselves rationally. Poets, scribes, and shape-shifting actors like Baal, Salman Farsi, and Saladin are contemptible to Islam, and therefore demonized, because they are constantly quibbling, satirizing, and questioning this moral tyranny. They are flexible and adaptable, and their ideas are similar to the "Satanic Verses" that Mahound originally included in the Qur'an because they make space for a variety of authority figures and power systems. Absolutism, both in politics and in morality, is the antithesis of their value system.

Similarly, Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is in direct confrontation with the moral foundation of the Islamic religion, and is so offensive to it, because it questions, satirizes, and ridicules Islam's absolutist moral code. In a way, the extreme and fanatical reaction to the novel on the part of many Muslims including the Ayatollah Khomeini, an extremely powerful and influential religious leader with great authority, proves that a strong current of absolutism continues in many interpretations of the Islamic tradition. Indeed, Khomeini and the other Muslim fundamentalists who denounced the novel and demanded Rushdie's death, proved not just that their moral systems are tyrannical and absolutist, but that an author, whether or not he/she claims to be a prophet of God, has the power to shake the world with a pen.

Source: Scott Trudell, Critical Essay on *The Satanic Verses*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Quotes

"The anger with God carried him through another day, but then it faded and in its place there came a terrible emptiness, an isolation, as he realized he was talking to *thin air*, that there was nobody there at all and then he felt more foolish than ever in his life and he began to plead into the emptiness, ya Allah, just be there, damn it, just be." Chapter 1, pg. 30

"'You miss the point,' she says softly, coming closer to him, bringing her face very close to his. 'If you are for Allah, I am for Al-Lat. And she doesn't believe your God when he recognizes her. Her opposition to him is implacable, irrevocable, engulfing. The war between us cannot end in truce. And what a truce! Yours is a patronizing, condescending lord. Al-Lat hasn't the slightest wish to be his daughter. She is his equal, as I am yours.'" Chapter 2, pg. 121

"'I? Who am I?' Gibreel was startled into absurdity. The other nodded weightily, his eyebrows waving like soft antlers. 'The prize question, in my opinion. These are problematic times, sir, for a moral man. When a man is unsure of his essence, how may he know if he be good or bad?'" Chapter 3, pp. 191-192

"All around him, he thinks as he half-dreams, half-wakes, are people hearing voices, being seduced by words. But not his; never his original material. - Then whose? Who is whispering in their ears, enabling them to move mountains, halt clocks, diagnose disease?" Chapter 4, pg. 234

"'Everest silences you,' she confessed to Gibreel Farishta in a bed above which parachute silk formed a canopy of hollow Himalayas. 'When you come down nothing seems worth saying, nothing at all.'" Chapter 5, pg. 296

"He told her: he fell from the sky and lived. She took a deep breath and believed him, because of her father's faith in the myriad and contradictory possibilities of life and because, too, of what the mountain had taught her. 'Okay,' she said, exhaling. 'I'll buy it. Just don't tell my mother, all right?'" Chapter 5, pg. 302

"His mental illness, the new influences in his life and now this nightly third-degree treatment: it was as though her real life, the one she wanted, the one she was hanging in there and fighting for, was being buried deeper and deeper under this avalanche of wrongnesses. *What about what I need*, she felt like screaming, *when do I get to set the terms*?" Chapter 5, pg. 348

"Our names meet, separate and meet again, Baal thought, but the people going by the names do not remain the same." Chapter 6, pg. 359

"'When you've fallen from the sky, been abandoned by your friend, suffered police brutality, metamorphosed into a goat, lost your work as well as your wife, learned the

power of hatred and regained human shape, what is there left to do but, as you would no doubt phrase it, demand your rights?'" Chapter 7, pp. 401-402

"Theirs had been a high-risk conjoining from the start, he reflected: first, Gibreel's dramatic abandonment of career and rush across the earth and now, Allie's uncompromising determination to *see it through*, to defeat in him this mad, angelic divinity and restore the humanity she loved. No compromises for them; they were going for broke." Chapter 7, pg. 435

"It was as if they were emerging form some Shangri-La of Ayesha's making, because now that they were simply walking behind her rather than following her in the true sense, they seemed to age and sicken with every step they took. By the time they saw the sea they were a lame, tottering, rheumy, feverish, red-eyed bunch and Mirza Saeed wondered how many of them would manage the final few yards to the water's edge." Chapter 8 pg. 501

"O, the dissociations of which the human mind is capable, marveled Saladin gloomily. O, the conflicting selves jostling and joggling within these bags of skin. No wonder we are unable to remain focused on anything for very long; no wonder we invent remote-control channel-hopping devices. If we turned those instruments upon ourselves we'd discover more channels than a cable or satellite mogul ever dreamed of..." Chapter 8, pg. 519

Topics for Further Study

Research the events following the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Then, discuss some of the things the episode reveals about the various communities involved (such as fundamentalist Islamic groups, the Western and Indian governments, the news media, and the international community of authors) and the attitudes of each of these groups towards literature.

Examine the many magical and fantastical elements of Rushdie's novel. Why do Gibreel and Saladin assume supernatural qualities? How does the magic in the novel relate to its main themes? Choose one magical motif in particular, such as Gibreel's angelic qualities or the appearance of God/Satan in the novel, and discuss how this motif is important to the meaning of the work as a whole.

The Satanic Verses contains numerous allusions to political and cultural events and situations in England. In what ways is Rushdie a political novelist? How does he approach political themes, and what angle does he take? How does he go about evoking the cultural atmosphere of London, and what is his perspective? Examine his treatment of the condition of immigrants to the United Kingdom, and discuss the main points he is trying to make about English culture and politics.

Research why sections of the novel were offensive to Muslims, namely the chapters "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia." What aspects of these chapters were particularly offensive? Why are they considered blasphemous? Discuss the function of these chapters within the meaning of the novel and why you think Rushdie included them.

Compare and Contrast

1980s: Margaret Thatcher, known for her inflexible, conservative beliefs, is prime minister of Britain.

Today: Tony Blair, the leader of the Labor Party who pioneered the "New Labor" movement, embracing a degree of privatization, has been the British prime minister since 1997.

1980s: Militant Islamic fundamentalism is gathering force in the Arab world. The United States government is providing arms and training to Osama bin Laden and his group of Muslim fighters in the Afghan War against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Today: Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Western countries have adopted new attitudes towards foreign policy, partly to attempt to address Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organizations.

1980s: Jim Henson's Muppets, which satirize politicians and celebrities, are trendy and popular in the Western entertainment world. Bombay's "Bollywood" film scene has an enormous number of devoted viewers in India.

Today: Animated satires like *The Simpsons* are one of the most popular forms of television entertainment in Britain and the United States. Although Western entertainment is more accessible in India than it was twenty years ago, Bollywood continues to be extremely popular.

1980s: Salman Rushdie goes into hiding after the Iranian fatwa condemns him to death.

Today: Publicly "pardoned" by the Iranian government, Rushdie lives openly and attends many public events, although he does continue to employ bodyguards.

What Do I Read Next?

Midnight's Children (1981) is Rushdie's compelling novel about Indian history and identity. Focusing on the story of Saleem Sinai, who was born at the moment of Indian independence, the work includes elements of magic realism and alludes to classic texts, including the Christian Bible and *Arabian Nights*.

Nicholas Mosley's *Hopeful Monsters* (1990), winner of the Whitbread Prize in 1991, is the story of two European intellectuals and their journey around the world as they become involved in the scientific, political, and religious controversies of the era.

Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981—1991* (1992) is a collection of seventy-five articles ranging from political to religious to artistic subjects, and it includes two of Rushdie's key articles in response to the circumstances following his publication of *The Satanic Verses*.

Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) is the classic colonial British novel about the orphaned Kim O'Hara and his experience growing up in India.

Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast the personality traits of the two Mishal characters, Mishal Sufyan in contemporary London and the zamindar's wife, Mishal of *Titlipur*. For what purpose do you believe the author gave these two very different characters the same name?

The women in Gibreel Farishta's life all possess mystical qualities. Describe the qualities in Gibreel which might be attractive to a mystical woman.

Discuss the mystical qualities and powers shared by Rekha, Rosa and Allie.

Why do you believe Mahound was able to forgive everyone except the satirist, Baal? What does his lack of forgiveness say about the power of words to sway men?

Why did Rosa Diamond keep Farishta under her spell? What purpose did he serve in her life?

Describe the circumstances which led to the rift between Saladin Chamcha and his father, Changez.

Ultimately, do you believe Chamcha was responsible for the destruction of Farishta and Allie Cone? Why or why not?

Both Allie Cone and the prophet Mahound are mountain climbers. What else do these two characters have in common? What connection did the author seek to make between them through the symbolism of mountain climbing?

Literary Precedents

Rushdie alludes throughout the novel to numerous fictional works, leaving no doubt about the genealogy of The Satanic Verses. The 9th century The Thousand and One Nights continues to be a major influence, especially in the way Gibreel's dreams are presented. The self-consciousness of Sterne and the "magical" realism of Garcia Marquez continue to be in evidence.

But a few writers are acknowledged as influences implicitly or explicitly for the first time. The most prominent of them is Dickens, and English critics have been quick to point out the deliberateness with which Rushdie invokes Our Mutual Friend (1865). In his Newsweek essay, Rushdie also mentions Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (1790) as one of the formative influences on his effort to fictionalize "the inter-penetration of good and evil." In this same article, Rushdie credits the Russian novelist Mikhail Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita (1967) as the work which inspired him to write about devilish visitations. The Satanic Verses also has affiliations with the tales of Argentina's Jorge Louis Borges. And as has been pointed out above, Rushdie intentionally mimics the outlandish style of popular Indian cinema.

Finally, the multiple endings given to the Rosa Diamond episode affiliate that part of the novel with the experimental fiction of John Fowles, especially his celebrated novel, The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969).

Further Study

Cavanaugh, Christine, "Auguries of Power: Prophecy and Violence in *The Satanic Verses*," in *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Fall 2004, pp. 393—404.

Cavanaugh's article discusses the theological context of Rushdie's novel and its commentary about how violence is related to prophecy.

Erickson, John, *Islam and Postcolonial Narrative*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 129—60.

The chapter on Salman Rushdie in Erickson's scholarly work discusses *The Satanic Verses* in terms of its depiction of Islam's relationship with the West.

Pipes, Daniel, *The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West*, Carol Publishing Group, 1990.

Pipes provides a study of the circumstances surrounding the publication of Rushdie's novel, including an analysis of Rushdie's intentions and reactions to the fatwa.

Rushdie, Salman, "In Good Faith," in *Newsweek*, Vol. 115, No. 7, February 12, 1990, pp. 52—56.

Rushdie's important article about *The Satanic Verses* defends his novel, argues why it should not be offensive to Muslims, and asks for the right to free expression.

Seminick, Hans, *A Novel Visible but Unseen: A Thematic Analysis of Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses,"* Studia Germanica Gandensia, 1993.

Seminick's analytical approach to *The Satanic Verses* offers a useful deconstruction of the novel's themes.

Bibliography

Parrinder, Patrick, "Let's Get the Hell Out of Here," in *London Review of Books*, Vol. 10, No. 17, September 29, 1988, pp. 11—13.

Rushdie, Salman, *The Satanic Verses*, Viking, 1988.

Wallace, Charles P., and Dan Fisher, "Khomeini Says Author of *Satanic Verses* Should Be Killed," *Los Angeles Times*, February 15, 1989, p. 13.

Wood, Michael, "The Prophet Motive," in the *New Republic*, Vol. 200, No. 10, March 6, 1989, pp. 28—30.