

Saville Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Colin Saville's life is a blank canvas. As a young boy, he is full of promise and hope for the future. His parents, Ellen and Harry Saville, work hard to give Colin every opportunity, opportunities that they never had growing up.

The story begins before Colin is born. The family then consisted of Ellen, Harry and Andrew, the oldest son. Andrew's death from pneumonia forever changes the lives of Harry and Ellen Saville. Despite having three more sons, Ellen never recovers from the grief of losing her firstborn child.

Harry Saville works down in the pit in a nearby coal mine, called a "colliery." The family lives in a miner's cottage and, since it is pre-World War II, the cottage is not outfitted with running water or a stove. Although Ellen tries to make her house a home, she can never escape its rundown poverty.

After Colin is born, brothers Steve and Richard follow. The family can barely feed three people, let alone five. Then Colin excels. He passes his entrance exams and is admitted to a prestigious school called King Edward's Grammar. It is there that his intellect blossoms and, as a result, he begins to see the lack of promise in his own family.

As Colin matures, he feels that he is a fifth wheel, no matter where he goes. He searches for redemption in the women who pass through his life but every one lets him down. From his mother to his series of girlfriends, he can't seem to find the love or the wife he hopes for. While he says he loves these women, it is really only lip service because Colin doesn't know what love is. In fact, he can barely stand himself.

It isn't until the very end that Colin finally escapes the bondage of his hometown. Nearly everyone with whom he grew up has left and now it is his turn. Although his mother is deeply disappointed in him, she is the only family member to accompany him to the train station.



Part 1, Chapter 1

Part 1, Chapter 1 Summary

In the late 1930s, Harry Saville, his wife Ellen and his one-year-old son Andrew, arrive at their new home just outside the town of Saxton in the lower Yorkshire Hills of England. Harry's enthusiasm for his new home, an old farm laborer's cottage that smells of wet dogs and cat urine, is not shared by his wife. Ellen is disgusted by the look of the place; it's dirty, has ripped plaster and floorboards and is exceedingly small. There are places on some of the doors where the former owner's dog scratched the wood all the way through so that daylight comes through. Likewise, the former owner used holes in the kitchen floorboards as a garbage refuse.

Harry Saville appears to be the type of man who makes the best out of every situation; his wife is not. Ellen comes from a family of nine and is the youngest child. She visits often but these visits are not a party for her. Her mother believes that children, especially girl children, should remain at home and perform domestic tasks for their mothers. Ellen's marriage to Harry Saville messed up that plan.

Every time Ellen returns home with Andrew, she spends time either cleaning or cooking for her parents and this causes friction between Ellen and her husband. In addition, while Ellen clearly loves her child Andrew is turning out to have the same type of gregarious personality as his father, something that irritates her.

Part 1, Chapter 1 Analysis

From the onset, readers will feel the mild tension that exists between Harry Saville and his wife. It's unclear at this point if Ellen loves or even likes her husband. Their son Andrew, is clearly the apple of his father's eye, yet for Ellen Andrew seems to be much more of a burden than a joy. Readers may already be asking themselves whether this marriage was planned or required.

Part 1, Chapter 2

Part 1, Chapter 2 Summary

Two years later, when Andrew is three, the Savilles move into better living quarters. It's not long after this move that Andrew starts wandering off on his own. This is of great concern to the Savilles, as they don't understand what is causing him to leave home.

One morning after returning from his night shift at the coalmine, Harry Saville discovers that Andrew is quite ill. Ellen is, by now, three months pregnant with their next child. It is decided that they will not go to the doctor yet, but will wait and see how Andrew does in a day or two.

On day three Andrew dies while Harry had gone to find a doctor. It's a time of deep mourning for both Harry and his wife, Ellen. They seem to walk through each day without noticing life going on around them.

However, things change with the birth of Colin. He soon fills the deep void that Andrew's death left. He's almost an exact opposite of gregarious Andrew, quiet, pensive and thoughtful. As Colin grows from toddler to young child, he tends to stay close to home with his mother and father instead of wandering away from home as his older brother Andrew, used to do. Colin is atonement for the neglect of Andrew.

Part 1, Chapter 2 Analysis

At this point in the novel, it's unclear exactly what killed Andrew but in the 1930s, it could have been any number of diseases. While his death certainly drove a bigger wedge between Harry Saville and Ellen, each blaming the other, Colin's birth seems to repair the rift. The tension created by Andrew's illness and death is released by the birth of Colin.



Part 1, Chapter 3

Part 1, Chapter 3 Summary

The summer after Colin begins school, Harry takes his family on a holiday to the seashore. He had worked two weeks overtime, 16 hours a day instead of eight, in order to get time away. Colin, never having seen the sea before, initially finds it frightening. It only takes a few days for Colin to begin to enjoy the water and start happily playing in it with bucket and pail.

It doesn't take long for the whole family to settle in to this picturesque town where they can watch supply boats come into the harbor, see tourists walk on the beach and finally breathe cleaner air.

While on holiday, Harry runs into an old friend from the coalmine in Saxton. He has joined the army and encourages Harry to do the same, promising that he can get him in a position he'd like if he joined before being called up. While Harry thinks long and hard about this, he realizes that he can't leave his family. For the remainder of their holiday, Harry takes his family to a different beach to avoid running into the man from Saxton and being grilled about signing up for military duty.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Analysis

This is the first opportunity readers will have to see Harry, Ellen and Colin have a relaxed time as a family and relate to each other as such. True to the 1930s, however, Harry will not burden his wife with the news of impending war. While many men at that time were freely joining the army, Saville felt this place was at home to protect his loved ones. Readers have not seen this is the kind of emotion from Harry before. The clean, fresh feeling of the seashore symbolizes the kind of life Harry Saville wishes he could give to his family. However, the only life he can provide for them at this time is one that is deep, dark and dirty, like the coalmine pit in which he labors.



Part 1, Chapter 4

Part 1, Chapter 4 Summary

Not long after returning from the summer holiday at the beach, Colin returns home from school to find his father digging in the backyard. It wasn't just any hole; it was a bomb shelter. He dug it deep and dug it wide and, each morning as he returns from work, he brings more supplies strapped to his bicycle to frame out and protect this shelter.

He creosotes the timbers in order to keep the shelter watertight and constructs four bunk beds so that his family would have some place to rest. After he finished constructing the bomb shelter, Harry escorts his entire family down to show them what he had done for their safety. The shelter couldn't be seen from the air because he had dug it deep enough so that the roof was parallel with the lawn. He'd even replaced the side that he'd carefully cut from top of the hole so that it appeared as though nothing were there.

Not long after the war began, an emergency forced Harry and his neighbor's to go to the makeshift shelter. Saville found his carefully built bomb shelter flooded with water from a recent rainfall. All of the families were forced to go back into their own homes to wait out the raid.

Later that week, Colin and his father went to a nearby city to witness, firsthand, what had happened during the latest air raid. They saw how arbitrary the destruction had been; one row of houses remained untouched and another row was totally destroyed.

Part 1, Chapter 4 Analysis

World War II has begun in earnest for the British and that tension permeates the lives of the characters. Destruction is everywhere and the Seville's must learn a different way of life, one that is guided by the sounds of the air raid siren and the all-clear code. Harry Saville is embarrassed about the failure of his shelter but vows to make it better, just as he wants his life to be.



Part 1, Chapter 5

Part 1, Chapter 5 Summary

The town of Saxton is divided into two sections, a newer part and an older part. There are several churches, the colliery (or coalmine), shops and homes. Harry Saville works in the pit at the colliery on the night shift.

Not long after the bombing begins, Colin's mother is taken to the hospital, where she stayed for six weeks. During that time, Colin barely saw his father and didn't live in his own house. Instead, he lived next door with Mr. and Mrs. Shaw who made sure he ate well, did his homework and went to school. Colin spent this time in a lonely and agitated state, not knowing where his mother had gone or when she would return. No one would tell him anything.

Harry would stop in to see Colin at the Shaw's home and, each time Colin asked to go to the hospital with him to see his mother, Harry would tell him that he wasn't allowed. No children were permitted past the front gate.

After six weeks, when Colin had already decided that his mother wasn't coming home, Harry took him to the hospital to pick her up. She carried a bundle in her arms and Colin learned then that he had a little brother named Steven.

Part 1, Chapter 5 Analysis

Although it appears that Colin is being neglected by his father and left out of his mother's pregnancy, that is how things were handled in the 1930s. Children were to be seen and not heard. Colin's ignorance of the situation and the fact that he was allowed to think bad things were happening to his mother creates a tension that is palpable. Mr. and Mrs. Shaw are wonderful neighbors and help lessen the concern by taking good care of Colin. It was a time and place where neighbors genuinely looked after neighbors without thought of payback.



Part 2, Chapter 6

Part 2, Chapter 6 Summary

After the birth of Steven, Colin begins to hang out with older boys in the village, namely Batty and Stringer. Batty has constructed a "hut" that is located in the Dell, a section of the village that lies in swampland near the septic dump. It's a great vantage point for the boys to keep an eye on the village. The hut is equipped with air guns, ready to defend the village from the Germans. They've also constructed booby traps that consist of deeply dug holes covered with grass all around the hut.

Even though Colin is glad his mother has returned, he also feels shut out. It is as if the baby takes a large part of his mother away from him again. To add insult to injury, Colin is enlisted spend his Sundays pushing Steven around the park in his carriage. When Harry finds out that Colin and Batty had taken Steven to the hut, he punishes him by using a strap across his backside.

One Sunday, while walking Steven, Colin follows his father to the park. There, he witnesses his father march and parade with other men who have formed an informal militia. The group practices drills with firearms, firing imaginary bullets at the end of the manor yard. The manor is an abandoned facility in the village. Colin watches his father drill seriously with these men, his face set in a grim expression. Harry Saville is the only man not wearing a uniform.

By the time Saville's uniform arrives, he is unable to wear it. While on his way home from work one night, in a tired and bleary state, Saville misjudges an oncoming car and both of his legs, as well as an arm are broken and several ribs are bruised. It is months before he recovers and goes back to work.

Harry Saville admires one man, Mr. Reagan. The Reagans are neighbors of the Savilles. Mr. Reagan always wears a nice suit, a bowler hat, gloves and carries an umbrella because he works in a local colliery office, not in the deep pit of the coal mine. In the days after Harry has his casts removed from his legs, he spends time with Mr. Reagan in the back yard adjoining their homes. At one point in his recovery, Harry inquires of Mr. Reagan whether there is work at Mr. Reagan's colliery. Harry believed that life would be better, not with a different job, but with a different location.

Part 2, Chapter 6 Analysis

Harry and Colin's lives run on a parallel track; neither character feels that he can catch a good break. Colin spends six weeks away from his mother, without explanation and when she comes home, he rarely gets to see her because she's too tired from caring for baby Steven. Harry tries to make the best of a difficult situation being a coal miner down in the pit and working overnight hours. He tries to balance this life with being an



important part of the village by joining other men in an informal militia. Just when he's feeling good about himself, he has an accident that sidelines him for a long time.

As more and more characters come to life, readers will begin to wonder whether Colin will suffer the same fate as his father and grow up to work as a coal miner at the colliery. While readers are slowly beginning to understand Colin through his life experiences, there's no indication of whether or not Colin is a good student or what Colin would like to do with his life.



Part 2, Chapter 7

Part 2, Chapter 7 Summary

Ellen decides that it's time for Colin to attend Sunday school. He is sent with Ian Bletchley, a boy who lives next door. Ian's father is one of the only men in the neighborhood who doesn't work at the colliery. Employed at the local truck depot, Mr. Bletchley supervises trucks coming in and out of the village.

Colin comes to understand that Ian Bletchley is a complaining sort of child and one who frequently gets his way. On his first day of Sunday school, Colin watches how Ian assists the teacher, Mr. Morrison. It was clearly a matter of pride for Ian to hold Mr. Morrison's bible or give him other resource materials when he needs them. After Sunday school, Ian walks with Mr. Morrison and ignores Colin.

During this time, Harry comes up with some ideas for aeronautical inventions. After he has finished his latest creation, he sends it the mail for consideration. Soon he receives a letter stating that his idea is under consideration. This so excites Harry that he returns home from work each day and immediately starts on new drawings.

With each new invention and the anticipation and hope of success, Harry grows more and more tired of the work he does. He can be seen in the evening playing football with other men in the neighborhood, delaying his departure for work by a greater amount every night.

Part 2, Chapter 7 Analysis

Harry wants very much to change his life but feels stuck where he is at the colliery. Readers will feel empathy for him because his inventions don't seem to be ones that will be successful but we want him to succeed, nonetheless. In this respect, Harry clearly is a dreamer without the skills to back up his dreams. While he would love to be a better provider, Harry would not know what to do with more money if he had it and may feel ostracized from his community if he becomes successful. It is a wicked and vicious circle for Harry and his family takes the brunt of it.



Part 2, Chapter 8

Part 2, Chapter 8 Summary

Another neighborhood boy, Michael Reagan, joins Ian and Colin at Sunday school. Although Ian initially teases Michael Regan about playing the violin, the two boys are seldom seen apart. They play after school in the fields behind their houses, walk to school together in the mornings and continue going to Sunday school together.

Mr. Reagan suggests to Harry that Colin should sit for examinations in order to go further in school. This begins Harry's latest obsession: helping his son prepare for the testing. He is relentless in his insistence that Colin practice each night after supper and is a stern taskmaster when Colin gets answers wrong. Harry has even brought a red pencil home from the pit office in order to grade Colin's tests. Harry's patience runs thin as the complexity of the preparation questions increases.

It doesn't take long for Harry to become distracted again, this time by planting vegetables in a community garden in the center of the village. Harry's time is soon taken up by cutting back the sod on his little plot, preparing the soil, planting seeds and plants and weeding. He even gets Colin involved. Harry gives the garden plot the same kind of meticulous attention he gives to all of his projects and for as short a time. Although Mr. Reagan has not taken a plot for himself, perhaps not wanting to dirty his clothes, Harry gives him vegetables for his family.

Soon, the entire Saville family makes a regular habit of taking a walk for an hour on Sundays around the village and park. It is a ritual with them now. Each week, Ellen Saville carefully chooses her clothes and Harry Saville carefully locks the front door when they venture out. After their stroll, the family comes home for tea.

Part 2, Chapter 8 Analysis

Readers are beginning to see how scattered Harry Saville is. Within that scattered fashion, his preparation is deliberate and meticulous. Harry Saville is a man searching for a reason for being and a man who will chase, but never find it. Tension is not as high in this chapter and that gives readers some breathing room. Harry's toughness on Colin during exam preparations speaks volumes about what he expects for his son's future; he wants Colin to have more than he has and a better place in life.



Part 2, Chapter 9

Part 2, Chapter 9 Summary

During the following winter, Harry's father comes to live with the Savilles. He is a man of slight build, light blue eyes and few words. He wears only the suit he showed up in, already worn thin and tattered but lovingly cared for. Grandfather charms both Colin and Steven by playing with them and he forms an acquaintance with Mr. Reagan as they sit out on the back stoop and tell each other war stories, each one grander than the last.

Ellen continues to visit and care for her elderly parents who complain about how little their children do for them. This hurts Ellen deeply and she frequently returns from these visits, after cleaning, cooking, washing and shopping for them, in tears and deeply upset. Harry would like to throttle both of Ellen's parents for hurting her, but keeps a civil tongue for fear of upsetting Ellen even more.

Not long after Grandfather comes to stay, Harry's brother, Jack, also known as "Mad Jack," shows up from the war. He flirts openly with Ellen, which embarrasses her. He even wishes aloud that he could visit when Harry has gone off to work and Ellen is by herself.

Examination time has come for Colin and he knows that a lot is riding on his performance. Not only is his father's pride involved, but his own as well. Harry continues to drill Colin all the way up to the night before the test and then makes him go to bed early so he'll sleep well. Colin, unable to sleep, spends the entire night with arithmetic and quiz questions running through his head.

The day of the test, Colin meets Ian and Michael at the bus stop. Ian is confident; Michael is such a state of panic that he spends the entire ride on the bus sobbing with fear. After arriving at the school, Bletchley, Reagan and Colin meet a fair-haired boy named Stafford who helps them find their rooms. Colin learns that Stafford has taken the exam before and that this is his last chance to get into a decent school.

The exam takes an entire day and the three boys from Saxton meet up on the bus ride home. Bletchley insists on reviewing every answer and making comments when Colin or Reagan answered incorrectly. Bletchley is confident of his performance, Colin thinks he did a passable job and Reagan is again so upset that he is beside himself. Colin's father asks for the test papers and begins to work on his own answers to the math before heading off for work.

Part 2, Chapter 9 Analysis

In this chapter, tension is heightened in three ways: Grandfather comes to live with the Savilles and Ellen's own parents are unappreciative of her efforts; Harry's brother, Jack, stops by and causes Ellen to feel nervous; and Colin sits for his entrance exam. Only



the final two instances have a resolution in this chapter. One is provided when Jack leaves and the other when Colin is finished sitting for his test. Slowly, the family tree is being colored in as the story goes along. Readers see that families never change; parents are as unforgiving today as they were generations ago and each family unit must deal with its own share of strife. It is clear that Harry and Ellen want a better life for Colin and understand that the way to get that life is through a good education. This chapter also foreshadows a new relationship for Colin, a friendship with Stafford that is mixed with envy and awe.



Part 2, Chapter 10

Part 2, Chapter 10 Summary

The snow that begins the night of Colin's exam lasts for days. A heavy, thick wet blanket of snow coats the entire village and town. Harry brings home parts from work to make a sled. After he constructs it, he takes Colin and Steven over to the park to go sledding.

Colin loves the activity but it frightens Steven. So much so, that he will not continue sliding down the hill even when tucked safely between Harry and Colin. The Savilles run into Stringer and his father, a man who wears only slacks and a sleeveless shirt even when sledding in winter.

Grandfather leaves in the spring to live with Harry's uncle. Before he leaves, he tells Colin to keep an eye on everyone. One afternoon, Colin makes a mistake that earns him a beating from his father. He takes Steven to play by the river on an old metal coal slip. When they are late returning home, Harry takes a belt to Colin's backside for putting them both in danger without Harry and Ellen knowing where they were. Harry is also angry at Colin for upsetting Ellen, who is pregnant again.

The result of the entrance exams come out. Colin has passed and will attend King Edward's Grammar in the fall. Bletchley will go to Melsham Manor, a better school. Reagan failed the exam.

Part 2, Chapter 10 Analysis

The tension of wondering whether Colin passes his tests is released. He passes and will attend a good school. The bar is now raised for Colin and he must continue to perform well in all of his studies. Tension begins all over again with the news of Ellen's third pregnancy and Colin gets in trouble for taking his brother to play in a dangerous area. The question in readers' minds may be whether the family will survive with another mouth to feed and school tuition to pay.



Part 2, Chapter 11

Part 2, Chapter 11 Summary

Not long after the exam results are announced, it's decided that Ellen will take Colin into a nearby town to buy his school uniform. Colin is fascinated and a little intimidated, by the town. There are many streets and shops everywhere. The bus they take will be the bus he'll ride to school every day, an hour each way.

Ellen buys Colin's uniform, cap and raincoat several sizes too big so he can grow into them. Colin is dwarfed by the clothes but puts up with this arrangement good-naturedly. Colin and Ellen walk down to his new school and then re-board the bus for the trip back to Saxton. After Colin models his new uniform, Harry beams with pride.

On the first day of school, Colin is assigned to a class taught by Mr. Hodges. He enters the room wearing a white clerical collar and black cassock. His white hair stands out in tufts from the back of his head and his face sports a permanent crimson color that deepens when he is angry. Books are passed out, as is a weekly calendar for keeping track of homework assignments. Colin is put on the hot seat when quizzed by Mr. Hodges about the school motto, *Labor Ipse Voluptas*. Colin has no idea what it means and Mr. Hodges moves on to another victim. It's then discovered that the school motto means, "Work is a Pleasure."

At lunch and recess, Colin runs into Stafford, the boy he met on the day of the exams and finds out that he is in the classroom across the hall from Colin. The remainder of the school day passes slowly, filled with lessons and homework and Hodges.

Part 2, Chapter 11 Analysis

While Harry and Ellen are proud of Colin's achievements, the day of purchasing his school clothes comes with the sting of the expense. They clearly will do anything to help their son get ahead, even knowing that another child is on the way. Tension mounts in anticipation of the trials and tribulations of Colin's surviving his first school day with an overbearing teacher. Colin, however, is finally on his way. His good education is his to lose or to keep. The large and unfamiliar school is symbolic of the new world Colin has just stepped into, a world without his parents to guide him. Something important readers learn in this chapter is Colin's age, which has been a bit of a mystery up to this point. Colin is 10 years old.



Part 3, Chapter 12

Part 3, Chapter 12 Summary

This chapter begins with tryouts for the school rugby team. Colin participates and watches as several of his classmates are dismissed from the field. At the end of the day, he's named to the junior team.

As a result of getting home late from trying out for the rugby team, Colin stays up late into the night trying to finish his studies, oversleeps the next morning and winds up late to school on his third day of school. This doesn't go without notice by Mr. Hodges and Colin receives a red mark in his scheduling book. When Colin sees what Mr. Hodges has written, he tries to correct his teacher and this results in another red mark in his book, this time for insolence.

During the second week of rugby, Colin runs into Stafford and watches him as he plays with the senior-level boys. Stafford has an unusual grace on the rugby field that almost looks as if he's not even trying, but he gets the results the school wants.

Because he's still having trouble with some of his studies, Colin is made a reserve member of the junior team. Harry comes to watch him play one Saturday and winds up embarrassing him, as all parents eventually do to their children. At the end of the game, Stafford wins it for King Edward's.

Harry Saville is impressed with Stafford. This boy is a neat, clean-cut young man who is very respectful to his elders, or at least appears to be. On their way to the bus, Harry, Colin and Stafford talk about the game and Harry finds out that Stafford takes the train, a much more expensive mode of transportation and one that the Savilles cannot afford. So begins a recognition of the class difference between the Colin and Stafford.

Ellen has now returned to the hospital to have her third child and, this time, Colin is responsible for helping Steven get ready for school. Not long after his mother has gone to the hospital, the news that they have a new brother, Richard, is brought to Colin and Steven. After his mother comes home, Colin tries to fit back into the family but having a third sibling to get used to is difficult with everything else he's doing.

Part 3, Chapter 12 Analysis

Colin is trying hard to fit into his new life at school and trying to balance that with life at home. He's finding that his studies are hard and that, although he wants to fit in by playing sports, his exhaustion every evening is making it difficult to finish his homework. He has already experienced conflict with his teacher and other authority figures at school but seems to have found a friend in Stafford. The only tension that exists in this chapter has to do with bringing home a new mouth to feed and the way that the new baby will fit into the pecking order of the family.



Part 3, Chapter 13

Part 3, Chapter 13 Summary

Steven has now grown to the point where he is joining Colin, Batty and Stringer down at the hut in the Dell. Moreover, since the Dell is located near the sewer works, Colin's parents always know when he's taken Steven down there and still he gets in trouble for it. It is becoming clear that Batty will soon be a school dropout. Also, he's starting to get involved with drinking alcohol at a very early age. Batty and Stringer seem to like Steven and don't mind that he comes down to play.

Trouble follows Colin at school. This time, it had to do with helping a fellow student named Stephens with an answer to a question. To his credit, Colin never lies about what he has done nor why he has done it. After being sent to the headmaster, another red mark for insolence was placed in Colin's scheduling book.

On their way home from a spring track meet where Colin places second in the long jump, Harry finally tells his son how proud he is of his achievement in going to King Edward's.

Part 3, Chapter 13 Analysis

The relationship between Harry and his son is changing and growing. Colin continues to try hard in his studies and in his athletics. For one of the first times in his life, his father has told him how much it means to him for Colin to attend King Edward's Grammar. The real, life-changing moment for Colin, whether he realizes it or not, is when his father tells him what he is feeling. Life goes on in the Saville household as Colin grows into a young man and starts to make his own choices. His friend, Batty, is starting to experiment with alcohol and Colin, so far, has refused to participate. Colin's dilemma lies in his need to fit in with the old friends who don't share his new world.



Part 3, Chapter 14

Part 3, Chapter 14 Summary

It's now summertime and school is out until September. Colin, now 11 years old, finds a job working on a farm during the day. He works with older men, cutting and bundling September grain, working from sunup past sundown and must ride a bicycle to and from home, which takes him one hour each way.

On the farm, Colin seems to do most of the work while the older men lounge in the shade. It is hot, sweaty, tiring work but Colin perseveres to earn money for the family. When he returns home from his first day on the job, Ellen is shocked at his appearance; he's covered in dust and sweat and his hands are bleeding. Harry and Ellen had no idea what their son was up to during the day, but they do now.

One day, as he's working in the field with the other men, Colin hears Stafford's voice coming from the direction of a nearby pond. Colin discovers that Stafford's first name is Neville.

Colin works at the farm for seven weeks and helps harvest eight fields worth of grain. There is still a bit of summer left, so Colin goes around to other farms and finds another job closer to his house. He spends his remaining time working there and helping to supervise two prisoners of war, a German and an Italian. When Colin finishes his duties at this farm, he's offered a job anytime he wants one.

Part 3, Chapter 14 Analysis

Instead of sitting around during the summer, young Colin goes out to work on a farm to earn money and help support his family. Tension is heightened, though, when Colin sees his friend from school, Stafford, having fun with two boys that live on the farm. It's clear to Colin that Stafford doesn't have to work over the summer. Readers will feel the push-pull of tension with Colin working so hard at such a young age yet knowing that he is earning an honest and decent wage for his family.



Part 3, Chapter 15

Part 3, Chapter 15 Summary

After the next school term starts, Colin and Stafford start spending more time together as friends. In fact, Stafford buys an expensive tie clip in a store and gives it to Colin as a present. Colin doesn't quite know what to make of this but Ellen tells him that he must return the gesture.

Colin continues to attend Sunday school with Ian Bletchley and Michael Reagan. Michael has changed over the summer, having grown taller and is now wearing long pants instead of a child's shorts. As Colin continues to grow into a young man, he's learning to stick up for the things and people he believes in. This leads him to a fistfight with Batty after Batty teases Ian about his heavy weight. Both Batty and Colin were bloodied in the fight. Harry Saville was proud of his boy; Ellen Saville was dismayed at the results of the fight on Colin face.

One Sunday, Neville Stafford comes to visit the Savilles. A fancy tea is served in Stafford's honor. Ellen Saville even goes so far as to correct her husband's grammar in front of this young boy. Food was served at this tea that the family rarely has, including tinned fruit and tarts. Wartime makes everything more difficult to get and more expensive.

After tea, Colin and Stafford head over to the hut and run into Stringer and Batty. They show Stafford their hiding place, but Colin and Stafford leave amid blasts from Stringer's air gun over their heads. The previous fight between Colin, Batty and Stringer has left what used to be a friendship in tatters.

Part 3, Chapter 15 Analysis

Colin's life starts changing again when his friendship with Neville Stafford becomes more important than his friendships with his boyhood friends in Saxton. Colin is learning what is most important to him and is finding out that he can stick up for himself and his friends both physically and emotionally. Readers might feel some tension growing, questioning why someone with Stafford's apparent social class and money would be interested in being friends and hanging out with someone Colin Saville. Does Stafford want something or is he merely interested in having a friend who likes him for his personality and not for his money?



Part 3, Chapter 16

Part 3, Chapter 16 Summary

Colin continues to endure the teachers at King Edward's Grammar including Miss Woodson who seems to rival Mr. Hodges for embarrassing the students. In addition to Miss Woodson, Mr. Carter, the boxing coach, also enjoys taking potshots at students and, most especially, at Colin.

Life continues along in the row house neighborhood where Colin lives. Ellen's parents are dying very slowly and now can only lie in their small, iron double bed. Ellen visits on a regular basis to clean the house and get them something to eat if they're hungry but she also has competition from her sister. While Ellen feels a great sense of loss because she perceives that she is a constant disappointment to her parents, her sister seems to take everything in stride. For instance, while Ellen feels worry and grief over the pending deaths of her parents, her sister doesn't seem to even notice. She breezes in to take over the housekeeping chores and barely notices the decay of her parents or the grief of her sister.

Part 3, Chapter 16 Analysis

Life goes on in Saxton and the Saville house. Colin is growing and changing, the neighbors are waiting for the end of World War II and Ellen is doing her own deathwatch, waiting for her parents to die. These changes are heightening the tension without much relief. There are small joys as the chapter unfolds but it ends on a very depressing note as Ellen watches her parents slip slowly away.



Part 4, Chapter 17

Part 4, Chapter 17 Summary

It appears that Colin enjoys writing poetry so much that he writes a poem instead of an answer to one of his test questions in Mr. Platt's class. Mr. Platt, thereafter, calls him "Bard Colin" and speaks to him as though he were Shakespeare.

Stephens, one of Colin's classmates, receives the same kind of barely passing marks that Colin does. Readers begin to see a different side of Stephens. He's not just someone with whom to empathize, he's a boy who likes to steal things and sell them to his classmates. Stephens tries to talk Colin into first purchasing a fountain pen and then being his partner in crime by going to stores and stealing. Colin refuses to get involved.

Colin runs into Stafford and starts a new chapter in his life. Stafford introduces him to two girls, Audrey and Marion. It is for Audrey that Colin's heart beats faster. It turns out that Audrey lives at the farm where Colin worked the summer he was eleven years old and they exchange pleasantries about the farm laborers who may still be there.

Not long after this incident, Colin goes to Stafford's house for the first time. It is a large house on a good-sized piece of land but Stafford is a boy who remains largely invisible in his own family. He seems to be able to do pretty much anything he wants. This day, Stafford's mother is acting as hostess to a gathering of women and Stafford's older brother is home from the army. There are people everywhere, yet no one really notices Stafford and his new friend. Colin is introduced to Stafford's father by exchanging pleasantries out Stafford's upstairs bedroom window. It seems that this boy has a better relationship with the farm animals than he does with his own family.

Part 4, Chapter 17 Analysis

Colin is beginning a new chapter in his life, one that will be filled with many social acquaintances and members of the opposite sex. This is the first time readers have seen Colin interested in a girl and it happens to be the daughter of an influential farm owner. This chapter is also enlightening with respect to the life of Neville Stafford. He has appeared to be a very well-to-do boy in the times that readers have met him previously. While he certainly gives that appearance, readers will learn that Stafford's uncles have all the money in the family, not Stafford's parents. Readers will also understand why Neville enjoyed having tea with Colin's family so much, he is a boy who doesn't belong in his own family.



Part 4, Chapter 18

Part 4, Chapter 18 Summary

Stafford and Colin take Audrey and Marion to the movies. Stafford is paired with Marion and Colin is with Audrey. Like all adolescents, Stafford tries to put the moves on Marion by casually draping his arm across her shoulders. Marion reciprocates by sitting just a little closer to him and calling him "darling." Colin, on the other hand, is satisfied just to be touching elbows with Audrey.

Not long after going to the movies together, Colin rides his bike out to Audrey's house. She comes down the driveway and talks to him over the gate but doesn't invite him in. Readers will understand the pull that Colin is feeling as he discovers members of the opposite sex. Audrey invites him to join her after church one Sunday evening, but because he has to stay home with his younger brothers, Colin arrives too late and she takes this as a slight.

Not only is Colin in trouble with Audrey for not showing up on time, he is also in trouble with his father for not staying home with his younger brothers. Colin's mother has, once again, gone to the hospital but this time it's because she's feeling sick and not because she's pregnant. There is no one at home to take care of the two younger Savilles except for Colin. Harry, upon seeing that Colin is not at home when he returns from work, is infuriated with his oldest son and tells him that he must stay in.

After his mother returns home from the hospital, Colin tries to do everything he can to help her. He's a teenager and really wants to be outside with his friends or seeing girls in whom he was interested. Colin is torn between his own life and the life of his family.

Part 4, Chapter 18 Analysis

Colin is now caught in a difficult situation and is experiencing conflict between family, friends and girls. He wants to please everyone and winds up pleasing no one, especially himself. This very fact causes tension that a reader will feel palpably. In addition to his concern over the miscommunication with Audrey, is his worry over his mother's continuing illness, which makes her weaker and weaker. The still, bleak atmosphere that hangs over the Saville house is symbolic of Colin's current life. Everything is on hold for Colin, as everyone seems to speed happily past him.



Part 4, Chapter 19

Part 4, Chapter 19 Summary

As time moves on, World War II ends and children of the row house neighborhood continue to grow up. The day the war ends, the neighbors have a party on their adjoining back lawns with food, games and fellowship. This kind of reverie hasn't occurred for many years in this neighborhood. Even Colin's father, a man who has grown more solemn as the years have passed, enjoys the games in the spirit of the day.

Colin excels through the various grade levels at King Edward's Grammar and gets to know a new girl in the neighborhood named Sheila. Sheila comes from a broken home, which was never discussed widely during this time. Sheila is also the first girl with whom Colin has a sexual experience. She's unusual because she is very forward with Colin and very forward about her life and the way she lives. However, when Colin invites her to his home to meet his parents, she refuses, stating that her mother would never permit it nor would she want to have to disclose her home life.

Colin and Sheila get together intermittently, more by his request than hers. Although she seems to avoid him of late, she chides him for not catching up with her at other times. Sheila's come-here-go-away behavior deeply confuses Colin.

Part 4, Chapter 19 Analysis

Colin Saville continues to feel uncomfortable in his own skin. Readers will feel great empathy for him as he continues to grow up. He's uncomfortable with his family, he's uncomfortable with his friends and he's uncomfortable at school. At this point, there is no end in sight for his discomfort and that will cause readers to feel ill at ease as well.



Part 4, Chapter 20

Part 4, Chapter 20 Summary

One summer day, Colin and Michael Reagan decide to head out for an adventure. They end up getting lost and return to Saxton very late. In the time that they are together, Colin discovers Michael's aspirations for the future. He doesn't want to attend university; he wants to be a professional musician. Michael wants to be a dance hall musician and conductor. He even speaks of playing his violin on the radio and in films. Colin listens politely keeping his skepticism to himself.

The time has come for Colin to take college entrance examinations. At this point, he has two choices. He could stay one more year at King Edward's Grammar or he could skip a grade and move on to the university. He tests well and chooses to go to a university that is too far from his home for him to continue living in Saxton.

By this time, Harry's father has been confined to a nursing home. When he and Colin go to visit, Harry is shocked at how shriveled and old his father looks. He knows that death is near but Harry still hopes he would soldier on. Harry even tries talking the old man into coming back to live with them so he can watch after him. Several days after this visit, Harry's father dies. Even though he expected it, the shock still devastates Harry.

Colin and Stafford remain good friends. They take a school trip together and Colin learns of Stafford's inability to make a decision regarding his choice between the military and attending Oxford. Colin's secret envy kicks in. He knows he would have to work extremely hard to qualify for a school like Oxford but Stafford, who doesn't care if he goes or not, gets it handed to him without apparent effort.

Part 4, Chapter 20 Analysis

Colin is coming of age in many ways. He's looking to his future, wanting to leave Saxton and the poor environs behind, but he also knows that he has a duty to his family. This creates tension in the story. Tension is also created because of Colin's understanding that he will never be the scholar that Stafford is perceived to be. Readers will understand, though, that Stafford gets things handed to him on a plate and Colin must work extremely hard for everything he gets. Because of this, Colin will be the one who appreciates the fruits of his labors.



Part 4, Chapter 21

Part 4, Chapter 21 Summary

Harry Saville finally gets his wish. With Mr. Reagan's help, he finally lands a job in the local coal mine. This means that he no longer has to ride his bike six miles each way to his job. Unfortunately, it is not all it's cracked up to be, as Mr. Reagan had tried to warn him in the past. In fact, this new job has worn Harry down much further and much faster than his old job ever would have. He is a supervisor, is not well-liked and is making less money.

The Savilles residence also suffers greatly. Furniture is tattered, things are broken and not replaced and everything seems a bit more sooty than it did before. Mr. Gannon, a teacher from King Edward's, visits the family to discuss Colin's future and the college he'll attend.

Although Mr. Gannon is put off by Colin's living arrangements, he believes that Colin has a bright future and wants to know what areas he is interested in. When Colin tells him that he enjoys writing poetry, Mr. Gannon tries to be supportive but also advises him that his best shot for a good job would be to get a teaching credential.

Colin meets his first serious girlfriend, Margaret Dorman, at a spring party at Marion's house. He spends time with her at this party and, at the end, takes her home on a local bus. She advises him that she is going away on holiday the next day but asks him to write to her. Colin is so excited by this that he writes her immediately.

The boys Colin grew up with have gone on their own ways. Of all of them, Colin remains friends only with Michael Reagan because he works in an accountant's office in the town where Colin attends college.

Colin and Margaret see each other quite frequently. After a number of weekends spent riding the bus to see her, Colin is finally invited to take tea with the family. Because Margaret's father is a surgeon, the Dorman's live much differently than the Savilles. When a trip is planned for Margaret to come and meet Colin's family, he does his best to prepare her for the poverty she will find in Saxton.

Part 4, Chapter 21 Analysis

Colin now turns another corner in his life when he meets his first serious girlfriend, Margaret Dorman. While he's in college, Colin lives away from home but still works in order to help support his family. Much of his time is taken up by his studies and his new love and his life is finally full of new and fun things. This chapter provides some release for readers because Colin is starting to pull away from the influence of his family and spread his wings to form his own life. The coal mine and the poverty of Saxton that once were symbolic of Colin's existence are no longer. Now, with college, he has a brighter

future, the ability to earn a much better wage and have a much better life than his parents ever did.



Part 4, Chapter 22

Part 4, Chapter 22 Summary

Colin and Margaret engage in lively debates over women's rights. They don't see eye to eye on how repressed women are at that time. This will eventually come between them but, for now, Margaret is content to discuss the issues with him.

Over the course of the next few months, she and Colin continue to see each other steadily and she learns more about Colin's family. Colin spends time with her family and even has the chance to meet Margaret's brother, who is in the military.

Margaret finally visits Colin's family. Colin has finished school and is living at home again. Margaret is quite taken aback by how primitively the Savilles live especially with all of the available amenities. There's still no running water in the house and all meals are cooked in the fireplace instead of on a stove. After a brief walk around town, Margaret tells Colin how poor the area is and wonders if he'd ever wanted to escape. Margaret is shocked and angry at Colin's failure to see Saxton through her eyes and Colin becomes embarrassed. After a fancy tea in her honor, Margaret tells Colin on the way to the bus stop that she feels sorry for his mother because she is driven to live a poor kind of existence.

Over time, Margaret visits Colin's home quite often and even spends entire days there helping his mother with housework and cooking. She begins to fit into the "poor" existence with ease. At the end of their first year together, Margaret is granted acceptance to a university 40 miles away from Colin. This achievement initially puts a rift between the two lovers but then causes them to think of marriage.

While Margaret and Colin are reasonably certain of their future, Dr. Dorman talks Colin out of marrying Margaret before she goes to university. When Colin tells Margaret of his concern about getting married too early, they both decide that their relationship will merely continue on the way it has. This will end up being the turning point in their relationship.

Part 4, Chapter 22 Analysis

Colin is beginning to see, through Margaret's eyes, how stark his life is in Saxton. Things that never before bothered him about his home irritate him now. Colin is caught between his duty toward his family and his feelings and aspirations for a different life with Margaret. If it hadn't been for Dr. Dorman talking Colin out of marrying Margaret, Colin could have escaped from the grips of a Saxton existence. The tension created in this chapter between Dr. Dorman and Colin and also between Colin and Margaret, is a key turning point for the relationship.



Part 4, Chapter 23

Part 4, Chapter 23 Summary

When Colin takes an early medical exam for military service, he learns he won't be accepted because of his flat feet. This is completely unexpected and, although others might find it a great relief, Colin truly wants to serve his country. His friend Stafford, on the other hand, is commissioned as an officer. Once again, Stafford has something that Colin wants.

Margaret and Colin continue to discuss marriage and Colin's escape from Saxton. Margaret pushes him to get out so that he can make a better life for himself. Shortly after leaving her at the train station, Colin runs into Stafford who is driving a car and wearing a military uniform. The two drive to the next town to surprise Margaret as she steps off the train.

When Margaret's train pulls in, Stafford and Colin are waiting there for her. She is surprised to see Colin and pleasantly shocked to see Stafford again. The two walk Margaret home and everyone is invited into the Dorman's for a drink. Margaret and her parents laughed heartily with Stafford and Colin watched, with envy, as the group appeared to get on very well together.

Part 4, Chapter 23 Analysis

Margaret and Colin continue to see each other even though their plans for marriage are put on hold. Colin is concerned that he'll lose Margaret when she attends school in a town that's too far away and, when she suggests that he could get a teaching job in that town, he hesitates because he needs to live at home to support his family. This is another wedge driven between them. Readers will begin to wonder when the relationship will completely die off; all the while still hoping that it will work out for Colin's sake.



Part 4, Chapter 24

Part 4, Chapter 24 Summary

A short time later after running into Stafford again, Colin sees Margaret walking with him. Colin has an inkling that his fate is sealed as he watches Margaret and Stafford drive away together in his car.

Colin spends the next couple of weeks trying to get in touch with Margaret but to no avail. Every time he calls her on the phone, she is out; every time he goes to visit her, she's not at home. He's always told that she's out shopping but Colin believes that she's really on a date with Stafford.

On top of the concern Colin is feeling for his relationship with Margaret, comes his father's comments about his teaching job. He intimates that teaching will be so easy for Colin that he will never have challenge in his position. Colin interprets this as Harry's disapproval of what he's doing with his life and they get into another argument about Harry's job in the coal mine versus Colin's teaching career.

The inevitable happens: Colin loses Margaret to Neville Stafford. Even though Colin and Stafford have remained friends and Colin is very gracious about losing Margaret, he tells her that he loves her and will feel very lost without her for quite a long time.

Part 4, Chapter 24 Analysis

Readers will feel a sense of release and a sense of remorse, when the relationship between Colin and Margaret finally ends. It's probably saddest that Colin lost Margaret to his boyhood friend and chief rival, Neville Stafford. It seems that Stafford's background and outlook on things are much more suited to Margaret and her family and this may, in the end, be a better match. That isn't going to make readers feel any better because, by this time, they are quite caught up in Colin's life and feel the pain of his lost love.



Part 5, Chapter 25

Part 5, Chapter 25 Summary

Colin goes to teach at a school that is populated by students like his old friends Batty and Stringer. To Colin, these children are worthy of being taught many wonderful things; to the headmaster and the other teachers, however, these children are headed only for menial jobs and should be taught only what is necessary. Colin's love of poetry is not what is considered "necessary."

Colin doesn't have a classroom of his own and is shuffled around from class to class as needed. His old friend from King Edward's Grammar, Stephens, is also teaching at the school and they renew their acquaintanceship. In fact, Stephens regularly gives Colin a ride down to the bus stop on the back of his scooter.

Stephens sees the children not as human beings but just the members of a class. To that end, he feels that they are just bodies to be taught and not thinking human beings. Colin bristles at this concept and argues with Stephens regularly about it.

The Saville family continues its pattern of arbitrary arguments. The newest is between Colin and his father over Steve's failure to pass the exam to go to King Edward's. Colin feels that Steven should be pushed to do better just as Harry pushed him. Nevertheless, Harry believes that Steven should be left to his own devices because he's happier that way. This enrages Colin because where he was forced to make school a priority, Steven doesn't have to toe that line.

Most nights Colin can't stand to go home to constant bickering so he ends up at the local pub to kill time until everyone has gone to bed. One night, as he is on his way home, he runs into Michael Reagan. Michael, once full of promise and dreams, has gone into a great decline after he was robbed at the dance hall he was managing. He tells Colin that he knows that it was Batty who robbed him but he can't prove it.

Nothing is right for Colin. Work is unbalanced, home is atrocious, life is unmanageable. To add insult to injury, Colin learns that Neville Stafford has become engaged to Margaret Dorman and although Colin tries to be nonchalant about his feelings, he does not hide his disappointment well.

Part 5, Chapter 25 Analysis

Colin is now going out in the world and getting his hands dirty. There is a distinct unease in his relationships with fellow teachers as well as with his family. In fact, he is so angry at his family for not pushing Steven the way they pushed him, that he can barely stand it. No one in the family understands why Colin is always mad at them. This anger causes him to stay away from home, which also causes resentment in his father. Readers will wonder why Colin still hasn't moved on, even with all of his feelings of

loyalty. This feeling causes tension because Colin, for all of his independence, isn't living independently.



Part 5, Chapter 26

Part 5, Chapter 26 Summary

Colin and his father talk about Andrew in depth for the first time. Harry shows Colin a sketchpad of drawings that Andrew had done. Colin starts to understand how deeply Andrew's death affected his parents. He also sees that he'll never be a substitute for Andrew.

Colin continues to argue with Steven about his apparent lack of direction in his academic pursuits. Steven is comfortable training for a job in the local mine just like his father. Colin can't understand why Steven doesn't want more for himself. In fact, the argument gets so heated that Colin takes his brother into the back yard and they have a fistfight over it. When Ellen sees what Colin has done to Steve's face, she finally loses the control she's worked so hard to maintain. She sides with Steven, telling Colin that Steven has never done him any harm and she can't understand why Colin hit him. Colin attempts to explain to but she ignores him.

Part 5, Chapter 26 Analysis

Colin is vocalizing his thoughts about his family and this continues to deepen the rift between them. Ellen barely knows her own son anymore and this adds to the pain in her life. Tension rises without release as the chapter goes on. While readers may feel a sense of release after Colin's fistfight with Steven, the release is illusory because the real reason for the fight has not been explored. Colin's mad at himself, not at Steve.



Part 5, Chapter 27

Part 5, Chapter 27 Summary

When fellow teacher Phil Callow introduces Colin to a woman named Elizabeth, it is the start of a new relationship. She's a married woman who has been separated from her husband for over a year. She works as a pharmacist in her father's drugstore and currently lives with her sister in the town in which Colin teaches.

Colin and Elizabeth spend time talking about their lives and the ways they have intersected. When Elizabeth asks about Colin's friends in Saxton, Colin remarks that most of them have left and started their own families. It appears to Elizabeth that Colin is merely walking through life waiting for things to happen to him instead of going out and making things happen.

The atmosphere in the Saville household has become so strained that Colin spends his evenings walking through the town where he teaches school rather than going home. The latest argument is over trying to prepare Richard for his school exams. Harry gets angry with Colin for losing his temper as he is trying to teach Richard to study.

Harry suggests to Colin that perhaps it's time that he finds his own place to live closer to school. Colin, of course, feels that he must stay in Saxton and help his family with the money he has earned. In fact, thanks to Colin's contributions, Harry has a new three-piece suit, a new kitchen table has been installed and new chairs for the living room have been purchased.

Despite the things that his money can buy, Colin is continually accused of disillusioning his parents. Ellen complains that he's changed and has become bitter. The disillusionment, she says, has to do with the ongoing argument about the poverty in which they live.

At Easter time, Colin sends his parents on a much-needed vacation. During that time, he comes home to find Steven alone with a girl named Claire Blakely. Colin believes that this is unseemly and that Steven should not be alone in the house with her. He tells him so and Steven becomes angry enough to leave the house, saying that he will never return. This situation is brought to the Savilles attention when they return from vacation and this time, Ellen sides with Colin.

Steven becomes indignant when his mother accepts Colin's word over his. He tries to walk out of the house again but is stopped. He tells Ellen he will never forget what she has done nor will he ever forget that she gave into Colin's bullying. Steven implores her to call the girl's parents to ask them what Colin had said to her. Ellen refuses, which increases Steven's anger even more.



Part 5, Chapter 27 Analysis

In his attempt to do something good and noble to save his brother's reputation, Colin is accused of interfering. When the Savilles return from their vacation and find out that Steven had gone and why, they side with Colin, which enrages his brother. Accusations fly back and forth including the accusation about Colin's bitterness toward the family. It's really himself he's angry with, angry for allowing himself to be forced down a path of education when he didn't want it.



Part 5, Chapter 28

Part 5, Chapter 28 Summary

Colin starts to teach poetry to the children at school and they respond well to it. They seem eager and anxious to answer Colin's questions and even have fun in class. Colin decides to use music as an inspiration for the children but is stopped by the headmaster. The fact that the headmaster enters Colin's class and chastises him in front of the students infuriates Colin. The headmaster's directive to turn off the music spurs Colin to turn the volume up even louder.

Colin's life changes again when he is dismissed from the school for failure to obey a direct order to turn off the music in class. To his credit, Colin stands firm in his resolve to teach more than the rudimentary lessons and the headmaster, who silently agrees with him, has no choice but to fire him.

On a walk around a pond, Colin asks Elizabeth if she thinks her husband is searching for evidence to divorce her and tells her about being approached by a strange man. She assures Colin that he is a latecomer to the divorce evidence party and that he shouldn't worry about being cited in a complaint.

Back in the village of Saxton, Mr. Reagan has died and Mrs. Reagan has been taken to a psychiatric facility. Michael Reagan, therefore, is left to fend for himself and starts behaving strangely. He has gotten rid of all of the furniture in the house except for a single bed and one chair. Also, he's adopted his father's dressing habits, wearing a three-piece suit, gloves, a bowler hat and carrying an umbrella.

Part 5, Chapter 28 Analysis

Colin is drawn further and further into the swirling vortex that is his life in Saxton. Every day opens his eyes further to the fact that Saxton keeps its residents jailed with the perception that they must stay in town and work at the mine. Colin tries to show his family a different way of life but they don't understand what he sees. It is as though he's speaking a foreign language to them. Readers may begin to feel that Colin is hopeless because he has been unable to stop banging his head against his family's impenetrable wall or and unable to escape.



Part 5, Chapter 29

Part 5, Chapter 29 Summary

Elizabeth Walton moves out of her sister's house, at her sister's request and into her own flat. It's a small, depressing room. She'd hoped that Colin would like it but he doesn't.

Colin relationship with Elizabeth dissolves into strangeness when she accuses him of being unable to commit to anything. It's merely a different version of the same argument he's been having with his family for quite some time. When they talk about their respective families, Elizabeth asks him why he is so jealous of his brother Steve.

This accurate analysis makes Colin angry and he tells her about the freedom that Steven has that he was never given. Colin doesn't like having elements of his personality pointed out to him by anyone, especially when he is told his jealousy is obvious.

Elizabeth believes that, when it all comes down to it, she and Colin are not destined to have a lengthy relationship. They have very little in common, as she is quite a bit older than he, but he doesn't see that. Colin has become frightened at the accuracy of her analysis of his personality and behavior.

Over the next three years, Colin teaches at a variety of schools and continues to see Elizabeth on an off. One evening, Derek Walton visits Colin at home. In a heated exchange, Derek begs Colin to stop seeing Elizabeth. Ellen overhears the argument and learns of her son's affair with a married woman. It is this fact that takes removes the remainder of Ellen Saville's peace. She demands that Colin breaks up with "another man's wife." He refuses.

Part 5, Chapter 29 Analysis

Colin is at another of life's crossroads. He doesn't belong with Elizabeth, he doesn't belong in the schools in which he's teaching and he doesn't belong at home. Ellen discovers that her son has been having an affair with a married woman. This is perhaps the most disappointing point in her entire life. And Colin believes it's none of her business. This sets up the tension that will carry through the rest of the novel. The depression that exists in Saxton is symbolic of the depression in Colin's life.



Part 5, Chapter 30

Part 5, Chapter 30 Summary

Colin tells Elizabeth about her husband's visit to his home and this spurs her to go and see him. Colin is upset when he hears that Elizabeth has gone to see Derek on his behalf because he didn't perceive Derek's visit as a threat. She turns on him, saying that he goes from woman to woman sucking the strength out of them and draining them, just as he has drained his mother with abuse. This statement gives Colin an odd strength. He professes love for Elizabeth, which she disbelieves.

Colin exorcises his wrath on Steve by asking him why he won't strive for a life outside of Saxton and the coal mine. Steven is perfectly content to work in the pit like his father but Colin thinks he is giving up too easily and shouldn't be permitted to do so. Steve doesn't understand why Colin gets so upset and remarks that he thinks Colin wants to grab everything for himself.

Finally, Colin feels the straw that breaks his camel's back. Unexpectedly, Steve is signed to a professional football contract and gives his family a check far larger than Colin ever could. All without really trying, Colin believes.

Part 5, Chapter 30 Analysis

Colin can't seem to make anyone happy, least of all himself. While he knows that it's time for him to move on and build his own life, he still feels a strong duty to his family. At this point, tension in the story is at a fever pitch because readers will want Colin to either put up or shut up. The time for reader empathy is long past and the release will only come when Colin finally escapes Saxton.



Part 5, Chapter 31

Part 5, Chapter 31 Summary

Colin finds the strength to break it off with Elizabeth. When he asks what she'll do with her life, she laughs and says that her chances at a good future are far less than his because she's a woman. Elizabeth wants Colin to go out and experience life and then come back to a community and commit to it wholly. He believes in himself, though and is relieved when the breakup occurs.

Ellen accompanies him to the train station the day he leaves Saxton. He carries one single suitcase and 50 pounds he had saved over the past four years. Ellen Saville is teary-eyed and emotional at her son's departure but knows he must go. Ellen is the only member of the Saville family to see him off at the station, to see him embrace a new life.

Part 5, Chapter 31 Analysis

Readers will finally feel the release they've been looking for. Colin doesn't just wait for things to happen to him this time, he does things himself. He breaks it off with Elizabeth and then gets on train and leaves Saxton behind. He allows himself the liberty of taking care of himself and not just existing so he can take care of his family.



Characters

Harry Saville

Harry Saville is a man who works very hard in a job he dislikes. He believes, strongly, that if he would have had the opportunity, he would have excelled personally and professionally. His opportunities were limited. He didn't have the chance to go school like his second oldest son, Colin.

Harry lives vicariously through Colin. When Colin doesn't appear to care very much about what he can do with his life, Harry explodes and then feels defeated, as though he had personally failed. To Harry, Colin is wasting the chances of a lifetime: to get out of Saxton, to make something of himself, to make a lot more money than Harry ever could and to provide for a family in a better fashion.

It's clear that Harry loves all of his sons but he is the most disappointed in Colin. His greatest pride lies with the son who died as a toddler. It's Andrew that Harry is most proud of and this pride is a burr under Colin's saddle.

Ellen Saville

Ellen Saville married Harry for two reasons: to get out the abject poverty in which she lived and to get away from overbearing, unappreciative parents. Although she makes do with what she has, Ellen is a consistently depressed and downtrodden woman.

There is no doubt that Ellen grew to love Harry but he has let her down. It appears that the way he shows his love is by giving her more children. While Harry listens to his wife, Ellen knows that he believes she would never have been smart enough to excel.

Colin is Ellen's next best hope for salvation. In him, she can let her spirit free but, like most of the men in her life, he lets her down. She doesn't understand why Colin dislikes his brother, Steve, or why he belittles and chastises his youngest brother, Richard. She sees only bitterness in Colin as an adult, which is symbolic of the bitterness she feels in her own life.

Andrew Saville

Eldest brother of Harry and Ellen Saville



Colin Saville

Colin Saville is the second son of Harry and Ellen Saville. He is, supposedly, their golden child; the one in whom their hopes soar highest and the one whom they most wish to succeed. Colin is the one who will replace Andrew.

On balance, Colin is a good boy who does what his parents want him to, including excelling at school, holding down a farm laborer's job at the age of 11 to contribute to the income in the house and looking after his younger brothers. When Colin matures from child to teenager to young man, he questions the manner in which he was raised and in which his family lives.

The town he lives in, Saxton, is a very poor, depressed mining community of which Colin grows deeply embarrassed. He always returns and takes a long time to leave and start his own life under the guise of loyalty to his family. In truth, Colin doesn't know where to go or with whom to associate. He desperately wants to have his own life in a new place but has a great deal of trouble leaving the familiar behind.

At the end of the story, it is questionable whether Colin will ever find the kind of life he seeks. It isn't that he doesn't have the potential; it's that he doesn't know what he wants. He may end up searching the rest of his life for things that are unattainable.

Mr. and Mrs. Swanson

Ellen's elderly parents

Steven Saville

Colin's next youngest brother and the object of his jealousy as he grows older

Richard Saville

Colin's youngest brother

Mr. and Mrs. Shaw

Next door neighbors of the Savilles; take care of children when Ellen Saville is at the hospital giving birth or when she became gravely ill.

Batty

Friend of Colin; built hut that boys hung out in; bright red hair, knock-kneed, a fighter because of these physical attributes



Stringer

Batty's deputy at the hut.

Mr. and Mrs. Reagan

Neighbors to the Savilles; Mr. Reagan works in the office at the local colliery

Michael Reagan

Boyhood neighbor of Colin Saville; plays violin; father is embarrassed by him

Ian Bletchley

Neighborhood boy with whom Colin attends Sunday school; grossly obese, Bletchley suffers from numerous skin irritations and, as a result, is the butt of childhood humor.

Mr. and Mrs. Bletchley

Ian's parents and neighbors to the Savilles

Mrs. McCormack

Neighbor to Mr. and Mrs. Bletchley

Mr. Morrison

Sunday school teacher

Mr. Saville

Father of Harry Saville; a veteran of World War I

"Mad Jack" Saville

Harry's brother; flirts openly with Ellen

Mr. Stringer

Father to Stringer



Neville Stafford

Young boy Colin meets while taking his school entrance exams and with whom he remains friends; Stafford steals away Colin's first serious girlfriend, Margaret Dorman

Mr. Hodges

Colin's first teacher at King Edward's Grammar

Mr. Platt

A teacher at King Edwards Grammar and rugby coach

Mr. Harrison

A teacher at King Edwards Grammar and assistant rugby coach

Stephens

A boy who sits in front of Colin at school;. later in life, teaches at the same school as Colin

Jack

Laborer at the farm where Colin works over the summer

Gordon

Laborer at the farm

Mr. Smith

Supervisor of Colin's work crew

Thornton family

Owners of the farm where Colin works the summer he is 11 years old; the family of his first crush, Audrey



Miss Woodson

Colin's mathematics teacher at King Edward's Grammar

Mr. Carter

Colin's boxing teacher at school

Mrs. McCormack

Neighbor of the Savilles

Audrey

A friend of Neville Stafford, Audrey is the subject Colin's first crush. She lives at the farm where Colin worked one summer.

Marion

Friend of Audrey and sometimes girlfriend of Stafford

Dougie Stafford

Older brother of Neville Stafford

Geoff Stafford

Older brother of Neville Stafford who is home from the army

John Stafford

Older brother of Neville Stafford

Aunt Madge

Ellen Saville's sister

Reg

Cousin to Colin; Madge's son



David

Cousin to Colin; Madge's son

Margaret Dorman

Colin's first serious girlfriend

Dr. and Mrs. Dorman

Margaret's parents

Mr. Gannen

Teacher from King Edwards Grammar

Phil Callow

Fellow teacher at a school where Colin teaches

Gerry Thornton

Fellow teacher at a school where Colin teaches; lived at the farm Colin worked when he was 11.

Claire Blakely

Steven's first girlfriend

Elizabeth Walton

The married woman with whom Colin has an affair

Derek Walton

Elizabeth Walton's husband

Maureen

Elizabeth Walton's sister

Mr. Corcoran

Headmaster at the school where Colin teaches



Objects/Places

Saville home — farm laborers cottage

The first home the Savilles have after they've been married; the home where Andrew, the eldest Saville, is conceived.

Ellen Saville's Parents' Home

The small row home where Ellen grew up four miles away from Saxton; the home where Ellen's parents still live.

Town of Saxton

The town in which miners live and the town at the heart of the story

Saville home — miner's cottage

The home that Colin, Steven and Richard grow up in

The Colliery

The coal mine where Harry Saville works in the pit

The Hut

A secret hideout used by Colin, Batty and Stringer

The Dell

A swampy place where the hut is located, near the sewage pit

King Edward's Grammar School

The school Colin attends after performing well on his entrance exams

The Park

The local park where families and children of Saxton play



Neville Stafford's Home

The house where Colin's friend, Neville, lives. It's about an hour away from his home.

Margaret Dorman's home

An upscale house and neighborhood that borders on a golf course

School

Colin's first teaching job

Maureen's House

Elizabeth Walton's sister's house; the place where Elizabeth lives when she first meets Colin; the place of their first sexual encounter

Elizabeth's Flat

The room where Elizabeth moves to after being asked to leave when Maureen discovers Elizabeth's affair

Assembly Rooms

The hall where Michael Reagan holds dances and is robbed

The Pit

The part of the coal mine where Harry Saville works



Themes

Coming of Age

Coming of age uniquely belongs to Colin but can also be seen in Harry Saville. Harry lives vicariously through his second eldest son and Ellen Saville never comes of age; she just ages.

Colin goes through some typical adolescent things: getting in trouble with friends from town; being in charge of his younger brothers when he'd rather be out with a new girl he fancies; his first crush that ends in disaster; a first sexual encounter; surviving school and sports; and the loss of his first true love.

Underpinning all of those experiences is the specter of World War II Britain and its Cold War aftermath, as well as the continued poverty and desolation of the town in which he has lived most of his life. Colin never really "sees" the way he lives or the town in which he lives until he starts dating Margaret Dorman. She opens his eyes.

Colin begins to come of age quite late in the story and, in fact, readers may wonder if he'll ever truly grow up. He seems rooted in adolescent behavior and feelings and, although his friends have grown and moved on, he is quite happy to be mired in the poverty of Saxton and his family.

Desolation

This theme is felt throughout the story through Colin's parents, most particularly Ellen Saville. Even though Harry does the best he can to provide for her and their family and readers are relatively certain that he loves her, Ellen will always live with the haunting of parents suggesting that she could have done much better in her choice of husband. She also suffers from the specter of parental disappointment.

Desolation for Ellen exists on several levels: her upbringing, existence and lack of future. Everything for Ellen will stay the same. There is no future. There are no dreams. Ellen can't seem to make anyone happy, especially her aging and dying parents. Despite her continual visits and the assistance she provides before they die, they never express any appreciation for her and barely even recognize that she exists. This parental disapproval pulls down on her like a soaked wool blanket across her tired shoulders. Nearly every action she takes is in order to get someone's attention: her parents, Harry, the boys.

Readers may feel a certain upset with Ellen, though, as she doesn't appear to try to escape her own life. She doesn't have to remain a lost and troubled soul; she merely continues it out of habit. Colin doesn't know how to help her because she tends to martyr herself by performing household tasks even when she's ill.



The one time she seems lifted from her desolation is when Colin has sunk low into his own despair after losing his girlfriend, Margaret, to his childhood chum Neville Stafford. It takes this event for Colin to confide in Ellen.

Harry Saville also feels a load of desolation that ends up erupting in his commentary about Colin's job as a teacher. Harry is a very proud man doing menial labor at the bottom of a coal pit. He hates it but is resigned to the fact that he'll never have anything else in any other place. His aspirations for schooling are lived out through Colin as he proceeds through school and college. Harry's final blow comes when he changes jobs to a local coal mine in Saxton that is much worse and pays less, than his prior job with a mine six miles from home. This desolation turns into a mantle of failure as Harry ages into his 50s.

Loyalty

Parental loyalty runs rampant through this piece. Harry is loyal to his aging father and is grief-stricken when he dies, even though he rarely saw him when he was alive. Ellen's loyalty to her parents is paramount while they're living and their failure to return that loyalty nearly kills her. Colin is loyal to his family despite his need to escape the kind of life they lead and the town in which they live.

Even though Neville Stafford has seemingly had things handed to him on a silver platter, including Colin's first true love, Margaret, Colin is loyal to their friendship. Each time Stafford comes around to spend time, Colin is receptive and makes time for him even if he hadn't heard from or seen him in years.

It isn't until the end of the story that Colin finally wises up to find the need for loyalty to himself. For perhaps the first time in his life, he doesn't allow his mother's tears to stop his forward motion.



Style

Point of view

Saville is told from a third person limited omniscient point of view. Colin's feelings are really the only ones the reader will experience but others' anguishes and joys are seen through his eyes. It's as though the reader were looking out of a window that is Colin's soul onto the landscape of his relationships with his family and friends.

As readers continue through this novel, they will see Colin referred to occasionally as only "he" or "him." Harry Saville is "his father" and Ellen is "his mother." Yet, readers still experience a first-person feel to Colin, richly drawn by David Storey.

As observers to everything around Colin as he sees it, readers still don't get to know Colin on a personal and intimate level. His emotions, while they are sometimes stated, are never felt. This gives the story a distant feel, which is symbolic to how Colin sees himself and his life.

Setting

Saville takes place before, during and after World War II in the Yorkshire Hills of the English countryside. The war and its aftermath colors everything and everyone. The town of Saxton, where the story opens, is a poor mining town just outside a larger city. The larger city's name, where Colin attends King Edward's Grammar, is never revealed.

As small towns do, neighbors rely on neighbors and knit together as an extended family, especially during the height of the war. Harry Saville builds a makeshift bomb shelter in his backyard where everyone gathers during a raid. The backyards of the row houses are connected, without fences between them.

While David Storey certainly leads readers through all of the seasons many times over, the bleakness of poverty keeps the town of Saxton in a sort of perpetual gray winter. Color is not a large part of this novel's canvas, it is shot through with grays, taupes and the soot stain of the coal mine.

Yet, even through the tough times, readers feel the pride of Colin's accomplishments and that highlights the lives of the people of Saxton. There is a bright future underneath the dust of war and soot of the colliery. Colin will be the one to get out and make a bright future for himself.

Language and meaning

The language and meaning in this novel are purely World War II and post-World War II Britain. Although it takes some getting used to, words like "summat" (meaning



'something') and "tha" (meaning 'that') become second nature halfway through the book.

The characters are poor, country folk who speak their own kind of slang almost the way sign language is used by a deaf person. The meaning is never lost on anyone because the residents of Saxton and surrounding areas understand the language of poverty and war. There is a silent code among the men who work in the local coal mine ("colliery") and their silent means of communication down in the pit sometimes filters into their daily lives above ground.

Harry Saville is a man of few words but he packs a lot of punch into them. He rarely plays in his life; everything is extremely serious. In fact, one of the only ways a reader knows he loves his wife is by the number of children he gives her, a total of 4; the first andrew, dies in infancy. He's fiercely proud of his family but shows it in his own unique way.

Colin is the one who traverses two different worlds: residents of under-schooled Saxton and classmates in well-schooled King Edwards Grammar. His father, Harry, wants to be part of Colin's school world but thinks he cannot keep up. In truth, Harry keeps up just fine and probably would have been a good student, had he been given the chance as a young boy.

Structure

Saville is broken up into five parts. The first part captures the toddlerhood and youth of Colin Saville together with a magnifying glass upon the kind of life he leads in Saxton. The second part follows Colin as he grows into a young boy and adolescent and is accepted into a good school. Parts three and four find Colin growing from boy to young man leading him away from Saxton and his family.

Each part contains several chapters and time passes rapidly between them. There is never a mention of Colin's age, except when he first starts school. Readers must infer how old he is by his life experiences. It is as though time is a fleeting thing that is secondary to the true story.

The structure follows the life and times of Colin Saville and even has an uphill battle feel to it as he matures. Readers will want to see Colin try harder to remove himself from the poverty of Saxton but it isn't until Part 5 that this actually happens.

The random way David Storey has broken up the parts helps readers take a deep breath before plunging into the next section. While the action is not thrilling and exciting, it's still exhausting to see Colin lose, win and lose again in life.



Quotes

"Ah, lass, you know I love you. I married you all the same." (Chapter 9, page 111)

"In those days nobody wanted you, no matter how good you might have been, no matter how hard you were prepared to work." (Chapter 16, page 293)

"However hard we work we end up where we were afore. There's no point in doing ought. Whatever we do, whatever we say, we end exactly where we wa' before." (Chapter 18, page 343 - 344)

"You'll find you'll get no more out of life than what you put into it." (Chapter 19, page 357)

"Oh, well, one man's bitterness mustn't feed another's." (Chapter 19, page 369)

"If everything is meaningless, that, nevertheless, we still ascribe a meaning to it." (Chapter 20 page 389)

"There should be more to a woman's life than getting married." (Chapter 22, page 411)

"It's so awful. It's so sickening. It's not that I don't feel sorry for," she said. "I do. But to be driven to live like this." (Chapter 22, page 431)

"But I wouldn't substitute one tyranny for another: the tyranny of not doing it," she's added, "for the obligation that I should." (Chapter 22, page 433)

"Marry the wrong one and your life is finished. Marry the right one and your life is made." (Chapter 23, page 465)

"Teaching, you know," he added to his mother, "he can do it out of the back of his hand." (Chapter 24, page 469)

"The only loyalty is to oneself." (Chapter 25, page 497)

"He's had chances of a freedom I've never had myself." (Chapter 29, page 563)

"You go from strength to strength. You suck the meat out. You drain these women. Like you drain your mother with your abuse." (Chapter 30, page 577)



Topics for Discussion

Was Colin afraid to leave Saxton and his family? If so, why? If not, why did he stay?

Discuss whether Colin is smart or just appears to be smart.

Why did Margaret break up with Colin?

Will Harry and Ellen Saville ever move out of Saxton?

Contrast and compare modern-day desolation with the desolation of the 1930s.

Why does Colin fight with his family?

What makes Colin jealous of Steve?

Describe the ways in which Neville Stafford is poorer than Colin.

Does Colin stay with his family out of loyalty or something else?

Define the concept of loyalty and how it has changed since World War II.

Discuss "coming of age" and how it affects the main characters.

Compare the working class in England with the working class in America.