

Sentimental Education Study Guide

Sentimental Education by Gustave Flaubert and Mary Ruefle

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Contents

Sentimental Education Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 and 2.....	4
Chapters 3 and 4.....	6
Chapters 5 and 6.....	8
Part Two, Chapters 1 and 2.....	11
Part Two, Chapters 3 and 4.....	13
Part Two, Chapters 5 and 6.....	16
Part Three, Chapters 1 and 2.....	18
Part Three, Chapters 3 and 4.....	21
Chapters 5 - 7.....	24
Characters.....	26
Objects/Places.....	30
Themes.....	33
Style.....	35
Quotes.....	38
Topics for Discussion.....	39



Plot Summary

Sentimental Education is a novel set in France around the time of the creation of the Second French Republic in 1848. The Second Republic was created after the overthrow of the French monarchy. The main character of the book, Frederic Moreau, is a young Frenchman from a town called Nogent. He finds himself with a small inheritance and decides to pursue his education in Paris. He encounters an old friend there, Charles Desclauries, and meets a younger couple, Jacques and Marie Arnoux, on the ship to Paris. Frederic instantly falls for Marie. He and Charles attempt to enter high society and also associate with some young Parisians interested in bringing socialism and democracy to France. They meet Hussonnet, Senecal, Martinon, and Dussardier through these interests.

The first part of the book is built around Frederic's various plots to get closer to Marie Arnoux and make her his mistress. He cultivates a friendship with Jacques in order to accomplish his goal. During this time, Frederic engages in social climbing, meeting with some of the Parisian elite, such as Monsieur and Madame Dambreuse. He discovers that Jacques Arnoux is having an affair with a woman named Rosanette. He is able to spend some time with Marie, but he has trouble getting as close to her as he would like. Jacques runs an art magazine and is constantly taking Frederic out to upper class social gatherings, which Frederic is using to promote his own reputation. Eventually, however, Frederic finds his inheritance dwindling and must return to Nogent.

Frederic spends several months in Nogent until he inherits vast sums of money from his uncle, Barthelemy. He returns to Paris in triumph and lives on his inheritance; he takes his place in high society and seeks out a mistress to increase his prominence. He continues to pursue Marie, and exposes Jacques's affair to her.

Frederic is constantly asked for loans and donations but refuses to help his friends' causes. Instead, he grows closer to the Arnoux's, but when he makes a move on Marie, she rejects him. He considers marrying Louise, the daughter of Monsieur Roque, a rich inhabitant of Nogent. While in Nogent, Charles begins a book-long attempt to usurp Frederic's life.

Frederic also has a falling out with Cisy and fights a duel against him that has little consequence. He pursues an affair with Rosanette and puts off marrying Louise. The revolution against King Philippe is successful, but the revolutionary forces fragment and fight one another. Rosanette and Frederic pursue their relationship outside of Paris, but he meets Marie again and confesses his love for her. To further complicate matter, he also decides to pursue a relationship with Madame Dambreuse. Rosanette and Frederic have a child, who dies. Rosanette and Madame Dambreuse push Jacques into bankruptcy. Frederic attempts to save Marie by giving Jacques money, but fails. He ends his relationships with Rosanette and Madame Dambreuse, and finds that Louise has married Charles. Years pass and Marie visits him at home. They confess their love for one another, but when Frederic sees her white hair, he immediately loses interest. Frederic is left with no lover at all.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

The book opens with the main character, Frederic Moreau, gazing at a beautiful Parisian scene. However, his mood is melancholy; Frederic is traveling home by ship in order to study law and live with family, in Nogent-sur-Seine. On the ship, Frederic observes many people, but a man holding a young girl catches his eye; he strikes up a conversation with the man, who is named Jacques Arnoux. Arnoux, it turns out, is rather wealthy, and runs an art magazine. Their conversation is interrupted, however, so Frederic returns to people-watching. He is then mesmerized by a woman seated ahead of him in first-class; she is beautiful, with dark, smooth skin, beautiful clothing and petite facial features. He finds an excuse to speak to her, but only briefly, as Jacques Arnoux comes back with a small child; Frederic then finds out, sadly, that the woman is Marie Arnoux, Jacques's wife. Despite this, Frederic finds the Arnoux's fascinating and stays with them. Much to his delight, the Arnoux's ask him to accompany them to the bar downstairs in the ship. Frederic continues to be drawn to Madame Arnoux, sitting near her and trying to avoid staring at her. He finds himself developing a romantic attachment to her, and decides that he will do what he can to spend more time with the Arnoux family because of this. Frederic arrives home, where friends and family are happy to see him. His mother, Madame Moreau, is pleased to have Frederic home and believes that he has a wonderful destiny; but Frederic is distracted with thoughts of Marie. After dinner, he decides to see his good friend Charles Deslauriers.

Chapter 2 finds Frederic getting reacquainted with his old friend Charles Deslauriers. Charles's father was not a kind man, often verbally abusing him. But he sent Charles to the school in Sens that Frederic attended. In Sens Frederic and Charles became friends. Both found their scholarly interests - Frederic in literature and art, Charles in metaphysics. Their when they left school was to live together in Paris and pursue the typical young male's rich Parisian man's dream - art and women. However, Madame Moreau sent Frederic away to visit family, in part because she thought Charles was a bad influence .

Frederic is upset to learn that Charles will not live in Paris with him. Frederic shares with Charles his new obsession with Marie Arnoux, and Charles encourages him not to give up. They meet Monsieur Roque, a servant of Monsieur Dambreuse; Roque lives with his housekeeper, earning the opprobrium of his community, but he remains friends with Frederic's mother. Charles encourages Frederic to sleep with Dambreuse's wife, and to use Roque to form the necessary relationships; Charles also tells Frederic to take his studies seriously and that he will return to Paris at some point in the new future.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The first two chapters introduce *Sentimental Education's* most of the main characters, the setting and the main plot. Three of the main characters are Frederic Moreau, Madame Marie Arnoux and Charles Deslauriers, although the story tracks events and thoughts in Frederic's life. The setting of the book is in Paris, within the small community of bourgeois figures in a subset of the Parisian social scene. This is a time of political upheaval, with the young French intellectuals opposing the mid-19th century king of France, Louis Philippe. The young intellectuals consider themselves 'republicans' or defenders of a more democratic political order. Eventually the young French rebels will create the second republic. Thus, republican ideals arise in the book. The main plot, however, does not initially appear political. Instead, it focuses on Frederic's obsession with Madame Arnoux and his pursuit of her.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Frederic enters law school two months after going home. He uses his connection with Roque to meet Monsieur Dambreuse. The wealthy industrialist Dambreuse and his socialite wife interview him but find him uninteresting. Frederic is unhappy about this but is delighted to find Jacques Arnoux's art shop on his walk home. He fantasizes about running into Marie Arnoux. Frederic grows restless in law school and prefers to pursue writing and literature. He wanders the Parisian streets, hoping to run into Marie. He does not hear back from Monsieur Dambreuse; further, Charles had connected him with Senecal, a mathematician tutoring, but Senecal ignores him too. Frederic spends some time writing a novel and composing music. At a theatre event, Frederic sees Jacques Arnoux, who is at that time with two other women - a piece of apparel on Jacques's hat causes him to worry that Marie has died, so he runs to Jacques's store to ask the clerk whether she is alive. Instead, of asking this explicitly, he asks the clerk about their marriage; she is, much to his delight, still living. Some weeks pass, he travels between Nogent and Paris, and loses interest in Marie.

Chapter 4 opens with a protest in the street that seems to have no purpose. He meets Hussonnet and see Martinon, a fellow law student. Martinon is concerned about violence from the rioters, but Hussonnet believes that his fears derive from government propaganda. They run into a Professor Rondelot on his way to class; the protesters verbally attack him because he has authority and harass the police for the same reason. A physical conflict begins, and the police arrest a man named Dussardier, another law student. Frederic and his friends go to visit him to offer him help, but Dussardier does not pick up on this. Hussonnet employer's is Jacques Arnoux, who runs the L'Art Industriel. Frederic wants to use Hussonnet to meet Jacques again and he fakes running into Hussonnet to raise the issue. The two spend the evening arguing about poetry. Frederic asks to meet Jacques again and Hussonnet consents to taking him. When they visit, during a social gathering, they find themselves surrounded by members of the art community. Jacques and Frederic find time to have a conversation. We meet two artists, Regimbart and Pellerin.

Frederic sees Pellerin again and finds a sketch of Marie Arnoux in Pellerin's portfolio. Pellerin tells him that Jacques has lots of affairs, but that Marie is a kind woman who stays loyal to him. Frederic admires Jacques because of his taste in art, however. In fact, Jacques is not an honest businessman. At a later meeting, Frederic comes to see Jacques for his true nature. Charles comes back to Paris. They plan a dinner but the day Charles gets back, Frederic blows him off to eat with Jacques and Marie. When Frederic arrives, he finds Marie devastatingly beautiful. He is flattered that she recalls meeting him. They have a wonderful meal and great conversation. When Marie leaves, the now all-male dinner guests start to engage in bawdy discussions about women; Frederic thinks their attitudes are disgusting. Later, Marie comes back to display a painting Jacques bought for her; Jacques gives her a kiss and Frederic is jealous. Marie



finally talks to Frederic, making him happy but he is shy around her. She sings for the group, and does so beautifully. When he laves dinner, he vows to win Marie's heart by becoming a painter.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce more characters and deepen our knowledge of the main characters. First, we meet Monsieurs Roque, Dambreuse, Hussonnett, Regimbart, Pellerin, Dussardier, and Martinon, among others. The reader becomes more acquainted with the art scene in Paris and the attitudes of many of the artists in the community. They are, in one way, shallow. They are pretentious and they gossip, although Frederic admires many of them. Frederic also discovers that he does not have an automatic 'in' within elite French social circles, given that he is snubbed both by Monsieur Dambreuse and Senecal. He must engage in some social climbing and networking.

However, despite the many characters and events of these chapters, the most important thing for the reader to note is our deepening knowledge of the main characters. We discover that Frederic feels alienated from his life. He is unhappy and aimless. He does not seem interested in his law studies, but neither does he seem to have the energy to complete any of his side projects, like his novel. He is desperate to engage in social climbing, but he is often disillusioned with those he initially respects. This is most clearly true about Jacques Arnoux, who he initially admires as a great art connoisseur but later discovers cheats his clients and cheats on his wife. We do not catch much of a glimpse into the personality of Madame Arnoux but Pellerin tells Frederic that she is widely regarded as 'pure' and 'virtuous.' She does not respond to Jacques's affairs with affairs of her own. In the second half of chapter 4, Frederic finds himself increasingly drawn to her.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Frederic takes up artistry under the tutelage of Pellerin. Senecal returns Frederic's inquiry and Pellerin, Senecal, Charles and Frederic discuss politics and art at Pellerin's house. Charles and Frederic are happy to be together again, and spend several days living together and thinking about their futures. However, they have difficulty making ends meet because Frederic is squandering all of his money buying art from Jacques in order to see Marie again. He even attempts to see her alone, but fails; all the while, however, he is cultivating his friendship with Jacques and often goes to dinner at his house. Since Charles and Frederic live together and Frederic often blows Charles off to spend time with the Arnoux's, Charles begins to have friends over, including Hussonnet and Dussardier. Charles eventually gets fed up with being left out and attempts to invite himself to one of the Arnoux's get-togethers, but Frederic is embarrassed by him.

Frederic experiences some ups and downs - he gets low marks on his tests at law school but discovers an opportunity to spend time with Marie when Jacques takes a trip to Germany. He buys new apparel and attempts to divine whether he should attempt to see her. Unfortunately, when he visits, he finds that it is Marie who is away and Jacques who is at home. They speak briefly and Frederic leaves. The next three months leave Frederic continually unhappy. He spends more time with Jacques and learns that Marie has finally returned home. Frederic takes the opportunity to see her but their meeting is lackluster. However, Frederic requests to accompany her on an errand and she allows it; he is ecstatic when they walk together, with his arm under hers. He feels the urge to confess his love but she must leave before he has the chance; he is now completely obsessed, and thinks of her as perfect despite his holding out little hope that she would consider a relationship with him. Charles thinks that Frederic is too caught up with Marie and tries to help him refocus by taking him to a social gathering at a place known as the Alhambra. The now group of friends - Frederic, Charles, Hussonnet, Dussardier and a new fellow named Cisy spend time dancing with various women, but Frederic is distracted. He is surprised to find Jacques flirting with Mademoiselle Vatnaz and decides to speak with them rather than spend time with his friends. His friends do not seem to mind - particularly Charles, who has vowed to sleep with any woman of his choosing. Frederic finds himself depressed and alone.

A few days later, Frederic finds himself with two simultaneous dinner engagements - one with Monsieur Dambreuse and a dinner with the Arnoux's. Of course, Frederic prefers to go to dinner with the Arnoux's, particularly because he knows that Marie will be there, but he initially decides to go to dinner with Dambreuse since the Monsieur had been interested enough in Frederic to invite him over; furthermore, Charles pressured him into this same decision. Dambreuse cancels and Frederic can see Marie. He decides to buy a replacement parasol for one he snapped during a conversation with Jacques. However, when he reaches dinner and presents her with the gift, she is surprised; she never had a broken parasol. Apparently, the parasol was owned by one



of Jacques's mistresses; Marie and Frederic have a good conversation while Jacques is buying Marie roses to distract her from the parasol incident. Jacques gives her the flowers but Marie quietly throws them away. Frederic gives them back to her and she then casts them out of a window. She is upset and Frederic is surprised to see her crying. He now knows she is hurt Jacques's affairs. While pursuing Marie at a later event, he has a nice conversation with Monsieur Dambreuse and his wife. Frederic returns home to get some extra money but learns from his mother that he is low on funds because of the debts she had to Roque. Incidentally, Roque has reduced the shame he bore in the community by marrying his maid.

Frederic can no longer afford to live the high life in Paris. He is more depressed than usual and faced with the prospect of returning to live with his mother or getting a small apartment near her. In his absence, Charles lets him know that Senecal has moved in. Frederic is horrified by the thought that Senecal would sell his art. He tries to rationalize his suffering - his lack of money will force him to create better art; this will in turn help him to win Marie's heart. He tries to return to Paris but his mother wants him close to home; he takes a mundane job but soon quits - he punishes himself by wishing that Marie would stop thinking about him and vowing to stay out of Paris forever. Frederic is once again despondent and directionless. In the meanwhile, Frederic and Roque cultivate a relationship; Roque has a child with his housekeeper/wife, but, in keeping with his roguish nature, has fallen in love with another woman; shockingly, even after regaining his reputation, he now lives with both his wife and Catherine, the woman he is in love with. Frederic becomes close with Louise, Roque's child. During this time of trouble, Frederic's hopes are hardly raised when Barthelemy, his rich uncle, decides to visit. Barthelemy is near death, and while Frederic could inherit his money, he refuses to look forward to receiving any. His mother, however, approaches matters differently, placing her hopes on Frederic becoming wealthy; after Barthelemy leaves without announcing his heir, both Frederic and his mother despair of their poverty.

Their despair, however, was for nothing; when Barthelemy dies, Frederic inherits his fortune and becomes wealthy; Frederic's thoughts turn to Marie. He can now triumphantly return to Paris and enter high society. Louise's mother dies, but Louise does not grieve. She is, however, upset by Frederic's departure.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Chapters 5 and 6 build steadily towards the climax of the book. Lengthy Chapter 5 is full of Frederic's attempts to get closer to Marie but he finds most of them thwarted. Between attempts, Frederic feels that his life is meaningless. He struggles with his studies and makes little progress with his artwork. He spends time with his friends, but mostly continues to build a relationship with Jacques Arnoux that he might ultimately win over Jacques's wife. At one point, Frederic realizes that Marie is aware of Jacques's indiscretions. He vows then (as he did earlier in the chapter) to win her heart. Chapter 5 ends where Chapter 6 begins - Frederic discovers that he is broke and must move back to live with his mother. He is even more depressed there than he was in Paris during Marie's absence. However, Chapter 6 ends with Frederic inheriting a great fortune from



his uncle and planning his triumphant return to Paris. We see the plot build towards a probably relationship with Marie or at least some resolution to his obsession. His interest in her continues to grow, as do his methods of garnering her love. The chapters are marked by many ups and downs - brief encounters with Marie that energize and overpower him, contrasted with long periods of unhappiness. The chapters have the feel of a rollercoaster but with far more downs than ups.

What we learn about Frederic in these chapters is that his career does not matter to him at all, nor does his wealth. He does not even feel terribly attached to his friends. The only thing that makes him happy is Marie and his anticipation of seeing Marie. Without her, his life has no meaning.



Part Two, Chapters 1 and 2

Part Two, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Frederic returns to Paris; the city appears to have changed. As he entered the city, the feel of Paris returned, but he found that the Arnoux's shop was empty. Apparently the Arnoux's have moved; Frederic scrambles to locate their address. He finds Regimbart, who knows where they are; Frederic bolts to their new residence. He finds Marie and Jacques; they now have a son along with their older daughter. Frederic announces that he is in Paris to stay. Frederic is overjoyed to see Marie but realizes that he is less impressed by her. His attraction has ebbed; he vows to focus on his career.

Frederic discovers that Charles failed law school; Charles is poor but is delighted to learn that Frederic is rich. Frederic is insulted by Charles's assumption that he would be able to share Frederic's money. Jacques is now a pottery dealer, and sold his magazine to Hussonnet, who made it a political journal. Frederic dresses up and decides to visit the Damreuses. Before arriving, he decides to see the Arnoux's. Marie recognizes him. And as Jacques leaves, Frederic notices tension between them. Frederic begins to wander the house and finds Pellerin. They strike up a conversation. A woman named Rosanette hosts a dinner party and Pellerin points out various community figures. We are introduced to Rosanette, the house owner, Delmar an actor, Monsieur Oudry and Mademoiselle Vatnaz. The party turns wild and lasts into the wee hours. Jacques and Frederic leave together. Frederic is happy to experience his new life of wealth.

Frederic buys a mansion and overspends decorating it. He visits the Dambreuses and is impressed by their wealth. However, he finds their conversation pretentious. Madame Dambruese is pleased enough with Frederic that she invites him back regularly. Next Frederic visits Rosanette, who turns out to be Jacques's mistress. She is bantering with Mademoiselle Vatnaz. Frederic wonders if Rosanette is flirting with him. He leaves and visits Marie. Upon seeing her, his love rekindles. She asks him about Jacques subtly, seeming aware of his affair. Frederic is overjoyed by her suspicion. Frederic returns to see his friends. who are happy that Frederic is rich. They want him to contribute to Hussonnet's journal. The friends argue about politics; Senecal attacks capitalism. They visit Frederic's mansion and ridicule his decorations and book collection. Frederic learns that Jacques owns a porcelain factory. Jacques becomes friendlier to Frederic and often invites him to Rosanette's. Frederic regularly visit both houses and is drawn to both Rosanette and Marie, who seem to have opposing personalities. Later, Frederic learns that Rosanette wants Jacques to buy her an expensive shawl, but Jacques resists. One day, Frederic perceives that Rosanette is making advances on him; he decides to pursue her but she rebuffs him because she knows that he loves Marie. Frederic conceives of a plan to break up Jacques's marriage by encouraging Jacques to spend more time with Rosanette so that he can have more time alone with Marie.

Madame Moreau sends Frederic a letter telling of her budding relationship with Roque. She encourages him to make use of his connection to Dambruese. He sees the



Dambreuses soon thereafter. The socialite at dinner reject the rising tide of socialism and republicanism; they instead defend the crown and traditional religion. Frederic observes, hoping to make a good enough impression to garner a position as Council of State. He leaves the party and finds himself delighted with Madame Dambreuse; he considers whether he could acquire her as a mistress. The next day he visits Rosanette's but she doesn't let him in. Mademoiselle Vatnaz finds Frederic outside and it becomes clear during the conversation that Rosanette is sleeping with Delmar, who Mademoiselle Vatnaz desires. She tells Frederic the gossip about Rosanette. Next Frederic visits Marie and Jacques; they are arguing; Marie confronts Jacques about the affair. Jacques had bought Rosanette the cashmere shawl and Marie found out. Jacques leaves and Frederic comforts Marie; he feels a linked to her.

Part Two, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The next two chapters reintegrate Frederic into Parisian life. He is now a rich man and his relationships to others have changed. He is able to command more respect and make new connections, particularly with the Dambreuses. He has his sights set on garnering a political position through networking with Monsieur Dambreuse. We see Frederic with a new confidence. His life seems less aimless, now that he has a goal. He sees Marie often, but his obsession with her has weakened. He learns that Jacques is having an affair with a woman named Rosanette. Due to his newfound confidence, Frederic believes that he can have Rosanette as a mistress. When she rejects him, he decides to encourage Jacques to spend more time with her so that he can pursue Marie. He even at one point considers attempting to make Madame Dambreuse his mistress. Frederic acquires a kind of swagger and deviousness. He wishes to acquire a prominent political position and a mistress, but preferably Marie.

Because Frederic's social status has changed, he plays a new role vis-à-vis his old friends. They now look to him for loans and donations. Charles wants to live at Frederic's expense and Hussonnet wants him to provide financial support to his political periodical. Thus, the primary story of the beginning of Part II is the increasing confidence and prominence of Frederic.

However, the main storyline moves forward. Marie confronts Jacques about the affair and Frederic sees their marriage falling apart. Frederic even pushes it along. He grows increasingly close to Marie during this time, all the while Jacques suspecting nothing. He is too busy with his own affair and running his new factory.



Part Two, Chapters 3 and 4

Part Two, Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Frederic spends his spare time with the Arnoux's. He discovers that their marriage is falling apart. In private, he both encourages them to leave each other. Jacques's financial position is becoming desperate; he is taking more risks and losing more money. As the risk that Jacques will lose the things he values increases, he grows kinder towards Marie, which makes Frederic feel guilty for the bad blood he is introducing into their marriage. Because Jacques desires to keep Marie, he tells her that Frederic and Rosanette are together, instead of he and Rosanette. Marie confronts Frederic about this but he denies it vehemently.

Next, Frederic becomes torn between two financial promises. Charles wants to borrow some money so that he can buy Hussonnett's periodical. It becomes clear later in the chapter that Senecal's socialist ideology has influenced Charles and that he is interested in a democratic revolution; Frederic promises him the money. However, Jacques later requests the same amount from Frederic in order to keep his factory and Frederic, apparently out of guilt, obliges. He lies to Charles and tells him that he doesn't have the money; he later lies again, telling Charles that he lost the money gambling. Charles is furious and ends their association. Frederic is stressed, torn between dramatic situations. He has long forgotten his law studies and his art, illustrations of his inability to finish projects once he starts them; but he still sets himself to writing a history of the renaissance, which he probably will never finish. While he is working, Marie visits him and discloses their financial difficulties. She wants him to speak to Monsieur Dambreuse - the man to whom Jacques is indebted - and persuade him to let Jacques delay payment. Frederic, out of sympathy for them both, decides to oblige her and successfully convinces Dambreuse to delay asking to be paid back. For whatever reason, Marie does not display much gratitude. During this conversation, the Monsieur presents Frederic with the opportunity to be secretary in a new national coal company that he is running. He also encourages Frederic to invest and Frederic agrees. This job is a great opportunity for Frederic, a stepping-stone to greater things. However, when the day comes to accept the job and invest the money, he runs after Marie, who is at Jacques's factory in the countryside. Initially, he cannot find Jacques's factory, ultimately discovering it further in the country and in an awful condition. He finds Marie partially undressed. He attempts to flatter her and then continuously attempts to subtly confess his feelings for her. She catches on and stridently rebuffs him. He leaves, embarrassed and furious. He seeks revenge by contacting Rosanette.

Frederic accompanies Rosanette publicly to a race, but she is bawdy and obnoxious, humiliating him; however, he still wants to be her lover in part to get revenge on Marie. Frederic and Rosanette run into Hussonnett and Cisy at the race; Cisy is acting gaudy and lurid. They greet Rosanette, as do many other men, making her appear whorish. Rosanette spots Marie and calls out to her, further upsetting Frederic. Frederic continues the outing by taking Rosanette to dinner where they run into Hussonnett and



Cisy again. Cisy flirts with Rosanette and infuriates Frederic by taking her home. This is the third time Frederic has been humiliated in a single night. However, Hussonnett stays and discusses the periodical; but Frederic is distracted. Hussonnett sticks him with the bill and Frederic feels slighted by everyone he knows. He then makes yet another vow, this time to get rich to spite everyone.

A few days later, Pellerin goes to meet Frederic to get him to pay for the portrait he commissioned for Rosanette. She has refused to pay for it, as has Jacques, but Frederic, embarrassed as he is by Rosanette, will not pay either. Pellerin is furious. Then Senecal shows up, and appears more prominent and noble than before. Jacques fires him (perhaps from suspecting him, perhaps due to his rabble-raising) for which Senecal blames Frederic. Frederic is able to sell a farm he owns to get the money to invest in the coal company. He later discovers that Rosanette dismissed Cisy after a single night from Hussonnett and Frederic runs into Cisy later that day. Cisy asks Frederic to come to dinner with him. As Frederic prepares for dinner he realizes that Jacques will not repay him. At dinner, Cisy displays his wealth prominently; Frederic despises him. A friend congratulates Cisy on going home with Rosanette but Cisy is embarrassed, in part because she rejected him and in part because Jacques found out. His friend basically implies that everyone has slept with Rosanette; Frederic is embarrassed because he can't seem to attract her, so he makes a feeble attempt to argue that she is not completely whorish, but everyone laughs at him. The next topic of dinner conversation is the sneaky dealings of Jacques, but Frederic stands up for him; Cisy claims that Jacques has only one asset of value - Marie - but he suggests that Marie is as loose as Rosanette; Frederic has been embarrassed by Cisy for the last time, becoming enraged. He throws one of the dinner plates at Cisy and storms out. He asks Regimbart about what his next course of action should be and Regimbart advises him to challenge Cisy to a duel; so Frederic does just that. At the duel, Cisy faints. When he wakes up and starts the fight again, Jacques stops then and thanks Frederic for defending Marie's reputation.

Senecal is arrested on the charge that he was engaged in an anti-government conspiracy. Dussardier, who has recently been growing closer to Frederic, informs Frederic and the two decide to defend him. Frederic researches newspapers for information on Senecal's whereabouts and finds a piece in Hussonnett's periodical mocking the duel he had with Cisy (however, names are not mentioned). Later he sees the portrait of Rosanette in Pellerin's shop window. Pellerin, because of his anger with Frederic, had a sign pointing out the Frederic was the owner. These two events threaten to ruin Frederic's reputation. He seeks to maintain his reputation by visiting the Dambreuses but they mock him as well, or at least they appear to from his perspective. Later, Frederic and Charles make up on Dussardier's urging and Frederic shares the news of the new job, which may not still be available. Some time later, Frederic receives a note from his mother; she wants Frederic to get married. Apparently Louise, Roque's daughter, is now of age. Of course, Madame Moreau wants Frederic to marry Louise to get money. And Frederic recently lost a large sum of money in a bad investment, so he considers this option. He returns to Nogent, where his mother lives, and gets to know Louise. He thinks over the option of marrying her.



Part Two, Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Chapters 3 and 4 display the overreach of Frederic's confidence. He is sure that he can gain Marie's heart but he is also looking for a trophy mistress to display his new wealth. He finds Rosanette hard to master, however, and she embarrasses him repeatedly. Marie proves hard to openly communicate with about Frederic's affection, and when Frederic subtly tells her that he is interested, she rejects him on the spot. He pursues Rosanette as revenge. He overreaches in his relationships as well, promising money to multiple people, a behavior that ruins his relationship with Charles, at least for a time. He attempts to pit Marie and Jacques against one another, but this meets with little success. And while things appear to be going well for him with the Dambreuses, they eventually mock him. Further, Pellerin and Senecal blame him for their misfortune, Hussonett mocks him over his duel with Cisy and Cisy goes out of his way to embarrass Frederic on numerous occasions. Finally, he overreaches financially. He invests too much money and ends up losing a great sum of it, so much so that he must reduce his income and consider marrying Roque's daughter Louise in order to inherit more money. All of this overreach significantly damages Frederic's reputation; he is widely rumored to be Rosanette's lover and is involved in a subtle emotional tryst with Jacques and Marie. Things look bad for Frederic.



Part Two, Chapters 5 and 6

Part Two, Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Frederic is in retreat. He is spending a lot of time in Nogent getting to know Louise. In Frederic's absence, several strange things happen. First, Charles looks over some of Frederic's documents and learns more about the job with Dambreuse. He decides that he should take up Frederic's life - both his job and his relationship with Marie. He confronts Marie, tells her that she loves him and she laughs in his face. In the meanwhile, Louise tells Frederic that she is in love with him, asks him to marry her and he agrees. Word of their marriage reaches Charles and when Marie rejects him, he tells her that Frederic is getting married. Surprisingly, this upsets her. We discover, finally, that Marie is in love with Frederic, as she comes to this realization only in the pages of Part Two, Chapter 5. While in Nogent, Frederic receives three letters. Charles writes him and wants him to stay in Nogent; Rosanette wants a loan from him and Monsieur Dambreuse requests that he come back to Paris to dine with him. These letters set up the events of the next chapter.

Frederic returns to Paris and finds himself torn. He cannot marry Louise, as this will make him appear in financial trouble. However, he does want to marry her to get Roque's money. Mademoiselle Vatnaz comes over to his mansion and gossips with him; she tells him that she is in love with Delmar and that Rosanette is dating the wealthy Prince Tzernoukoff. Frederic lends Rosanette the money she needs, but she only wanted to run off with her to sea; Frederic finds this prospect daunting because he would have to avoid retribution from Tzernoukoff. Frederic runs into Marie a few days later but nothing comes of their conversation. Frederic also visits Charles, who informs him that Marie was upset when she heard about his impending marriage; Charles also tells Frederic that Senecal is free and that Dussardier is holding a social gathering in his honor. The party is very political. The republican forces are gaining power and swaying public opinion. The crown has responded by cracking down on republican intellectuals and protests. This has bred unrest. Hussonnet appears at the party and does not mention the attack made on him. Charles and Dussardier persuade Frederic to buy Rosanette's portrait from Pellerin. Frederic makes his decision not to accept the job at the coal company.

On an errand to procure two statues for Louis, he runs into Marie; she is quite unhappy about his marriage and his relationship with Rosanette. He denies both charges; he tells her that he is in love with her, kisses her on the eyelids and promises her that he will not marry Louise. Marie is overjoyed, which leads Frederic to get excited and overreach his expression of love for her; she becomes frightened and asks him to leave. However, he sees her often thereafter and while they avoid sexual intimacy they often speak of a building a life as a couple. Frederic is eager to have her for his mistress and often gets frustrated at her recalcitrance; he resents her and plots a scheme to take her to an apartment and has sex with her. But it turns out that her son Eugene is very sick; she does not come to their rendezvous because he appears near death. When he recovers,



she interprets it as a sign that her relationship with Frederic must end. Political tensions continue to flare; revolution is around the corner. Frederic is distraught by Marie's behavior and returns to Rosanette. They make love.

Part Two, Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Chapters 5 and 6 bring much of the emotional drama in *Sentimental Education* to its climax. Frederic is nearly ready to decide on who his wife and/or mistress will be. Initially he wants it to be Louise, in order to gain her father's fortune. However, if he marries her he will reveal his financial weakness to the Parisian upper class. Charles tells him that Marie was upset to learn about his impending marriage, and this causes him to turn from Louise back to Marie. He confesses his love to her and she does the same to him; he is incredibly happy. They spend a lot of time alone together but do not consummate their relationship. As time progresses, Frederic grows restless and attempts to sleep with her, but Marie ends their association when her son Eugene's sickness convinces her that she should end the illicit relationship with Frederic. This causes Frederic to become enraged and sleep with Rosanette to get back at her. He seems to have settled on Rosanette towards the end of Part II but this is not clear.

Here we see Frederic at his most indecisive. Throughout the book, Frederic has taken on commitments he never completes, made promises that he could not honor, dreamed dreams he would never fulfill and make vows he would never honor. Now it is time for him to choose a companion and he simply cannot make up his mind, running between three women in the two chapters. This illustrates Frederic's inability to choose and reveals a certain kind of immaturity.

These events take place against the backdrop of an impending political revolution. The monarchy of King Philippe is falling apart and will be replaced by the Second French Republic. Political revolution in the story seems to track the sordid events of Frederic's life. At the beginning of the book, the revolution is only a dream, and as the book progresses protests erupt randomly. But these protests do not have a focus, much as Frederic lacks focus. Finally, the protests and new ideas are coming to a head, just as the conflict in Frederic's life is doing the same.



Part Three, Chapters 1 and 2

Part Three, Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

The cries of revolution pervade the events of chapter one. The king has been overthrown and many want to establish a democracy. They are also inclined towards socialism. However, the revolutionaries differ on what they want. Frederic and Rosanette wake up hearing gunfire. Frederic rushes out into the street and is indifferent to the fighting. He goes to the palace and helps storm it. He also links up with Hussonet; they find Dussardier. All are happy that the republican forces have won.

The next day, Frederic tries to find Charles, but he has been appointed to a regional commissionership. He returns Rosanette; she pretends to like the new republic, and the two of them stroll through the city. In a few days, Frederic runs into Pellerin and Regimbart, who disagree about how the new institutions should be structured. Many want to expropriate the property of the rich, which makes the upper classes nervous, especially Monsieur Dambreuse. He recruits Frederic to run for the assembly, and promises him benefits if Frederic protects his holdings. During a nomination meeting, Frederic gives a speech, but it is too socialistic for Monsieur Dambreuse's tastes. Frederic's nomination is shot down by Senecal because he refused to contribute to Hussonett's political journal before the revolution. Frederic is embarrassed, and leaves to find Rosanette; she is angry with him and blames him for the revolution. She is also involved in an ongoing dispute with Mademoiselle Vatnaz about the role of women in society. Rosanette is a traditionalist, where Vatnaz is an ardent feminist. However, when Vatnaz gives a speech, she discovers that Delmar has given Vatnaz a piece of jewelry, and realizes that Vatnaz and Delmar are lovers. This creates some tension between the women.

Rosanette maintains that she loves Frederic and cares nothing for the principle. She decides to find a new apartment; Frederic aids her move. Frederic spends his time there, but one day finds Jacques coming downstairs. Apparently Rosanette is still sleeping with him. Jacques asks Frederic to take his guard shift one night, in part so he could have some alone time with Rosanette. The two men sleep at the camp. Frederic watches Jacques sleep with his gun and wishes that he would accidentally shoot himself. Jacques is equally suspicious of Frederic. The next day, Frederic runs into Martinon and Dambreuse, who has just run for an assembly seat; Frederic is angry, and Dambreuse makes excuses. The assembly is making new political demands on the people and is creating anti-poverty programs. They are also expanding the army. The old alliances amongst the republicans are fracturing and middle-class and lower-class are fighting one another. Dambreuse looks for all the allies he can, including Jacques. This further upsets Frederic, who then forces Rosanette to choose between him and Jacques. Rosanette chooses him and they leave for Fontainebleau. They find great peace there, spending time talking about nothing and enjoying each other's company. Frederic believes that he will be happy for the remainder of his life. Rosanette tells him many of her secrets, such as that she had been to England and had once attempted



suicide. However, during a walk they encounter some troops from the city. Frederic learns that Dussardier has been hurt and goes to see him, despite Rosanette's objections. Frederic has troubles finding Dussardier, but when he does Mademoiselle Vantaz is nursing him. Roque comes to Paris to join the army and Louise accompanies him. She is eager to see Frederic.

The violence in Paris settles somewhat, enough to where the Dambreuses feel comfortable hosting a party. All the book's major characters are there. Early in the evening, Martinon seeks permission from the Dambreuses to marry their niece Cecile despite Madame Dambreuse planning for Cecile to marry Cisy. Madame Dambreuse also objects because - and this becomes clear - she is Martinon's mistress. The guests talk about recent political events, arguing in detail about what shape French political institutions should take and how the uprisings should be dealt with. They are pleased that their fortunes have been retained, however; on that they agree. Frederic and Marie speak barely a word to one another, and we find Cisy attempting to salvage his chances with Cecile; Martinon rebukes Cisy by raising his embarrassing conduct during the duel with Frederic. Next, Frederic is yet again embarrassed when Roque inquires about the portrait of Rosanette that he commissioned - the guests all know that he and Rosanette are lovers. A man named Fumichon, a capitalist, defends the right of private property, while Jacques tries to defend one variant of socialism. Dambreuse admits that there is some logic to the socialist position, much to his chagrin and Hussonett shares some socialist literature with him. Louise is pained by Frederic's relationship with Rosanette and tells Marie that she is in love with him. Marie tells her to stay away from him, obviously expressing her hurt. Madame Dambreuse prods Frederic about Louise doting on him so. He is pleased that someone is interested in him and generally feels confident at the gathering. As he is leaving, Louise confronts him, demanding that he confess his love to her and that he ask for her to marry him. Frederic rebuffs her and leaves for Rosanette's. Louise and Caroline, her maid, travel to Frederic's house late at night only to find him not there; they discover that Frederic is practically living with Rosanette and Louise is devastated.

Part Three, Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Part Three introduces some political themes. The older political order is collapsing, and being replaced by a new, democratic order. Revolution has poured into the streets and there is some bloodshed as the monarchy is overthrown and the remaining interest groups tussle for the political upper hand. We find Frederic and the other members of the Parisian upper class debating political ideas regularly and getting involved in the new democratic politics. Some of them are socialists; others are traditional capitalists. Frederic and Jacques find themselves somewhere in between. We are also introduced to Mademoiselle Vantaz's early version of feminism in contrast to Rosanette who represents a more traditional attitude. We find the Monsieur Dambreuse is the consummate opportunist, doing what he can to protect his fortune, from attempting to use Frederic as his political pawn to making nice with the new regime.



Frederic seems to have settled on Rosanette for the time being. While sometimes finding her annoying, they continue to grow closer. He eventually forces her to give up her other lovers, including Jacques and they abscond to the countryside and spend some romantic days together. Frederic finally has love in his life. He feels happy, excited about the new political age and his love life with Rosanette. Somehow his life has come to have meaning. As the dust of the revolution settles, we can see that Frederic's melancholy attitude is settling as well. While he continues his tradition of being embarrassed by his friends, he has a kind of confidence that has returned to him. His only problem for the time being is Louise, who is desperate to marry him. He must resist her because should he marry her, his friends will think that he has lost all of his money.



Part Three, Chapters 3 and 4

Part Three, Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Frederic accepts his relationship with Rosanette, although Frederic finds himself slightly dissatisfied with her. Rosanette tells him that Jacques's life is falling apart - he lost the factory and has practically lost Marie. Jacques visits soon thereafter and wants Frederic to come over. On the way, Frederic meets Compain, a strange man who may be a member of a secret society known as the "Calf's Head." Frederic finds Marie rather than Jacques when he arrives at their house. He tells her that he still loves her and she reciprocates. However, Rosanette has tracked him and sees them kiss. When Frederic and Rosanette get home, Frederic nearly hits her out in anger; he stops when she announces that they will soon be parents. Frederic calms and helps her pay off another debt to Mademoiselle Vatnaz.

After the fight, Frederic finds himself increasingly unhappy with Rosanette. He becomes drawn to Madame Dambreuse, and despite finding her only mildly alluring, he wants her as a mistress for the confidence boost and prestige. Frederic decides to pursue her and succeeds with little effort, boosting his confidence and social status. After a meeting with Madame Dambreuse, he runs into Charles, who is involved in a political conflict; as a result, he has alienated the socialists and the conservatives. When Frederic invites him to stay over, Charles decides to convince Frederic to run for office. Times are good for Frederic. He has his revenge on Rosanette, new confidence from Madame Dambreuse and the continued interest of Marie, and even the opportunity to run for the assembly. When he returns to Rosanette's, he is proud of his achievements, particularly his ability to hide his indiscretions from her.

Charles goes to work for Monsieur Dambreuse and begins to rebuild his political network by getting in touch with Roque. Frederic encourages Charles to lie to Roque about why Frederic has yet to propose to Louise. And throughout the chapter, the reader encounters a small subplot where Charles attempts to win over Roque and Louise for his own purposes. During this time, Frederic grows increasingly interested in Madame Dambreuse. At their parties, everyone knows that he is her lover; the affair elevates Frederic's social status. However, Madame Dambreuse wants a genuine romantic relationship with him, but at the very mention of the idea he begins to lose interest; the relationship with the Madame was primarily about social climbing. During their affair, Monsieur Dambreuse dies. Frederic and the Madame fully expected her to receive his assets in the will. There was some worry that he would leave his money to Cecile, his niece (who turns out is really his illegitimate daughter). The Madame does not take this option seriously and insults Cecile. Frederic and the Madame decide to marry to enjoy Monsieur's riches, all this before the funeral. They are both disappointed to learn, however, that Monsieur Dambreuse left his money to Cecile. The Madame is devastated, and while Frederic tells her that he will still marry her and that he loves her, his rationale for marrying her has fallen apart. Instead, he leaves for his hometown of Nogent to organize his run for the assembly.



The affair with the Madame brings another important event: Rosanette has Frederic's child, a son. Out of guilt, Frederic spends some time with her and tends to his child, who he seems indifferent towards. Charles tells him that he should forget the assembly run and when Frederic shows Charles's message to the Madame, she confronts him for not going to Nogent as he said he would. Charles had told her. This causes Frederic to grow cautious and live a double life between Rosanette and Madame Dambreuse; he lives life as a kind of game, but a private informant tells the Madame that Frederic is having an affair with Rosanette, although when she confronts him, she believes Frederic's lies. She is more threatened by Marie than anyone else, but he calms her. Frederic is unnerved by the fact that the Madame knows so many of his secrets, which increases his disenchantment with her. The political situation in France is leading to despair. Things are not much better than they were before the revolution. The political parties wrestle for power and have restricted individual liberty. The conservatives have imposed many new rules. Many of the revolutionaries are disappointed, and now want to divide power so that each may at least have something. Political meetings spring up around town. Rosanette and Frederic decide to move as a result, and when Rosanette expresses a desire to be a 'high society' wife, he realizes that she is expected him to propose. This, coupled with other grievances, causes him to begin to dislike her as well. Further, Rosanette's debt issues continue, and Frederic must bail her out. Rosanette tries to pay for her debts by cashing in shares that Jacques had sold her but they have lost their value, and Rosanette decides to file a civil suit. She must liquidate some of her assets, but Frederic is able to prevent her from being more embarrassed publicly than necessary. A small subplot with Mademoiselle Vatnaz arises. She has come to despise Rosanette and has fallen in love with Dussardier, after running into him at a job. She pursues marriage with him, but he rejects her. Dussardier discovers the bad blood between Vatnaz and Rosanette, attempts to quell it and when he fails, apologizes to Frederic for the trouble Vatnaz has caused; he then laments the failure of the revolution.

In the meanwhile, Rosanette is initially unsuccessful in her suit against Jacques, but Charles, who is her lawyer, finds other grounds for a lawsuit with Senecal's advice. She wins, but before she and Frederic can enjoy her victory, their son becomes sick and dies. Rosanette is devastated and Frederic has the sense that this foreshadows future tragedy in his life. They decide to have their son's portrait painted, and they hire Pellerin. During the painting job, Pellerin tells Frederic that Jacques's fortunes are ruined and that he, Marie and their children have to leave town to avoid their debts. The only way to keep Marie in town, Frederic discovers, is if he can find Jacques and pay off his debts. The chapter ends with Frederic trying to track them down.

Part Three, Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Chapters 3 and 4 reveal Frederic's true nature and his hopelessness. He jumps between love interests. He was with Rosanette to spite Marie, but he loses interest in Rosanette as her interest increases. So he pursues an affair with Madame Dambreuse and lives a double life between them. He is only interested in the Madame to gain social stature and is perfectly content to use her for this purpose. When she falls for him and asks to develop a genuine relationship with him, he again loses interest. He only wants



her money, which she doesn't get due to the fact that Monsieur Dambreuse left his assets to his illegitimate daughter, Cecile. His double life with Rosanette continues to cause him drama and difficulty which in some ways culminate with the death of his and Rosanette's son and a lawsuit against Jacques. The lawsuit is successful, leaving Jacques poor and with no recourse but to move his family out of town. When Frederic realizes that Marie will be leaving Paris, he rushes off to find them. We can see from even this brief synopsis of Frederic's love interests that he is not really interested in love at all. He cannot decide what he wants and it continually causes him trouble. He is certainly interested in social climbing, but we have seen throughout the book that Frederic cannot decide what will make him happy and never completes any of his plans. Instead, he is always distracted by new pursuits before completing his old ones. It appears that Frederic is genuinely interested in these three women, but for different reasons - Rosanette promises him a family, Marie romance and Madame Dembreuse high society, and so he cannot be satisfied with any of them. Further, the political events in France continue to parallel the events in Frederic's life. Disillusionment with the revolution reflects Frederic's disillusionment with his life choices.



Chapters 5 - 7

Chapters 5 - 7 Summary

Chapter 5 begins with Frederic rushing to find Marie. He borrows the money he needs from Madame Dambreuse and lies about the reason. The Arnoux's have left their house; Frederic tracks down Regimbart who tells him that they have left town. Frederic, upset, returns home to Rosanette, who is crying at the portrait of her dead son. Frederic joins her in tears; however, he is crying for Marie. Later, Regimbart tells the Madame that Frederic lied to her about the money; she vows revenge and does not confront Frederic about it. Instead, she invites Charles to consult her about collecting on debts from Jacques and Marie to further impoverish them; Charles obliges in part because Marie had embarrassed him for rejecting him. They settle on running a debt auction, through which Charles will buy the debts and sue Jacques and Marie. Weeks later, Frederic finds that the Arnoux's assets are being liquidated and that Senecal is behind this. He believes that Rosanette is behind the sale; she denies this but in a rage he decides to leave her. He becomes exclusive with Madame Dambreuse, but when he sees her eagerly purchasing Marie's things, he realizes that she was behind the action; then then ends their relationship. Frederic next travels to Nogent to marry Louise, but she is marrying Charles. Frederic leaves Nogent with no one, bringing his love life to a close. Frederic witnesses political skirmish in the street where Senecal kills Dussardier.

Chapter 6 brings the denouement but gives us one final plot event. After years of torrid affairs and unemployment, Frederic is surprised to find Marie at his door. He feels his love for her return; she confesses her love to him and they talk about their halcyon days, but when they return from an outing, Marie removes her hat; her hair is white from the stress of the last years. Frederic's interest in her evaporates instantly and he rejects her overtures. When the conversation is over, she departs; they never see each other again.

Chapter 7 is the true denouement. Charles and Frederic have reconciled. They revisit the fates of the main characters. After many occupations and ideological flirtations, Pellerin has taken up photography. Cisy is the father of eight. Senecal is nowhere to be found. Jacques has died and Marie and her son live in Rome. Hussonett controls both the playhouses and news media in Paris, and Martinon won a seat in the senate. Madame Dambreuse has left France to live with her husband, an Englishman, and Louise left Charles to live with a well-known singer. Charles confesses to a brief affair with Rosanette, which Frederic tries to ignore, but Charles tells Frederic that he saw Rosanette with her adopted child in a store and reports that she is now overweight. Charles tells Frederic about the Calf's head secret society; it is composed of the remaining party of revolution. The two continue to speak of the past and recall an outing together where they visit a whorehouse. However, Frederic becomes frightened and they quickly flee. Charles and Frederic decide that this was the high point of their lives.



Chapters 5 - 7 Analysis

In a flash, all four of Frederic's love interests evaporate. In part due to his role in Jacques's debts and his own indiscretions, Rosanette and Madame Dambreuse financially ruin the Arnoux's, which leads Marie to leave the city. Frederic blames Rosanette and ends their relationship; when he discovers Madame Dambreuse's role in Marie's departure, he leaves her too. He then quickly tries to salvage his relationship with Louise, but Charles has worked his way into her and Roque's heart and they marry. Marie, Rosanette, Madame Dambreuse and Louise are all gone. Frederic's indecisiveness and social climbing has left him with nothing. The great tragedy of his personality is that he seems constitutionally incapable of happiness. Even when Marie visits him years later and offers him the chance to be with her, finally, after years and years of loving her, he rejects her when he sees her white hair. Even when his heart's desire is at his doorstep, he rejects it for something else. Frederic wants only what he cannot have, and ends up with no lover at all.

These events wrap up the book, which now appears to be the tragic story of a man and a community so socially dysfunctional that everyone ends up unhappy or dead. And Frederic is at the center of all the misery. This, in many ways, parallels the tragedy of the second republic of France, which everyone realizes is no better than the monarchy. After the revolution, friends turned on friends, allies on allies and now the people are no freer than they were before. The revolution was also full of indecisive ideas and collapsed into fights and pathetic regret. It becomes clear to the reader towards the end that Frederic is not merely a French upperclassman that cannot find happiness, but is a symbol of the tragedy of mid-19th century French political reform. It starts without hope, rises to power and glory, but it is plagued by internal contradictions and an unstable foundation, which leads inevitably to its collapse, just like the stretch of Frederic's life as described in *Sentimental Education*.



Characters

Frederic Moreau

Frederic Moreau is the main character of *Sentimental Education*. He begins the book melancholy and unhappy. After receiving a small inheritance, he moves to France to study to become a lawyer, but he becomes distracted with writing, his friends and his desire for Marie Arnoux. Frederic's main animating interest throughout the first half of the book is his obsession with Marie. He befriends Jacques, her husband, just to get close to her; but when he finally gets close enough to confess his feelings, she rejects him. Frederic inherits a great deal of money towards the middle of the book and uses his new wealth to enter high society, which embroils him in intrigue. At one point, he has four love interests - a relationship with Rosanette, an affair with Madame Dambreuse, a paused marriage plan to Louise Roque and his continuing romantic attachment to Marie Arnoux. Towards the end of the book, he ends his relationships with Rosanette and Madame Dambreuse, and finds out that his best friend is marrying Louise. Some years later, when he encounters Marie again, he rejects her because she has aged.

Frederic is a romantic but he is never satisfied with what he has. Just as he is about to accomplish one of his goals, he drops it and turns to something else. Frederic, almost by constitution, is indecisive and unable to make firm, honest life choices. Instead, he appears to prefer to have his cake and eat it too, never making a decision about what to give up and what to gain. As a result, he causes a great deal of suffering within his social circle and by the end of the book is alone.

Madame Marie Arnoux

Madame Marie Arnoux is the wife of Jacques Arnoux and the mother of two. She is a beautiful woman with a mild and kind manner; she mostly keeps to herself and stays aloof from various social conflicts. She is also Frederic's central love interest throughout *Sentimental Education*. For the first half of the book, he pursues her in any way that he can, particularly by developing a close friendship with Jacques and spending as much time as he can with them. He even exposes Jacques' affairs with Rosanette to Marie in order to split them up and he subsequently continues to fan the flames of their estrangement. Marie rejects Frederic's advances. She appears to have some faith in the sanctity of marriage and will not cheat on Jacques despite his affairs.

Nonetheless, Frederic's advances cause her to fall in love with him, and while they confess their love for each other, she will not start a romantic relationship with him. When Frederic gets frustrated and starts a relationship with Rosanette to punish her, Marie is hurt. Marie continues to float in and out of the storyline, as Frederic develops multiple love interests in addition to hers. She is also brought down by Jacques's various embarrassing financial decisions and poor reputation, which eventually forces them to leave the city, an event that Frederic cannot prevent. Years later, Marie comes



to visit Frederic and finally confesses her love to him. She has waited a very long time, but when Frederic sees her white hair, he rejects her, and it is with this that the story's main plot climaxes.

Charles Deslauriers

Frederic's closest friend. He starts off loyal and attempts to keep Frederic happy despite his attachment to Marie. Over time, however, he comes to envy Frederic's life and often tries to usurp it, first by pursuing a relationship with Marie, then by entering politics and finally by marrying Louise. He has a falling out with Frederic, but they reconcile and end the book as friends.

Monsieur Jacques Arnoux

Jacques is Marie's husband and Frederic's friend throughout much of the book. He brings Frederic into high society and shares his secrets with him; oddly, he does not notice Frederic's attachment to his wife. Jacques also pursues affairs with other women, most notoriously with Rosanette. He originally sells art, but later gets involved in industry, and it does not go well.

Madame Moureau

Frederic's mother, who is always encouraging him to find money and marry well.

Rosanette

Originally Jacques's lover, she later becomes Frederic's lover instead. They conceive a son together, but the child dies. They spend some happy days together in the country, but when Rosanette attempts to send Jacques to the poorhouse with a lawsuit, Frederic believes that she is doing so to punish him for loving Marie. He ends their relationship.

Senecal

A mathematics teacher and socialist activist who later becomes an oppressive member of the state.

Baptiste Martinon

A law school acquaintance of Frederic's, and is a member of the Parisian upper class. He ends up a rich senator, not only through getting elected to the general assembly but by marrying Cecile, Monsieur Dambreuse's illegitimate daughter.



Pellerin

Pellerin starts the book off as a 'starving artist' but eventually rises to become a prominent painter and later a photographer. He has falling outs with both Jacques and Frederic.

Hussonnet

Hussonnet takes over Jacques's art magazine and converts it into a political periodical. He is also involved in politics.

Louise Roque

Roque's daughter and heir to his fortune. She is infatuated with Frederic from a young age, but when he rejects her, she marries Charles.

Monsieur Roque

A friend of Madame Moureau, he comes into money and his daughter Louise becomes an important prize. He wants Frederic to marry her, but when Frederic hesitates, he allows Charles to do so instead.

Cecile

Monsieur Dambreuse's illegitimate daughter who later inherits his fortune rather than his wife.

Cisy

A wealthy man and friend of Charles and Frederic. Eventually he provokes Frederic into a duel, but faints before it is completed.

Madame Dambreuse

Monsieur Dambreuse's wife, who loves to host parties and is an intriguing member of high society. She eventually becomes Frederic's lover and fails to inherit her husband's vast fortune. When she tries to ruin the Arnoux's, Frederic ends his relationship with her.



Monsieur Dambreuse

One of the richest men in Paris, owner of a national coal company and a man of 'reactionary' politics, Monsieur Dambreuse offers Frederic several important financial and political opportunities throughout the book.

Dussardier

A political activist who is arrested early in the book. He goes to law school with Charles and Frederic and later is involved in the revolution. Senecal kills him.

Mademoiselle Vantaz

Rosanette's friend who is in love with Delmar. The two often bicker and fight. Vantaz is flighty and unreliable.

Regimbart

Regimbart is one of the other artists in the early part of the book.

Delmar

The object of Vantaz's affection and an actor.

Uncle Barthelemy

Frederic's uncle and very wealthy. He leaves Frederic his fortune, allowing Frederic to enter the French upper class.



Objects/Places

Paris

The site of the book's major events and the revolutionary overthrow of the French monarchy.

Nogent

Frederic's hometown, where he often retreats due to conflicts in the book. His mother, Roque and Louise all live there.

Brittany

A French town that the Arnoux's retreat to after financial devastation.

Law School

Frederic begins his days in Paris at law school with Charles; he meets Martinon and Dussardier through his experiences there.

Frederic's Mansion

When Frederic returns to Paris a wealthy man, he buys a mansion where he entertains.

Barthelemy's Inheritance

The grand sum of money Frederic's uncle left to him; this money allows Frederic to enter Parisian high society.

Rosanette's Son

Rosanette and Frederic have a child that dies not long after he is born.

Monsieur Dambreuse's Fortune

Monsieur Dambreuse was a rich man. Frederic planned to marry his wife in order to inherit his fortune, but Monsieur left it to his illegitimate daughter Cecile.



A Parasol

In an awkward meeting with Jacques, Frederic accidentally breaks this object. He believed it to be Marie's and replaced it by giving another to her as a gift. It was in fact the parasol of one of Jacques's lovers, so the parasol leads to Marie uncovering Jacques's affairs and bringing her closer to Frederic.

Guest Parties

Much of the book occurs at guest parties throughout French high society.

The Revolution of 1848

During the book the French monarchy is overthrown and replaced by a democratic government that leaves many unsatisfied and disappointed.

The General Assembly

The democratic governing body of the second French republic.

The Monarchy of King Phillippe

The monarchy that preceded the revolution.

The Calf's Head

The name of a French secret society of revolutionaries.

Rosanette's Portrait

A painting Frederic commissions Pellerin to create. When no one will pay for it, Pellerin uses it to humiliate Frederic

Madame Marie Arnoux's White Hair

At the end of the book, Marie returns to see Frederic. When she reveals her white hair to him, he loses interest.



Jacques' Factory

A dilapidated factory that Jacques acquired. It plays a role in forcing the Arnoux's into bankruptcy.

Debts

The book is suffused with debts that members of the French elites owe one another. Many of the book's central conflicts involve debt collection or borrowing large sums of money.



Themes

Wanting What One Cannot Have

At practically every point in *Sentimental Education*, Frederic wants only the things he cannot have. When he arrives in Paris, he wants to be a lawyer, but this bores him, so he becomes a writer. Frederic wants to use Monsieur Dambreuse as an opportunity for social climbing but does not take him up on his job offer. He is wishy-washy about investment projects, coming up on an opportunity and the backing away. When he conceives of an idea, it seems desirable to him; and when he is about to commit to completing the project he quickly moves to something else.

This is no clearer than in his love life. He pursues Marie, but when she rejects him, he goes after Rosanette. After a short time of happiness with Rosanette, he pursues Madame Dambreuse. Before this, he considered marrying Louise, but constantly puts her off until she marries Charles. He desires Madame Arnoux on and off throughout the book. But in the end, when she offers herself to him, he immediately loses interest. However, he loses interest time and again before this occurs, jumping back and forth between four relationships. When Rosanette wants to get married, Frederic stops being interested. When Madame Dambreuse wants to get married, Frederic, again, loses interest. Frederic wants to marry Louise to get her father Roque's money, but when he has the opportunity, he demurs, and when Marie finally offers herself to him, he rejects her. Each time he is on the cusp of achieving the relationship he wants, he moves onto something else.

The Desperate Search for Happiness

Sentimental Education is full of unhappiness. No one seems content. Some are dissatisfied with the political regime, others with their social standing, still others with their love lives. Senecal, Hussonnet and others focus on changing the government, but in the end, their lives are not better off. Charles tries to steal Frederic's life but ends the book no happier than he was before. Both Cisy and Frederic pursue social climbing, but neither of them appears to be happy. And Rosanette pursues man after man, wanting a family, but has to adopt a child. Jacques won't marry her, Frederic won't marry her, and presumably, no one else would either. Marie stays loyal to Jacques, hoping that he will return the favor and when he dies, she pursues Frederic, but he rejects her. Madame Dambreuse marries well, but does not receive her husband's fortune when he dies and cannot get Frederic to marry her. Jacques pursues women, but loves his wife, and chooses neither. And he makes bad investments which ultimately force him to leave Paris. No one in *Sentimental Education* is happy and everyone is desperately searching for it.

One of the major themes of the book, then, is the desperate search for happiness. Everyone in *Sentimental Education* is pursuing happiness in their own way, but



practically everyone is pursuing a path that they could not reasonably expect would satisfy them. They pursue lives that are risky and their relationships are rarely stable. Few focus on family life and being content with what they have. Frederic is the worst of all, sometimes achieving what he wants but quickly casting it aside for something else.

Political Revolution, Hope and Disappointment

A major underlying theme of *Sentimental Education* is political revolution and placing hope in dramatic social change. The French revolution of 1848 began the Second Republic, and adopted for itself the motto of "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality." The revolution was bred by dissatisfaction with the monarchy, an increasing awareness of nationwide poverty which was attributed to the rise of industrial capitalism. Many wanted to implement socialist reforms and most wanted a fully democratic government. However, the revolution did not have a clear focus and in the end the interest groups that allied to bring about the overthrow of the monarchy turned on one another. Much like the first French Revolution, the radical hopes of the reformers were dashed by reality.

The political theme of *Sentimental Education* appears secondary to the main story line for the vast majority of the book. However, over time a parallelism appears between Frederic's life and the rise and fall of the revolution. Both begin in a state of dissatisfaction but good fortune leads them both to become confident of their ability to achieve great things. However, neither is sure of what they really want; they overreach and have no one stable plan to bring their hopes to fruition. As a result, their lives collapse and both end as depressed and unhappy as before. In some ways, one might understand *Sentimental Education* as a commentary on the second French revolution, arguing that its self-absorption, lack of focus and coherent ideology, utopianism and tendency to overreach led to little social improvement.



Style

Point of View

One might argue that *Sentimental Education* operates from two perspectives, one social and the other political. While the book is written in the third-person and covers the events of Frederic's life without much commentary, there is an underlying message. The author illustrates the emptiness in Frederic's life, points out his embarrassing behavior, his poor character and his consistently poor life choices. He clearly disapproves of the behaviors of the French upper class. They are rarely loyal in marriage, think only of social, financial and political gain and generally live bad lives. Their relationships with one another are unstable; they seldom care long for one another, and are even indifferent when their loved ones die - in some cases, at least.

However, in the background, France is in the process of undergoing a revolution against the monarchy. The story begins with revolutionary, democratic and socialist ideas floating around the young intellectual scene in Paris. Over time, these ideas produce random protests without much of a message. As time progresses, interest groups in favor of revolution ally and plan until eventually they launch a revolt and take over the government and abolish the French monarchy; they replace the monarchy with a republic. However, once the republic is formed, the interest groups in the alliance turn on one another, some take power and crack down on the individual liberties of the people and most people are worse off than they were before the revolution. The author, Flaubert, appears to have a harsh judgment not only of the French elite but of the revolution as well. In fact, in many ways the two stories track one another - they begin with dreams, rise with hope, but the seeds of destruction are found within a false hope and unfocused plan, such that when victory comes, decision makers do not know how to proceed. This ultimately ends in conflict and disappointment. Apparently, this is how the author sees both the life and times of Frederic and his community and the French political uprisings of his day.

Setting

The setting of the book is mid-19th century France, and specifically the cities of Paris and Nogent. This period in French history has suffered from seven decades of political upheaval. In 1789 the French revolution brought down the king and queen of France. The monarchs are beheaded and Robespierre's reign of terror begins. In 1794, he is overthrown. In 1799 Napoleon took over and became Consul and in 1804 he became Emperor. From 1804 to 1812 he attempted to conquer Europe but lost crucial battles in 1812 and 1815. Louis XVIII replaced Napoleon and Charles X overthrew Louis XVIII. Charles's reign resembled the reign of the old French Monarchs; he was replaced in 1830 which elected a king, Louis Philippe. He reigned fairly peacefully through much of the beginning of *Sentimental Education*. The French people believe that they can simply overthrow a government when it fails to suit their interests, but they appear not to have



learned that revolutions can backfire. So in 1848, they decide to overthrow Phillippe; Napoleon's nephew then becomes the first president of the Republic but became Emperor through a vote in 1852. Paris during this time is full of revolutionary ideas, which in actual fact were by this time actually traditional. This is the historical setting of *Sentimental Education* and its location.

More specifically, the the main characters are located both in Nogent and in Paris. Frederic grew up in Nogent and moves to Paris to attend law school. He often retreats to Nogent when things go badly for him. He returned to Nogent when he could not find love, and when he was out of money. Nogent is where his mother lives and Louise, one of his love interests. Most of the book takes place in Paris, particularly in the houses and communities of the French upper class. Thus, the settings are mansions, dinner parties, upper class outings and so on. Also, many of the scandalous events in the book occur in bedrooms, discreet apartment buildings and mansions when one or the other spouse of the mansion is not home.

Language and Meaning

The language of the book is descriptive, melancholy and subtly opinionated. The reader is shown a glimpse of Paris and its social climate in the mid-19th century, along with some pictures of the French countryside. As in most depictions of France, Paris is shown as lively, beautiful and full of ideas. It is also shown to have its own form of decadence, self-absorption and unrealistic expectations, also features of how France is often depicted in literature.

The story is narrated somewhat in line with the emotion state of its main character, Frederic Moreau. We begin with melancholy scenes, evenings, long walks alone in the rain, balmy and gray weather conditions that generally reflect Frederic's mood. When Frederic becomes rich and enters the French social scene, the tone is livelier and full of excitement and intrigue. In fact, *Sentimental Education* was originally seen by the French reading public as glorifying adultery because of these parts of the book. Frederic is full of hope and the world seems to open to him. He feels as if he can accomplish anything. However, as the book progresses and Frederic overreaches, things appear dark. The revolution produces bloodshed and little positive change, Frederic becomes desperate and even more indecisive than before. The reader will be particularly struck by Frederic's indifference to the death of his son, which appears to be illustrated with depictions of the slow decay of his son's corpse as Pellerin is painting the child's portrait. Towards the end of the book, time passes quickly, intermittently sprinkled with important events. These stretches of time seem boring and sad, as the author passes over them quickly and without much description.

In the end, the author appears to be making the same judgment about Frederic, the Parisian upper class and the revolution of 1848: all are pretentious, self-absorbed and have a character such that they will never be happy.



Structure

Sentimental Education is divided into three parts, each containing six to seven chapters. The parts and chapters are not named but they mark an order and shape of the book's plot. The first part of the book introduces the main characters and the plot - Frederic's rise to prominence and his romantic interest in Marie. Things prove difficult for him initially, as he is often depressed but he wins a small inheritance and is able to begin his climb up the ladder into high society. Towards the end of the book, there is a small subplot where Frederic loses much of his inheritance but receives another much larger inheritance from his uncle. This ends part one. Part two opens in triumph. It is the long build towards the climax of the book. It focuses on Frederic's entry into the French social class, his attempts to build his wealth, his reputation and acquire a mistress. We see him become distracted from his romantic interest in Marie. Through much of part two, he pursues her but he also becomes interested in Rosanette. The climax of part two comes when he asks Marie to be with him, and she rejects him. Frederic throws himself into a relationship with Rosanette out of spite. At this same time, the events of the revolution are coming to a head. However, it is not until part three that the book reaches its climax. Part three opens with the revolution one but the tone of the book is not one of triumph. Instead, there is risk and responsibility that comes along with success. The French revolutionaries and Frederic must both now make concrete decisions about how to handle their successes but both become distracted. To focus on Frederic, we see that he develops multiple romantic interests - with Louise, Madame Dambreuse, Rosanette and Marie. He cannot decide who he wants; although towards the end he picks Marie. Yet the climax of the entire book comes years after the book's main events, when Marie visits Frederic at home. They declare their love for one another, but when Marie exposes her now white hair to Frederic, he rejects even her. This event is followed with the book's denouement, where Frederic seems to acquiesce to his unhappiness and spends his time with affairs, idleness and reminiscing about the past.



Quotes

"It was like a vision: She was sitting in the middle of the bench, all alone." (18)

"Love is the food and air of genius." (28)

"Yet it seemed to him he deserved to be loved." (36)

"A man of this sort was worth all the women in the world." (47)

"Never having seen society through the fever of his ambition, Deslauriers pictured it as an artificial creation, functioning in accordance with mathematical laws." (88)

"What a fool I was, with my lovesick sorrow! Why, she scarcely recognized me! What an ordinary creature she is!" (117)

"His brain conceived of a Machiavellian plan." (154)

"His dreams have raised her to a position outside the human condition. Beside her, he felt less important on earth than the scraps of silk which fell from her scissors." (174)

"Why, yes! I love him! ... I love him!" (248)

"'I'm just too happy,' said Frederic, 'I've been wanting you too long!'" (283)

"All is well! The people have won! Workers and bourgeois are embracing!" (291)

"He felt certain that he was going to be happy for the rest of his days, his contentment struck him as so natural, so inseparably linked with his life and this woman." (325)

"And I nearly died of longing for you!" (354)

"After all, love in itself was not so very important." (362)

"Looking around him, Frederic almost imagined that he was dreaming. Fear gripped his heart. He felt that this death was only a beginning, that some worse misfortune was going to follow close behind it." (395)

"When they returned, Madame Arnoux took off her hat. The lamp, standing on a console table, lit up her white hair. It was like a blow full in the chest." (414)

"And that was all." (416)

"That was the happiest time we ever had." (419)



Topics for Discussion

What is Frederic's real passion in life? Does he have one? Defend your answer.

How does Charles try to take over Frederic's life? Why do you think he does so?

Why doesn't Marie accept Frederic's advances earlier? What is her real motivation?

Why is Frederic so indecisive? In your answer, please list three examples of Frederic's indecisiveness and then explain why you think he has this character trait.

What was the French revolution of 1848 about? What were its main events? Why did it end with disappointment?

How do you think the political events of *Sentimental Education* are related to the dramas of the French upper classes? Do you see any parallelism between the two story lines?

Frederic has three major love interests in *Sentimental Education*. Who are they? What does Frederic find appealing about each woman? What does he find unappealing?