Shizuko's Daughter Study Guide

Shizuko's Daughter by Kyoko Mori

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Introduction

The plot of Kyoko Mori's first novel, *Shizuko's Daughter*, published in New York in 1993, follows a story line very similar to the author's own life. The female protagonist of the story experiences very difficult and often traumatic experiences as she is growing up, such as the suicidal death of her mother and the harsh treatment she receives from her father and stepmother. The novel explores the challenging reality of a young, pubescent girl who is living in Japan and who rebels against the strict discipline imposed upon her by her father and the Japanese culture. For many reasons, she is often alone throughout the story. One cause of her loneliness is that she does not relate to others who accept their status in life without questioning it.

The idea of the novel began as a short story that Mori wrote during the summer while she was in graduate school. In an article titled "Staying True to the Story," for *The Writer*, Mori states that this short story was "the first story in which I was able to write about what I knew but didn't understand." She explains that at first she used to write about things that she understood "all too well." This, however, bored her. "There was no mystery in it for me, let alone for my readers," she writes. So she began by thinking about her grandmother's life, about her relationship with her grandmother, about what her mother's life might have been like, and finally about what her own life would have been like if she'd done things just a little differently. It was from these considerations that *Shizuko's Daughter* was born.

Stating her philosophy about writing in "Staying True to the Story," Mori comments, "each character comes to us already half-formed, in the midst of his or her conflict. Our job as writers is to define and develop that conflict, to follow and ponder the story that unfolds." This philosophy is very clearly followed in this, her first novel.

Author Biography

Kyoko Mori was born in Kobe, Japan, in 1957. When she was twelve years old, much like the young girl in *Shizuko's Daughter*, Mori's mother, Takako, committed suicide. Also like her fictional female character, Mori's childhood was traumatized by the harsh and sometimes physical disciplines that her father, Hiroshi, imposed on her, as well as by the unloving attitude of her stepmother, Michiko. There were, in other words, many similarities between Mori's childhood and the story of the young girl in Mori's novel.

Shortly before her death, Mori's mother decided that sending her daughter to the traditional Japanese public high school with its rigorous examination process would drain her daughter of her creative energies. So she helped Mori apply to Kobe Jogakum, a school in Japan that had been founded by two American women in 1890, and that focused its curriculum on the arts and language. When Mori graduated, she taught English for a while. Then, at the age of nineteen, in 1976, she moved to the United States, by herself, to attend Rockford College, a liberal arts college in Illinois. In 1979, Mori earned her bachelor's degree there.

During graduate school at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Mori met her future husband. She eventually earned a doctorate in creative writing and found a teaching job in Green Bay, Wisconsin, at St. Norbert College, where she taught writing. The couple stayed together through most of their twenties and into their thirties, but then, as Mori states in her memoir, *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught Between Cultures* (1997), "I decided to be divorced because I began to sit alone in the kitchen late at night, as sad and silent as my mother had been." Despite the divorce, Mori writes that she had a good relationship with her husband. She states in her book *The Dream of Water* (1995), her first memoir, that her husband completely understood her chosen path of writer, in which her work shaped her life. "I think of myself primarily as a writer, not as a wife," she writes. And her husband accepted this, but there still remained inside of her something that made her unhappy about her marriage. Unhappiness is a theme that drives much of her writing. She strives to unravel the causes of this sadness by working through them creatively in her novels and memoirs.

After her divorce, Mori eventually moved away from Green Bay, having found a job at Harvard University. Currently, she is a Briggs-Copeland lecturer at Harvard, where she teaches creative writing. She lives in Cambridge, Massa-chusetts. Mori's other publications include *Fallout Poems* (1994), another young adult novel called *One Bird* (1995), and her novel *Stone Field, True Arrow* (2000).

Plot Summary

Chapter 1: Housebound

The first chapter of Mori's *Shizuko's Daughter* begins with Shizuko, the protagonist's mother, dreaming about the small village in which she grew up. The phone awakens her. It is her daughter, Yuki, who tells her mother that her piano teacher will be late for Yuki's lesson, thus causing Yuki to return home later than anticipated. Shizuko assures Yuki that this will not cause any difficulties. Although the tone of her mother's voice concerns Yuki, she decides to wait for Miss Uozumi rather than forego the lesson.

Meanwhile, Shizuko begins her process of readying herself for her suicide. She sits down and writes two notes. She asks for her husband's forgiveness, blaming only herself for the unhappiness that has led her to this act. In her note to Yuki, she writes that Yuki must always remember that she loves her. Then she adds, "When you grow up to be a strong woman, you will know that this was for the best."

She goes to the kitchen, closes the door, and lays the two notes on the table. After turning on the gas on the stove, she sits down on the floor. She thinks about a comment that she wrote in the note to her husband: "I am almost happy at this last hour," she had written. Then she had added, "and I wish you to be." When she thinks over this last sentiment, she changes her mind about it and reaches up to the table, finds the note to her husband, and tears it into very small pieces.

Chapter 2: The Wake

Yuki and her aunt Aya are packing all of Shizuko's clothes and jewelry. Aya comments, "Nobody would think you were only twelve," making reference to Yuki's composed reactions to her mother's death. Already, Yuki is tired of such remarks. Yuki reflects on how she came home from her lesson the day before to find her mother on the kitchen floor. Looking back, she wonders if her mother was still alive when she first found her. She tries to remember whether her mother was breathing. When Yuki telephoned her father, he told her not to call an ambulance because it would cause too much commotion in the neighborhood.

Yuki goes downstairs to the living room, and when her aunt sees her, she suggests that the dress that Yuki is wearing is of an inappropriate color. Aya takes Yuki upstairs to find a dress in a darker or more muted tone. The only appropriate dress that Aya finds is an old choir uniform. Yuki's mother had made all of Yuki's other clothes, using brightly patterned materials. When her aunt leaves the room, Yuki begins to put on the choir outfit. As she does this, she hears voices wailing downstairs. She drops the dress to the floor and goes into her clothes closet with all the vivid colors, sits down on the floor, and shuts the door.

Chapter 3: Tiptoes

One year later, Yuki is sent up to a hotel dressing room where her father's future bride is preparing herself for her wedding. Yuki's future stepmother, Hanae, states that there should be no hard feelings between her and Yuki. She says, "You'll probably hear people say all kinds of bad things about me because I was married to your father so soon after your mother's tragic death." She then suggests that Yuki shouldn't believe any gossip concerning a supposed affair that she and Yuki's father had been carrying on.

Yuki is very uncomfortable in the room and tells Hanae that the smell of makeup is making her sick. Then she runs out of the room. Yuki finds her Aunt Aya and begs her to repeat the story about how her grandmother had arranged a wedding for Yuki's mother and how Yuki's mother had refused to take part in an arranged marriage. Her aunt repeats the details of how Shizuko had moved to Kobe to find a job. That was how she'd met Yuki's father.

Later, during the wedding ceremony, as a ceramic bowl of sake is passed around the room, Yuki purposefully drops it when it is given to her. The breakage, in Yuki's mind, mimics the earlier breaking of a rice bowl at her mother's funeral, an act performed so her mother's ghost would not haunt the house. Yuki breaks the sake bowl so her father will not forget her mother.

Chapter 4: Irises

Yuki, who had been living with her Aunt Aya until her father's marriage, experiences another dramatic turn in her life. She moves in with her father and stepmother, but they close themselves off to her. She goes into the kitchen and notices that all her mother's ceramic pieces are gone, except for one tea service. She remembers her mother taking her to street fairs to watch potters create their wares. The recent move into her father's house reminds Yuki of another transition, when she and her mother had packed up all the household goods to move to a new house closer to the mountains. She compares the warm feelings that she and her mother shared in that move to the coldness that she feels now in this house, now that her father's new bride has moved in.

Yuki looks out at the garden and remembers how her mother had dug up many of the plants from the old residential yard and replanted them here in the home where Yuki now lives with her stepmother. Although her stepmother has changed many things, she has not yet converted the garden.

Chapter 5: Pink Trumpets

Yuki runs track for her school team. She is one of the star athletes. Neither her father nor her stepmother ever attends Yuki's events, and she is painfully aware that the other students and their parents feel sorry for her.

While waiting for her event, Yuki watches Sachiko Murai, a record-breaking hurdler. Yuki wants to meet the young girl and is glad when Sachiko easily wins her race. After Yuki's event, she and Sachiko bump into one another and plan to meet later.

Chapter 6: Sundays

Sachiko and Yuki meet on Sundays until the end of summer, when Sachiko confesses that she is no longer going to be running cross-country. Yuki wants to maintain the friendship but suspects that Sachiko's mother no longer wants Sachiko to be Yuki's friend.

Chapter 7: Yellow Mittens and Early Violets

Yuki is allowed to visit her grandparents on the third anniversary of her mother's death, but she is uncomfortable there. Just before she leaves, her grandfather collapses, which startles Yuki, and she finally opens up emotionally to her grandmother.

Chapter 8: Grievances

Hanae (Yuki's stepmother) is cleaning the house and thinking about how dirty Yuki is. She decides to get rid of all Yuki's old clothes and is descending the stairs when Yuki comes home and confronts her. Hanae pushes Yuki back, and Yuki falls down several steps, hurting her ankle. A few minutes later, Hanae accuses Yuki of trying to hurt her. When Yuki goes to her room, Hanae takes the clothes outside so the garbagemen can collect them. She then walks into the kitchen, takes down Yuki's mother's ceramic tea set, and smashes it.

Chapter 9: Homemaking

Yuki is in a homemaking class at school. She does not get along well with her teacher, so when the teacher needs a volunteer to go out into the woods to gather some colorful items for the table arrangement, Yuki asks to go, but the teacher tries to deny her. Eventually, Yuki's classmates convince the teacher that Yuki is the best choice since she is so artistic.

Chapter 10: The Golden Carp

Yuki's aunt Aya is getting married to an old friend of Yuki's mother, Mr. Kimura. Yuki remembers the first time she met Mr. Kimura, who apparently had a crush on Yuki's mother at one time. Her mother might have considered leaving Yuki's father for Mr. Kimura but knew if she left, she would have lost Yuki. Later, after Yuki's mother's death, Mr. Kimura comes by to offer his condolences. It is then that he meets Yuki's aunt. After that, Aya credits Yuki for introducing them to one another.

Chapter 11: Winter Sky

Chapter 11 covers the wedding ceremony of Aya and Mr. Kimura. At dinner, Yuki tells her mother's family that she has decided to go to a college that focuses on the arts. Mr. Kimura assures her that he is certain she could gain entrance into the more prestigious national university, but Yuki says, "That isn't for me. My teachers agreed. I wouldn't fit in at a national university. I don't want to fit in." She then further explains that she also wants to go to this particular school because it is located a great distance away from her father and stepmother.

Yuki becomes angry and walks outside. She is confused about all of her emotions. Mr. Kimura joins her, and they discuss relationships. Mr. Kimura has been divorced. Yuki's Aunt Aya is widowed. Yuki asks if it is worth falling in love. Mr. Kimura's comment is that "it may not turn out right" but, in some ways, that "means more because the odds are against us."

Chapter 12: Gladioli

Yuki is at home and sneaks up into the attic in the middle of the night to look through all the boxes to chose something special to take with her to school. She senses that she may never return home. She is about to leave Kobe for college. In the end, she decides that none of the items in the boxes are better than the memories she already carries with her. So she leaves everything behind.

Chapter 13: Silent Spring

Yuki's father comes home one night to find all the boxes that had been in the attic now piled up on the front porch. Hanae asks Yuki's father to burn them all. Hideki takes the boxes to the back yard and must open them up and take out the items a handful at a time to get them to burn. The boxes are filled with Yuki's and Shizuko's clothing, as well as mementos that Shizuko had saved over the years. In the process of going through the boxes, Hideki runs across his dead wife's sketchbook. He looks through it and decides to keep it.

Chapter 14: After the Rain

Chapter 14 takes place at Yuki's grandmother's place. Masa thinks about Yuki's recent visits from her break at college. She has asked Yuki to live with her. While Masa is working in the garden, Takeo, Yuki's grandfather, suffers what appears to be a heart attack and dies.

Chapter 15: The Effects of Light

Isamu is a photographer and a new school friend of Yuki's. Yuki thinks about whether she wants to become involved with Isamu. When she returns from work, she finds two things waiting for her: a note saying that Isamu has called and her mother's sketchbook, which her father has mailed to her. Yuki, after looking through the sketches, decides that her mother must want her to move beyond her unhappiness. So she calls Isamu, thus signifying that she is ready to become emotionally involved with him.

Chapter 16: Epilogue

Almost a year later, Masa is at home, babysitting her grandson, Tadashi, who keeps himself entertained by cutting off the heads of flowers and trapping small tree frogs in a jar. Masa is tired of death, and when the young child takes a nap, she frees the tiny frogs. When the boy wakes up, Masa finds him playing at the old wooden slide that her husband had made when her children were small.

Chapter 1 – House Bound (March 1969)

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Lying on the couch in her home in Kobe, Shizuko dreams that she is in the village where she was born, among the village children, catching the pink and white rice cakes thrown down by the village carpenter from the bare rafters of a house; it is how the building of a new house was celebrated in her village. The children were all Yuki's friends, but her daughter Yuki was not there. Then suddenly she was in a park, watching Yuki chase after and catch white cherry blossom petals as they fell from the trees.

Shizuko is woken by the ringing of the telephone. It is Yuki. She had telephoned to tell her mother that Miss Uozumi was late and so her piano lesson would finish an hour later than usual. Yuki tells her about her day at school and asks her mother if she shouldn'tshould not come back right away to make supper. Her mother tells her to stay for the lesson. She asks a second time, but Shizuko says she needn'tneed not come home.

Shizuko then makes her way to the den, where she writes two letters, one for her husband and the other for Yuki. There was so much she had planned to do but she had wasted the day doing aimless tasks and then had fallen asleep. She carries the two notes to the kitchen, shuts the door behind her and places the notes on the table. She turns the gas on. As the gas fills the room, she remembers her words to her husband in the letter, and feels she cannot lie about wanting him to be happy, not now. Dizzy, she grabs the note from the table and, after making sure it'sit is the right one, tears it to pieces before giving in to the darkness.

Chapter 1 Analysis - House Bound (March 1969)

This opening chapter is a stark, powerful one. Shizuko's seemingly senseless suicide is the event that sets the tone for the rest of the novel. Although the reader knows little about Shizuko at this point, the fact that she has a daughter for whom she obviously cares creates a sense of empathy with her character. Clearly, a deep sadness is the root cause of her deliberate actions; this is not a spur-of-the-momentan impulsive decision, she has, no doubt, been contemplating this for a long time. She is also convinced that killing herself is the best thing she can do for her daughter, that by doing so, she will save Yuki from a life of sadness.

Her actions reverberate throughout the rest of the novel and while the title of the book is Shizuko's Daughter and is obviously all about Yuki, it is Shizuko, in her absence, thatabsence that plays a vital role in the book. Her presence, in other words, is felt throughout. Through the eyes of her daughter and others, we gain an insight into the type of person she was, and while her suicide is startling in its immediacy, it is as the

novel unfolds and as we discover who she was and what she meant to Yuki that the true extent of this tragedy becomes apparent.

So too, these first few pages forebode much of what will be revealed later on: Her husband's philandering; Yuki's struggle to cope with the loss of her beloved mother; and the idea that despite great suffering and loss, people, have the capacity to overcome and move on.

Chapter 2 – The Wake (March 1969)

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The day after her mother's death, Yuki and her aunt Aya (who had just arrived on the southbound train from Tokyo) are packing her mother's belongings into wooden storage boxes, while downstairs, the men rearrange the living room for the wake. Her aunt remarks how good Yuki'sYuki has been, and compliments her on her composure during these difficult times. Yuki, however, is sick of such remarks, because it is all anyone has said to her since the day before, when she came home to discover her mother's body.

Upon discovering the body, she had turned off the gas and called her father, who told her not to call an ambulance because it would create a commotion. He would come home, he said, and bring a doctor immediately. After they arrive, and upon the doctor having pronounced Shizuko dead, Yuki fetches her mother's notebook from the den and phones her friends and relatives.

Back downstairs, Yuki can'tcannot believe how much the room has changed. The makeshift altar, coffin in the center; the yellow and white chrysanthemums; the incense filled air; white drapes covering the floors and walls. A small group of mourners sitA small group of mourners sits on the floor, among whom are Yuki's grandparents who had come up from the countryside during the night. Aya comes out of the kitchen and asks Yuki if she doesn'tdoes not have anything darker to wear (she's wearing a pale blue dress). She and her aunt go upstairs just as the priest arrives. Aya undresses Yuki and picks out an outfit for her. It is drab and ugly, and Yuki watches as her aunt closes the closet door on all the clothes and their brilliant colors her mother had bought and made for her. Aya leaves Yuki to dress alone, but Yuki is overcome with emotion. She begins to cry and can'tcannot bring herself to zip up her dress. After going in, she closes the door of the closet behind her and sits on the floor. She pulls her knees up to her chest and cups her hands over her ears to block out the wailing of the mourners below.

Chapter 2 Analysis - The Wake (March 1969)

The aftermath of what is an almost surreal first chapter is readily apparent here. Shizuko is dead. The tone is somber,; almost of disbelief. That she is wearing a blue dress, a color unsuitable for a wake and one quite different from what everyone else is wearing foreshadows the isolation that Yuki will come to endure and an indictment of the non-conformity that will characterize her teenage years. She is different, not like other people, and her mother's death will only exasperate this loneliness.

Aya closing the closet door on all the brilliant colors could be construed as a metaphor for the end of Yuki's happiness. Her mother had made all those clothes for her, but she is gone now and Yuki must wear drab, ugly clothes. Alone in her room, the emotions finally boil to the surface and for the first time since her mother's death, Yuki cries.

Closing herself in the closet is symbolic of the manner in which she will slowly withdraw from those around her becoming a silent, insular girl.

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Chapter 3 Summary – Tiptoes (April 1970)

A year has passed since Shizuko's death, and Yuki, having arrived on the train from Tokyo where she'dshe had been living with her aunt, visits her father's new bride in the dressing room of the hotel where she and Yuki's father are to be married. She talks to Yuki for a while, but Yuki simply stares out the window at Kobe harbor and remembers the time her mother had taken her to the port to see the ships. She asks Yuki if they'llthey will be happy together, but Yuki says she can'tcannot promise that and leaves the room, blaming the smell of the makeup and saying that she'llshe will be sick if she stays.

Making her way downstairs, she looks at a picture she carried with her of her mother and father on their wedding day. Theirs was a western wedding, because the rentals were cheaper and they didn'tdid not have much money then.

She goes to the hotel coffee shop where her aunt Aya is waiting for her. They would spend the night in the hotel and the next morning her aunt would return to Tokyo and Yuki would go home with her father and stepmother. She hadn'thad not been home since her mother's death. Yuki asks Aya to tell the story about when her mother was young and how she wouldn'twould not marry the rich man her grandmother had wanted her to marry, and says that if Aya does, she will behave herself for the rest of the day.

Aya concedes and tells the story: It was the year after the War and until that year, their family had been landowners. The reform had begun, however, and the government made them sell their land for next to nothing to give to the tenant farmers. Suddenly, Shizuko's family was very poor. Their eldest brother had been killed in the War and most of the five remaining children were too young to be of any help. It was arranged by her mother that Shizuko, who was then seventeen, was to marry the son of the richest man in the village.

They too were landowners, but it being high up in the mountains, they weren'twere not required to sell their land. They gave the family some gifts to celebrate the engagement, but when Shizuko's mother told her the news, Shizuko was furious. AndIn addition, early the next morning, before anyone else was awake to stop her, she returned the gifts to the family and told them that she would find her own husband. Aya reveals that Shizuko had confided in her later, saying that she worried all night, wondering whether she should accept the proposal to help the family, but if she did she would live to resent them, she thought, so decided that she would help them another way. It is for this reason she came to Kobe, and for two years worked as a secretary, staying in a little

room because she sent most of her money home. She had visited Yuki's father in the hospital every day for a year until he recovered from tuberculosis. Yuki wants to stay with her aunt, knowing that her father and stepmother are only keeping her because to do otherwise would reflect badly upon them.

During the wedding ceremony, when the ceremonial sake is passed around, Yuki takes a sip, then drops and shatters the earthenware bowl just as her father had done to her mother's rice bowl on the morning of the funeral so that her ghost would not haunt his household or anyone in it.

Chapter 3 Analysis – Tiptoes (April 1970)

A year has passed since her mother's death, but it quickly becomes clear that Yuki is no closer to accepting Shizuko's death. The conversation between Hanae, Yuki's stepmother,stepmother and Yuki foreshadows the strained nature of their relationship in years to come. Already Hanae is lying to Yuki, telling her that there was nothing between herself and Yuki's father prior tobefore Shizuko's death. And Yuki, for her part, makes little effort to bond with Hanae.

Yuki, even at such a young age, is already cognizant of the fact that her father and stepmother care little for her, having visited her only twice during the past year. And despite her promise to be good, during the wedding Yuki shatters the ceremonial bowl, something which Hanae will, it becomes clear later in the novel, not forgive her for.

Traditionally, weddings are a time of happiness and celebration, but seen through the eyes of Yuki, it is one of great sadness. The tone is melancholic and indicative of the girl's current state. Even in her sadness, however, Yuki's independent character exerts herself. The shattering of bowl is a defiant, brave act that most children would not be capable of performing.

Chapter 4 Summary – Irises (April 1970)

After pouring herself a glass of orange juice, Yuki returns upstairs to her room where she begins to unpack the boxes containing her things that her aunt Aya had sent from Tokyo. As she does so, she remembers back to the time when, just two years ago, she and her mother had packed their things to move to this house.

It had been a Saturday in early April and by eleven Yuki had almost finished packing her things. The movers would arrive at three. Her father was on a business trip at the time; he spent a great deal of time away from home. When she was done, she went to the kitchen and began to pack the plates and glasses, carefully wrapping them in newspaper first, before packing them in boxes. Yuki could remember where they bought each of the items she packed and she thought how much her mother knew and had, in turn, taught her. Her mother asks, not for the first time, whether Yuki does not mind going to a new school. Impatient, and slightly curt at having been asked again and again, Yuki tells her that she doesn'tdoes not mind.

When she is done in the kitchen, she goes to her mother's bedroom where Shizuko is busy packing her own things. Yuki apologizes for her earlier impertinence. They speak for a while and Shizuko asks whether they should take the flowers with them. She seems reluctant, saying that they can get new ones from Yuki's grandmother, but Yuki says that it won't be the same and wants *these* flowers. Yuki takes over packing her mother's things, while Shizuko goes into the garden to dig out the flowers.

Later, joining her outside, Yuki is chilled by the manner in which her mother speaks about death. Shizuko tells her to go back inside and that she'llshe will be done shortly. Later, they sit on the steps behind the kitchen and Shizuko asks Yuki what she would do if something happened to her and wasn'twas not around to look after Yuki anymore. Yuki insists that she would never forget her, and on Shizuko's insistence answers her question: she says that she will be sad, but that she will go on. At this, Shizuko leans her head against the wall, and it seems that she may cry. Yuki apologizes, but her mother says that it's good that she told the truth. Yuki promises to help her all she can at the new house, and Shizuko replies that they'llthey will try and be happy at the new house.

Back in the present, Yuki walks outside to the garden and looks at the flowers they had planted there. She thinks that maybe she was wrong when she said she could go on without her mother and that at the time she wanted to take it back, but Shizuko would not let her.

Chapter 4 Analysis – Irises (April 1970)

It is through Yuki's memories of her mother that much of Shizuko's character is revealed; her love for Yuki, and the deep, suffusing sadness that characterized the last years of her life. Even then, two years before they moved into the house in which Shizuko had killed herself, it is clear that she was unhappy.

Because of the care and love with which she tended them, the flowers in the garden are, to Yuki at the very least, symbolic of her mother. The irises represent Yuki herself, as unlike the other flowers they do not shed their petals and die, they simply shrivel up into themselves. The theme of death is, by the very nature of the content of the story, pervasive, and the flowers, too, are symbolic of this continual cycle of life and death.

In contrast to the close relationship she maintained with her mother, it is becoming increasingly clearer that she shares little with her father. He had said little to her since Shizuko's death, and he and her stepmother, watching TV as she passes on her way to her room, do not even acknowledge her presence.

Chapter 5 Summary – Pink Trumpets (June 1971)

It is the last girls' track meet before the summer vacation – city finals for the junior high school of Kobe – and Yuki is warming up for her race. She thinks of the picture her mother had taken of her winning the 50-meter dash back in the third grade. As she

stretches she sees a group of girls in red-and-black uniforms passing by and she hurriedly looks for the tall ninth-grade girl who ran the hurdles.

They had first met after Yuki had won the 1,000-meter event at a meet between their schools. After the racerace, she had gone for a drink of water and almost bumped into the tall girl. If she would just talk to me, Yuki thought, she would be happy. Her own race began after noon. During the race she unconsciously breaks from the pack too soon, and with two and three-quarter laps remaining she might not make it, but then at the end of the third lap she begins to run as fast as she can.

By the end of the last lap her body is wracked with pain, she wonders if this was how it was for her mother, but she decides that her mother's death had probably been more painful. She wins the race by a large margin,, and she is quickly surrounded by the other girls on her team, Yuki thinks how she didn'tdid not look back and hadn'thad not even known where the others were. The events conclude by one-thirty and Yuki runs off to the drinking fountain before anyone could invite her to join them for lunch; everyone knew about her mother and that no-one from her family came to the meets.

At the fountainfountain, she meets the tall hurdler. Yuki introduces herself but the girl says she knows her name and had seen her race. Yuki admits that she watched the girl run as well. She introduces herself as Sachiko Murai, and she says that she knows some people who go to Yuki's school and thus knows a lot about her. Sachiko asks what Yuki is doing for the summer vacation and when she does not reply suggests that maybe they could run together to stay in shape. Yuki follows Sachiko to her mother so that they can get a pen and exchange phone numbers but she does not have one and so instead, Yuki promises to memorize Sachiko's.

As Sachiko and her mother walk away, Yuki notices the azaleas around the bench where Mrs. Murai had been sitting and remembers how her mother had taught her to taste the inside of the flower with her tongue; therein lay spots of intense sweetness. She wishes now that she could suffocate in their sweetness.

Chapter 5 Analysis – Pink Trumpets (June 1971)

Even before her mother's death, Yuki had stood out from the crowd. Her mother had always dressed her in bright colors and tied ribbons around her hair. A conscious effort on Shizuko's part to make her an individual.

Yuki, it seems, yearns for friendship. She and her mother had always been best of friends, but two years have passed since Shizuko's death and in all that timetime, Yuki has remained alone and isolated. It is clear from the way that she looks up to, and wants to talk to Sachiko that Yuki likes her and wants to be friends. Spurred on, perhaps by her desire to impress Sachiko, Yuki surges ahead of the other runners, and despite the pain and fatigue, wins the race.

The race itself, an oft usedoft-used literary device, is a metaphor for Yuki's life. In spite of the pain and fatigue and the feeling that perhaps she cannot go on, if Yuki just keeps

running she will eventually win, she will, in other words, be okay. As long as she does not give up, her life will go on. That she didn'tdid not look back, didn'tdid not even know where the other runners were, indicates that Yuki was, in effect, running against herself; chased, perhaps, by her own demons.

The exact nature of Yuki's relationship with her stepmother is illustrated, in no uncertain termsclearly, in this chapter. They have barely spoken to one another for more than a year. She, of course, was not at the meet, either. Despite the sense of hope and ephemeral happiness offered by her meeting with Sachiko, the tone of the chapter is, once more, downbeat. Seeing Sachiko with her mother only reminds Yuki of what'swhat is missing in her life and this depresses her. She wishes, not for the first time, that she were dead.

Chapter 6 Summary – Sundays (September 1971)

The first week of September had been unusually cool, but on the Sunday morning regardless, Yuki leaves the house, where her father and stepmother were eating breakfast, and goes to the park to meet Sachiko. The second term of school had started the week before and soon Yuki would be running in cross-country meets every Sunday. Her coach had told her not to run on weekends, that weekday training was enough, but Yuki didn'tdid not care. She thought that Sachiko's coach had probably told her the same thing and as she waits in the park for Sachiko to arrive thinks of how she can tell her that they should continue to meet.

Sachiko arrives and they set off out the park and up the steep gradients offered by the surrounding roads. While running, they talk. Sachiko tells Yuki about a strange incident she had on the train one day. A boy had stared at her all week on the train, but on the Friday as he got off the train he handed her a small piece of paper with his name and number written on it. Sachiko is incredulous at both, the fact that the boy would expect her to phone him and at Yuki's question (she had asked her if she was going to phone him). Yuki feels stupid but at Sachiko's insistence explains that it sounds to her as if Sachiko wants to phone the boy.

Sachiko asks what *she* would do if a boy stared at her and Yuki says that no one has ever had a crush on her. She remembers a time in the sixth grade when her and her mother had been really angry with one another. Her mother had wanted to get a pattern for a new dress for Yuki and held one up with a lace collar and a bow tied in the back and said she would make it for Yuki in pink. Yuki had made a disparaging remark about the design and the two had walked and shopped in silence for a while.

When they finish their run and are back at the park, Sachiko says that it had been fun running with Yuki during the summer. Seeing her chance, Yuki suggests that they should continue somehow but Sachiko reveals that she won't be doing cross-country this year and will instead be the lead in the school play.

Yuki suggests that she can take a day off running during the week or keep running on Sundays against her coach's advice, in order to continue to see Sachiko but Sachiko says that her mother wants her to start taking flower-arrangement lessons on Sundays. They shake hands and Yuki watches as Sachiko leaves. On the way home, Yuki thinks of how Sachiko had said, 'see you around,' but she knew Sachiko hadn'thad not really meant it and that they would likely never see each other again. She remembers the last time she had been to Sachiko's house: Mrs. Murai had asked about her family and about her mother's death. Yuki had simply said that it had been an accident at home – her father had told her to tell people she died of cancer, people would say, her father warned, that she came from a mentally unstable family – and then left.

Yuki imagines how she wanted the encounter to go: how she would say her mother died because she was unhappy, and that it was not an accident. AndIn addition, that Yuki wanted to work hard and be happy for her because that'sthat is what Shizuko wanted and because she had promised her mothermother, she would go on after her death. Sachiko and her mother would embrace Yuki and tell her how proud her mother would have been. She would have then been asked to stay for breakfast, stay the whole day to watch a movie or play games or go shopping downtown.

Standing in front of her house, she sees her stepmother's car, a small dent in front where she had hit a mailbox when her high heel got stuck in the gas pedal. She had spent that day in bed, Yuki remembers, and said Yuki's pacing upstairs had added to her nausea. Yuki said she did no such thing. It didn'tdid not matter if Yuki was telling the truth or not, her stepmother always acted likeas if Yuki was lying.

Chapter 6 Analysis – Sundays (September 1971)

Yuki had enjoyed her summer running with Sachiko, and she is desperate for it to continue, but their time together is fated not to last. Sachiko is a year older and already it is clear that she is becoming less of a tomboy and more feminine, and as a result having increasingly less in common with Yuki. She talks about a boy, has a part in the school play and her mother wishes her to take flower arrangement lessons. Yuki is unable to relate, however.

That she is still something of a tomboy, only adds to her growing sense of isolation. She does not believe that boys are interested in her and her memory of how angry she had been with the pink, overtly feminine dress her mother had wanted to make for her is indicative of this.

Her desperate need to be loved,loved; to feel safe and comforted is revealed as Yuki daydreams about how the encounter at the Murai household should have gone. The Murai family it seems,seems representrepresents Yuki's idealized view of family life, one that is in stark contrast to her own. By the end of the chapterchapter, Yuki is left, once again, alone. Similarly, she is able to feel sympathy for the boy, imagining how nervous he must have been when giving Sachiko his number, whereas Sachiko is oblivious to that fact, concerned only with herself.

Chapter 7 Summary – Yellow Mittens and Early Violets (March 1972)

For the first time since her father's remarriage, Yuki is visiting her grandparents. She had come for the third anniversary of her mother's death. It is seven in the morning in mid-March, and Yuki is reading a magazine and putting on and pulling off her mittens – she had made them herself – as her grandmother, Masa, comes into the kitchen. On the floor are her suitcase and the violets she had dug up by the river. She is waiting for the bus, the first of which will only arrive in two hours – it is an hour bus ride from the village to Himeji and then a three-hour train ridetrain ride back to Kobe.

Masa remembers how, when she used to come each year with her mother, Yuki had always done something that the neighbors would talk about for months. She thinks of the time Yuki had climbed a chestnut tree and then was too scared to come down and firemen from a nearby town had to be called in order to rescue her. The year after, she had run through a glass screen while chasing a dragonfly, and she continued running until she caught it. She had only minor cuts and scratches and had bragged about her scars all summer long. Masa recalls how different she was then to the quiet and moody person she had become.

Masa suggests Yuki take rice and tea to the altar but she refuses, saying that there'sthere is no point because there was no-oneno one to whom to say goodbye to. Just then, Takeo, her grandfather, appears in the kitchen and asks Yuki if she doesn'tdoes not want to go pick strawberries with him. She is curt and refuses. Masa goes to the altar herself and remembers how, after Shizuko's death, Yuki had washed her hair over and over again, saying how she couldn'tcould not get rid of the smell of gas, then of cigarette smoke, then of incense. She prays to her ancestors for peace. She returns to the kitchen and soon after sees Takeo, coming back into the house, trip and fall forward, hitting the floor. Yuki runs to fetch a doctor. After checking him, Masa fetches a first-aid kit from the hallway closet, but the contents are useful only for minor cuts and bruises suffered by children and she doesn'tdoes not know what else to do.

His breathing, at first wheezy, grows quieter and then slows. She runs to the bedroom to phone the doctor but cannot recall his number. Finding it in the phonebookphonebook, she dials but the number is busy, and as she tries again the book falls shut. Her hands are shaking, her heart beating fast. When at last she gets through the woman who answers tells her that Yuki has been and that she and the doctor have already left on his motorcycle.

Masa hangs up and returns to Takeo just as Yuki and the doctor come in. The doctor examines him and then with Yuki's help, carries Takeo to the bedroom and places him on the futon. At the doctor's behest, Yuki fetches a glass of water for Takeo. He then suggests to them that Takeo get some rest, saying that it was probably just dizziness brought on by the humidity and that he'she is alright. He'llHe will return in a few hours to check on him. When the doctor has left, Yuki tells her grandmother that she'llshe will

take the afternoon bus and train because she doesn'tdoes not want to leave until Takeo has woken up and she can talk to him.

She explains to her grandmother that she had forgotten about the phone and had run to the doctor as they had done in the old days. She also says that as he was leaving, the doctor had told her that she had come to look more like her mother. Yuki gets up to phone her father to tell him she will be late and then goes outside to pick strawberries to replace the ones Takeo had dropped and that had been stepped on in the commotion.

Yuki is washing strawberries in the kitchen when Masa comes in. She tells her grandmother about the day her mother died, and how she had heard her voice on the phone but not seen her, and then when she found the body she could see her, but not hear her voice. It'sIt is as though, she says, that she can'tcannot remember her mother whole. She had wanted desperately to help her. She apologizes to her grandmother for the way she acted before and says that when she saw her grandfather fall she was scared she would never hear his voice again just likeas she would never hear her mother's again. She says she doesn'tdoes not know why she is mad at everything and everyone but that she just can'tcannot stop being that way and that she does love her grandmother and grandfather.

Chapter 7 Analysis– Yellow Mittens and Early Violets (March 1972)

Masa reflects on the time, when as a young child, Yuki had visited them along with Shizuko. From her memories of Yuki as a happy-go-lucky, spirited child, we are able to see just how much the death of her mother has changed her. Furthermore, while it is the death of her mother that first plunged her into sadness, her angry indifference at the world around her is lifted by another near-tragedy. Although he is not seriously injured by the fall, it does illustrate how susceptible Takeo has become in his old age and forebodes a more tragic incident that will befall him later in the novel.

Although only in her mid-teens, already, Yuki is exerting her independence. She had made the gloves and wears them even though they are poorly crafted simply because she refuses to take money from her stepmother to buy her own. She wants nothing to do with them. By this time, her grief has metamorphosed into anger. She is spiteful and condescending, angry at the world around her. At heart, though, she is a good child as illustrated by her concern for her grandfather and remorse for her behaviour.

Yuki is, in some respects, indicative of the younger generation of Japanese that had by this time begun to accept more westernized concepts. While her grandparents remain dedicated to the old customs (her grandmother, for instance, still wears kimonos and prays at the altar), she is considerably more modern.

Chapter 8 Summary – Grievances (May 1973)

Having arrived back from her doctor's appointment, Hanae, Yuki's stepmother, sets about cleaning the house, something she did every day. Shizuko, she decided, had been the type of woman who would leave it for two, three weeks before cleaning and when Hanae had married Hideki, three years previously, she discovered that Yuki did not know the proper ways to clean a house, wash dishes or write up a shopping list. She had asked Yuki once what it was exactly that her mother had taught her, to which Yuki replied that she had been taught to paint and draw and the names of flowers and stories to tell; things no-one else knew.

She cleans the bathroom – thinking that it was a good thing that Yuki had started to cut her hair short, because the sight of her curled hairs on the floor sickened Hanae – and then returns to the kitchen. She stares at the teapot and six cups and saucers arranged around it in the cabinet. She had thrown everything else of Shizuko's out, but Hideki had suggested that maybe she save that set, saying that good pottery should be passed on as heirlooms. She could put it in the attic so she wouldn'twould not have to see it, he added, but in a huff, she had repacked them exactly the way she found them. She hated the attic. It was filled with boxes of items that Shizuko had saved for Yuki. She resents the fact that for eight years she could see Hideki only in secret, while this woman had a house all to herself and an attic to fill up with whatever she wished. She wasn'twas not, she decided, going to add to the worthless collection of things to be saved for Yuki.

Back in the bathroom, cleaning the floor, she thinks about her doctor's visit that morning. He had told her that she would never have a child, that it was too late and that she should have come to him six years previously, when her periods first became infrequent. She couldn'tcould not, of course, because she was not married then. She and Hideki had been lovers for two years when it began to happen. At first, Hideki had been worried that she might be pregnant and had sent her each month to a clinic in Wakayama, two hours away by train. He had not wanted anyone in town to know in case she had been pregnant. She resents Yuki.

While cleaning Yuki's room, she discovers that Yuki had not thrown out her old summer clothes (the ones that were made by her mother and that were too small for her now). She bundles them in her arms and is walking down the stairs when Yuki arrives home. At first she begs Hanae not to thrown them out and it seems she may cry. She approaches Hanae on the stairway. Hanae remembers how Yuki had smashed the ceremonial bowl of sake at her wedding and pushes Yuki down the stairs. At the bottom, having managed to break her fall, Yuki starts to sob. Then, trying not to show her limp, goes up to her room. Hanae throws the clothes in an old box in a shed in the garden then comes inside and in the sink, shatters, one by one, the pieces of the tea set.

Chapter 8 Analysis – Grievances (May 1973)

Having spent the last three years in near silence, Hanae and Yuki's passive, aggressive relationship at last comes to a head. Their confrontation on the stairs is the first physical

manifestation of their hate and resentment toward one another and it is the most succinct description of their relationship as yet. Hanae lives a lie, pretending to the outside world that everything is fine, and that her relationship with Yuki is a good one while at the same time despises the fact that Yuki openly dislikes her. Ironically, she believes Yuki to show signs of madness (inherited from her mother, she reasons) when it is she who pushes Yuki and otherwise acts irresponsibly.

Hanae's act of smashing Shizuko's last remaining tea set is a symbolic one. Her pushing Yuki was, at least in part, an accident, but destroying the cups one by one is a deliberately spiteful, vengeful act. She cannot take her anger and grievances out on Shizuko or Yuki and so instead does so on the next best thing; that which symbolizes both of them. She blames Shizuko for the pain in her life, for her not being able to conceive a child, for the years wastedwasted, as she had to sneak around with Hideki and for the ever-present thorn in her side, Yuki.

Chapter 9 Summary – Homemaking (November 1973)

In the homemaking class, Yuki and her group prepare tempura; it is Yuki's job to cook the rice. As usual, her group is the slowest. Throughout, she is thinking of the next class in which she would have to dissect a frog and the thought makes her sick to her stomach. She had asked her biology teacher, Mr. Wada, to allow her not to dissect the frog, but he would not relent. She had been thinking about the dissection for the whole day.

The first time the class had met, Miss Sakaki had divided them into six groups and instructed them to bake cupcakes. Yuki's group's cupcakes overflowed and bubbledoverflowed, bubbled and trickled down to the broiler. Yuki had gotten her sketchbook and had just finished sketching the batter when Miss Sakaki rushed over, shouting only at Yuki, telling her how irresponsible she was. When it hardened, Yuki took the pan to her advanced painting class and created a painting she called *Homemaking*.

Their group was instructed to return after school to bake another batch, Yuki, however did not go because she had cross-country practice and consequently received an F. Everyone in the class felt that Miss Sakaki had a special dislike for Yuki. In order to make their dishes more presentable, Miss Sakaki asks for a volunteer to fetch leaves, flowers and berries for the class in the nearby woods. Yuki volunteers but Miss Sakaki is reluctant to let her go, but eventual cedes to the other girls' pleas, and allows her to leave on the condition that she be back within ten minutes.

While outside in the woods, Yuki remembers a time when she was ten that when her mother had taken her to a mountain famous for its maple trees and wild monkeys. At the bottom they had eaten a plate of maple leaves dipped in batter and fried for just a second. She wonders if she would have been better at homemaking if her mother was still alive.

The bruise Yuki had gotten during her confrontation with her stepmother was a bad sprain and for two weeksweeks, she had to swim instead of going to her track practice. One afternoon, while swimming, she decides to draw the clothes her mother had made for her; she is afraid the events of the past three years would crowd up her mind and erase her memories of her mother. SoTherefore, from that day on she sketched her clothes, the tea set… she didn'tdid not want to forget anything.

While collecting pine needles and leaves in the woods, Yuki makes her way to the biology lab where, through the window, she can see the jar of frogs on the teacher's desk. She climbs into the room, and upon opening the jar, the smell, though not the same, reminds her of her mother's funeral and the smell at the crematorium where her mother's body was burned. Holding her breath, she empties the jar of frogs out of the window, then washes the jar, fills it with all of the pine needles and maple leaves she had collected and places it back on the desk. By now, the ten minutes Miss Sakaki had given her are up and she would be failed for today's assignment, but with a smile on her face, she quickly runs back for more maple leaves and pine needles.

Chapter 9 Analysis – Homemaking (November 1973)

It is not only at home, but at school too, that Yuki's personality clashes with someone in authority. Her forthright manner does not, it seems, endure her to Miss Sakaki, who, ever since the cupcake incident, appears to have a vendetta of sorts against Yuki. The pervading tone, however, is almost humorous and Yuki's action in setting the frogs free and replacing them with maple leaves and pine needles comes across as light-hearted defiance as opposed to anything malicious.

Yuki's determination is displayed unequivocally on a number of occasions throughout the novel, and here, too, we glimpse her single-mindedness. She refuses to forget about her mother and in an attempt to keep her memories alive,alive; she sketches the clothes her mother had made for her.

Smells trigger a number of memories for Yuki in this chapter. The gas from the burner in the cooking class for obvious reasons and the smell of the formaldehyde in which the frogs were kept.

Chapter 10 Summary – The Golden Carp (August 1974)

Sitting at his desk in his study, Yuki's father gives her a letter from her aunt Aya whichthat had ostensiblyapparently been included in a letter addressed to him. Since her mother's death, Yuki had written to her aunt and grandparents once a month, but the only letter she had received in the last five years was an invitation to her youngest uncle's, Saburo, wedding. Her father had not allowed her to go.

Her father tells her that her aunt Aya is getting married and that because he owes her a debt for having looked after Yuki for the year following Shizuko's death, he will allow Yuki to attend. In her room, she hears her father and stepmother arguing, she can'tcannot hear the words but assumes that her stepmother is upset because Hideki is allowing Yuki to go and had not insisted on reading her letter.

In the letter, Aya tells Yuki how she looks forward to her letters every month but out of respect for her father's wishes cannot write back. She says that it'sit is because of her that she met Mr. Kimura, her fiancé, and would very much like to see her at the wedding. She also says that she has much more to tell her face-to-face.

Yuki remembers the first time she saw Mr. Kimura: she was ten and it was a Saturday in early June. Yuki had spent the afternoon at their neighbor's, the Shirakawas, house while her mother had attended her grade school class reunion. When she returns, it is with Mr. Kimura, a classmate of hers during grade school who had given her a lift back home.

The three of them chat outside for a while, and then Shizuko invites him in for tea. Inside, sitting at the kitchen table, Mr. Kimura tells Yuki how her mother had gotten him into trouble at grade school. It was a few years before the war and the principal had regularly made speeches about the greatness of the emperor. There was also a picture of the emperor and they were supposed to close their eyes because looking at it would, it was said, blind them. One day, however, Shizuko looked, poked Mr. Kimura in the elbow and remarked what a funny nose the emperor had. Everyone heard her and assumed he was looking too.

Mr. Kimura recalls how, on the day the War ended, when the emperor made his speech on the radio and said the people of Japan were wrong to worship him, all he could think about was the remark Shizuko had made in fourth grade. He was in high school by then and was disappointed that he would never see her again.

He says he would have looked Shizuko up sooner, but had been living in Tokyo and had only moved back to Kobe that April. He is divorced. At the timetime, Yuki had known a girl at school whose parents were divorced. Her mother explained that when a couple gets divorced the children usually stay with the father while the mother goes back to live with her parents.

Mr. Kimura then tells of the time they had visited a temple on a school trip. A golden carp had jumped out of the pond and while everyone just stared and watched as it flailed helplessly, Shizuko threw it back into the water and saved it. Later that night, worrying about a swimming competition the next day and unable to sleep, Yuki had gone downstairs just as her mother hung up the phone. Shizuko explains that she had been talking to Mr. Kimura (he had given her his card and said to call if she needed a friend), and then gives his card to Yuki, saying she had explained everything to Mr. Kimura and would not need it anymore. She said, with sad eyes Yuki noted, that Yuki was her friend and that she didn'tdid not need anyone else.

The next time Yuki saw Mr. Kimura was when she had been living with her aunt Aya in Tokyo, eleven months after her mother's death. Having heard about Shizuko's death only two weeks priorprior, he had come to talk to Yuki. He hugged her and said how sorry he was and that he knew how much Shizuko had loved her.

Chapter 10 Analysis – The Golden Carp (August 1974)

Thus far there have simply been tenuous links, such as the doctor's compliment that she looked more like her mother, but here, we get a tangible sense of just how much like her mother, Yuki really is. Her mother too, as a child, had an independent, slightly rebellious nature. For one, she had refused to participate in an arranged marriage, and in this chapterchapter, we learn of how, in grade school, she had looked at the picture of the emperor when no-oneno one else dared. Their inherent kindness and love of animals is yet another trait the two share.

Shizuko saying that Yuki was the only friend she needed, indicates to a large extent, just how lonely she truly must have been. Trapped in a loveless marriage, she felt isolated from the world. In Yuki, she found her only solace. Mr. Kimura is portrayed, in stark contrast, to Yuki's father, as a loving, gentle man. His easy, comfortable manner upon meeting Yuki for the first time is testament to that, as is the fact that he had hugged her and consoled her upon hearing about her mother's death. Something her father, himself, had never done for her.

Chapter 11 Summary – Winter Sky (February 1975)

As a result of both of them having been married before, Aya and Mr. Kimura's wedding is a short affair. Afterwards, Yuki is helping Etsuko, her uncle Saburo's wife (whom she had just met that morning), prepare food in the kitchen. Etsuko is cleaning a fish and it reminds Yuki of her own particular eating habitsfish, it reminds Yuki of her own particular eating habits, and how her stepmother often cooked things she could not eat. After placing her grandmother's good white china on a tray, Yuki goes to the family room where her grandparents, Aya and Mr. Kimura and her uncle Saburo are already sitting on the floor. She notices how her grandfather's health has deteriorated since she last saw him; he now walks with a cane.

Her grandfather suggests Yuki put a plate down for her mother, but her grandmother forces a short laugh, saying they wouldn'twould not want to bring bad luck to the wedding. Saburo says that it's a shame that Yuki isn't going to Kobe University (where Mr. Kimura is a teacher). Aya says that Mr. Kimura can arrange a special exam for Yuki and that she could still get in, but Yuki insists that she wants to go to a small college in Nagasaki to study art.

She says that she wants to go to Nagasaki because then she can move out of her father and stepmother's house without them losing face. She has saved up money from her part-time job working in the library for her college tuition so that she will not have to take any money from her father. And if she doesn'tdoes not live with them she can come

visit her grandparents every summer like she did before; then it can be as though the last six years never happened, she says.

The conversation veers towards her parents and her grandmother says that she is glad Yuki wants to see herself and Takeo but that she has to show her parents respect. Yuki retorts by saying that they show no respect to her, her mother or her grandmother. Her grandfather interjects, saying that sometimes you have to show respect before you can expect it. He tries to stand up, then gives up, his cheeks red with effort. Yuki apologizes to everyone, and then runs out of the house.

Outside, in the cold, leaning against the persimmon tree farthest from the house, Yuki thinks of the things she used to do with her grandparents; the hikes she took with her grandfather; how, at night, he had shown her the summer constellations and told her stories about them; and how in the fall he would send dried persimmons to her and her mother.

Mr. Kimura comes outside holding the sea-green jacket Yuki had bought with her own money; she had spent the whole afternoon in downtown Kobe trying to find one that her mother might have bought for her. Yuki apologizes about the scene in the house and Mr. Kimura tells her about the night Shizuko had phoned and told him they could not be friends. Yuki says she knew already. Mr. Kimura says that he wanted Yuki to be at the wedding because it was as a result of her that he and her aunt had met and that it was the only good thing to come of all the sadness surrounding Shizuko's death.

He asks her if there were not at least boys she liked, but she says no. Because of her routine – running at break, doing cross-country or track practice in the afternoon and then going home for dinner, going to the library, coming home and doing her homework at eleven at night – there was no time to daydream about boys. The only person she had daydreamed about was Sachiko, whom she had seen only a few times since their summer running together. She had become like all the other girls, she wore makeup and walked around with boys.

She says that she doesn'tdoes not think she'llshe will ever want to be in love because half the time it doesn'tdoes not turn out right. Mr. Kimura reveals that he had felt the same way during his first marriage, but that as he got older he had wanted to love someone in spite of the futility of it all and that in a way it meant more because the odds are always against people. Aya comes outside and Mr. Kimura goes to her. Yuki can see how happy they are together. Looking at the sky, she wishes for her mother, her grandfather of ten years ago, someone, to read the sky and name the stars for her.

Chapter 11 Analysis – Winter Sky (February 1975)

Yuki speaks openly of her poor relationship with her father and stepmother and it is because of them that she is going to Nagasaki; she simply wants to get away from them. Her independence and stubborn nature are illustrated by how she has paid for her college tuition all by herself, from money she had saved up over the past few years.

She is too proud and too stubborn to take money from her father. Yuki's isolation and loneliness is demonstrated by the busy schedule she keeps. She has no time for socializing or simply relaxing with friends or fawning over boys.

Because of his relationship with Shizuko, there is a close connection between Mr. Kimura and Yuki, and he tells her that one of the reasons he loves Aya is because, at least initially, she had reminded him of Shizuko. In their brief moments togethertogether, it seems almost as though he is more of a father to her than Hideki has ever been.

Yuki's reluctance to fall in love speaks of her own distrust in love and that even though she derives great strength from her independence,independence; it is also something of a pretense. She is scared to love someone again as she had done with her mother in case they, too, leave her. The image of her running endlessly around a track is a metaphor for the endless cycle of pain and abandonment she feels caught up in, while everyone else around her is falling in love. For all her talk about not wanting to love, it is clear that she is lonely and wants desperately to be loved.

Chapter 12 Summary – Gladioli (March 1975)

It is after midnight as Yuki creeps into the attic. She had waited until her father and stepmother were sleeping. She is to leave for Nagasaki in two days, having paid her tuition, a month's rent at the rooming house and having just barely enough left over for the train ticket. She can'tcannot afford to send any of her mother's things, but she can pack a small bag to take on the train. She is sure that her stepmother will throw out whatever she doesn'tdoes not take and is surprised she hadn'thad not already done so.

The first item she takes out is a purple kimono with hand-dyed patterns of maple leaves. The last time Yuki had seen her mother wear this kimono was when Yuki had been eleven and her mother had gone to a neighbor's wedding. Next, she takes out a teal-blue dress and then still other dresses, skirts and blouses. Looking at the boxes containing her mother's jewelry she remembers her mother wearing each piece and her aunt Aya packing them all away. Then, before she realizes what she'sshe is doing, she packs everything back.

When she is done she thinks of the afternoon she had to give a three-minute speech to her sophomore class about Monet's painting, *Gladioli.* She spent the three minutes in silence. Whatever was important about the painting could not be said in a speech, not in three hours or in three days. The only true thing she could say, she felt, was nothing. Her mother, like the painting, could not be summed up by a mere sampling of her possessions. To save a few things over the others was to say that her mother could be reduced to one essence and she would not do that.

Climbing back through the trapdoor, she looks at the closet of a room that was her mother's and that her stepmother had now filled with piles of magazines and newspapers. She will do the same to my room, Yuki thinks. Back in her room, she thinks how she and her mother are moving on, away from here.

Chapter 12 Analysis – Gladioli (March 1975)

Yuki's gradual coming of age, her maturity, is displayed here. Whereas before she is reluctant to let her stepmother throw out the last remaining clothes her mother had made for her, here, in this chapter, she has the opportunity to take a number of keepsakes, but decides not to, realizing that it is impossible to distill her mother's essence into a handful of items.

This realization is an important part of her development, as she is essentially letting go of the past, unbound by the physical fetters she had once yearned for. Her mother will be with her in memory and in spirit, and but not in the worthless possessionspossessions she could carry around with her. Yuki is on the cusp of a brand new beginning. Soon, she will leave her father and stepmother behind, and go out on her own. Her leaving can also be construed as a symbol of how she is finally moving on after the death of her mother; it is a literal as well as metaphoric journey. The tone is one of expectation and upliftment. Yuki is content, despite her sadness, to leave her mother's things behind.

Chapter 13 Summary – Silent Spring (March 1975)

A week after Yuki had left for college, Hideki comes home to find cardboard boxes stacked up outside the door. Asking Hanae about them, she says she feels justified in throwing them out – the boxes from the attic and Yuki's own things – saying that Yuki would have taken them if she wanted them. Hideki says he'she is not so sure and that perhaps she had not taken them because there was no space where she was living.

Hanae is furious with Hideki for not having any authority over Yuki, because she is afraid that the neighbors will think she is a bad stepmother and that it is her that drove Yuki away from the house. Hanae says that from the way Yuki left it's obvious she'llshe will never write to them or ask them for anything and that she wouldn'twould not be surprised if the only time they hear from her is when she graduates or gets married, if she ever does.

Hideki remembers the day Yuki left. She had come downstairs holding her suitcase and said that she'd leave the address of the lodge by the telephone, in case they need to get hold of her, but that they needn't write and that she wouldn'twould not either. She then said that she was calling a cab and that she'd probably never come back to the house again. Then she was gone. All week long Hideki had tried to decide how he felt about Yuki leaving; relief, then annoyance, then guilt at being glad that she was gone. With her gone there would be no more arguments with Hanae unless it was something he had done.

Hanae asks him to burn the boxes, saying that if they leave them for the garbage pickup, the neighborhood kids might take things out and their parents might talk. He says he'llhe will do it after supper. She smiles and says that will be very helpful.

As he watches the fire just beginning to catch, Hideki thinks of how Yuki had not even asked them to come to her graduation – Hanae was furious and expected him to force her to invite them, saying that people will blame her, not Yuki – and how she had left so abruptly after graduation. He wonders if she had wanted the things he was about to burn or if she had left them to forget about her past. Or that perhaps it was too painful to go through them. That was most likely he thought, because Yuki, he felt, had never gotten over her mother's death.

The fire began to smolder and so he would have to feed it from the contents of the boxes. In the first box he finds large envelopes and manila folders of paper and photographs from Yuki's childhood. They burn easily. He thinks of how, as a child, the people in his town celebrated the last day of each year by burning old things they wanted to get rid of. It taught people to put things behind, embrace the new. Someone should have taught Yuki to embrace the new, he thought.

Every time Hanae had threatened to leave him, it was because of Yuki. Hanae blamed him for Yuki being a selfish, spoiled girl. He remembers the first time Hanae threatened to leave: about a year after their marriage, during her supper, Hanae got up from the table saying how the two of them made her sick. Yuki because she was close and sly and Hideki because he was useless. She had gone outside to hail a cab, and he, after grabbing his shoes and jacket, ran after her. She did not resist being brought back. Later that night, after having begged and pleaded with her to say, he saw her take a pair of underwear from her purse and put it back into the drawer; it was all she had taken with her.

Staring at the fire, Hideki tries to picture the way Shizuko used to dress. He cannot. He wonders, even now, whether they should have divorced. But However, that wouldn'twould not have solved anything, because Yuki would still have had to remain with him. He had never had a close bond with Yuki and she brought him nothing but guilt – guilt for her mother's unhappiness, her suicide, about his remarriage, about keeping her away from her mother's family.

In the last box, he finds Shizuko's sketchbook, which she had since the days before their marriage. He decides to send it to Yuki and places it in the desk drawer in his study before going to bed. At two or three in the morning he wakes up, disturbed by something imperceptible. He goes to the study and looks at Shizuko's sketchbook. It is filled with watercolors she had done while watching over him when he was in hospital with tuberculosis. They gave way to pencil sketches of Yuki throughout her infancy and early childhood. Toward the end of the book are watercolors of them at a small cottage in the mountains; the last vacation they had taken together.

He remembers that on the second day of the vacation he and Shizuko had argued about something, he had stomped off and after several hours returned, holding large clusters of hydrangea flowers. He had fallen asleep in the chair and that was when she must have sketched the image of him that now jogged his memory. He holds his head in his hands.

Chapter 13 Analysis – Silent Spring (March 1975)

For Hanae and Hideki too, it is a time of new beginnings. The burning of Shizuko's things and those that she had saved for Yuki is a symbol of cleansing, of eradicating the old in order to forget about them and move on. This chapter is the most revealing yet of Hideki's feelings toward Yuki and the entire ordeal. He had never spent much time at home and she had always seemed quiet and aloof to him. She brings him nothing but guilt. He is glad that she is gone.

However, his actions toward the end of the chapter – unable to sleep, he goes to his study to look at the sketchbook and then holds his head in his hands – are signs that Hideki does possess a modicum of remorse for his past; for his time with Shizuko and Yuki and the mistakes he had made. Try as he might, he can remember very little about Shizuko, an indictment of how little time he had really spent with her in the intervening years.

This scene is also illustrative of just how little Hideki knows about his daughter. He reasons that she had left the things behind because it would have been too painful to go through. On the contrary, Yuki had left them behind because she has begun to accept her mother's death.

Hanae's treachery and sense of melodrama is revealed when Hideki thinks of the first time she had threatened to leave him. All she had taken in her bag was a pair of underwear. Clearly, she had not intended to go anywhere. Her leaving, as with many things in her life, was simply an act, a façade. So too, it is not Yuki's leaving that concerns her, but the way that it will reflect upon her as a stepmother. Ironically, she says people will think it was her fault Yuki left, and it *is*, at least in part.

Chapter 14 Summary – After the Rain (August 1975)

It is five-thirty in the morning and Masa is outside in her garden, tending to the plants. She used to plant very few annuals, but since Shizuko's death she had planted more and moreincreasingly. The two-week drought had killed the flowers that had sprung up after Yuki's visit, which Yuki had spent hours caring for. Masa recalls Yuki's visit and how she was never rude or irritable, and when they disagreed her face was always full of patience, but Masa felt that something was wrong. AndIn addition, she blamed their strained relationship on Yuki's father; if she had been allowed to visit regularly, things would be different. She sees her husband, Takeo, waving on his way to collect eggs from the hen coophencoop.

He had woken up just before six, having dreamt of hundreds of schoolchildren running in a field of pampas grass. Some he had never seen, others had been his students during his forty years as a schoolteacher. Among the children were his own as well as his grandchildren. Just before he woke, he wondered how he could pick out his own children among all of them.

Lately, awake or sleeping, he heard distant noises that sometimes sounded like the wind and other times like children's voices. He thought he might be losing his hearing like the old couple who lived across the road, both of them having been deaf and mute for seven or eight years now. Before the war, Takeo's family had owned all the land east of the river and even now, the elderly couple would bow to him when they met in the street and every year until she became deaf, the woman had brought the best of her crops to Masa. He had tried to discourage her, but she said that their family had always done so.

Fully awake now, he went to the Buddhist altar in the family room, lit an incense stick and closed his eyes. For a momentmoment, his mind was at peace, then againagain, he thought of his children and grandchildren, the woman across the road, his family losing the land, the rainstorm the night before, Shizuko, Yuki,Yuki and Masa. He had thought it would be easy to grow old; he was wrong, he now thought. Opening his eyes, he sees the brightly colored cloth Yuki had dyed during her visit, Shizuko's colors he had thought at the time, and knew then that Yuki would be okay though he could not explain why.

While gathering the eggs, he remembers a time when Yuki was eight. Saburo had caught two buckets of bass whichbass, which Masa cooked for supper. Having seen her uncle scale the fish, Yuki would not eat and made herself a sandwich instead. During her most recent visit, she had told them she had become a vegetarian. She said that she had stopped eating meat or fish because she couldn'tcould not kill anything.

Back inside the house, he sees the wooden slide, on the sun porch, he had built when Shizuko was born. Shizuko would have been forty-six years old he remembered and was suddenly sad. He walks to the kitchen and as he is about to put the basket of eggs down, feels a pain in his chest. Masa comes in behind him, but he cannot speak, nor can he hear what she is saying.

About to leave for her job at a restaurant, Yuki receives a call from her grandmother telling her that Takeo'sTakeo has had a heart attack. Yuki asks if he'she is alright but her grandmothers says no and then asks if Yuki can come for the funeral. She says she'llshe will be there on the first train in the morning. She thinks of a telephone call she had six years ago when she called her grandmother to tell her about Shizuko's death. Her grandmother has asked if it was one of her tricks and she said no, her mother was really dead. Masa had hung up, then called back to say they were leaving right away and would be there before midnight.

Yuki tells Isamu (who was giving her a lift to work on his motorcycle) and he says that maybe she shouldn'tshould not go to work, but she retorts that it's too late to call in. On the bike, she thinks how she should'veshould have spent more time with him and visited him more oftenoften, no matter what her father said. Having arrived, she gets off the bike and Isamu tells her to call him if she needs anything.

At seven 'o' clock, with the restaurant at its busiest, Yuki is overwhelmed and cannot cope with the demands of the bartender and the busboy's insistence that she prepare the check for a family wanting to leave. She tells them to leave her alone, and then

explains that her grandfather had died that afternoon. The bartender tells her to take a break, to go outside to the balcony. She goes outside, and looking at the night sky and the stars, remembers that her grandfather had said that looking at the stars with her when she was a little girl was one of his best memories.

Chapter 14 Analysis – After the Rain (August 1975)

Having been prevented from seeing her grandparents for much of the last six years, Yuki has just started visiting regularly when her grandfather dies. The tragedy is not so much in his death (due to his age, it was inevitable) but rather that Yuki has missed out on so much time with her grandparents, and they, in turn, with her.

Even though she is devastated by his death, Yuki's pragmatism is once again displayed. She doesn'tdoes not say as much to her grandmother, but thinks that there is little good in her rushing there right away, it was too late to do anything, she reasons. Still, her grandfather's death occupies her mind throughout the day and night.

Again, flowers are a predominant symbol in the text. Since Shizuko's death, Masa has taken to planting more annuals, whereas before she had mostly tended perennials. An indictment, perhaps, that she too, has come to accept the cycle of life and death. She no longer gleans comfort from the flowers' return every spring, many of which were older than her children were.

Chapter 15 Summary – The Effects of Light (August 1975)

After the four days she had spent with her grandmother, Yuki is back home in Nagasaki looking at the three black-and-white photographs Isamu had taken of her the day before she left. Watching him as he makes coffee, she remembers the first day they'dthey had met. On the first day of school at the college librarylibrary, he had smiled at her and introduced himself. He had been a year ahead of her and was a native of Nagasaki. In April and May he had shown her the city and the countryside around it and since school got out in June he had been teaching her how to use his camera and develop her own film.

She is tired from the all-night train ride, having only arrived back at six. It is just after nine as they walk outside to sit in the garden. They chat for a while and at ten, Yuki says she has to go back to her apartment to get ready for work. Isamu stands up but his camera falls to the ground; the strap is broken. The buckle had come off. They find the clasp and she shows him how to fix the strap. He puts his arm around her shoulder and pulls her closer, saying he'dhe had thought about her a lot while she was gone. She gets up but he takes her hand and kisses her wrist. She leaves, but looks back and shouts that she'llshe will call him later, after work.

At twelve-thirty, Mr. Sato, a regular customer, comes into the restaurant and is unable to get a table anywhere but in Yuki's section, he decides to wait instead. Yuki is proud of this fact and recalls the day, about a month prior that he had stumbled into the restaurant, drunk. He had dropped his fork and signaled to Yuki to bring him a new one. She was about to put it down when he grabbed her hand and squeezed her fingers. She had brought the fork to his nose and calmly told him to let go, saying that the fork should be sharp enough to break his skin. He let go immediately. When she brought his lunch she told him that, that would be the last time she would wait on him. He had come back occasionally since then, but never sat in her section.

She thinks about her encounter with Isamu that morning, and how she had wanted to sit back down and say that she had thought a lot about him too. ButHowever, he was her best friend and she didn'tdid not want to be in love. Love, she thought, ends in sadness and she doesn'tdoes not want anymoreany more sadness.

Coming back from work, she finds a note on her door saying that Isamu had called and to call him back. AlsoIn addition, a small square package had been left by the door. Inside her room, she unwraps it to find a large blue notebook, Shizuko's notebook. Yuki looks through the pages of the book, remembering the events depicted in them, and thinking how happy they had been back then. Looking at the picture on the last page, Yuki remembers that her parents had argued and that this one time he had returned with flowers. Looking at the pressed flowers on the page, Yuki thought her mother must have wanted to remember his gesture of apology. She must have still loved him back then, she thought.

Yuki thinks of her grandmother and how she'llshe will suffer for months and years being reminded of her husband by everything around her. Perhaps her grandmother would'vewould have been better off, Yuki thought, if she hadn'thad not loved him in the first place. And yetYet, as she thought of her grandmother she couldn'tcould not stop thinking of Isamu and regretted he would never meet her mother or her grandfather. They would'vewould have liked him.

Looking through the pictures in the sketchbook again, Yuki thinks of Isamu and remembers the first day they'dthey had gone to use his camera and how she had accidentally taken a picture of a heron with the incorrect lens. It had come out blurred, but she liked it the best anyway. Isamu had said it looked like she was taking a picture of light.

She phones Isamu and asks him to meet her in the park. He is afraid that she is angry with him for that morning, but she says she is not. Running to the park, she thinks of the sketches her mother had drawn of her and that her mother would have wanted her to be happy. At the entrance to the park, she sees Isamu who waves, and starts walking over. She decides to be happy, to be with him.

Chapter 15 Analysis – The Effects of Light (August 1975)

The tone of this penultimate chapter is one of triumph and of hope for the future. In spite of the unhappiness that has plagued her teenage years, Yuki at last allows herself an opportunity to be happy. Of course, there are no guarantees that her relationship with Isamu will last, and she had thus far vehemently denied that she was in love but it speaks to her coming of age and how she has grown as a person that she is willing to take that chance, regardless.

Shizuko's notebook inspires Yuki to take the chance with Isamu. Seeing, through her mother's portraits of her, the manner in which Shizuko had always viewed Yuki, as a happy child, she decides that her mother would not want her to be unhappy. In a way, even after her death, Shizuko is still able to influence her daughter. The notebook represents Shizuko's view of her family; the love she once had for her husband and the deep, unending love for Yuki.

Her independence, the very thing that has isolated her and set her apart from those around her, has come to be one of her most valuable assets. Whereas most girls would not know how to deal with the likes of Mr. Sato, Yuki is confident enough to confront and intimidate him.

Chapter 16 Summary – Epilogue (May 1976)

On the morning of her seventy-fifth birthday, Masa wakes to the sound of music coming from the nearby schoolyard. Since her husband's death some nine months before, she had taken to sleeping in the family room. The first thing she saw every morning was the Buddhist altar where she honored the spirits of her ancestors, of which Takeo was now one.

She did not think of Shizuko and Takeo as her ancestors, they remained separate from the others: her first-born that had died of measles before the others were born; another son killed in the War; her parents and parents-in-law. She wanted to join Shizuko and Takeo soon so that the three of them could then join the others.

She thought of Yuki who had visited her for two weeks during the spring break. Together they had worked in the garden, and one afternoon Yuki had looked through the kimonos Masa had saved from her younger days. Masa had sold her best kimonos after the family had lost their land after the war, and said Yuki wouldn'twould not want them. Yuki and Isamu were going to learn to sew and she asked her grandmother if she wouldn'twould not mind her changing or cutting them into things she would wear.

Yuki's latest letter had contained a picture of her wearing a quilted vest she had made from one of the kimonos. In the letter she told Masa of her best friend Isamu, whom she said was also her boyfriend and asked if he could come too because she wanted to

show him where she grew up. Later that morning, Etsuko would arrive with her four-year old son, Tadashi. Every other day she worked at a factory in a nearby city and left Tadashi with Masa. He did not care for anyone other than his parents but had taken to Yuki, Masa observed, from the first time he saw her.

They arrive and as usual Tadashi spends the first half-hour sulking, drawing on the ground with broken twigs. After breakfast (Tadashi hadn'thad not eaten with Masa ever since he found a dead fly in her cupboard), Masa works in the garden and coaxes Tadashi into helping pull weeds by telling him that he could pretend they were enemy soldiers and behead them. She fetches sticks from the shed and while there sees the bench stored there and remembers how Takeo used to point out the constellations to Yuki and other grandchildren while sitting on it. Returning, she finds that Tadashi has snipped off a number of white chrysanthemums. He says that they died fighting the soldiers. Masa doesn'tdoes not know whether to laugh or scold him.

After lunch, Masa asks Tadashi if he wants to play on the wooden slide Takeo had built shortly after Shizuko's birth. Tadashi did not want to and hadn'thad not played on it since he had seen his grandfather's body at the wake. He always had an excuse: he was too big for it;, there were splinters. Masa convinces him to slide, just once, and then he takes his nap in the family room. While he is sleeping, Masa releases the frogs he had caught (he did this every time he came to visit) because she does not want them to die. Someone, she thought, had to teach him not to kill.

Releasing them into the garden, she notices a cicada, newly out of its shell. It looked as if it may die. She brings it inside and places it on the altar, deciding that if it is to die, it might as well be where Takeo can see it has been offered to him. All she wants is to join her husband and daughter. She falls asleep next to Tadashi and dreams that Shizuko had driven to her from the city and brought her pink and white peonies and a kimono of silvery gray. When she wakes, she finds Tadashi going up and down the slide over and over again, and the cicada flying around the room. She laughs and cries with joy.

Chapter 16 Analysis – Epilogue (May 1976)

At seventy-five, Masa has outlived both her husband and daughter. Her thoughts are constantly occupied by the two of them and she wants nothing more than to die so that she can be with them. She sleeps in the family room because when she wakes she instantly knows he is gone, instead of thinking momentarily that he is still alive and then feel the crushing realization of the awful truth yet again.

Yuki's 'recycling' of Masa's old clothes speaks yet again to the theme of the continuous cycle of life and death; from the old emerges new. As does the whole encounter with Tadashi and Masa. He is the youngest of the Okuda family, and she the oldest. With death such a dominant theme throughout the novel, this final chapter is a celebration of life. The cicada's survival and Tadashi's playing on the slide are images of vitality and of life and a testament that life goes on no matter what.

Coming inside, and placing the cicada upon the altar Masa can think only of Takeo and Shizuko. She is sad but her tears had seemingly dried up since Takeo's death, she has moved past grief and is simply numb. Seeing, Tadashi playing on the slide and the cicada's survival, however, causes her to cry tears of joy.

The climax, for all intents and purposesessentially, has taken place in the previous chapter. Yuki has come through all her trials and tribulations and emerged from it all a stronger, better person. She may even be happy yet. This final chapter, though, illustrates the commonality between all who suffer loss. Masa too, endures many of the same emotions as Yuki and wants to die, but she too comes to see hope for the future and a chance at happiness.

Chapter 4 – Irises (April 1970)

Chapter 4 Summary - Irises (April 1970)

After pouring herself a glass of orange juice, Yuki returns upstairs to her room where she begins to unpack the boxes containing her things that her aunt Aya had sent from Tokyo. As she does so, she remembers back to the time when, just two years ago, she and her mother had packed their things to move to this house.

It had been a Saturday in early April and by eleven Yuki had almost finished packing her things. The movers would arrive at three. Her father was on a business trip at the time; he spent a great deal of time away from home. When she was done, she went to the kitchen and began to pack the plates and glasses, carefully wrapping them in newspaper first, before packing them in boxes. Yuki could remember where they bought each of the items she packed and she thought how much her mother knew and had, in turn, taught her. Her mother asks, not for the first time, whether Yuki does not mind going to a new school. Impatient, and slightly curt at having been asked again and again, Yuki tells her that she doesn'tdoes not mind.

When she is done in the kitchen, she goes to her mother's bedroom where Shizuko is busy packing her own things. Yuki apologizes for her earlier impertinence. They speak for a while and Shizuko asks whether they should take the flowers with them. She seems reluctant, saying that they can get new ones from Yuki's grandmother, but Yuki says that it won't be the same and wants *these* flowers. Yuki takes over packing her mother's things, while Shizuko goes into the garden to dig out the flowers.

Later, joining her outside, Yuki is chilled by the manner in which her mother speaks about death. Shizuko tells her to go back inside and that she'llshe will be done shortly. Later, they sit on the steps behind the kitchen and Shizuko asks Yuki what she would do if something happened to her and wasn'twas not around to look after Yuki anymore. Yuki insists that she would never forget her, and on Shizuko's insistence answers her question: she says that she will be sad, but that she will go on. At this, Shizuko leans her head against the wall, and it seems that she may cry. Yuki apologizes, but her mother says that it's good that she told the truth. Yuki promises to help her all she can at the new house, and Shizuko replies that they'llthey will try and be happy at the new house.

Back in the present, Yuki walks outside to the garden and looks at the flowers they had planted there. She thinks that maybe she was wrong when she said she could go on without her mother and that at the time she wanted to take it back, but Shizuko would not let her.

Chapter 4 Analysis - Irises (April 1970)

It is through Yuki's memories of her mother that much of Shizuko's character is revealed; her love for Yuki, and the deep, suffusing sadness that characterized the last years of her life. Even then, two years before they moved into the house in which Shizuko had killed herself, it is clear that she was unhappy.

Because of the care and love with which she tended them, the flowers in the garden are, to Yuki at the very least, symbolic of her mother. The irises represent Yuki herself, as unlike the other flowers they do not shed their petals and die, they simply shrivel up into themselves. The theme of death is, by the very nature of the content of the story, pervasive, and the flowers, too, are symbolic of this continual cycle of life and death.

In contrast to the close relationship she maintained with her mother, it is becoming increasingly clearer that she shares little with her father. He had said little to her since Shizuko's death, and he and her stepmother, watching TV as she passes on her way to her room, do not even acknowledge her presence.

Chapter 5 – Pink Trumpets (June 1971)

Chapter 5 Summary - Pink Trumpets (June 1971)

It is the last girls' track meet before the summer vacation - city finals for the junior high school of Kobe - and Yuki is warming up for her race. She thinks of the picture her mother had taken of her winning the 50-meter dash back in the third grade. As she stretches she sees a group of girls in red-and-black uniforms passing by and she hurriedly looks for the tall ninth-grade girl who ran the hurdles.

They had first met after Yuki had won the 1,000-meter event at a meet between their schools. After the racerace, she had gone for a drink of water and almost bumped into the tall girl. If she would just talk to me, Yuki thought, she would be happy. Her own race began after noon. During the race she unconsciously breaks from the pack too soon, and with two and three-quarter laps remaining she might not make it, but then at the end of the third lap she begins to run as fast as she can.

By the end of the last lap her body is wracked with pain, she wonders if this was how it was for her mother, but she decides that her mother's death had probably been more painful. She wins the race by a large margin,, and she is quickly surrounded by the other girls on her team, Yuki thinks how she didn'tdid not look back and hadn'thad not even known where the others were. The events conclude by one-thirty and Yuki runs off to the drinking fountain before anyone could invite her to join them for lunch; everyone knew about her mother and that no-one from her family came to the meets.

At the fountainfountain, she meets the tall hurdler. Yuki introduces herself but the girl says she knows her name and had seen her race. Yuki admits that she watched the girl run as well. She introduces herself as Sachiko Murai, and she says that she knows some people who go to Yuki's school and thus knows a lot about her. Sachiko asks what Yuki is doing for the summer vacation and when she does not reply suggests that maybe they could run together to stay in shape. Yuki follows Sachiko to her mother so that they can get a pen and exchange phone numbers but she does not have one and so instead, Yuki promises to memorize Sachiko's.

As Sachiko and her mother walk away, Yuki notices the azaleas around the bench where Mrs. Murai had been sitting and remembers how her mother had taught her to taste the inside of the flower with her tongue; therein lay spots of intense sweetness. She wishes now that she could suffocate in their sweetness.

Chapter 5 Analysis - Pink Trumpets (June 1971)

Even before her mother's death, Yuki had stood out from the crowd. Her mother had always dressed her in bright colors and tied ribbons around her hair. A conscious effort on Shizuko's part to make her an individual.

Yuki, it seems, yearns for friendship. She and her mother had always been best of friends, but two years have passed since Shizuko's death and in all that timetime, Yuki has remained alone and isolated. It is clear from the way that she looks up to, and wants to talk to Sachiko that Yuki likes her and wants to be friends. Spurred on, perhaps by her desire to impress Sachiko, Yuki surges ahead of the other runners, and despite the pain and fatigue, wins the race.

The race itself, an oft usedoft-used literary device, is a metaphor for Yuki's life. In spite of the pain and fatigue and the feeling that perhaps she cannot go on, if Yuki just keeps running she will eventually win, she will, in other words, be okay. As long as she does not give up, her life will go on. That she didn'tdid not look back, didn'tdid not even know where the other runners were, indicates that Yuki was, in effect, running against herself; chased, perhaps, by her own demons.

The exact nature of Yuki's relationship with her stepmother is illustrated, in no uncertain termsclearly, in this chapter. They have barely spoken to one another for more than a year. She, of course, was not at the meet, either. Despite the sense of hope and ephemeral happiness offered by her meeting with Sachiko, the tone of the chapter is, once more, downbeat. Seeing Sachiko with her mother only reminds Yuki of what'swhat is missing in her life and this depresses her. She wishes, not for the first time, that she were dead.

Chapter 6 – Sundays (September 1971)

Chapter 6 Summary - Sundays (September 1971)

The first week of September had been unusually cool, but on the Sunday morning regardless, Yuki leaves the house, where her father and stepmother were eating breakfast, and goes to the park to meet Sachiko. The second term of school had started the week before and soon Yuki would be running in cross-country meets every Sunday. Her coach had told her not to run on weekends, that weekday training was enough, but Yuki didn'tdid not care. She thought that Sachiko's coach had probably told her the same thing and as she waits in the park for Sachiko to arrive thinks of how she can tell her that they should continue to meet.

Sachiko arrives and they set off out the park and up the steep gradients offered by the surrounding roads. While running, they talk. Sachiko tells Yuki about a strange incident she had on the train one day. A boy had stared at her all week on the train, but on the Friday as he got off the train he handed her a small piece of paper with his name and number written on it. Sachiko is incredulous at both, the fact that the boy would expect her to phone him and at Yuki's question (she had asked her if she was going to phone him). Yuki feels stupid but at Sachiko's insistence explains that it sounds to her as if Sachiko wants to phone the boy.

Sachiko asks what *she* would do if a boy stared at her and Yuki says that no one has ever had a crush on her. She remembers a time in the sixth grade when her and her mother had been really angry with one another. Her mother had wanted to get a pattern for a new dress for Yuki and held one up with a lace collar and a bow tied in the back and said she would make it for Yuki in pink. Yuki had made a disparaging remark about the design and the two had walked and shopped in silence for a while.

When they finish their run and are back at the park, Sachiko says that it had been fun running with Yuki during the summer. Seeing her chance, Yuki suggests that they should continue somehow but Sachiko reveals that she won't be doing cross-country this year and will instead be the lead in the school play.

Yuki suggests that she can take a day off running during the week or keep running on Sundays against her coach's advice, in order to continue to see Sachiko but Sachiko says that her mother wants her to start taking flower-arrangement lessons on Sundays. They shake hands and Yuki watches as Sachiko leaves. On the way home, Yuki thinks of how Sachiko had said, 'see you around,' but she knew Sachiko hadn'thad not really meant it and that they would likely never see each other again. She remembers the last time she had been to Sachiko's house: Mrs. Murai had asked about her family and about her mother's death. Yuki had simply said that it had been an accident at home - her father had told her to tell people she died of cancer, people would say, her father warned, that she came from a mentally unstable family - and then left.

Yuki imagines how she wanted the encounter to go: how she would say her mother died because she was unhappy, and that it was not an accident. AndIn addition, that Yuki wanted to work hard and be happy for her because that'sthat is what Shizuko wanted and because she had promised her mothermother, she would go on after her death. Sachiko and her mother would embrace Yuki and tell her how proud her mother would have been. She would have then been asked to stay for breakfast, stay the whole day to watch a movie or play games or go shopping downtown.

Standing in front of her house, she sees her stepmother's car, a small dent in front where she had hit a mailbox when her high heel got stuck in the gas pedal. She had spent that day in bed, Yuki remembers, and said Yuki's pacing upstairs had added to her nausea. Yuki said she did no such thing. It didn'tdid not matter if Yuki was telling the truth or not, her stepmother always acted likeas if Yuki was lying.

Chapter 6 Analysis - Sundays (September 1971)

Yuki had enjoyed her summer running with Sachiko, and she is desperate for it to continue, but their time together is fated not to last. Sachiko is a year older and already it is clear that she is becoming less of a tomboy and more feminine, and as a result having increasingly less in common with Yuki. She talks about a boy, has a part in the school play and her mother wishes her to take flower arrangement lessons. Yuki is unable to relate, however.

That she is still something of a tomboy, only adds to her growing sense of isolation. She does not believe that boys are interested in her and her memory of how angry she had been with the pink, overtly feminine dress her mother had wanted to make for her is indicative of this.

Her desperate need to be loved,loved; to feel safe and comforted is revealed as Yuki daydreams about how the encounter at the Murai household should have gone. The Murai family it seems,seems representrepresents Yuki's idealized view of family life, one that is in stark contrast to her own. By the end of the chapterchapter, Yuki is left, once again, alone. Similarly, she is able to feel sympathy for the boy, imagining how nervous he must have been when giving Sachiko his number, whereas Sachiko is oblivious to that fact, concerned only with herself.

Chapter 7 – Yellow Mittens and Early Violets (March 1972)

Chapter 7 Summary - Yellow Mittens and Early Violets (March 1972)

For the first time since her father's remarriage, Yuki is visiting her grandparents. She had come for the third anniversary of her mother's death. It is seven in the morning in mid-March, and Yuki is reading a magazine and putting on and pulling off her mittens - she had made them herself - as her grandmother, Masa, comes into the kitchen. On the floor are her suitcase and the violets she had dug up by the river. She is waiting for the bus, the first of which will only arrive in two hours - it is an hour bus ride from the village to Himeji and then a three-hour train ridetrain ride back to Kobe.

Masa remembers how, when she used to come each year with her mother, Yuki had always done something that the neighbors would talk about for months. She thinks of the time Yuki had climbed a chestnut tree and then was too scared to come down and firemen from a nearby town had to be called in order to rescue her. The year after, she had run through a glass screen while chasing a dragonfly, and she continued running until she caught it. She had only minor cuts and scratches and had bragged about her scars all summer long. Masa recalls how different she was then to the quiet and moody person she had become.

Masa suggests Yuki take rice and tea to the altar but she refuses, saying that there'sthere is no point because there was no-oneno one to whom to say goodbye to. Just then, Takeo, her grandfather, appears in the kitchen and asks Yuki if she doesn'tdoes not want to go pick strawberries with him. She is curt and refuses. Masa goes to the altar herself and remembers how, after Shizuko's death, Yuki had washed her hair over and over again, saying how she couldn'tcould not get rid of the smell of gas, then of cigarette smoke, then of incense. She prays to her ancestors for peace. She returns to the kitchen and soon after sees Takeo, coming back into the house, trip and fall forward, hitting the floor. Yuki runs to fetch a doctor. After checking him, Masa fetches a first-aid kit from the hallway closet, but the contents are useful only for minor cuts and bruises suffered by children and she doesn'tdoes not know what else to do.

His breathing, at first wheezy, grows quieter and then slows. She runs to the bedroom to phone the doctor but cannot recall his number. Finding it in the phonebookphonebook, she dials but the number is busy, and as she tries again the book falls shut. Her hands are shaking, her heart beating fast. When at last she gets through the woman who answers tells her that Yuki has been and that she and the doctor have already left on his motorcycle.

Masa hangs up and returns to Takeo just as Yuki and the doctor come in. The doctor examines him and then with Yuki's help, carries Takeo to the bedroom and places him

on the futon. At the doctor's behest, Yuki fetches a glass of water for Takeo. He then suggests to them that Takeo get some rest, saying that it was probably just dizziness brought on by the humidity and that he'she is alright. He'llHe will return in a few hours to check on him. When the doctor has left, Yuki tells her grandmother that she'llshe will take the afternoon bus and train because she doesn'tdoes not want to leave until Takeo has woken up and she can talk to him.

She explains to her grandmother that she had forgotten about the phone and had run to the doctor as they had done in the old days. She also says that as he was leaving, the doctor had told her that she had come to look more like her mother. Yuki gets up to phone her father to tell him she will be late and then goes outside to pick strawberries to replace the ones Takeo had dropped and that had been stepped on in the commotion.

Yuki is washing strawberries in the kitchen when Masa comes in. She tells her grandmother about the day her mother died, and how she had heard her voice on the phone but not seen her, and then when she found the body she could see her, but not hear her voice. It'sIt is as though, she says, that she can'tcannot remember her mother whole. She had wanted desperately to help her. She apologizes to her grandmother for the way she acted before and says that when she saw her grandfather fall she was scared she would never hear his voice again just likeas she would never hear her mother's again. She says she doesn'tdoes not know why she is mad at everything and everyone but that she just can'tcannot stop being that way and that she does love her grandmother and grandfather.

Chapter 7 Analysis- Yellow Mittens and Early Violets (March 1972)

Masa reflects on the time, when as a young child, Yuki had visited them along with Shizuko. From her memories of Yuki as a happy-go-lucky, spirited child, we are able to see just how much the death of her mother has changed her. Furthermore, while it is the death of her mother that first plunged her into sadness, her angry indifference at the world around her is lifted by another near-tragedy. Although he is not seriously injured by the fall, it does illustrate how susceptible Takeo has become in his old age and forebodes a more tragic incident that will befall him later in the novel.

Although only in her mid-teens, already, Yuki is exerting her independence. She had made the gloves and wears them even though they are poorly crafted simply because she refuses to take money from her stepmother to buy her own. She wants nothing to do with them. By this time, her grief has metamorphosed into anger. She is spiteful and condescending, angry at the world around her. At heart, though, she is a good child as illustrated by her concern for her grandfather and remorse for her behaviour.

Yuki is, in some respects, indicative of the younger generation of Japanese that had by this time begun to accept more westernized concepts. While her grandparents remain dedicated to the old customs (her grandmother, for instance, still wears kimonos and prays at the altar), she is considerably more modern.

Chapter 8 – Grievances (May 1973)

Chapter 8 Summary - Grievances (May 1973)

Having arrived back from her doctor's appointment, Hanae, Yuki's stepmother, sets about cleaning the house, something she did every day. Shizuko, she decided, had been the type of woman who would leave it for two, three weeks before cleaning and when Hanae had married Hideki, three years previously, she discovered that Yuki did not know the proper ways to clean a house, wash dishes or write up a shopping list. She had asked Yuki once what it was exactly that her mother had taught her, to which Yuki replied that she had been taught to paint and draw and the names of flowers and stories to tell; things no-one else knew.

She cleans the bathroom - thinking that it was a good thing that Yuki had started to cut her hair short, because the sight of her curled hairs on the floor sickened Hanae - and then returns to the kitchen. She stares at the teapot and six cups and saucers arranged around it in the cabinet. She had thrown everything else of Shizuko's out, but Hideki had suggested that maybe she save that set, saying that good pottery should be passed on as heirlooms. She could put it in the attic so she wouldn'twould not have to see it, he added, but in a huff, she had repacked them exactly the way she found them. She hated the attic. It was filled with boxes of items that Shizuko had saved for Yuki. She resents the fact that for eight years she could see Hideki only in secret, while this woman had a house all to herself and an attic to fill up with whatever she wished. She wasn'twas not, she decided, going to add to the worthless collection of things to be saved for Yuki.

Back in the bathroom, cleaning the floor, she thinks about her doctor's visit that morning. He had told her that she would never have a child, that it was too late and that she should have come to him six years previously, when her periods first became infrequent. She couldn'tcould not, of course, because she was not married then. She and Hideki had been lovers for two years when it began to happen. At first, Hideki had been worried that she might be pregnant and had sent her each month to a clinic in Wakayama, two hours away by train. He had not wanted anyone in town to know in case she had been pregnant. She resents Yuki.

While cleaning Yuki's room, she discovers that Yuki had not thrown out her old summer clothes (the ones that were made by her mother and that were too small for her now). She bundles them in her arms and is walking down the stairs when Yuki arrives home. At first she begs Hanae not to thrown them out and it seems she may cry. She approaches Hanae on the stairway. Hanae remembers how Yuki had smashed the ceremonial bowl of sake at her wedding and pushes Yuki down the stairs. At the bottom, having managed to break her fall, Yuki starts to sob. Then, trying not to show her limp, goes up to her room. Hanae throws the clothes in an old box in a shed in the garden then comes inside and in the sink, shatters, one by one, the pieces of the tea set.

Chapter 8 Analysis - Grievances (May 1973)

Having spent the last three years in near silence, Hanae and Yuki's passive, aggressive relationship at last comes to a head. Their confrontation on the stairs is the first physical manifestation of their hate and resentment toward one another and it is the most succinct description of their relationship as yet. Hanae lives a lie, pretending to the outside world that everything is fine, and that her relationship with Yuki is a good one while at the same time despises the fact that Yuki openly dislikes her. Ironically, she believes Yuki to show signs of madness (inherited from her mother, she reasons) when it is she who pushes Yuki and otherwise acts irresponsibly.

Hanae's act of smashing Shizuko's last remaining tea set is a symbolic one. Her pushing Yuki was, at least in part, an accident, but destroying the cups one by one is a deliberately spiteful, vengeful act. She cannot take her anger and grievances out on Shizuko or Yuki and so instead does so on the next best thing; that which symbolizes both of them. She blames Shizuko for the pain in her life, for her not being able to conceive a child, for the years wastedwasted, as she had to sneak around with Hideki and for the ever-present thorn in her side, Yuki.

Chapter 9 – Homemaking (November 1973)

Chapter 9 Summary - Homemaking (November 1973)

In the homemaking class, Yuki and her group prepare tempura; it is Yuki's job to cook the rice. As usual, her group is the slowest. Throughout, she is thinking of the next class in which she would have to dissect a frog and the thought makes her sick to her stomach. She had asked her biology teacher, Mr. Wada, to allow her not to dissect the frog, but he would not relent. She had been thinking about the dissection for the whole day.

The first time the class had met, Miss Sakaki had divided them into six groups and instructed them to bake cupcakes. Yuki's group's cupcakes overflowed and bubbledoverflowed, bubbled and trickled down to the broiler. Yuki had gotten her sketchbook and had just finished sketching the batter when Miss Sakaki rushed over, shouting only at Yuki, telling her how irresponsible she was. When it hardened, Yuki took the pan to her advanced painting class and created a painting she called *Homemaking*.

Their group was instructed to return after school to bake another batch, Yuki, however did not go because she had cross-country practice and consequently received an F. Everyone in the class felt that Miss Sakaki had a special dislike for Yuki. In order to make their dishes more presentable, Miss Sakaki asks for a volunteer to fetch leaves, flowers and berries for the class in the nearby woods. Yuki volunteers but Miss Sakaki is reluctant to let her go, but eventual cedes to the other girls' pleas, and allows her to leave on the condition that she be back within ten minutes.

While outside in the woods, Yuki remembers a time when she was ten that when her mother had taken her to a mountain famous for its maple trees and wild monkeys. At the bottom they had eaten a plate of maple leaves dipped in batter and fried for just a second. She wonders if she would have been better at homemaking if her mother was still alive.

The bruise Yuki had gotten during her confrontation with her stepmother was a bad sprain and for two weeksweeks, she had to swim instead of going to her track practice. One afternoon, while swimming, she decides to draw the clothes her mother had made for her; she is afraid the events of the past three years would crowd up her mind and erase her memories of her mother. SoTherefore, from that day on she sketched her clothes, the tea set she didn'tdid not want to forget anything.

While collecting pine needles and leaves in the woods, Yuki makes her way to the biology lab where, through the window, she can see the jar of frogs on the teacher's desk. She climbs into the room, and upon opening the jar, the smell, though not the

same, reminds her of her mother's funeral and the smell at the crematorium where her mother's body was burned. Holding her breath, she empties the jar of frogs out of the window, then washes the jar, fills it with all of the pine needles and maple leaves she had collected and places it back on the desk. By now, the ten minutes Miss Sakaki had given her are up and she would be failed for today's assignment, but with a smile on her face, she quickly runs back for more maple leaves and pine needles.

Chapter 9 Analysis - Homemaking (November 1973)

It is not only at home, but at school too, that Yuki's personality clashes with someone in authority. Her forthright manner does not, it seems, endure her to Miss Sakaki, who, ever since the cupcake incident, appears to have a vendetta of sorts against Yuki. The pervading tone, however, is almost humorous and Yuki's action in setting the frogs free and replacing them with maple leaves and pine needles comes across as light-hearted defiance as opposed to anything malicious.

Yuki's determination is displayed unequivocally on a number of occasions throughout the novel, and here, too, we glimpse her single-mindedness. She refuses to forget about her mother and in an attempt to keep her memories alive,alive; she sketches the clothes her mother had made for her.

Smells trigger a number of memories for Yuki in this chapter. The gas from the burner in the cooking class for obvious reasons and the smell of the formaldehyde in which the frogs were kept.

Chapter 10 – The Golden Carp (August 1974)

Chapter 10 Summary - The Golden Carp (August 1974)

Sitting at his desk in his study, Yuki's father gives her a letter from her aunt Aya whichthat had ostensiblyapparently been included in a letter addressed to him. Since her mother's death, Yuki had written to her aunt and grandparents once a month, but the only letter she had received in the last five years was an invitation to her youngest uncle's, Saburo, wedding. Her father had not allowed her to go.

Her father tells her that her aunt Aya is getting married and that because he owes her a debt for having looked after Yuki for the year following Shizuko's death, he will allow Yuki to attend. In her room, she hears her father and stepmother arguing, she can'tcannot hear the words but assumes that her stepmother is upset because Hideki is allowing Yuki to go and had not insisted on reading her letter.

In the letter, Aya tells Yuki how she looks forward to her letters every month but out of respect for her father's wishes cannot write back. She says that it'sit is because of her that she met Mr. Kimura, her fiancé, and would very much like to see her at the wedding. She also says that she has much more to tell her face-to-face.

Yuki remembers the first time she saw Mr. Kimura: she was ten and it was a Saturday in early June. Yuki had spent the afternoon at their neighbor's, the Shirakawas, house while her mother had attended her grade school class reunion. When she returns, it is with Mr. Kimura, a classmate of hers during grade school who had given her a lift back home.

The three of them chat outside for a while, and then Shizuko invites him in for tea. Inside, sitting at the kitchen table, Mr. Kimura tells Yuki how her mother had gotten him into trouble at grade school. It was a few years before the war and the principal had regularly made speeches about the greatness of the emperor. There was also a picture of the emperor and they were supposed to close their eyes because looking at it would, it was said, blind them. One day, however, Shizuko looked, poked Mr. Kimura in the elbow and remarked what a funny nose the emperor had. Everyone heard her and assumed he was looking too.

Mr. Kimura recalls how, on the day the War ended, when the emperor made his speech on the radio and said the people of Japan were wrong to worship him, all he could think about was the remark Shizuko had made in fourth grade. He was in high school by then and was disappointed that he would never see her again.

He says he would have looked Shizuko up sooner, but had been living in Tokyo and had only moved back to Kobe that April. He is divorced. At the timetime, Yuki had known a

girl at school whose parents were divorced. Her mother explained that when a couple gets divorced the children usually stay with the father while the mother goes back to live with her parents.

Mr. Kimura then tells of the time they had visited a temple on a school trip. A golden carp had jumped out of the pond and while everyone just stared and watched as it flailed helplessly, Shizuko threw it back into the water and saved it. Later that night, worrying about a swimming competition the next day and unable to sleep, Yuki had gone downstairs just as her mother hung up the phone. Shizuko explains that she had been talking to Mr. Kimura (he had given her his card and said to call if she needed a friend), and then gives his card to Yuki, saying she had explained everything to Mr. Kimura and would not need it anymore. She said, with sad eyes Yuki noted, that Yuki was her friend and that she didn'tdid not need anyone else.

The next time Yuki saw Mr. Kimura was when she had been living with her aunt Aya in Tokyo, eleven months after her mother's death. Having heard about Shizuko's death only two weeks priorprior, he had come to talk to Yuki. He hugged her and said how sorry he was and that he knew how much Shizuko had loved her.

Chapter 10 Analysis - The Golden Carp (August 1974)

Thus far there have simply been tenuous links, such as the doctor's compliment that she looked more like her mother, but here, we get a tangible sense of just how much like her mother, Yuki really is. Her mother too, as a child, had an independent, slightly rebellious nature. For one, she had refused to participate in an arranged marriage, and in this chapterchapter, we learn of how, in grade school, she had looked at the picture of the emperor when no-oneno one else dared. Their inherent kindness and love of animals is yet another trait the two share.

Shizuko saying that Yuki was the only friend she needed, indicates to a large extent, just how lonely she truly must have been. Trapped in a loveless marriage, she felt isolated from the world. In Yuki, she found her only solace. Mr. Kimura is portrayed, in stark contrast, to Yuki's father, as a loving, gentle man. His easy, comfortable manner upon meeting Yuki for the first time is testament to that, as is the fact that he had hugged her and consoled her upon hearing about her mother's death. Something her father, himself, had never done for her.

Chapter 11 – Winter Sky (February 1975)

Chapter 11 Summary - Winter Sky (February 1975)

As a result of both of them having been married before, Aya and Mr. Kimura's wedding is a short affair. Afterwards, Yuki is helping Etsuko, her uncle Saburo's wife (whom she had just met that morning), prepare food in the kitchen. Etsuko is cleaning a fish and it reminds Yuki of her own particular eating habitsfish, it reminds Yuki of her own particular eating habits, and how her stepmother often cooked things she could not eat. After placing her grandmother's good white china on a tray, Yuki goes to the family room where her grandparents, Aya and Mr. Kimura and her uncle Saburo are already sitting on the floor. She notices how her grandfather's health has deteriorated since she last saw him; he now walks with a cane.

Her grandfather suggests Yuki put a plate down for her mother, but her grandmother forces a short laugh, saying they wouldn'twould not want to bring bad luck to the wedding. Saburo says that it's a shame that Yuki isn't going to Kobe University (where Mr. Kimura is a teacher). Aya says that Mr. Kimura can arrange a special exam for Yuki and that she could still get in, but Yuki insists that she wants to go to a small college in Nagasaki to study art.

She says that she wants to go to Nagasaki because then she can move out of her father and stepmother's house without them losing face. She has saved up money from her part-time job working in the library for her college tuition so that she will not have to take any money from her father. And if she doesn'tdoes not live with them she can come visit her grandparents every summer like she did before; then it can be as though the last six years never happened, she says.

The conversation veers towards her parents and her grandmother says that she is glad Yuki wants to see herself and Takeo but that she has to show her parents respect. Yuki retorts by saying that they show no respect to her, her mother or her grandmother. Her grandfather interjects, saying that sometimes you have to show respect before you can expect it. He tries to stand up, then gives up, his cheeks red with effort. Yuki apologizes to everyone, and then runs out of the house.

Outside, in the cold, leaning against the persimmon tree farthest from the house, Yuki thinks of the things she used to do with her grandparents; the hikes she took with her grandfather; how, at night, he had shown her the summer constellations and told her stories about them; and how in the fall he would send dried persimmons to her and her mother.

Mr. Kimura comes outside holding the sea-green jacket Yuki had bought with her own money; she had spent the whole afternoon in downtown Kobe trying to find one that her mother might have bought for her. Yuki apologizes about the scene in the house and Mr. Kimura tells her about the night Shizuko had phoned and told him they could not be

friends. Yuki says she knew already. Mr. Kimura says that he wanted Yuki to be at the wedding because it was as a result of her that he and her aunt had met and that it was the only good thing to come of all the sadness surrounding Shizuko's death.

He asks her if there were not at least boys she liked, but she says no. Because of her routine - running at break, doing cross-country or track practice in the afternoon and then going home for dinner, going to the library, coming home and doing her homework at eleven at night - there was no time to daydream about boys. The only person she had daydreamed about was Sachiko, whom she had seen only a few times since their summer running together. She had become like all the other girls, she wore makeup and walked around with boys.

She says that she doesn'tdoes not think she'llshe will ever want to be in love because half the time it doesn'tdoes not turn out right. Mr. Kimura reveals that he had felt the same way during his first marriage, but that as he got older he had wanted to love someone in spite of the futility of it all and that in a way it meant more because the odds are always against people. Aya comes outside and Mr. Kimura goes to her. Yuki can see how happy they are together. Looking at the sky, she wishes for her mother, her grandfather of ten years ago, someone, to read the sky and name the stars for her.

Chapter 11 Analysis - Winter Sky (February 1975)

Yuki speaks openly of her poor relationship with her father and stepmother and it is because of them that she is going to Nagasaki; she simply wants to get away from them. Her independence and stubborn nature are illustrated by how she has paid for her college tuition all by herself, from money she had saved up over the past few years. She is too proud and too stubborn to take money from her father. Yuki's isolation and loneliness is demonstrated by the busy schedule she keeps. She has no time for socializing or simply relaxing with friends or fawning over boys.

Because of his relationship with Shizuko, there is a close connection between Mr. Kimura and Yuki, and he tells her that one of the reasons he loves Aya is because, at least initially, she had reminded him of Shizuko. In their brief moments togethertogether, it seems almost as though he is more of a father to her than Hideki has ever been.

Yuki's reluctance to fall in love speaks of her own distrust in love and that even though she derives great strength from her independence,independence; it is also something of a pretense. She is scared to love someone again as she had done with her mother in case they, too, leave her. The image of her running endlessly around a track is a metaphor for the endless cycle of pain and abandonment she feels caught up in, while everyone else around her is falling in love. For all her talk about not wanting to love, it is clear that she is lonely and wants desperately to be loved.

Chapter 12 – Gladioli (March 1975)

Chapter 12 Summary - Gladioli (March 1975)

It is after midnight as Yuki creeps into the attic. She had waited until her father and stepmother were sleeping. She is to leave for Nagasaki in two days, having paid her tuition, a month's rent at the rooming house and having just barely enough left over for the train ticket. She can'tcannot afford to send any of her mother's things, but she can pack a small bag to take on the train. She is sure that her stepmother will throw out whatever she doesn'tdoes not take and is surprised she hadn'thad not already done so.

The first item she takes out is a purple kimono with hand-dyed patterns of maple leaves. The last time Yuki had seen her mother wear this kimono was when Yuki had been eleven and her mother had gone to a neighbor's wedding. Next, she takes out a teal-blue dress and then still other dresses, skirts and blouses. Looking at the boxes containing her mother's jewelry she remembers her mother wearing each piece and her aunt Aya packing them all away. Then, before she realizes what she'sshe is doing, she packs everything back.

When she is done she thinks of the afternoon she had to give a three-minute speech to her sophomore class about Monet's painting, *Gladioli.* She spent the three minutes in silence. Whatever was important about the painting could not be said in a speech, not in three hours or in three days. The only true thing she could say, she felt, was nothing. Her mother, like the painting, could not be summed up by a mere sampling of her possessions. To save a few things over the others was to say that her mother could be reduced to one essence and she would not do that.

Climbing back through the trapdoor, she looks at the closet of a room that was her mother's and that her stepmother had now filled with piles of magazines and newspapers. She will do the same to my room, Yuki thinks. Back in her room, she thinks how she and her mother are moving on, away from here.

Chapter 12 Analysis - Gladioli (March 1975)

Yuki's gradual coming of age, her maturity, is displayed here. Whereas before she is reluctant to let her stepmother throw out the last remaining clothes her mother had made for her, here, in this chapter, she has the opportunity to take a number of keepsakes, but decides not to, realizing that it is impossible to distill her mother's essence into a handful of items.

This realization is an important part of her development, as she is essentially letting go of the past, unbound by the physical fetters she had once yearned for. Her mother will be with her in memory and in spirit, and but not in the worthless possessionspossessions she could carry around with her. Yuki is on the cusp of a brand new beginning. Soon, she will leave her father and stepmother behind, and go out on

her own. Her leaving can also be construed as a symbol of how she is finally moving on after the death of her mother; it is a literal as well as metaphoric journey. The tone is one of expectation and upliftment. Yuki is content, despite her sadness, to leave her mother's things behind.

Chapter 13 – Silent Spring (March 1975)

Chapter 13 Summary - Silent Spring (March 1975)

A week after Yuki had left for college, Hideki comes home to find cardboard boxes stacked up outside the door. Asking Hanae about them, she says she feels justified in throwing them out - the boxes from the attic and Yuki's own things - saying that Yuki would have taken them if she wanted them. Hideki says he'she is not so sure and that perhaps she had not taken them because there was no space where she was living.

Hanae is furious with Hideki for not having any authority over Yuki, because she is afraid that the neighbors will think she is a bad stepmother and that it is her that drove Yuki away from the house. Hanae says that from the way Yuki left it's obvious she'llshe will never write to them or ask them for anything and that she wouldn'twould not be surprised if the only time they hear from her is when she graduates or gets married, if she ever does.

Hideki remembers the day Yuki left. She had come downstairs holding her suitcase and said that she'd leave the address of the lodge by the telephone, in case they need to get hold of her, but that they needn't write and that she wouldn'twould not either. She then said that she was calling a cab and that she'd probably never come back to the house again. Then she was gone. All week long Hideki had tried to decide how he felt about Yuki leaving; relief, then annoyance, then guilt at being glad that she was gone. With her gone there would be no more arguments with Hanae unless it was something he had done.

Hanae asks him to burn the boxes, saying that if they leave them for the garbage pickup, the neighborhood kids might take things out and their parents might talk. He says he'llhe will do it after supper. She smiles and says that will be very helpful.

As he watches the fire just beginning to catch, Hideki thinks of how Yuki had not even asked them to come to her graduation - Hanae was furious and expected him to force her to invite them, saying that people will blame her, not Yuki - and how she had left so abruptly after graduation. He wonders if she had wanted the things he was about to burn or if she had left them to forget about her past. Or that perhaps it was too painful to go through them. That was most likely he thought, because Yuki, he felt, had never gotten over her mother's death.

The fire began to smolder and so he would have to feed it from the contents of the boxes. In the first box he finds large envelopes and manila folders of paper and photographs from Yuki's childhood. They burn easily. He thinks of how, as a child, the people in his town celebrated the last day of each year by burning old things they wanted to get rid of. It taught people to put things behind, embrace the new. Someone should have taught Yuki to embrace the new, he thought.

Every time Hanae had threatened to leave him, it was because of Yuki. Hanae blamed him for Yuki being a selfish, spoiled girl. He remembers the first time Hanae threatened to leave: about a year after their marriage, during her supper, Hanae got up from the table saying how the two of them made her sick. Yuki because she was close and sly and Hideki because he was useless. She had gone outside to hail a cab, and he, after grabbing his shoes and jacket, ran after her. She did not resist being brought back. Later that night, after having begged and pleaded with her to say, he saw her take a pair of underwear from her purse and put it back into the drawer; it was all she had taken with her.

Staring at the fire, Hideki tries to picture the way Shizuko used to dress. He cannot. He wonders, even now, whether they should have divorced. But However, that wouldn'twould not have solved anything, because Yuki would still have had to remain with him. He had never had a close bond with Yuki and she brought him nothing but guilt - guilt for her mother's unhappiness, her suicide, about his remarriage, about keeping her away from her mother's family.

In the last box, he finds Shizuko's sketchbook, which she had since the days before their marriage. He decides to send it to Yuki and places it in the desk drawer in his study before going to bed. At two or three in the morning he wakes up, disturbed by something imperceptible. He goes to the study and looks at Shizuko's sketchbook. It is filled with watercolors she had done while watching over him when he was in hospital with tuberculosis. They gave way to pencil sketches of Yuki throughout her infancy and early childhood. Toward the end of the book are watercolors of them at a small cottage in the mountains; the last vacation they had taken together.

He remembers that on the second day of the vacation he and Shizuko had argued about something, he had stomped off and after several hours returned, holding large clusters of hydrangea flowers. He had fallen asleep in the chair and that was when she must have sketched the image of him that now jogged his memory. He holds his head in his hands.

Chapter 13 Analysis - Silent Spring (March 1975)

For Hanae and Hideki too, it is a time of new beginnings. The burning of Shizuko's things and those that she had saved for Yuki is a symbol of cleansing, of eradicating the old in order to forget about them and move on. This chapter is the most revealing yet of Hideki's feelings toward Yuki and the entire ordeal. He had never spent much time at home and she had always seemed quiet and aloof to him. She brings him nothing but guilt. He is glad that she is gone.

However, his actions toward the end of the chapter - unable to sleep, he goes to his study to look at the sketchbook and then holds his head in his hands - are signs that Hideki does possess a modicum of remorse for his past; for his time with Shizuko and Yuki and the mistakes he had made. Try as he might, he can remember very little about

Shizuko, an indictment of how little time he had really spent with her in the intervening years.

This scene is also illustrative of just how little Hideki knows about his daughter. He reasons that she had left the things behind because it would have been too painful to go through. On the contrary, Yuki had left them behind because she has begun to accept her mother's death.

Hanae's treachery and sense of melodrama is revealed when Hideki thinks of the first time she had threatened to leave him. All she had taken in her bag was a pair of underwear. Clearly, she had not intended to go anywhere. Her leaving, as with many things in her life, was simply an act, a façade. So too, it is not Yuki's leaving that concerns her, but the way that it will reflect upon her as a stepmother. Ironically, she says people will think it was her fault Yuki left, and it *is*, at least in part.

Chapter 14 – After the Rain (August 1975)

Chapter 14 Summary - After the Rain (August 1975)

It is five-thirty in the morning and Masa is outside in her garden, tending to the plants. She used to plant very few annuals, but since Shizuko's death she had planted more and moreincreasingly. The two-week drought had killed the flowers that had sprung up after Yuki's visit, which Yuki had spent hours caring for. Masa recalls Yuki's visit and how she was never rude or irritable, and when they disagreed her face was always full of patience, but Masa felt that something was wrong. AndIn addition, she blamed their strained relationship on Yuki's father; if she had been allowed to visit regularly, things would be different. She sees her husband, Takeo, waving on his way to collect eggs from the hen coophencoop.

He had woken up just before six, having dreamt of hundreds of schoolchildren running in a field of pampas grass. Some he had never seen, others had been his students during his forty years as a schoolteacher. Among the children were his own as well as his grandchildren. Just before he woke, he wondered how he could pick out his own children among all of them.

Lately, awake or sleeping, he heard distant noises that sometimes sounded like the wind and other times like children's voices. He thought he might be losing his hearing like the old couple who lived across the road, both of them having been deaf and mute for seven or eight years now. Before the war, Takeo's family had owned all the land east of the river and even now, the elderly couple would bow to him when they met in the street and every year until she became deaf, the woman had brought the best of her crops to Masa. He had tried to discourage her, but she said that their family had always done so.

Fully awake now, he went to the Buddhist altar in the family room, lit an incense stick and closed his eyes. For a momentmoment, his mind was at peace, then againagain, he thought of his children and grandchildren, the woman across the road, his family losing the land, the rainstorm the night before, Shizuko, Yuki,Yuki and Masa. He had thought it would be easy to grow old; he was wrong, he now thought. Opening his eyes, he sees the brightly colored cloth Yuki had dyed during her visit, Shizuko's colors he had thought at the time, and knew then that Yuki would be okay though he could not explain why.

While gathering the eggs, he remembers a time when Yuki was eight. Saburo had caught two buckets of bass whichbass, which Masa cooked for supper. Having seen her uncle scale the fish, Yuki would not eat and made herself a sandwich instead. During her most recent visit, she had told them she had become a vegetarian. She said that she had stopped eating meat or fish because she couldn'tcould not kill anything.

Back inside the house, he sees the wooden slide, on the sun porch, he had built when Shizuko was born. Shizuko would have been forty-six years old he remembered and was suddenly sad. He walks to the kitchen and as he is about to put the basket of eggs down, feels a pain in his chest. Masa comes in behind him, but he cannot speak, nor can he hear what she is saying.

About to leave for her job at a restaurant, Yuki receives a call from her grandmother telling her that Takeo'sTakeo has had a heart attack. Yuki asks if he'she is alright but her grandmothers says no and then asks if Yuki can come for the funeral. She says she'llshe will be there on the first train in the morning. She thinks of a telephone call she had six years ago when she called her grandmother to tell her about Shizuko's death. Her grandmother has asked if it was one of her tricks and she said no, her mother was really dead. Masa had hung up, then called back to say they were leaving right away and would be there before midnight.

Yuki tells Isamu (who was giving her a lift to work on his motorcycle) and he says that maybe she shouldn'tshould not go to work, but she retorts that it's too late to call in. On the bike, she thinks how she should'veshould have spent more time with him and visited him more oftenoften, no matter what her father said. Having arrived, she gets off the bike and Isamu tells her to call him if she needs anything.

At seven 'o' clock, with the restaurant at its busiest, Yuki is overwhelmed and cannot cope with the demands of the bartender and the busboy's insistence that she prepare the check for a family wanting to leave. She tells them to leave her alone, and then explains that her grandfather had died that afternoon. The bartender tells her to take a break, to go outside to the balcony. She goes outside, and looking at the night sky and the stars, remembers that her grandfather had said that looking at the stars with her when she was a little girl was one of his best memories.

Chapter 14 Analysis - After the Rain (August 1975)

Having been prevented from seeing her grandparents for much of the last six years, Yuki has just started visiting regularly when her grandfather dies. The tragedy is not so much in his death (due to his age, it was inevitable) but rather that Yuki has missed out on so much time with her grandparents, and they, in turn, with her.

Even though she is devastated by his death, Yuki's pragmatism is once again displayed. She doesn'tdoes not say as much to her grandmother, but thinks that there is little good in her rushing there right away, it was too late to do anything, she reasons. Still, her grandfather's death occupies her mind throughout the day and night.

Again, flowers are a predominant symbol in the text. Since Shizuko's death, Masa has taken to planting more annuals, whereas before she had mostly tended perennials. An indictment, perhaps, that she too, has come to accept the cycle of life and death. She no longer gleans comfort from the flowers' return every spring, many of which were older than her children were.

Chapter 15 – The Effects of Light (August 1975)

Chapter 15 Summary - The Effects of Light (August 1975)

After the four days she had spent with her grandmother, Yuki is back home in Nagasaki looking at the three black-and-white photographs Isamu had taken of her the day before she left. Watching him as he makes coffee, she remembers the first day they'dthey had met. On the first day of school at the college librarylibrary, he had smiled at her and introduced himself. He had been a year ahead of her and was a native of Nagasaki. In April and May he had shown her the city and the countryside around it and since school got out in June he had been teaching her how to use his camera and develop her own film.

She is tired from the all-night train ride, having only arrived back at six. It is just after nine as they walk outside to sit in the garden. They chat for a while and at ten, Yuki says she has to go back to her apartment to get ready for work. Isamu stands up but his camera falls to the ground; the strap is broken. The buckle had come off. They find the clasp and she shows him how to fix the strap. He puts his arm around her shoulder and pulls her closer, saying he'dhe had thought about her a lot while she was gone. She gets up but he takes her hand and kisses her wrist. She leaves, but looks back and shouts that she'llshe will call him later, after work.

At twelve-thirty, Mr. Sato, a regular customer, comes into the restaurant and is unable to get a table anywhere but in Yuki's section, he decides to wait instead. Yuki is proud of this fact and recalls the day, about a month prior that he had stumbled into the restaurant, drunk. He had dropped his fork and signaled to Yuki to bring him a new one. She was about to put it down when he grabbed her hand and squeezed her fingers. She had brought the fork to his nose and calmly told him to let go, saying that the fork should be sharp enough to break his skin. He let go immediately. When she brought his lunch she told him that, that would be the last time she would wait on him. He had come back occasionally since then, but never sat in her section.

She thinks about her encounter with Isamu that morning, and how she had wanted to sit back down and say that she had thought a lot about him too. ButHowever, he was her best friend and she didn'tdid not want to be in love. Love, she thought, ends in sadness and she doesn'tdoes not want anymoreany more sadness.

Coming back from work, she finds a note on her door saying that Isamu had called and to call him back. AlsoIn addition, a small square package had been left by the door. Inside her room, she unwraps it to find a large blue notebook, Shizuko's notebook. Yuki looks through the pages of the book, remembering the events depicted in them, and thinking how happy they had been back then. Looking at the picture on the last page,

Yuki remembers that her parents had argued and that this one time he had returned with flowers. Looking at the pressed flowers on the page, Yuki thought her mother must have wanted to remember his gesture of apology. She must have still loved him back then, she thought.

Yuki thinks of her grandmother and how she'llshe will suffer for months and years being reminded of her husband by everything around her. Perhaps her grandmother would'vewould have been better off, Yuki thought, if she hadn'thad not loved him in the first place. And yetYet, as she thought of her grandmother she couldn'tcould not stop thinking of Isamu and regretted he would never meet her mother or her grandfather. They would'vewould have liked him.

Looking through the pictures in the sketchbook again, Yuki thinks of Isamu and remembers the first day they'dthey had gone to use his camera and how she had accidentally taken a picture of a heron with the incorrect lens. It had come out blurred, but she liked it the best anyway. Isamu had said it looked like she was taking a picture of light.

She phones Isamu and asks him to meet her in the park. He is afraid that she is angry with him for that morning, but she says she is not. Running to the park, she thinks of the sketches her mother had drawn of her and that her mother would have wanted her to be happy. At the entrance to the park, she sees Isamu who waves, and starts walking over. She decides to be happy, to be with him.

Chapter 15 Analysis - The Effects of Light (August 1975)

The tone of this penultimate chapter is one of triumph and of hope for the future. In spite of the unhappiness that has plagued her teenage years, Yuki at last allows herself an opportunity to be happy. Of course, there are no guarantees that her relationship with Isamu will last, and she had thus far vehemently denied that she was in love but it speaks to her coming of age and how she has grown as a person that she is willing to take that chance, regardless.

Shizuko's notebook inspires Yuki to take the chance with Isamu. Seeing, through her mother's portraits of her, the manner in which Shizuko had always viewed Yuki, as a happy child, she decides that her mother would not want her to be unhappy. In a way, even after her death, Shizuko is still able to influence her daughter. The notebook represents Shizuko's view of her family; the love she once had for her husband and the deep, unending love for Yuki.

Her independence, the very thing that has isolated her and set her apart from those around her, has come to be one of her most valuable assets. Whereas most girls would not know how to deal with the likes of Mr. Sato, Yuki is confident enough to confront and intimidate him.

Chapter 16 – Epilogue (May 1976)

Chapter 16 Summary - Epilogue (May 1976)

On the morning of her seventy-fifth birthday, Masa wakes to the sound of music coming from the nearby schoolyard. Since her husband's death some nine months before, she had taken to sleeping in the family room. The first thing she saw every morning was the Buddhist altar where she honored the spirits of her ancestors, of which Takeo was now one.

She did not think of Shizuko and Takeo as her ancestors, they remained separate from the others: her first-born that had died of measles before the others were born; another son killed in the War; her parents and parents-in-law. She wanted to join Shizuko and Takeo soon so that the three of them could then join the others.

She thought of Yuki who had visited her for two weeks during the spring break. Together they had worked in the garden, and one afternoon Yuki had looked through the kimonos Masa had saved from her younger days. Masa had sold her best kimonos after the family had lost their land after the war, and said Yuki wouldn'twould not want them. Yuki and Isamu were going to learn to sew and she asked her grandmother if she wouldn'twould not mind her changing or cutting them into things she would wear.

Yuki's latest letter had contained a picture of her wearing a quilted vest she had made from one of the kimonos. In the letter she told Masa of her best friend Isamu, whom she said was also her boyfriend and asked if he could come too because she wanted to show him where she grew up. Later that morning, Etsuko would arrive with her four-year old son, Tadashi. Every other day she worked at a factory in a nearby city and left Tadashi with Masa. He did not care for anyone other than his parents but had taken to Yuki, Masa observed, from the first time he saw her.

They arrive and as usual Tadashi spends the first half-hour sulking, drawing on the ground with broken twigs. After breakfast (Tadashi hadn'thad not eaten with Masa ever since he found a dead fly in her cupboard), Masa works in the garden and coaxes Tadashi into helping pull weeds by telling him that he could pretend they were enemy soldiers and behead them. She fetches sticks from the shed and while there sees the bench stored there and remembers how Takeo used to point out the constellations to Yuki and other grandchildren while sitting on it. Returning, she finds that Tadashi has snipped off a number of white chrysanthemums. He says that they died fighting the soldiers. Masa doesn'tdoes not know whether to laugh or scold him.

After lunch, Masa asks Tadashi if he wants to play on the wooden slide Takeo had built shortly after Shizuko's birth. Tadashi did not want to and hadn'thad not played on it since he had seen his grandfather's body at the wake. He always had an excuse: he was too big for it;, there were splinters. Masa convinces him to slide, just once, and then he takes his nap in the family room. While he is sleeping, Masa releases the frogs he

had caught (he did this every time he came to visit) because she does not want them to die. Someone, she thought, had to teach him not to kill.

Releasing them into the garden, she notices a cicada, newly out of its shell. It looked as if it may die. She brings it inside and places it on the altar, deciding that if it is to die, it might as well be where Takeo can see it has been offered to him. All she wants is to join her husband and daughter. She falls asleep next to Tadashi and dreams that Shizuko had driven to her from the city and brought her pink and white peonies and a kimono of silvery gray. When she wakes, she finds Tadashi going up and down the slide over and over again, and the cicada flying around the room. She laughs and cries with joy.

Chapter 16 Analysis - Epilogue (May 1976)

At seventy-five, Masa has outlived both her husband and daughter. Her thoughts are constantly occupied by the two of them and she wants nothing more than to die so that she can be with them. She sleeps in the family room because when she wakes she instantly knows he is gone, instead of thinking momentarily that he is still alive and then feel the crushing realization of the awful truth yet again.

Yuki's 'recycling' of Masa's old clothes speaks yet again to the theme of the continuous cycle of life and death; from the old emerges new. As does the whole encounter with Tadashi and Masa. He is the youngest of the Okuda family, and she the oldest. With death such a dominant theme throughout the novel, this final chapter is a celebration of life. The cicada's survival and Tadashi's playing on the slide are images of vitality and of life and a testament that life goes on no matter what.

Coming inside, and placing the cicada upon the altar Masa can think only of Takeo and Shizuko. She is sad but her tears had seemingly dried up since Takeo's death, she has moved past grief and is simply numb. Seeing, Tadashi playing on the slide and the cicada's survival, however, causes her to cry tears of joy.

The climax, for all intents and purposesessentially, has taken place in the previous chapter. Yuki has come through all her trials and tribulations and emerged from it all a stronger, better person. She may even be happy yet. This final chapter, though, illustrates the commonality between all who suffer loss. Masa too, endures many of the same emotions as Yuki and wants to die, but she too comes to see hope for the future and a chance at happiness.

Characters

Aunt Aya

Aya is Yuki's aunt and Yuki's mother's sister. It is Aya who comes to Yuki's aid as soon as she hears about Yuki's mother's suicide. She helps Yuki prepare herself for the changes that are about to come upon her. It is also Aya who takes Yuki and raises her during the year between Yuki's mother's death and her father's remarriage. Aya becomes a cross between a big sister and a mother figure for Yuki. Aya ends up marrying a former friend of Yuki's mother.

Mr. Kimura

Mr. Kimura is an old schoolmate of Yuki's mother, Shizuko. He appears in a flashback when Yuki recalls seeing her mother express happiness in his presence. At one point in Shizuko's life, it is insinuated, Shizuko may have considered divorcing her husband for Mr. Kimura. However, according to Japanese tradition, Yuki's father could have contested, thus prohibiting Shizuko custody of Yuki had Shizuko gone through with the divorce.

Mr. Kimura appears later in the story when he comes to the house to offer his condolences to Yuki upon her mother's death. It is at that time that he meets Aya, Yuki's aunt. The two form a relationship and eventually announce their plans to marry.

Yuki is allowed to attend the wedding, and it is Mr. Kimura who comes to Yuki after she becomes angry at the wedding dinner table. Mr. Kimura is a sensitive man, and he is able to talk intelligently to Yuki. He confesses to Yuki that he too once thought that sharing love with someone else might not be worth all the pain and confusion. However, he tells her that he finally came to the conclusion that it is better to experience love and its pain than not to experience love at all and that it is worth all the risks involved.

Masa

Masa is Yuki's maternal grandmother. Although there are times when she becomes very angry with her grandmother, Yuki loves Masa very much. Although her father prohibits Yuki from visiting her grandmother very often, Yuki has a lot of memories of spending summers with her mother at Masa's house. It is not too difficult for Yuki to maintain a close relationship with Masa despite how infrequently they are allowed to spend time together.

Masa is very disturbed by her daughter's death. She says that it is very unfair for a daughter to die before her parents. Masa is a traditional Japanese person. She is intelligent and rather open-minded. However, she does not always understand Yuki's emotional outbursts or the way Yuki always seems to get into trouble, such as when she

was a child and climbed up a tall tree and got stuck there, or like the time she ran through a glass door in her attempts to catch an insect. Although Yuki is often angry with Masa, Masa is very forgiving.

When Yuki goes away to college, it is to Masa's home that she returns when she needs to make contact with her familial roots. At one point, Masa gives Yuki all her old kimonos so that Yuki can cut the material and make other types of garments. It is through Masa that Yuki introduces her boyfriend to the family.

Mrs. Murai

Mrs. Murai is Sachiko's mother. Sachiko is a running mate of Yuki's. Mrs. Murai is skeptical of Yuki when she finds out that Yuki's mother died under suspicious circumstances. It is suggested that Mrs. Murai tells Sachiko to end her relationship with Yuki.

Sachiko Murai

Sachiko is one year older than Yuki and attends a different school, but the two girls meet at a sporting event and become friends. They get together every Sunday to run. Sachiko teases Yuki for being so innocent about boys. She also encourages Yuki's confidence in herself. At the end of the summer, Sachiko makes excuses to end her friendship with Yuki.

Isamu Nagano

Isamu is the first boyfriend that Yuki has. Isamu meets Yuki in college. He is a photographer and teaches Yuki how to capture light on film. Isamu is very sensitive and his affections are apparent. He appears at the end of the story and represents Yuki's opening her emotions and trusting someone.

Hanae Okuda

Hanae is Yuki's stepmother. Hanae had a long affair with Yuki's father while he was still married to Shizuko. She is a small-minded person without much education. She is very petty, dictatorial, sneaky, and jealous. She brings havoc into Yuki's life.

Hanae has no need of Yuki and rarely speaks to her unless it is to scold her. She has no interest in what Yuki is doing at school. Hanae is only interested in what the neighbors think, so she keeps her house spotless, lies to cover social errors, and berates Yuki's blunt honesty.

Hanae is told by her doctors that she will never have a child. She is too old, they say, and Hanae blames Yuki's father for making her wait so long before he would consent to

get her pregnant. Hanae does not understand Yuki or Yuki's mother; neither does she comprehend the close relationship between the mother and the daughter. In an attempt to destroy Yuki's memories of her mother, Hanae tries to rid the house of everything that Shizuko ever bought or made. Hanae is not even happy with Yuki's father. She is constantly arguing with him about how careless he is with Yuki in disciplining her.

Hideki Okuda

Hideki is Yuki's father. It is hard to understand Hideki. He rarely shows his emotions, except when he is angry with Yuki, which is often. Other than when he is angry, he usually remains silent. Hideki refuses to allow Yuki to visit her mother's relatives. He never goes to any of Yuki's school events. Although he knows that Yuki is struggling to pay for her college, he never offers to help her. At one time, Hideki appears to have been in love with Shizuko. There is a slight glimpse into his emotions for his first wife when he finds her sketchbook, which Hanae has asked him to burn. Eventually, Hideki sends the sketchbook to Yuki, but he does not include a note explaining his actions.

Shizuko Okuda

Shizuko is Yuki's mother. Although she commits suicide in the first chapter, her presence is felt throughout the novel. Shizuko was an artist. She loved colors and emotions. She loved flowers and things that were different. She encouraged Yuki to be different but often worried about her at school because she was so different.

It is suggested that Shizuko suffered from depression. There are several possibilities for what might have caused this. She was very different from the traditional Japanese woman of her time. She liked to wear vivid colors, whereas her peers wore muted tones. She refused an arranged marriage that her mother had set up with a wealthy family. She moved away from her family and found a job and a man that she thought she could love. She was enthralled with the unusual and shopped at art fairs rather than at department stores. These characteristics set her apart, making her an outsider in her culture, much as Yuki becomes.

Shizuko also knew that her husband was having an affair. She suffered in silence, staying with the marriage even though her husband was seldom home, because she did not want to take the chance that she might lose her child in a custody battle. Shizuko thought it was better, in the end, that she take her own life, thus ridding Yuki of her mother's depressive moods.

Yuki Okuda

Yuki is the protagonist of the story. She is twelve years old when the story opens and she finds her mother dead on the kitchen floor. Yuki is a very bright and very open young woman. She has trouble dealing with the hypocrisy that she sees around her.

Yuki, like her mother, is an artist with a flare for the unusual. This places her outside of her traditional culture, which includes most of her peers.

Yuki suffers through most of her pubescent years because of her mother's death. She does not have anyone who encourages or counsels her. She has no one to turn to when she tries to sort out her emotions. Her father does not support her in any way except that he provides her with a roof over her head and food in the refrigerator.

Most of the time, Yuki suppresses her emotions. However, because she holds in the way she feels, she also has emotional outbursts. She lashes out at everyone around her, including her grandparents whom she loves. She tries to form friendships with her peers, but she is lacking social skills. Her blunt honesty often gets her in trouble.

Yuki is a gifted child in many different ways. She is intelligent and does well at school. Her artistic skills are well known. She is also a talented athlete. Instead of succumbing to the difficulties that face her, Yuki takes the talents and gifts that she has and finds a way out of her predicaments. She fights for her rights and finds a way to attend the college she chooses. By the end of the story, she takes the final step in facing her emotions when she decides to take a chance on learning to love Isamu.

Tadashi

Tadashi is the grandson of Masa and Takeo and a cousin of Yuki's. He appears in the epilogue and represents the continuity of life.

Takeo

Takeo is Yuki's maternal grandfather. He and Masa are husband and wife. Takeo's strongest moment in the story is when he tries to get Yuki to eat while she is visiting his house. When Takeo comes from the garden with a basket full of strawberries, he falls and hurts himself. This makes Yuki aware of how much she cares for her grandfather. Soon after this incident, Takeo dies.

Miss Uozumi

Miss Uozumi is Yuki's piano teacher. Although she never appears in the story, it is because of her tardiness on the day of Yuki's mother's suicide that Yuki does not come home until her mother is dead. Throughout the story, Yuki thinks about what might have happened had Miss Uozumi held the piano lesson on time.

Themes

Death

Either actual death or reference to death is a recurring theme in this story. The novel begins with the suicide of Shizuko, Yuki's mother; this suicide flavors the rest of the story, hanging over all of the events of Yuki's life. Because of her mother's death, Yuki is pushed deeper and deeper into herself. Her mother, who was an artist, encouraged Yuki to think independently. This attitude, however, did not provide Yuki with the skills to deal with the Japanese culture, which disapproved of the concept of the individual. Thus, upon her mother's death, a great support for Yuki's personality also died.

Toward the end of the story, Yuki's grandfather dies. It is at her maternal grandparents' home that Yuki receives the most positive sense of family life. So the death of her grandfather represents yet one more instance where she loses love in her life.

Tradition versus Nonconformity

The timing of this novel corresponds to the budding of women's lib in Japan. The liberation movement in Japan, especially in comparison to the revolution in the United States, is subtle, thus making Yuki's actions and thoughts appear radical.

The traditional role of the woman is very clearly defined in Japan. From the type of clothes she wears and the kind of makeup she applies to her face to the courses she studies if she should decide to go to college, all are dictated to her through a long tradition of social rules. Despite her intelligence, skills, or natural talents, she is expected to marry by a certain age, to give up her profession, and to focus all her efforts on the welfare of her husband and her children. She is also expected to maintain social grace, which often means that she does not express her true feelings.

In *Shizuko's Daughter*, Yuki breaks almost every traditional social rule. She does not understand accepting things just because that is what every other woman has done for thousands of years. She wears brightly colored clothes of original patterns that her artistic mother makes for her. She insists on her right to observe her inclination toward vegetarianism. When she is angry, she speaks her mind. If someone lies to her, she makes him or her aware that she knows the truth is not being told. At the wedding of her father and stepmother, Yuki, during the ceremony of communal sharing of the sake, drops the bowl on purpose to make her feelings toward her father's marriage known. In other words, Yuki fights for her independence, her sense of the individual, something that goes against the grain of Japanese traditions.

Loss

Through death, Yuki loses her mother. But it is more than just her mother that is lost; Yuki also loses her emotional support, her childhood, her optimism, and possibly her closest friend. When her father remarries, Yuki must give up her summers with her maternal relatives. Eventually, her stepmother throws away all of Yuki's clothes, including the ones that Shizuko made for her. Yuki's stepmother replaces everything in the house that represents Shizuko, from the handcrafted dinner plates and bowls to the boxes in which Shizuko saved little mementos from Yuki's childhood.

Yuki acknowledges her tremendous loss upon her mother's death when she shuts herself into her clothes closet. This event symbolizes her eventual closure to the world. With her mother alive, she was encouraged to be different. Having lost her mother, she has also lost her source of confidence. She knows that she is alone. In the dark closet, even though Yuki reaches up to touch the bright clothes, she can no longer see the colors.

With the loss of her mother's love, Yuki also loses her sense of humor. In its place are anger, frustration, and bitterness. While children her age giggle at frivolous things, Yuki lives in a solitary world that is cold and painful. She must learn to take care of herself. Inside her head she must recreate her mother's voice, encouraging her to go on. These tactics are precarious, at best, and often Yuki's anger boils over the top as she lashes out, unable to keep her feelings inside of her. She has lost her buffer. She has no place to go and no person to turn to for help in understanding her emotions.

Style

Setting

Shizuko's Daughter is set in Kobe, a large city on Japan's main island, Honshu. Kobe, a major industrial and cultural center of Japan, is situated on a narrow strip of land that sits between the Inland Sea and a range of mountains. In the course of the story, two other cities are mentioned, Himeji, a much smaller city also located on the main island, and Nagasaki, located on the southernmost island of Kyushu.

Kobe is where most of the story occurs. It is where Yuki, the protagonist, spends most of her time. It is where she lives until she goes away to college. Himeji exists in a more rural environment, and it is Yuki's mother's hometown. It is to Himeji that Yuki goes when she visits her maternal grandparents. Nagasaki is where Yuki goes when she leaves home to attend college. Nagasaki is located on a different island than Kobe, thus giving Yuki a sense of detachment or release from her father and stepmother who still live in Kobe.

As the story is set in Japan, the story reflects the traditional customs of that culture. To understand the emphasis on particular colors in reference to clothes, the reader has to grasp the concept of conformity that is of great importance in Japan. Fitting in without making a spectacle of oneself is very important in the Japanese culture. Yuki's clothes are clearly not clothes that fit in. The role of women in Japanese marriage must also be understood. First there is the accepted practice in Japan of husbands having extramarital affairs. Then there is (more so during the 1970s setting of this story than in more recent times) the social stigma that makes divorce an almost impossible choice. Adding to this is the power that a husband has to claim his offspring should his wife insist on leaving him. Yuki's father also has the right to insist that Yuki not visit her maternal relatives after Shizuko's suicide. This decision is observed by the rest of the family as a normal, accepted practice.

Point of View

Shizuko's Daughter is told through a third person narrator, as if someone were watching what was happening and then relating it to the reading audience. This third person narrator switches point of view from chapter to chapter, sometimes telling the story through the thoughts and vision of Shizuko (Yuki's mother), as in the first chapter, sometimes making observations through Masa (Yuki's grandmother), as in the last chapter. However, most of the story is told by the third person narrator observing life, as well as the internal dialogue, as Yuki expresses it.

Flashback

Most of the chapters in this book begin with the present tense, with the narrator discussing what is happening at that particular moment. It is through the present event that the narrator then remembers something from the past. In this way, the author is able to fill in the details that lead up to the present moment. For instance, since Yuki's mother dies in the first chapter, the narrator, through flashback scenes, relates to the reader the possible reasons for her depression and subsequent suicide. Allowing the audience to view past events helps readers understand Yuki's emotional outbursts, facilitating empathy for the protagonist.

Journal Entries

Although this story is not written in a first person point of view, the use of dates as part of the title of each chapter gives the feeling that this story is written as if it were a journal. Despite the fact that the third person narrator switches from one character to another in various chapters, the specific dates carry over, thus providing a sense that there is some omniscient narrator who is recording the events in a special, universal journal. In this way, the story reads as if it were fact, an actual occurrence.

Historical Context

Japanese Women—Education and Employment

With the booming economy that Japan experienced in the 1960s and 1970s, the role of women saw, in Japanese terms, dramatic changes. Women, who traditionally were married young and stayed home to rear the children, were now finding jobs as the demand for goods and materials soared. Women were beginning to postpone marriage and to take their college education more seriously. There was also a budding awareness of women's rights.

The major role for women in Japan has been, and still remains, that of wife and mother. However, during the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), three legal changes occurred in Japan. First, Japanese women were allowed to pass their nationality to their children (previously this had been a privilege given only to men); second, widows could inherit a larger share of their deceased husband's property; and finally, Japan adopted an Equal Employment Opportunity law.

Before the Equal Employment Opportunity law was passed, most companies would not even consider hiring women who had a degree from a four-year university. It was understood that these women, by the time they reached the age of twenty-five, would be married. Once married, the women would retire from the workforce to stay home, give birth, and raise the children. So it was considered a better economic practice to hire women with only a high school or junior college education. Although the law was passed, Japan's workforce continues to be predominantly male, according to Jane Condon in her article "The Quiet Revolution: Changing Roles of Women," with the largest group of working women still remaining what is called "office ladies" or "office flowers," women who mostly run errands and answer phones.

Japanese Women—Marriage and Children

In Japan there is a saying, writes Condon, "Women are like a Christmas cake—no good after the twenty-fifth." This refers to the belief that all women should be married before they reach the age of twenty-five. If they aren't, pressure is applied by family, friends, and even fellow employees or supervisors. Although the social customs of arranged marriages are not as strict as they once were (only in 1947 did women and men win the right to marriage by mutual consent), a modern version of matchmaking still occurs in what is estimated as one-fourth of all marriages.

Whether Japanese women work or not, the responsibility of raising the children solely rests on the woman's shoulders. In the end, when the children finally leave home, how they function in society is seen as either a credit or a failure on the part of the mother. If a child does well in school and is accepted into the better colleges, it is because the mother has trained the child properly.

Although divorce rates are rising in Japan, there continue to be social pressures on the couple to stay together for the sake of their children. Divorce, especially for the Japanese woman, is considered a social stigma. Because of the fact that few companies rehire women who once quit their jobs to be married and have children and that alimony support is nominal, the economic ramifications of divorce are severe for women.

Japanese Women—Suicide and Depression

Suicide in Japan has a long tradition. The ceremonial *harakiri* was performed historically when someone committed what they thought was an unforgivable social error. In other situations, Japanese warriors committed suicide that symbolized loyalty or sacrifice. However, in modern times, much like in other countries around the world, suicide is most often committed due to severe depression.

During the 1950s, Japan ranked within the top five countries with the highest suicide rates in the world. Although this ranking has dropped over the years, the number of women committing suicide has risen. The number one reason for female suicide is depression. In Japan, despite its modern facade, there remain social taboos on seeking help from mental health professionals. To go to a psychiatrist is to admit that one is crazy.

Japanese women often receive mixed messages from their society. The traditional rules dictate that a woman marry, stay home, and raise children, whereas the modern, technological world encourages a woman to be bold and go out into the world and work hard in college so she can partake in the business world. However, if a woman decides to pursue a profession and delay her marriage, she is ostracized. If, on the other hand, she pursues a college education but retires from the business world when she marries, she feels that she has wasted all her efforts. Managing a house and rearing children, with modern devices available to help her, do not consume as much of her time and effort as they might have for her grandmother. Since business does not look favorably upon women who want to return to work after their children are in school, the only outlet women find are school-related events such as membership in the local PTA or taking on a somewhat unfulfilling part-time job. If a woman should pursue this route, she must not only work outside of her home, but she must also continue full responsibility of the home and the children, as the husband is not required to share in domestic chores.

Added to these pressures are social traditions that demand that a woman "look the other way" in relation to her husband's extramarital affairs. In addition, men who want to climb the economic ladder are required not only to work long hours but also to socialize after work, often drinking until late and returning home exhausted. These factors create pressures in a marriage, leaving many women either feeling unfulfilled or overwhelmed with domestic detail. Without an outlet, these conditions can lead to depression and eventually suicide.

Critical Overview

Mori's writing has captured the attention of literary reviewers. She has also gained their respect as a writer. Praise comes from a wide range of sources, such as John Philbrook, writing in the *School Library Journal*, who describes Mori's writing as "beautiful and sensitive prose [that] evokes a world of pungent memories and harsh realities." *Kirkus Reviews* claims that *Shizuko's Daughter* is a "beautifully written book about a bitterly painful coming of age" and concludes that her book marks a "splendid debut." Following in this same line of praise, the *Horn Book Magazine*'s Nancy Vasilakis describes Mori's first published book as a "skillfully structured novel." Vasilakis then goes on to state, "Mori paints beautiful pictures with words, creating visual images that can be as haunting and elliptical as poetry." Rounding out this criticism of Mori's first published writing is a *Publisher's Weekly* review that declares Mori's book to be a "quietly moving novel" that depicts "keen imagery," as Mori pays attention to details that "produce an emotionally and culturally rich tale tracing the evolution of despair into hope."

Mori has published several books since *Shizuko's Daughter*, and the reviews continue to come out in her favor. Hazel Rochman, writing in *Booklist*, states that in Mori's second young adult novel, *One Bird*, "Mori writes with subtlety and drama." Mori's memoir, *The Dream of Water*, published in 1994, is "beautifully written,"according to a *Publishers Weekly* reviewer. Mori's second book of memories, *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught Between Cultures*, is reviewed in *Booklist* where it states that Mori "sensitively examines" the cultural differences between Japan and the United States through the use of "exquisite language." Kay Meredith Dusheck, writing in the *Library Journal*, states that Mori's second memoir shows "the insight evident" in her previous works and describes this book as a "strong collection [that] binds one woman's old country with her new one."

As Mori continues to publish, the reviews about her books continue to assure her that she is doing a great job. Although she is sometimes criticized for ruminating over the same themes in most of her works—those of separation, loneliness, and loss—her ability to write gracefully and simply is never in question.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Hart has degrees in English literature and creative writing and is a published writer of literary themes. In this essay, Hart ponders the symbolic significance of the last chapter, or epilogue, of Mori's novel.

Only two sections out of the sixteen that make up Kyoko Mori's novel *Shizuko's Daughter* are written without the appearance of the protagonist, Yuki: the first chapter, during which Yuki's mother commits suicide, and the last, referred to as the epilogue. Although it is quite evident why Mori might have chosen not to include Yuki in the chapter about her mother's final moments, it is curious that she decided, after devoting all the other chapters to her protagonist, not to include Yuki in the epilogue. Instead, the focus in the last chapter is on the character Masa, Yuki's grandmother. It is through Masa's vision and reflection that the novel ends. The abrupt transition of the epilogue may be unsettling, leaving the reader wondering why the protagonist has disappeared. However, upon closer reading, the symbolism becomes evident, allowing the reader to conclude that the story has come to a perfect ending.

The epilogue begins on the morning of Yuki's grandmother's seventy-fifth birthday. Masa is Yuki's maternal grandmother, the adult who, more clearly than any other character, represents a loving parental figure for Yuki. Upon awaking on her birthday, Masa's vision first takes in the family altar. This altar is a shrine to all her ancestors and relatives who have died before her. Besides having lost her husband, Masa has also lost some of her children, among them Yuki's mother. The narrator describes Masa's thoughts as she looks at the altar and remembers other mornings when she ritualistically placed offerings on the altar. When she married her husband, the ancestors to whom she made offerings were like "a large white cloud," Masa remembers. In other words, when she was young, the word *ancestors* was more or less an abstract concept that covered intangible feelings. However, now that she is seventy-five, having lived a long life, faces and memories are attached to that word. In particular, she thinks specifically about her husband, Takeo, and her daughter, Shizuko.

By creating this scene, Mori has brought her story full circle. Having begun with the death of Shizuko and then having made Masa, at the end, reflect on the death of her daughter brings the reader back to the beginning of the story. Mori doesn't stop there, however. She not only takes the reader back to the opening events, but she also encourages the reader to reflect on the entire passage of the story from beginning to end. By having Masa think about the two major deaths in Mori's tale, the suicide of Yuki's mother and the death of Yuki's grandfather (which occurs near the end of the novel), the reader travels, via Masa's thoughts, from the events of the opening pages of this book through all but the final passages. In this way, in just the first two paragraphs of the epilogue, Mori has created a short but concise summary of her story. She does not, however, conclude her story there.

There is something else going on in the epilogue. The tone of this segment, although it resounds with the idea of death, reflects something more uplifting, more positive.

Throughout the preceding chapters of the novel, the overall tenor is that of sadness, loneliness, frustration, and anger. However, here, in the epilogue, a sense of rebirth and hope exists.

In the first sentences of this final section, Mori has Masa wake up to music and "painted images of Buddha in his various manifestations." Both music and the Buddha can be said to represent the full spectrum of emotions behind the variety of challenges that life presents. Music is played at weddings as well as at funerals, for instance. In addition, as if to emphasize that there are several ways to look at the circumstances of life, Mori refers not just to a single version of the Buddha but rather to all his various expressions; thus, the mood of this novel has changed, the focus has altered, and it is hinted that rather than looking at life through a haze of gloom, this chapter is going to take on some other aspect. Just as Masa has "taken to sleeping in the family room" since her husband died so that she can "forget momentarily" that he no longer is there with her, Mori, too, changes her point of reference.

Continuing with this theme of change, Mori has Masa rise from her bed, and, as the grandmother folds her futon, she gazes at its quilted cover. The quilt has been made from many different kimonos that her children wore when they were children, when they were teenagers, and when they were young adults. This leads Masa to remember other kimonos, too. The last time Yuki visited her, Masa had given her granddaughter some of her old kimonos, which Yuki then took back to school with her and transformed into vests. Taking these old materials (as well as the memories surrounding them) and turning them into something else more useful symbolizes the changes that Mori is attempting to relate. Mori also has Yuki send a photograph to Masa, showing off the new vests she has made. "I wanted to wear the same things you did," Yuki writes to her grandmother, "only in a different way."

Masa next prepares herself for the arrival of her grandson Tadashi. Upon mentioning the child's name, Mori makes a connection between Tadashi and Yuki, by having Masa remember, "Yuki was the only person he seemed to like from the first time he saw her." Tadashi is a sullen child. His moods, much like Yuki's throughout the previous chapters, are heavy and mournful. He is also prone to fighting children his age, and that is why his grandmother must watch him while his mother goes to work. At first, when Tadashi arrives, the mood of death prevails.

While Masa works in the garden, Tadashi catches tiny frogs and places them inside a tightly sealed jar where they wait for their imminent suffocation. Masa tries to distract him from his endeavors when she suggests that he help her clear the garden by pretending the weeds are enemy soldiers whom Tadashi must decapitate. This mood shifts when Tadashi takes a nap and "his mouth, so often distorted sullenly while he was awake, relaxed in his sleep and his face was flushed from the morning in the sun." At this point, Masa looks over at the jar full of frogs. She feels sorry for them and, tired of the thought of death, she opens the lid and, while Tadashi sleeps, releases the frogs.

From this point, the epilogue turns to symbols of birth. First, Masa sees a cicada, which has just risen from the earth. Having cast away its larval shell, it is drying its new form

on the screen of one of Masa's windows. Later, when Masa lies down for a nap, she thinks about another of her birthdays, when Shizuko was still alive. Her daughter had brought her flowers and a new kimono made of silk that Shizuko had wrapped around her mother in soft layers "like a cocoon." These images of rebirth and transformation stand in stark contrast to the earlier images of death and sadness. They are positive and hopeful symbols that lead to the final scene.

Masa awakens from her nap to the noise of Tadashi running up the steps of an old wooden slide that Masa's husband made many years previously for her own small children. Tadashi had been afraid of the slide, concerned that it might give him splinters and then worried that he was too big for the slide and might break it. Before taking his nap, Masa encouraged Tadashi to try out the slide, which he did once before going into the house. As the story ends, however, Tadashi is filled with enthusiasm, running and sliding down the slide "in an almost frenzied circle of movement." Watching him, Masa sees all her children running and sliding, "laughing and chattering." The epilogue ends with Masa laughing and crying "copious tears, until her chest and shoulders ached from joy."

It is through this scene that Mori ends her story. Here is a child (who could represent Yuki, in particular, or the future, in general), who has overcome his fear and, at least momentarily, his anger and sorrow. The circle of children, like the circle from birth to death, the circle from the beginning of the story to its culmination, is capable of causing a full range of emotions. Sometimes those emotions become so entangled that it is hard to sort them out, to separate them. Often they are so closely related that they all come out at the same time in the form of tears. In the epilogue, Mori appears to be telling her readers (and maybe even reminding herself) that even though life may contain many difficult challenges, people should not give up hope. It is possible that she could not convey this message to Yuki whom she may have believed still had to learn this lesson. Masa, on the other hand, who has lived through many more experiences and who is preparing for her own death, has the wisdom that is required to transform even death into something as positive as peace. It is on that note that the novel ends, presenting a conclusion that rises above depressing emotions and offering an absolute contrast to the opening tragic scene, thus giving the overall effect of a perfectly balanced rhythm.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on *Shizuko's Daughter*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Critical Essay #2

Dupler has published numerous essays and has taught college English. In this essay, Dupler shows how symbolism is related to memory and time in a novel.

For as long as novels have been written, novelists have grappled with the issue of how to portray the passage of time in their stories. In the nineteenth century, novelists frequently used the epic form of the novel, creating sweeping stories that take place over long expanses of time with actions occurring mainly in chronological order. This form was used by authors such as Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, Jane Austen, and countless others. Novelists have also experimented with other ways of dealing with time in novels. In the early twentieth century, James Joyce wrote a long, complex story that takes place in only one day, in the landmark modern novel, *Ulysses*. Joyce told his story with the realization that people, at any moment, have access to vast portions of time through the process of memory and recollection. Kyoko Mori's novel, *Shizuko's Daughter*, has aspects of both of these ways of dealing with time in storytelling. This novel proceeds chronologically from beginning to end, showing various points in the six years that pass in the lives of the main characters. Within this linear passage of time, the characters are also able to move around in time, as they remember past events.

Shizuko's Daughter begins with its most affecting event: Shizuko, an unhappy wife and mother, commits suicide. The first chapter begins with a date, "March 1969," as do the remainder of the chapters, which proceed chronologically and inform the reader of the passage of time. The novel is told from a third-person point of view, which allows insights into the thoughts and memories of the characters. The structure of the novel relies on narrative flashbacks to inform the reader of the depth of experience and emotions of the main characters. These flashbacks are triggered by objects that symbolize events of the past.

As Shizuko acts out her tragedy in the first scene, many of the important symbols of the following story are introduced. First, there is nature, which serves as a backdrop and an influence for the characters and their emotions. Dreamily, Shizuko thinks of "white cherry blossom petals that were blowing about in the wind." She remembers the "rainy morning" of her mother-in-law's death, while the smell of gas "reminded her of the tiny yellow flowering weeds that had grown near her parents' house." In this first scene, there are also several references to clothing, such as Yuki's "pink spring dress," and the pieces of cloth from Yuki's new skirt, which remind her of "butterfly wings." Near her end, Shizuko imagines Yuki in this new skirt, which would flutter in the wind "like the sail of a new ship." Throughout the remainder of the novel, these particular symbols—nature, flowers, and clothing—appear again and again, serving as markers that connect the present moment of the characters to this major emotional event of the past.

One day after her mother's death, clothing begins to symbolize the drastic change that has just occurred in Yuki's life. Her Aunt Aya begins folding her mother's clothes, which "hung limp," representing death. Yuki has also seen the clothing for the new dress her mother had been making, which leads her to question why the suicide happened.

Things no longer fit correctly in Yuki's world, down to the fact that she cannot pick the correct clothes for the funeral. As her aunt goes through her clothes to find an appropriate dress, Yuki feels "utterly humiliated." Yuki understands that her life has irrevocably changed when she cannot bring herself to zip up her new dress, and she finally collapses in her closet of clothes. A year later, at her father's wedding, Yuki is still plagued by this ill-fitting event: the dress she wears makes her itch. Throughout the rest of the story, clothing remains a central symbol connecting the present to the past, and Yuki saves the clothing her mother had made for her until the very end. Yuki accesses the clothing when she needs to sort through her memories.

In this novel, objects in nature serve to symbolize past events and provide a backdrop for the emotions of the characters. In recalling an important conversation with her mother before her suicide, Yuki thinks of the rain, which "was coming down with enough force to shatter the fragile cups of flowers." These memories have shattered the innocence of Yuki. Flowers play a particularly symbolic role in the novel. During her father's wedding, Yuki can "almost smell the wisteria blossoms," which makes her remember her mother and question her father. She wants to ask him: "Can't you remember . . . the scent of flowers and green leaves" that reminds her so much of her mother. In another scene, Yuki recalls working with flowers alongside her mother. Her mother had said, "I always wondered if the dead people can really smell those flowers," which made Yuki feel "a chill down her back," so flowers, for Yuki, are associated with fear and death. The symbolism of the flowers has many layers. The chrysanthemums smell like funerals. The violas are hardy plants that "bloom and multiply on their own," just as Shizuko claims Yuki would do if she were no longer alive. Yuki associates irises with guilt, because she had thought of irises when her mother asked her if Yuki could survive without her. Whenever Yuki is plagued by the thought of not having said redeeming words to her mother, she thinks of irises: "When the irises faded, they shriveled into themselves like punctured balloons and dried up." When Yuki understands the difficulty of living with grief, she takes strength in the flowers, remembering that: "Her mother was right about the flowers. They were hardy."

The use of flowers as symbolism continues throughout the novel. When Yuki meets Sachiko and her mother during a track meet, flowers serve as pointers to memories of her own mother. Yuki suddenly remembers that "her mother had shown her how to pick an azalea blossom." Yuki's memories are still overwhelming at this point in the story; on the flowers "there were spots of intense sweetness" and Yuki wishes she could "suffocate with their sweetness." Flowers also symbolize changes to the characters in the story, or reflect upon their mental states. When Yuki senses her friendship with Sachiko is fading, she notices that "petals had begun to curl at the edges. Soon, the frost would break them into a pile of broken stems."

Symbolism also plays a part in describing the subtle transitions that characters undergo in the novel. In her school, Yuki is afraid of dissecting frogs in science class, thinking, "it's wrong to cut open something," and claiming she already knows what she'll "find inside." On a symbolic level, this is another way for her to say that she has been avoiding going inside herself. It is at this point in the story that Yuki begins her own healing work of coming to terms with her hidden memories and with her mother's death.

She has decided to begin sketching pictures of the clothes that her mother had made for her. She goes at this sketching project with energy because "she didn't want to forget anything." Moments later, Yuki confronts another fear, by stealing the jar of dead frogs from the science room, which have a smell that "reminded her of standing outside the crematorium while her mother's body was burned." Releasing the dead frogs from the jar is the same as releasing her own bottled-up memories; she is forced to confront the things that have been closed off for so long. It is interesting that one of the scenes near the end of the book also uses this same symbol of frogs, only the frogs in the jar are alive, having been found by Masa's grandchild, showing the change from despair to hope that has taken place.

Symbols are also important to other characters remembering their pasts throughout the novel. Yuki's stepmother, Hanae, "couldn't stay in the attic for more than five minutes" without being overwhelmed by unpleasant memories of her secret affair with Yuki's father. Hanae is so plagued by memories that she compulsively cleans and dusts the house, keeping it clear of objects that might trigger recollection. Beneath her compulsion lies the sad thoughts that she cannot have a child, as well as jealousy and anger toward Yuki and her father. Hanae finally breaks down and destroys a set of pottery that Yuki's father had saved for Yuki, one of the last heirlooms left from Yuki's mother. However, it is more than just pottery, on the symbolic level: "broken pieces filled the sink while Hanae counted her grievances against the living and the dead." Yuki's father has "never told Yuki that he was saving the tea set for her." When these characters repress their memories, the symbols for them become intolerable. Hanae also violates Yuki's memory of Shizuko by destroying the clothing that her mother had made for her. These memory cues are so powerful for the characters that they cause violence, such as when Hanae pushes Yuki down the stairs when taking away Yuki's old clothes.

Throughout the novel, Yuki's father, Hideki, is portrayed as distant, silent, and uncaring. One of the only times that he shows feelings for Yuki is near the end of the story, after Yuki has moved out, when he is reluctant to destroy Yuki's belongings. Hideki finally carries out Hanae's request to destroy the boxes; while handling these mementos, he is flooded with memories: of childhood, of Yuki, and of his former wife. He is destroying these items, ultimately, because he is plagued by a "useless sense of guilt." Hideki finds a book of Shizuko's sketches and secretly looks through it. Dried flowers are pressed between the pages and are all that is left of a relationship that was once sweet and filled with living flowers. Reminiscing, Hideki "was staring at the brittle flowers, the memory escaping him and leaving him with nothing but faded ink smudges." The last image of Hideki in the book is one of pain and despair; he can no longer avoid the many symbols that force him to confront his memories and his past.

Just as nature contains symbols that remind the characters of the painful events of the past, nature also displays promising symbolism. Near the end of the novel, Masa thinks to herself that it is "a wonder that the flowers came back every year." This sentence has a dual meaning. The flowers still remind her of Shizuko, as she recalls the lavender that "bloomed profusely" the year after her daughter's death. Memories of this event come back every year. At the same time, these flowers represent renewal, healing, and the

indomitable living force of nature. Takeo reaffirms this metaphor, because when "he looked at the irises now, he knew again that Yuki was going to be all right." Despite the tragic event, he realizes that "Yuki had not changed all that much," just like the perennials that appear the same each year. After Yuki hears of Takeo's death, "flowers floated into Yuki's memory," and she, as well, is confronted by symbols of recollection. Nature helps Yuki understand her own healing process, and her own relationship with time, as when she reflects on the persimmon fruit that her grandfather had given her. At first, the "fruit was bitter when it came off the tree," but "Yuki and her mother would eat them through the winter, reminders of their summer in the country." Nature turns in cycles, and the bitterness of the past can have a purpose and can be transformed.

Yuki's identification with symbols and their relationship with memory has a major effect on her life: she decides to be an artist, a person who works with symbols, emotions, and memories. She is eager to go away to school, "then it would be as though the last six years had never happened." However, as she is packing up her things, Yuki comes to understand that she cannot simply forget the past six years, because her memories are still attached to the objects around her. Yuki has a flashback to a presentation she gave at school on a painting by Monet. Looking at the painting, or the symbols of an artist's memory, Yuki realizes that whatever "was important about the painting could not be put into speech." This realization comes at the same time Yuki decides to leave all her mother's things behind. At last, Yuki comes to terms with the memories that these physical objects symbolize. She no longer has to either avoid or sanctify the objects, because "[t]hese things were not necessary for her to go on remembering." Then she realizes that she and her mother "are moving on," leaving behind "nothing but empty spaces" that are "turning green," or regenerating and renewing once again, just like nature.

In the end, Yuki is living independently at college and getting on with her life. Her interest in photography shows the new relationship she has with objects and memories. Before, she was committed to sketching the symbols that reminded her of her mother, which indicated her need to control the symbols that had such a power over her memory. Her new interest in photography shows a change; she can now confront the present in its clearest terms, and she is committed to facing the world as it is, no longer filtering it through her own perceptions, but "taking pictures of the surrounding light."

Source: Douglas Dupler, Critical Essay on *Shizuko's Daughter*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

Topics for Further Study

Shizuko, the mother in Mori's *Shizuko's Daughter*, suffered from depression. Write a research paper on the topic of depression. What are some contemporary causes of depression, and what are the medical and therapeutic treatments for this disease? Also look into the social implications of depression. Are there any taboos on the discussion of this disease? What are the personal ramifications of depression in terms of its affect on family members?

Suicide is a topic that has been covered in many different literary works. Find at least two poems or one other novel or short story that deals with this topic and compare them to *Shizuko's Daughter*. Suggestions include some of Sylvia Plath's poems, Susanna Kaysen's book, *Girl Interrupted*, and William Styron's memoir, *Darkness Visible*.

Research the traditional role of Japanese women. Has that role changed since World War II? How has Western culture affected Japanese women? How do the lives of women living in the United States compare with the lives of Japanese women?

Read Kyoko Mori's memoir *The Dream of Water*, which offers more insight into the background from which her novel was written. Then write a poem to Mori, expressing your feelings about one of the main topics that has ruled her life; it could be based on her mother's suicide, her father's or her stepmother's mistreatment of her, or the alienation that Mori has felt as an outsider from her traditional and inherited culture.

What Do I Read Next?

Mori has written two memoirs. The first one, published in 1995, is *The Dream of Water*. This memoir covers Mori's trip back to Japan, thirteen years after moving to the United States. As Mori travels back to her homeland, she also travels back through her memories, many of the same memories that triggered her writing the novel *Shizuko's Daughter*. Although the novel and memoir differ slightly from one another, the reader is given a fuller and even more dramatic glimpse into the psychological challenges that Mori has faced in coming to grips with her mother's suicide, her father's callous response to her, and her stepmother's immature attempts to keep Mori disconnected from her maternal relatives.

Mori's second memoir, *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught between Cultures* (1997), includes twelve essays that deal with Mori's observations of the role of women as seen through her experiences with her native Japanese culture and her adopted American culture. She writes about the effects of language and social customs, the role of women in the family, how women relate to their bodies, and how women in both cultures deal with their drive to improve their status through education and professional experience.

Another novel written by Mori is called *One Bird* (1995). It tells the story of a teenage girl whose mother decides to divorce her father and return to her family's village. According to Japanese tradition, this estranges the mother from her daughter, as her husband forbids any contact between the two. The story is written as if Mori is thinking through the possibilities of what might have happened if her own mother had not committed suicide but had only physically removed herself from her husband. In other words, this novel is a different take on the circumstances of her first book, *Shizuko's Daughter*.

Walk Two Moons (1994), by Sharon Creech, is a Newberry Medal winner and tells the story of a teenage girl's attempts to find her mother who has suddenly disappeared. As the young protagonist travels to Idaho with her grandparents, she exposes her hidden emotions about the loss of her mother by telling a story of a friend who has gone through similar experiences. Although the topic of the story is sad, the grandparents offer a loving and humorous touch. This is a story about loss and the rites of passage into adulthood.

A collection of poems compiled from across many different cultures of the world and focused on the theme of loneliness, *Pierced by a Ray of Sun: Poems about the Times We Feel Alone* (1995) is a great companion to anyone who has ever felt as if he or she were the only person alive. This collection contains beautifully crafted poems from masters such as May Sarton, Emily Dickinson, Adrienne Rich, Carl Sandburg, and Rainer Maria Rilke. The variety of poetic voices offers inspiration and hope during times of despair and sadness.

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1982) tells the story of a young woman living in Canada whose mother returns to Japan to visit her family right before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Because of this incident, the mother is trapped in Japan and cannot return to her family. The young girl, along with the remaining members of her family, is then forced to move to a relocation camp until the end of the war. The story is told in reflection and covers her feelings of loss and the mistreatment of Japanese people during World War II.

If you have ever considered writing your own memoir, a good place to start might be to read Denis Ledoux's *Turning Memories into Memoirs: A Handbook for Writing Lifestories*. Ledoux doesn't do all the work for the writer, but his book is capable of heading any potential memoir author in the right direction. He offers insight and inspiration for writers attempting to overcome the fears and challenges of delving into old memories to create a good book.

Further Study

Fine, Carla, *No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One*, Main Street Books, 1999.

Fine personally experienced the suicide of someone she loved, and this book reflects the battle that ensued as she tried to cope with her emotions. Using not only her personal experience, but also advice from professionals in the field of mental health, Fine writes about the full range of emotions, including guilt, anger, and confusion, that confronts a person who is forced to experience the death of someone close to him or her, in particular, death by suicide with the complications caused by social taboos on the subject.

Leonard, Linda Schierse, *The Wounded Woman: Healing the Father-Daughter Relationship*, Shambhala Press, 1999.

As a Jungian analyst, Leonard examines the relationship between daughter and father as a key to self-understanding. Using examples from her own life and those of her clients, Leonard exposes the problems and conflicts that can arise from the bond created in this relationship.

Lippit, Norika Mizuta, ed., *Japanese Women Writers: Twentieth Century Short Fiction (Asia and the Pacific)*, M. E. Sharpe, 1991.

This is a collection of fourteen short fictional works, translated by the editors, that reveal the range and degree of women writers' participation in modern life and in the historical development of modern Japanese literature. The book is a good overview of the various topics and styles of modern Japanese women writers.

Morley, Patricia A., *The Mountain Is Moving: Japanese Women's Lives*, New York University Press, 1999.

Morley wraps together current fiction, government data, and interviews of women living in Japan to examine the most relevant issues facing women in that culture. She asks Japanese women to answer tough questions as they reflect on the advantages as well as on the ancient cultural taboos that guide their lives. This is an excellent introduction into what it means to grow up female in Japan.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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