

Short Story Masterpieces Study Guide

Short Story Masterpieces by Robert Penn Warren

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

[Short Story Masterpieces Study Guide.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

['Impulse', 'A Bottle of Milk for Mother', and 'The Egg'.....3](#)

['Torch Song', 'Witch's Money', and 'An Outpost of Progress'.....5](#)

['The Third Prize', 'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky', 'Open Winter', and 'Barn Burning'.....8](#)

['Winter Dreams', 'Soldier's Home', and 'The Tree of Knowledge'.....11](#)

['The Boarding House', 'Liberty Hall', and 'The Horse Dealer's Daughter'.....13](#)

['Virga Vay & Allan Cedar', 'Marriage A La Mode', and 'The Outstation'.....15](#)

['Cruel and Barbarious Treatment', 'The Sojourner', 'The Open Window', and 'My Oedipus Complex'.....17](#)

['Innocence', 'The Nightingames Sing', 'Flowering Judas', 'The Valliant Woman', and 'The Eighty Yard Run'.....20](#)

['A Country Love Story', 'Flight' and 'A Red-Letter Day'.....24](#)

['A Spinster's Tale', 'You Could Look It Up', 'Why I Live at the P.O.' and 'The Use of Force'.....26](#)

[Characters.....29](#)

[Objects/Places.....38](#)

[Themes.....40](#)

[Style.....42](#)

[Quotes.....44](#)

[Topics for Discussion.....46](#)



'Impulse', 'A Bottle of Milk for Mother', and 'The Egg'

'Impulse', 'A Bottle of Milk for Mother', and 'The Egg' Summary

In 'Impulse,' Michael Lowes begins by standing before a mirror. As he and his friends play cards later and drink, they talk about impulsive behaviors such as stealing. Michael remembers stealing a conch shell from a neighbor as a child. After the card game, Michael stops at the drugstore and steals a razor set, but is immediately caught, and taken into police custody. Michael attempts to pass the theft off as a bet among friends, but his friends refuse to vouch for him. Dora, his wife, arrives to see him in jail, and is cool and distant. He realizes the years of lies has left her resentful, but Michael feels betrayed. In court, he is sentenced to three months in jail. A few weeks later, Dora informs him she has filed for divorce. As Michael thinks over his life, he is convinced he is a good man whom fate has looked down on in the end.

'A Bottle of Milk for Mother' opens with Bruno 'Lefty' Bicek being interrogated by police about his involvement with a local robbery. Captain Kozak questions the young Polish boy, and after pushing, he admits he and his friends saw an older man cashing his check. He followed the man, who was drinking, and tried to take his money. Lefty admits he had a gun and that he fired at the ground to make the man scared. Kozak notes that the man is dead, having perished from a gunshot wound to the groin. Lefty claims he was by himself. Sergeant Adamovitch thinks of how low class this Polish boy is in comparison to himself. When Lefty tries to pass off that he can't be in too much trouble, the police laugh at him. When he tries to escape, no one pays attention, other than to put him in a cell. He thinks to himself that he always knew he would not make it to twenty-one.

In 'The Egg,' the narrator's father is a kind man, but he attempts many failed businesses to please his wife. First, the couple tries chicken farming, where his father collects the monstrosities of the chicken farm. Next, his father attempts the restaurant business. Even when the hours are extended, however, the restaurant does not do well, and father decides he should be happier to customers. One night, a young man named Joe Kane enters the cafe, and spends time waiting for his father. Father, now eager to try out his new cheerfulness attempts to entertain the boy. He tells him stories of eggs, and attempts to do several tricks with eggs that fail. He also shows Joe the monstrosities of chicks. When the train Joe is waiting on arrives, Father, still trying a trick, breaks an egg all over himself, and Joe laughs. Father throws him out, comes up to the apartment, and weeps. The narrator notes the pending question of why the egg must exist, remains on his mind.



'Impulse', 'A Bottle of Milk for Mother', and 'The Egg' Analysis

'Impulse' is a story that shows the drastic consequences of self-deception. Throughout the story, Michael convinces himself he is a good person, who is plagued by bad luck, unloyal friends, and a resentful wife. He is, according to his beliefs, simply a man who has too many responsibilities, too much debt, and whom fate frowns on. However, Michael clearly isn't a good person from the get go. He lies to his wife and children, skips out on rent and bills, moves his family to avoid debt, and is generally a man who cares little for others. His impulsive act, as he believes the theft of the razor to be, is clearly just an extension of his true personality. He has stolen before, as is shown in the story of the shell, and had he learned his lesson at that time, he may have been able to overcome his compulsive behaviors as an adult. However, Michael is clearly a naturally impulsive individual who is unable to look beyond the immediate to see long term consequences. As a result, Michael loses his friends, his wife, his children, and his freedom.

'A Bottle of Milk for Mother' is a story of a young, tough boxer of Polish descent who struggles between his identity as a gang member and his own future. Caught robbing an older Polish man, Lefty at first takes pride in his accomplishments, as it is clear the police in the beginning think of him as knowledgeable, and know him among the other thugs in the neighborhood. He prides himself in his identity, and seeks to show his toughness by his assertion that he acted alone. However, it is this very assertion that lands him further in trouble, as he is given an out by police to blame another, but he refuses. Further, Lefty's belief in his roots as a good Polish boy are precisely the same roots that alienate him from the police. Adamovitch clearly thinks of himself as better than Lefty, and Kozak's terminology of 'gang' 'jackroller', and other derogatory terms shows he too believes Lefty is a loser. These attitudes lead he and the other officers to quickly dismiss Lefty as a criminal, and a lost cause. Lefty is left to know his own pride in his identity have led him to his demise.

'The Egg' deals with both success and failure. The egg in the story represents the birth of hope, and new ideas, but as the narrator notes, the egg is just the beginning of a long, hard life of the chicken, and one that rarely comes to fruition. In the story, too, the hope of the father and the mother to become successful is ripe, but the reality is difficult, and often leads only to despair. Father is not a bad man, but his own inner drive to satisfy his wife leads him astray. He nears insanity as his ambition overtakes logic, and his own failure becomes his undoing. The author seems to be suggesting that the fall of the Father in the story is based not in his inabilities, but in his struggle to achieve.



'Torch Song', 'Witch's Money', and 'An Outpost of Progress'

'Torch Song', 'Witch's Money', and 'An Outpost of Progress' Summary

'Torch Song' begins with a note that Joan Harris, Jack Lorey's friend, reminds him of a widow. Joan and Jack are from the same town in Ohio and meet in New York. They are close, at first, but over time their friendship drifts apart. Over several years, during random sightings and cocktail parties at Joan's, Jack sees Joan in a bar with a man who has clearly passed out, with a Swedish count, who is an abusive drug addict, with Hugh, a violent drunk, and with Franz, a large German man who is abusive, and Pete, who steals her money, and Stephen, who is ill. After being drafted, two failed marriages, and his discharge, Jack soon finds himself out of work in a run down apartment, out of money, and ill. Out of the blue, Joan arrives. Jack finds himself suspicious and suddenly asks about the Englishman, Stephen. Joan laughs, and notes that she can't remember everyone she has been with. Jack realizes Stephen, and all the others, are dead and that Joan has a sixth sense for death. He tells her to leave, not wanting her to thrive on his death as she does on others. She leaves, and Jack begins to pack.

In 'Witch's Money,' Foiral is returning to his village when he sees a stranger on the road. The stranger buys a house from Foiral, and after paying a deposit, a party is held. When the stranger returns, he attempts to give Foiral a check for the remaining amount, but Foiral does not understand how a check is used. When the stranger explains, Foiral goes to a local town, and when the check is cashed, the bank explains that some of the money has been taken in fees. Foiral approaches the stranger for the difference, and is angered when the stranger claims to be poor, as Foiral has seen pages of the checks in his account book. Foiral calls on his friends to help him seek justice. The men travel at night to the house of the stranger, and return to their own homes with two checks each for thirty thousand dollars. The men begin selling and buying property, and soon, the local economy improves greatly. Foiral proposes the men travel to town to cash in the checks. The following day, the men travel to the banking, laughing at their good fortune.

In 'An Outpost of Progress', two white men, Carlier and Kayerts, run a trading post with the help of a local black man, Makola. The first chief of the station died of fever, and is buried in the graveyard. The men begin to read books to past the time. A local tribe leader, Gobila, visits them often, as he believes all white men are immortal brothers. A strange, violent tribe arrives and makes themselves at home, but Makola seems agitated, and says the men may be bad. Later, Makola asks if they need ivory, and he begins to trade with the tribe. The following day, all the station employees have vanished, but a large tusk of ivory is left. Makola claims he traded the station men for the ivory. Kayerts and Carlier are appalled, but over time, they accept the trade in order to keep up their commissions. The men become more and more terse and angry as the



steamer from the Director is late with supplies. One day, the two begin to argue violently over stashed away sugar. Kayerts has his pistol and shoots Carlier, only to find later that Carlier had no weapon. Kayerts and Makola decide to pretend Carlier died of fever, but when Kayerts wakes the following morning to bury the body, he hears the steamer, and realizes his crime is about to be discovered. When the Director lands, he finds Kayerts hanging from the arm of the cross that marked the grave of the first chief.

'Torch Song', 'Witch's Money', and 'An Outpost of Progress' Analysis

'Torch Song' is the story of a woman's fascination with death and the lengths to which she goes to watch others pass away. Jack Lorey is a kind man whose friendship with Joan over the years shows him that she is generally with people who are unhappy, sick, or in some way not well. While Jack knows something is awry, he doesn't particularly seem to know what that something is. It is only when Jack becomes ill himself that he realizes Joan preys on the deaths of others to make herself feel young and useful. While Joan maintains Jack's company through the years, she doesn't seek him out until he is near death. Joan's life is entirely about staying with lover's until their death, and in the end Jack leaves, sick and alone, rather than allow her to feed off his demise.

'Witch's Money' shows that corruption can happen even in the least advanced societies when money is the objective. Foiral is a good man, with a good, simple life in a village. When a stranger arrives in town, however, and Foiral is able to sell his land for a higher price than it is worth, he is taught about banking and checks. Even though he obtained more money than the land was worth, Foiral stills feels he was cheated by the stranger out of 100 dollars, due to bank fees. His solution is to get his friends to kill the stranger, and steal his checks, believing them to be worth thirty thousand dollars each. While this step does improve the economy of the town, and make the town thrive again, it is questionable as to whether, in the end, the checks are really worth the money. The point, however, is that the village was stable prior to the coming of the man with the money, but once they are exposed to large amounts of money, their behaviors change. This shows that money can corrupt even the smallest, least developed areas.

'An Outpost of Progress' shows what can happen to civilized men left in an uncivilized place. Carlier and Kayerts are privileged men who have existed in wealthy societies since birth. These men are not adventurers, but are instead men who believe in culture. When pressed from their lazy lives because of a need for money, or a simple shove by family, these men assume roles for which they are not qualified. Their food is intolerable, the new climate is unbearable, and their new surrounds are not as luxurious as they are accustomed. While they appear to grow closer together in these conditions, this is clearly out of necessity and not out of a love for one another. Makola, the local assistant that is native to the area, is shown to be the one who understands the culture of the area, and who is the real chief of the station. He is the one who is able to make deals, and able to exist in the harsh and violent climate of the station. When it is clear the station needs money, it is Makola who trades men for ivory, knowing the station cares more for money than it does men. The conscience of the two white men, however,



at the trading of slaves for goods, becomes too much and the guilt of their actions drives them to fight one another. This story also uses the already unstable climate of Africa as a backdrop to show the unstable climate at the station, as the author uses imagery such as the villages burning, the blackness of the tribesmen, and stories of local customs and beliefs to uphold the concept that this land is not one of progress and modern culture. Kayerts' murder of Carlier, then, is simply a violent reaction in a violent, uncivilized culture. When Kayerts is ripped back to civilization by the sound of the coming steamer, he takes his own life rather than to face his crimes. The last image of the story, the swollen purple tongue of the dead Kayerts protruding at the Director, shows the story's theme of the complete loss of civilization at the station. The story, based in the politics of the time it was written, shows the consequences of the colonization of Africa and the attitudes of the English at the time of the colonization.



'The Third Prize', 'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky', 'Open Winter', and 'Barn Burning'

'The Third Prize', 'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky', 'Open Winter', and 'Barn Burning' Summary

In 'The Third Prize,' two men, Naboth Bird and George Robins are runners. One August day, they compete in a local town where they meet two women, Margery and Minnie. Following the race, where George is third, the men meet with Jerry Chambers, a local street ruffian who tries to borrow money from them. When winners are called, someone else's name is called for third place. George changes hats with Naboth, and collects the prize. George then changes hats back, and explains that someone else has taken his third place prize, and is given more money. As they leave the grounds, they come upon Jerry again, who is begging for his blind aunt and uncle. Without a pause, George gives them a sovereign, and walks quickly away. Jerry happily counts his share of the profit.

In 'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky,' Jack Potter is the local sheriff of a frontier town named Yellow Sky. He is bringing back to town his new wife, and is fearful of the response of the town when they arrive, since his marriage was unannounced. In the local bar, six men sit drinking, when the local troublemaker, Scratchy Wilson, arrives in the street, drunk and armed. The bar manager closes and locks the door, and the men sit fearfully listening. The bartender explains that Potter usually handles Wilson. Wilson drunkenly searches for Potter, shooting everything in sight, and decides to go to Potter's home, but finds it empty. However, soon, Potter and his wife, arriving home, round a corner and come face to face with Wilson, who puts the gun to Potter's chest. When Potter explains that he is now married, that the woman is his wife, and that he is unarmed, Wilson declares the fight over, and walks away.

'Open Winter' begins with Pop Apling, sixty, and Beech Cartwright, sixteen, bringing a group of horses to their end destination, but it is deserted. The men take the horses up the ridge to Indian trails, and Apling asks Beech to stay with the horses while he makes arrangements with the local ranchers to allow the horses to feed. Beech refuses, noting the ranchers will likely refuse, violently. Beech rides out in the morning, but is eventually approached by two ranchers, who threaten him for information on Apling's location. Beech pulls his gun on them, and refuses to tell them. He backtracks to find Apling and explains the situation as well as tells him how to water the horses. Apling is highly impressed. They drive the horses hard to Robber's Roost, where they steal a ferry and cart the horses across the river. A note is delivered from Gervais, their employer, urging the men to deliver the horses in town. Beech brings the herd into town and is filled with pride as he rides the horses through.



'Barn Burning' opens with a young boy sitting in general store, where court is being held. His father, Abner Snopes, is accused of burning down the barn of a local enemy. The young boy, named Colonel Sartoris Snopes, is called to stand against his father, but his accuser revokes the request to have him questioned. Abner is not convicted, but is advised to leave town. That night, the boy wonders of his father's arson habits, and his father strikes him, knowing he would have told the court the truth. They arrive at their new home, and Abner and Sartoris ride to the home of the man who owns the house. When they arrive, however, Abner refuses to wipe his feet and dirties the indoor rug of the major. The major demands Abner clean the rug, but instead, he destroys it. Days later, his father is again in court, and sentenced for the destruction of the rug. Later, he prepares a container of kerosene, and leaves. Sartoris escapes his mother, and races to the major's home, shouting for them to get to the barn. He runs away, only to hear a gunshot, and knows his father has been killed. He thinks of his brave father and walks into the woods, not looking back.

'The Third Prize', 'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky', 'Open Winter', and 'Barn Burning' Analysis

'The Third prize' is a story about morality and charity. Naboth and George are clearly not bad people and are kind and fun-loving. When presented with an opportunity to double their winnings, however, George is dishonest and claims to be two people to claim two prizes. Naboth is clearly upset about this decisions, showing him at first to be more moral than his friend. In the end, however, George gives his extra money to a local disabled couple, showing that he too can be kind and generous. This story asks the question, as do many in the novel, of whether the means of an act justify the end. In this case, George's act of dishonesty leads to an end of a donation for the disabled, seemingly indicating that his first act is offset by his generosity at the end.

'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky' is a story of new beginnings. Jack and his wife are newlyweds, and Jack is filled with more than just newlywed jitters. As a local Marshall he fears the community's judgment of him and of his bride. He clearly chooses, however, that a new life with his bride is worth any fall out from the town. Conversely, his arch enemy, Wilson, is seeking the same fight he always searches for. When confronted with this new piece of information, however, Wilson too chooses a new path, knowing that the situation has now changed, and that Jack is now not just a Marshall, but also a family man. In the end, both men are allowed to start anew.

'Open Winter' is a great story about responsibility, and personal satisfaction, as well as a coming of age story for Beech Cartwright. Apling is clearly a responsible man, whose years of work have taught him job responsibility, as well as a responsibility toward his employer and his fellow man and animals. Apling will go through any length to get his horses to their rightful owner, in part because he has a responsibility to do so, and in part because he feels he has a responsibility to the horses not to let them die. On the other hand, Beech sees no reason not to just abandon the horses, since he is clearly not going to be paid. The two characters are opposites due to age, and experience. Over the course of the story, however, it is clear that Beech respects Apling, and learns



from him as he begins to show more responsibility, and more logical deduction to help him through his situations. He slowly begins to understand a responsibility to animals and to other men, outside of his pay, showing him to be growing up. At the end of the story, as predicted by Apling, Beech is rewarded for his new found responsibility by a sense of self-pride, and by the reactions of the towns people to him as he brings in the herd. Even Beech admits in the end the experience will last him, showing the full extent of the experience.

'Barn Burning' is another coming of age story, although a much darker one. Abner, a civil war veteran, is an angry, violent man with a propensity for arson. His family suffers greatly because of his issues, and his son is aware of his father's dangerous behaviors from the beginning. Sartoris is torn constantly between loyalty to his father and a responsibility to tell the truth. His father, who should be his guide for morality, is a horrible role model. Sartoris learns from an early age that everyone is an enemy, and that he is cut off from others because of his father's activities. In the beginning of the story, Sartoris is prepared to lie for his father in court, but by the end of the story, he is telling de Spain of his father's plans, even though he knows his father is in danger, and that he can never go home again. He has made a decision like a man by the end of the tale, even at the risk of his own safety and future.



'Winter Dreams', 'Soldier's Home', and 'The Tree of Knowledge'

'Winter Dreams', 'Soldier's Home', and 'The Tree of Knowledge' Summary

In 'Winter Dreams,' Dexter Green is working at the local country club as a caddy when he meets Judy Jones, the daughter of the club owner. When Dexter refuses to caddy for her, she throws a tantrum, and Dexter quits. As he ages, Dexter desires to live the life of the upper class, and eventually buys a partnership in a laundry and becomes increasingly wealthy. One day when Dexter is twenty three he is playing golf when Judy plays through. Later, they meet again and go boating, where Judy invites him to dinner. Dexter realizes Judy is sensual and sexual in a way that makes men insane with desire and love. He feels himself falling for her, but a week later when she leaves him at a picnic with another man, he knows she is untamable and forever unfaithful. Dexter, a year later, becomes engaged to another woman, Irene. Judy returns to his life at this point, and asks him to marry her, as she is bored. The two become engaged. In a month, however, Judy breaks the engagement, and Dexter realizes he has given up Irene for a dream. Seven years later runs into a man who knows Judy, who claims she used to be pretty, but has faded and Dexter realizes he has now lost his dream and a part of himself.

In 'Soldier's Home,' Harold Krebs is home after his time in the war. He finds he hates discussing the war. He begins to sleep late and to wander through his life. He likes girls, but finds their lives too complicated for him. Nearly a month after his return, his mother tells him his father will allow him to begin taking the car out at night. He comes down to breakfast, where his younger sister adores him, asking him to be her beau. He agrees with a smile. His mother asks if he has thought of what to do for a living, and admits he has not. She tells him he must start looking for employment, and must start settling down. She asks if he loves her, and he replies he does not. She cries, and he is shamed into apologizing. She asks him to pray and when he cannot, she prays for him. Krebs decides to go to Kansas City to work, which allows him to leave the house and remain uncomplicated.

In 'Tree of Knowledge,' Peter Brench hates the work of his friend, Morgan Mallow. He is in love with Mallow's wife, and as a result he hides his hatred of the man's artwork from him for many years. Lance, the Mallow's son, is a bright boy, but at twenty, he decides to become a painter. Brench admits to Mrs. Mallow that he hates the idea, and tells Lance he will pay for his way to Cambridge, if only he promises to not go to Paris. Lance refuses the offer. When Lance returns from Paris the following year, he admits he understands why Brench did not want him to go. He admits he now knows that he is talentless at art, and that he he has always known his father's art was terrible. Brench warns him to keep this a secret, for his mother's sake. Lance realizes, months later, that



Brench is in love with his mother. He gently tells Brench that, despite all his cautions and carefulness, Mrs. Mallow has always known Morgan's work was worthless. Brench, after a pause, admits that he tried to keep Lance from Paris not to spare him, but in fact to spare himself from the knowledge of the depths of Mrs. Mallow's devotion.

'Winter Dreams', 'Soldier's Home', and 'The Tree of Knowledge' Analysis

'Winter Dreams' is a story of success and a loss of self. Dexter Green is successful even as a young child and aims for nothing less than greater success. He has a knack for finding opportunity, and his 'winter dreams' often lead to higher aspirations of more success. When Dexter meets Judy, she quickly becomes the embodiment of these dreams for Dexter, and he continues to pursue her. Over time, however, Dexter begins to learn that Judy really is just a fantasy, and that she is unattainable to him. His repeated gain and loss of his dream result in an inability within him to love, or to grieve, for anything. In the end, he finds he is able to grieve only for the knowledge that a piece of him dies with his complete loss of Judy as an icon for his success fantasies.

'Soldier's Home' is another type of coming of age story, although again, this is a dark version. Harold Krebs has returned from the war, still a young man, but a broken young man. Once confident and carefree, Harold now wants nothing complicated in his life. He is tormented by his experiences in the war, and finds himself unable to talk about the war, but unable to keep it inside. Krebs becomes isolated in his own world as he cannot exist in the world of the young men and women in town who know nothing of war. He alienates himself from his parents and friends as he is no longer able to pretend to enjoy their world. In the end, he is forced to admit that he is not able to love anyone. Instead of pretending to be able to exist in his old world, Krebs plans to move to Kansas City to find employment. This will please his parents without forcing him to accept a role in their worlds. Krebs determines he can leave his childhood home and move forward, without forcing himself to pretend to fit in.

'Tree of Knowledge' is a story of love and the lies told to spare those we love. Peter Brench is a kind man who is in love with the wife of a friend. Because of this love, Brench chooses to ignore the fact that his friend's artwork is terrible. The wife appears to adore his work, and Brench does not want to spoil her image of her husband. When Lance, their son, aims to follow in his father's footsteps, Brench tries everything to block him, knowing that knowledge will make him understand his father's work is worthless. However, when Brench discovers the boy has always known this, his goal is still to preserve Mrs. Mallow's image of her husband, or so he claims. In the end, however, when Brench discovers she has always known his work is terrible, he is forced to admit that he was likely attempting to spare himself the hurt of knowing Mrs. Mallow loved her husband enough to pretend to love his work.



'The Boarding House', 'Liberty Hall', and 'The Horse Dealer's Daughter'

'The Boarding House', 'Liberty Hall', and 'The Horse Dealer's Daughter' Summary

'The Boarding House' opens with the story of Mrs. Mooney, the boarding house madam. Mrs. Mooney was married to a man who became a drunk and was abusive. When she separates from him, she and her children open a boarding house, where strangers pay fifteen shillings a week. Jack, the son, and Polly, the daughter, often entertain the boarders musically. Polly and one of the young men begin to have an affair. She speaks with Polly, and then plans to speak to the boarder, Mr. Doran, and ask him to marry her daughter. Mr. Doran, for his part, knows he will marry Polly, or lose his job because of the affair. However, he also knows his family will look down on her because of her drunken father. Polly comes to his room upset and tells him of her confession, and he comforts her. He goes to speak with Mrs. Mooney, while Polly, no longer upset, waits patiently. She cheerfully dreams of the future.

In 'Liberty Hall,' Ben Drake's wife tells of her and her husband's lives. She tells several stories of times when the couple wanted to get away from their hosts who entertain them, but could not. Ben finally decides to send a telegram to the houses in which they stay on the second day, demanding he leave. Mrs. Drake then tells the story of the Thayer's. The couple decides to spend a week resting with the Thayer's in Landsdown. When they are picked up, the couple insist that Ben sit in the comfortable seat in the limo, even though he claims to prefer a smaller seat. At lunch, the Thayer's insist he try their cream in his coffee, even though he hates cream. When he lights a cigarette, the Thayer's insist he try their brand. At each turn, Ben's desires are overlooked by the hosts in favor of their own beliefs as to what is best for him. When the telegraph fails to come the following day, Ben states he has a premonition that he must return to New York. Mrs. Thayer admits she received a telegram requesting his return, but refused to deliver it, as it wasn't in Ben's best interest. As the Drake's leave, Mrs. Thayer admits she responded to the telegram.

In 'The Horse Dealer's Daughter,' the three brothers and one sister of the Pervin family sit together, discussing their future as their family fortune is bankrupt. Their father has died, and his money has been left to the bill collectors Mabel, a twenty-seven year old female, is quiet about her plans of where to go. Jack Fergusson, the local doctor, arrives as a friend of the family, and says goodbye. Mabel has proudly kept house for many years for the brothers, but after poverty, Mabel grew quiet. The doctor, passing the Pervin farm later, sees Mabel walk into the pond to drown herself. Jack rushes to her, and pulls her body up from the depths. He carries her back to the farm, where, after stripping her and drying her, she wakes, and the two talk of her experience. She asks if he loves her, and crawls over to him. She is certain he loves her, but he is reluctant.



When her face falls with doubt, however, he is torn apart, and grasps her to hold her, knowing he does love her. She gets some dry clothing for him, but when he has to leave, she again begins to doubt his love. He reassures her, and plans to marry her.

'The Boarding House', 'Liberty Hall', and 'The Horse Dealer's Daughter' Analysis

'Boarding House' is a story of social responsibility and class relations in Dublin. Mrs. Mooney, to some extent, traps Mr. Duran into marrying her daughter, as a way to increase the social class of Polly. The marriage is not based on emotion, but social standards and public perception. It is expected that Mr. Duran marry Polly because of his actions against Mrs. Mooney, and she knows he will be unable to do anything else. He, too, knows he is trapped, because of his job and his responsibility. Although his family will frown on his marrying beneath his class, he has no choice. Polly, too, seems to know this as she waits to be called downstairs. She too is aware that Mr. Duran will have to marry her, implying that she, along with her mother, have either consciously or unconsciously planned this affair.

'Liberty Hall' is a comedic story that shows clearly how quickly attempts to cater to someone's needs can cause problems. The Thayers are a kind couple who simply want to entertain their new friends, the Drakes. Ben Drake is a famous composer, and the Thayer's want only to make sure he is able to relax, and is as comfortable as possible. However, their constant attention rapidly becomes annoying as they counter every desire he has by noting a way to improve his wants. He is forced to eat and drink things he dislikes, forced into chairs he doesn't prefer, and forced to read books he doesn't desire. In the end, even his planned escape is thwarted by the Thayer's desire to make him happy. It is only when he forces his escape that he is able to leave their grasp.

"The Horse Dealer's Daughter' is a twist on the typical boy meets girl story line. Jack, the rescuer in the story, is a bright and cheerful man with his life ahead of him. Mabel is a dark, brooding woman with a propensity for darkness and depression. As the sister of a friend, Mabel is only a background figure to Jack until she tries to commit suicide and he saves her. It is at this point that Jack is forced to see her as a female, and as a possible love interest. Unlike most love stories, Jack is not only drawn to Mabel, but also actively repulsed by her. On the one hand he realizes he has never seen her for who she is and on the other, he realizes that it was only her suicide attempt that forced him to see her as she was. Jack knows he does not want to love Mabel, but finds himself unable to resist her. In the end, he wants to marry her quickly, knowing that common sense will soon return.



'Virga Vay & Allan Cedar', 'Marriage A La Mode', and 'The Outstation'

'Virga Vay & Allan Cedar', 'Marriage A La Mode', and 'The Outstation' Summary

In 'Virga Vay & Allan Cedar,' young Virga Vay finds solace from her overbearing husband in her lover, Allan Cedar, a married dentist. His wife, Bertha, is a heavy, mean woman and when she learns she has inherited a house in California, she tells Allan they are moving. Allan and Virga decide to commit suicide together to avoid having to leave one another. Allan drives to St. Paul, where he meets Virga. They drive to a scenic area, where Allan attaches a vacuum cleaner hose to the exhaust, and pushes it through into the car. The two drink and read poetry, slowly falling asleep. Suddenly, they are ripped from the car by Bertha and her detective cousin. Bertha ridicules Allan endlessly as he recovers, and intercepts all mail to him from Virga, noting that sentimental love gets you nowhere.

'Marriage A La Mode' opens with William remembering that he must buy something for his children, since he has been traveling. He decides on fruit, since his wife has changed recently, and now is set on what types of toys the children should like. He thinks of Isabel, his wife, and recalls her changing, wanting new houses, and new things. He believes the change came when a friend took her to Paris, and showed her the high life. At the station, Isabel is there with her new friends, who are loud and without manners. At the house, William hears the friends making fun of him and Isabel halfheartedly defending him. The following day, she sees him off, and the following day, Isabel receives a love letter from William. She reads it aloud to her friends, and they laugh. Isabel rushes to her room, ashamed of her behavior, realizing how vain, selfish, and shallow she is. When her friends come for her to swim, however, she goes with them, promising herself she will write William later.

In 'The Outstation,' Mr. Warburton meets Mr. Cooper, his new assistant. Warburton asks him to dine later and while he dresses up for each dinner, he is appalled to find that Cooper does not. Cooper is somewhat embarrassed at Warburton's courteous nature. The two speak of shared acquaintances and often disagree. Both men reflect their dislike of the other. Warburton notes that his life has gone from riches to rags as he started out a wealthy socialite, but after losing his money, he went into the military as a colonist. He is a snob, but he believes most like him. One night at dinner, after several stories of high society, Cooper admits to Warburton that snobs are the largest problem in England. From that night forward, the two rarely speak. A few months later, Warburton returns from a short trip to find Cooper has read his newspapers. A man of habit, Warburton is extremely furious. Later, after an argument over servants, the two men stop speaking altogether. One day, however, the two argue and come to blows. After discovering Cooper is withholding his servant's wages, Warburton warns him he will be



killed by the natives for such a crime. Cooper ignores the warning. Later, after Cooper again abuses his servant, he is killed, and although it is known that the servant committed the crime, he is not hung, but instead is taken in to be trained after a term of imprisonment.

'Virga Vay & Allan Cedar', 'Marriage A La Mode', and 'The Outstation' Analysis

'Virga Vay and Allan Cedar' is a love story gone wrong. It is clear from the beginning that both Virga and Allan married their exact opposites and are thus incredibly unhappy. Their love for one another is deep enough to choose death over separation, but the possessive nature of Allan's wife is stronger still. Even after cheating on her, Bertha is still set on berating and abusing her husband. Unless Allan stands up for himself, which he will likely not do, he is doomed to suffer a life of torment.

'Marriage A La Mode' shows the selfish and shallow nature of England during the time of the story's writing. The characters in this story are all selfish, as well as immature, displaying a sense of entitlement not earned. William, the man who does earn the money and works for his life, is the only individual not to be openly rude and uncaring. In fact, William's character is quite the opposite as he attempts to win back his wife. Her behaviors, however, show her true nature as a selfish, self centered, cruel woman who cares only for herself. Although she momentarily thinks of writing William, she gives up the idea for her friends, showing her true nature. The story shows also that the needs in a marriage often change, and if they do not change in the same direction, the result can be disastrous.

"The Outstation" is another story in this collection of class conflict, race relations, and colonization. Mr. Warburton believes himself to be of the highest class of citizens. His upbringing as well as his past experiences give him, he believes, a right to stand above others in judgment. Although he uses natives as servants, he still feels he is kind to them. When a younger, more common and vibrant man, Cooper, joins him in his isolation, he is confronted with his own snobbishness and as a result, comes to despise the other man. He believes Cooper to be of a lower class and therefore less worthy. Cooper, for his part, sees Warburton as a snob, and a rude man. On the other hand, his own treatment of his servants is rude and cruel. The natives, angry at his treatment, resort to killing him, and Warburton allows this to occur, because of his own bias against Cooper. Due to his lower class actions, and his inability to treat other races with respect, Cooper is killed and Warburton is free to return to his snobbish ways.



'Cruel and Barbarious Treatment', 'The Sojourner', 'The Open Window', and 'My Oedipus Complex'

'Cruel and Barbarious Treatment', 'The Sojourner', 'The Open Window', and 'My Oedipus Complex' Summary

'Cruel and Barbarous Treatment' opens with a young woman worrying about telling her husband of her affair. She realizes she is delighted at the idea of being a divorcee, because it holds a certain social status. She uses occasions with her husband to show a care and concern for him to entice the young lover to jealousy. Eventually, the newness of such situations wears off, and the woman tells a few friends to gain their reactions, but is surprised to find them seemingly judgmental. She tells her husband of her affair, in order for her relationship with the young man to continue forward. The two weep together, and she knows that moment is a poignant one in her life. She insists on the three talking together, but the husband clearly bores soon, and she realizes it was he who brought the affair life. She finds herself often at parties, dancing with her lover and her husband in the same night, always with an audience. She discovers, however, that her husband is receiving more weekend invitations than she, and is becoming far more popular than her new young man. She becomes bored with him, and she realizes she will not marry her young lover. She also realizes she is facing a spinsterhood future, and wishes she had not fooled herself. She soon, however, finds herself warming to the title of divorcee.

In 'The Sojourner,' John Ferris wakes in a hotel room in New York with an unpleasant feeling about the day. He has come from Paris to Oklahoma for his father's funeral, and is on his way back home. Through the window, he sees his ex-wife, Elizabeth, whom he has not seen in eight years. He knows she has remarried and has children, but he calls her, and is invited to dinner. When he arrives, young son Billy answers the door, and takes John to the living room, where husband Bill extends a warm welcome. They drink and speak of politics while waiting for Elizabeth. When she arrives carrying her baby, John realizes she is beautiful. The two talk of his father, and when it is explained that she and John were once married, Billy is confused. John is reminded of his own girlfriend's son as Elizabeth plays piano. At dinner, John finds himself lying, claiming a presumed engagement and activities with his girlfriend's son. Elizabeth smiles as a birthday cake is brought out, and John recalls it is his birthday. He leaves, feeling grateful, and thinks longingly of Elizabeth and her family the following day. Once home, he promises the young boy he will take him often on outings as he holds him close.

'The Open Window' opens with a young woman explaining that her aunt will be down shortly. Framton Nuttle is in the country, recovering from nerves, and his sister has



given him letters of introduction, so he is not lonely. He is calling on Mrs. Sappleton presently, and his niece is entertaining him. The niece explains that three years ago, Sappleton's husband and brothers went off for a day of shooting, never to return. They drown, and she keeps a window open for them each day. When Sappleton does arrive, she explains that her husband and brothers will be home soon, and Nuttle feels sympathy for her clear dementia. However, soon he hears a dog, and as he look, Sappleton's husband and brothers are seen walking across the lawn. Nuttle runs from the home, terrified, while the niece laments to Sappleton that she believes he must be afraid of dogs.

In 'My Oedipus Complex', Larry is a young boy whose father has returned from the war. During his absence, Larry was allowed to sleep in his mother's bed, and often had all of her attention. When his father comes home, however, he is often told to be quiet, or not to interrupt at dinner. He is also taken by his father on a walk in town, but is left to himself as father speaks to men up and down the street. He is also told not to wake father in the morning, and is eventually banished from his parents room. Angry, he begins to scream, and his father chastises him harshly. When he is still shrieking, he is spanked. The two begin a war, with each day one using mother against the other. Eventually, Larry tells his mother he will marry her and have children. Soon, mother really is pregnant with father's child, and when it is born, both Larry and father are shut out of mother's affections. Father begins to be kinder to Larry, and one night, he comes to sleep with Larry, placing his arm around his son.

'Cruel and Barbarious Treatment', 'The Sojourner', 'The Open Window', and 'My Oedipus Complex' Analysis

'Cruel and Barbarous Treatment' is the story of a bored woman of the bourgeoisie class who acts as though the world is perpetually her stage. She toys with adultery as a way to reinvent herself and her life, but what she finds is that her fantasy of how the ending would play out is far better than the true ending. Her entire existence is dependent on what others think of her, and how others see her and her behaviors. Therefore, when she is revealed to be an adulteress, and when her friends begin to look down on her, she unwittingly blames her young lover, and thus pushes him away, as well. Once his part in her drama is over, he is discarded, as is her husband's, and she reinvents herself again as a mysterious divorcee heading to Nevada.

'The Sojourner' is a story of a man coming to terms with lost youth and an inability to love. John Ferris has come back to America for his father's funeral, and with the sight of his ex wife, John begins to attempt to make amends with his past. His visit to Elizabeth appears spontaneous, but as the only woman he has loved, he chooses to spend his final day in America with her. His lies to her conceal his true lack of emotional depth, but his use of the word sojourner represents his own role in the world as a temporary resident. John chooses to live a life of a temporary nature. The death of his father, however, and the vision of his ex wife with a permanent and happy family cause him to



reflect on his own life. On his return home, his new found love for the son of his girlfriend show that John is beginning to seek a more permanent status in his life.

The short story 'The Open Window' is simply a story of the fine line between reality and imagination. Nuttle is already being treated for a nervous condition, and he is in a new home with people he has not met. Mrs. Sappleton's niece seizes this opportunity to play a practical joke on poor Nuttle. She spins a highly believable tale, using cues from the scene around her as a base for her story, and including elements pertinent to a story, such as small, fine details. She knows the men will return home, as they have undoubtedly done several times before, and she is able to script their arrival in such a way that Nuttle is fooled into thinking the dead have returned from the grave. Both reader and character are taken in, at first, showing the author to be fooling both simultaneously. The author, then, shows the reader how simple it is to create a believable story that even those outside the characters will believe.

'My Oedipus Complex' is the perfect compliment to a Freudian examination of a boy's relationship with his father. When Larry's father went off to war, his mother treated Larry with much the same respect she would have her husband. She allowed his company on a consistent basis, allowed him to do as he pleased, and often to go wherever he chose. When Larry's father returns from war, then, she expects Larry to fade back into a childhood role. Larry, however, is extremely hurt and angry at his sudden change in status, and highly jealous of his father, as Freud often surmised as he discussed the Oedipus Complex. Larry wants his role as husband back from his father, and he does all he can to take it. It is only when a new baby arrives that Larry is able to forgive his father. His father, for the first time, is in the same position as Larry, and the two share a close moment of comradeship at their distaste for the new baby. This new found bond continues through Christmas, resolving the boy's hatred of his father.



'Innocence', 'The Nightingames Sing', 'Flowering Judas', 'The Valliant Woman', and 'The Eighty Yard Run'

'Innocence', 'The Nightingames Sing', 'Flowering Judas', 'The Valliant Woman', and 'The Eighty Yard Run' Summary

'Innocence' begins with a father who is helping his son prepare for his first Confession. He remembers his own Confessions as a child, and remembers the first few, when confessions were only admittances of lies to parents and disrespect. However, he also recalls his first confession when he realized he had committed a severe sin. Frightened, the priest asked several questions, and he can recall the fear and anguish he felt. He returned home and lied to his mother, knowing he would have to confess that lie, as well. He found out during his next confession that he had not, in fact, committed adultery, but he still recalls the emotions, and feels for his son.

In 'The Nightingales Sing,' young Joanna Gibbs rides with Phil, the older brother of a friend, to a remote ranch house after a day at a horse show. She has been invited to dinner. She is introduced to Sandy, a young man who owns the horses, and is sent inside to look after Chris, a female rider who was thrown during the show. In Chris' room, the two talk briefly, and Joanna realizes these individuals live a life different than her own. Phil and Sandy arrive, and Joanna learns that Chris and Sandy are lovers, but that Sandy also has a wife. After drinks, music, and supper, Chris and Joanna travel outside to the privy. Chris admits she is spoiled by Sandy's take charge way, so that no one else seems worthy, even though she knows Sandy will never leave his wife. They travel back inside, where Joanna finds comfort in the fire and in her new friends. Joanna realizes, as she says goodbye, that they really do like her, and wish her to return. Back home, she thinks about the night as she goes to bed, knowing her life is simpler than theirs.

'Flowering Judas' is the story of one woman's betrayal of her own ideals and morals. Laura is a twenty two year old American who is in Mexico, working for the revolution. She owes her position to Braggioni, a cruel, fat, mean individual who leads the group of revolutionaries. He is married, but seeks to seduce Laura, and as a result, often appears at her apartment to serenade her. On occasion, she betrays her revolutionary friends to attend church, as she was born Roman Catholic. In addition to teaching English to children, Laura brings food, money, and drugs to political prisoners, and listens to their plights. She smuggles letters and messages, and finds herself constantly turning down men, as she is a pretty woman. As Braggioni speaks of an uprising coming up, Laura tells him of a revolutionary, Eugenio, who committed suicide in prison. Braggioni claims they are better without him. He returns to his wife, and Laura knows



she is free for the time being, and should flee, but does not. In a dream, Eugenio comes to her, and asks her to eat the flowers of the Judas tree. When she does, he cries out that she is a murderer, and that the flowers were pieces of himself. She awakens, and fears returning to sleep.

'The Valiant Woman' begins with two priests and the house keeper discussing an upcoming visit with a bishop. It is soon clear that Mrs. Stoner is a loud woman with definite opinions, as she badmouths several local housekeepers, and even the bishop. A birthday cake is brought out by Mrs. Stoner, as it is Mr. Firman's birthday. Father Firman and Father Nulty discuss local priests and their hired help, noting that some have hired Filipino assistants. Mrs. Stoner tries to begin several conversations, but it is clear Nulty is only patronizing the woman. He and Firman part, and Firman returns to the study. Mrs. Stoner prepares their nightly game of cards. Mrs. Stoner always wins, and tonight is no exception. He thinks about other priests who have worse housekeepers, and notes that Mrs. Stoner is a good person at heart. He is able to forgive her faults, because they are all for good cause. He realizes that, in her way, she saves him. He thinks over the fact that she sleeps in the guest room. Deciding against it, he tries to figure a way out, but comes to no conclusion. Trying to kill mosquitoes, he breaks a statue, and Mrs. Stoner chastises him.

In 'The Eighty Yard Run,' Christian Darling remembers running an eighty yard touchdown fifteen years earlier during a practice, and meeting Louise, his girlfriend, afterward. They were married and lived a rich life, but Darling admits there were affairs. Her father gives him a position, but when the stock market crashes, Darling realizes his high life with Louise is over. He becomes an alcoholic, and Louise takes a job at a fashion magazine. Darling is jealous of his wife's new fame and friends, and openly mocks her. Eventually, he finds jobs, but makes no money while Louise continues to rise, becoming assistant editor. One evening, Louise finally goes to the theater without him, and he begins to realize he is losing her. Louise continues with her own new life. He becomes a caring husband, ready to go with her at a whim, but he knows she prefers the company of others. When he is offered a position as a tailor's representative, she tells him to take the position, even though he will rarely be home. Now, years later, he is still married but knows she is spending time with better people. He knows the eighty yard touchdown and the kiss of his girlfriend that night was the highlight of his life.

'Innocence', 'The Nightingames Sing', 'Flowering Judas', 'The Valliant Woman', and 'The Eighty Yard Run' Analysis

'Innocence' is the story of a father sympathizing with his son. The narrator of the story remembers clearly his own experiences as a young boy in Church, and he empathizes with his own son as he prepares for the same rituals. The father hopes desperately that his son avoids some of the pitfalls he himself landed in as a result of not fully understanding sin. The imagery in this story has a primary role as the author uses it to



convey a true sense of fear and anguish over his sins as a child. This helps the reader to sense his honest reluctance for his son to begin the same path.

'The Nightingales Sing' is a coming of age story of sorts. Joanna Gibbs is from a very proper, middle class family. As a result, her experiences on the night of the story make her come out of her safe world, and make her begin to realize that the world of others is not as safe, or as traditional. She loves the freedom the ranch house provides, and although her new friends are somewhat 'racy' as she thinks of them, she knows they are kind and good people. She is reminded that their lives are so much more complex than hers when she learns of Chris' love for Sandy, and of his marriage. By the time she returns home, Joanna now knows there is a whole other world waiting outside her door, and she finds herself feeling sorry for her family, whose stringent following of the rules makes them unable to experience the freedom she has just found.

'Flowering Judas' is primary about betrayal. Laura herself betrays both her own upbringing and her revolutionary values when she bounces in and out of the church. Simultaneously, she is a part of the revolution against the church while still visiting the church for forgiveness. In addition, the theme of betrayal is seen as Braggioni betrays his wife by attempting to seduce Laura, and in his reluctance to actually help his revolutionary brothers being held inside prisons. Further, Braggioni's people die for their cause, while he simply reaps the gifts of their work, showing him to betray them as well. He notes, however, that they too betray him consistently. In the end, even Laura sees her betrayal as Eugenio forces her to eat the fruits of the Judas tree in a dream, symbolizing her betrayal of him and of the cause.

'The Valiant Woman' is a touching, humorous story about the power struggle between a housekeeper and a priest in a rectory. The housekeeper mocks the role of women when the story was written, during the late 1940s. Unlike other women of her time, she is strong willed, loud, opinionated, and unafraid of stating her opinion, even to men in her company. She has taken the role in the rectory of the priest's wife, although she is, and will never be, involved romantically. She snoops, is a terrible cook, and loves to beat the priest at cards. In short, she is everything a woman was, at that time, taught not to be. However, the housekeeper also takes on a motherly role, in that she makes sure the priest does what is best for him, even against his will. Their constant power struggle during life is reflected in their nightly bridge game, and although it is clear the two respect one another, it is also clear there are animosities, just as in husband and wife relations.

'The Eighty Yard Run' shows clearly that a marriage left unattended will end in unhappy results. First, the theme of marriage runs throughout the story, as Darling nearly loses his out of selfishness. Darling spends the first part of his marriage taking his wife and her affections for granted. When he falls, he allows her not only to pick him back up, but to go to work herself. He is not thankful, as a husband should be, nor proud, but jealous and selfish. As she begins to shine in her own light, Darling is not supportive, but instead ridicules her. It is not until Louise actually leaves him standing alone that Darling realizes he is losing his marriage. Years later, he is able to recognize that he could have stood by her, but he was too busy looking at his own reflection. Darling's own personal



sense of self and his pride get in the way of his seeing his wife for who she is. When he does, it is too late, and Darling is left to worship her from afar, knowing he is married to her, but that she prefers others' company. While this knowledge eats at Darling, he also knows that it is his fault.



'A Country Love Story', 'Flight' and 'A Red-Letter Day'

'A Country Love Story', 'Flight' and 'A Red-Letter Day' Summary

'A Country Love Story' tells the tale of Daniel and May, a young couple who move into the country to help Daniel recover from a bout of tuberculosis that kept him in the hospital previously. Daniel is twenty years May's senior at age fifty, and the doctors believe that country life will suit him for some time. The house they purchase has a sleigh in front that is rather old, but the couple decide to let it remain. Over the winter, Daniel becomes a workaholic, and angry and short with May as she attempts to assist him. Lonely and hurt, May soon dreams up a lover, and visualizes him in the old sleigh. Daniel senses her distance, and believes she blames him for his illness. One day, Daniel wakes to feel better, and reminds her he loves her, as he blames his cruelty on his illness. May, however, realizes he is old, and that she can never imagine her lover again. She wonders how she will get through life.

In 'Flight,' Mama Torres sends her youngest son, Pepe, to Monterey for medicine and salt. He is to stay with Mrs. Rodriguez, if needed, in town. That night, Pepe returns, and explains that while at Mrs. Rodriguez's, he became angry at another man, and killed him with his knife. He notes he is now a man, and she agrees. She sends him into the mountains. Pepe enters the canyon and follows the stream, eating and drinking as needed. The first night, he sees a wildcat and creates a distraction with birds to lure it away. During the night, he is forced to ride, as he hears a horse in the distance, coming nearer. At dawn, his horse falls beneath him, shot. Soon after, Pepe hears another shot and is hurt as a piece of granite is driven into his hand. His hand soon throbs and he travels in between bouts of unconsciousness. He awakens to find a mountain lion staring at him, but he flees when he hears people, dogs, and horses approaching. In the morning, he again passes out. When he wakes, he notices a black line running from his hand up his arm, and he cuts it open to drain the infection. He hears his pursuers, and rises to a standing position, facing them. He is shot and killed.

In 'Red Letter Day,' a mother, Tory, visits her son at school on Visiting day. Recently divorced, Tory is bitter about her lack of male companionship. Only one other woman is alone, and she is, as Tory puts it, large enough to act as both mother and father to her large brood. She sees the other woman as all she is not. She knows her relationship with Edward, her son, is strained. She arrives at the school, after sharing a taxi with the woman, who she nicknames Hay-Hardy. She thinks she may not be a born mother, as she prepares to walk to town with her son for lunch. Tory asks a litany of questions over lunch, and Edward answers accordingly. The two window shop following lunch, and Tory is amazed that time is moving so slowly. In a museum, she flirts with a man, as she always does, and asks him to tell Edward of a piece of artwork. Edward is angry, as Tory



often puts him in such positions. He too waits for the day to end. They go for tea, and at the mention of his father, Tory stiffens, but acts indifferently interested. Back at the school, the two say a brief and awkward goodbye, and Edward rushes back to the safety of the school.

'A Country Love Story', 'Flight' and 'A Red-Letter Day' Analysis

'A Country Love Story' is the heartbreaking tale of loneliness and pain. In the story, May believes she knows what is best for her husband, but quickly learns there is much about him she does not know. His illness makes him disagreeable, and May is stuck on a country home with no friends, and no company. She is virtually forced into her own mind, as she makes up a lover to help ease her pain. Her lover, however, turns into someone she loves more than her own, true husband. When he becomes well, she is trapped, in that she knows she must stay with him, but she also knows she no longer loves him. It was Daniel's own cruelty during his illness that caused May to look inside herself to find what she truly wanted, but this knowledge now makes her more of a prisoner with Daniel than when he simply shut her out. May's pain now lies in the knowledge that her life is destined to be less happy than her fantasy.

'Flight' is another painful coming of age tale. Pepe is a young boy with little ambition. He likes to believe he is a man, but as his mother points out, men become men when life forces them to be. Unfortunately, Pepe becomes a man when he inadvertently kills someone. The story of his struggle through the mountains, against nature and against mankind, is riveting, and full of a description the author, John Steinbeck, is well known for. Nature becomes a character in this story as Pepe struggles to survive. In the end, while Pepe is killed by the bullet of a man, it is suggested that nature would have killed him, as well. He is poisoned, severely dehydrated, and near death even before he is shot. It is in his final moment, when he finds the strength to stand and face his killer, that Pepe shows he is a man.

'Red Letter Day' is a story of a young woman's struggle to connect with her son. Tory is a young divorcee, who is filled with self doubt after her recent divorce. She is not a mothering type, and is unsure of how to deal with her son, Edward. She clearly loves him, and wants the best for him. She wants to have a relationship with him that is fun, amicable, and proper, but she seems unsure of how to have such a relationship. She herself admits that she is a flirt and that she often uses her son as a tool to flirt with men. Edward, too, sees this and despises this behavior in his mother. Edward wants to have a relationship with his mother, but in a way, he fears her and the instability that she brings to his life. Tory's own insecurities feed this unfulfilling relationship and in the end, both are happy when the visit ends and they can return to their safety zones.



'A Spinster's Tale', 'You Could Look It Up', 'Why I Live at the P.O.' and 'The Use of Force'

'A Spinster's Tale', 'You Could Look It Up', 'Why I Live at the P.O.' and 'The Use of Force' Summary

In 'A Spinster's Tale', Elizabeth first learns of Mr. Speed in the year following her mother's death. She is in the parlor when she sees him, muttering at the trees and banging them with his cane as he stumbles down the street. Mr Speed comes the following day, and for many thereafter. She feels she must talk to her brother or father about it, so she sets up a play date with her brother in the parlor. When Mr. Speed appears, she is surprised to see her brother rush out to help him with his hat. One day as she watches her father, brother, and uncles drinking in the parlor, she realizes that she sees Mr. Speed within them. Soon, Elizabeth exclaims that Mr. Speed is walking by the window. Her father tells her to shut her eyes to such things. After the incident, Elizabeth begins to become more bold as she takes over the role of mistress of the household. One day, months later, Mr. Speed bangs on the door of the house for entry out of the rain, Elizabeth is alone with Lucy, the maid, and when Lucy answers, Mr. Speed calls her a Nigger. Elizabeth calls the police, and Mr. Speed begins to weep. Elizabeth suddenly realizes she is cruel, and has mistaken that cruelty for courage. Mr. Speed leaves the house only to slip and fall unconscious. The police arrive and take him away and he is never seen again, but Elizabeth thinks of him throughout her life.

In 'You Could Look It Up,' a baseball team is struggling as they lose several games, and the men begin to fight with one another. The manager of the team, Squawks Magrew, meets a midget, Pearl du Monville, in a bar in Columbus. Pearl begins to make fun of the ball club and the players, and Squawks agrees. He takes Pearl with them on the train, and during the next game, Pearl continues to make fun of the team. Squawks takes him, and says they re heading to the lawyers. The following day, Pearl shows up in a uniform as a member of the team. The game is nearly tied with a man on third at the bottom of the ninth, and Squawks sends in the midget to bat. After arguments about legality, Pearl is allowed to bat. Three balls later, Pearl hits the ball, and is tagged out at first base. Squawks is furious, and throws Pearl through the air, but he is caught by the center fielder. Pearl walks away and is not seen again, but the team begins to improve.

'Why I Live at the P.O.' begins with the narrator noting that all was fine at home before her sister, Stella-Rondo, came home following her separation. She brings with her a child she claims is adopted. The narrator notes the child looks like her family, and the two argue. Stella lies to her grandfather, telling him the narrator said he should trim his beard, and 'Papa-Daddy' is furious. He goes out to lay in the hammock and when Uncle rondo arrives, drunk and in Stella's kimono, Papa-Daddy turns him against the narrator,



as well. Mother and the narrator also argue, and when the narrator questions whether the child of Stella can talk, mother turns against her, as well. At dinner, Stella tells Rondo the narrator has been making fun of him all afternoon. When Rondo puts fireworks in her room the following morning, the narrator decides to move into the post office where she works. She takes all of her belongings, and her family threatens to stop using the postal service. The narrator asks how Stella will manage to ask her husband to take her back, and she begins to cry. The narrator leaves, and has not seen her family for five days.

In 'The Use of Force,' a small town doctor is called to the house of a family for a child, Mathilda. The little girl clearly has a high fever, but claims to have no sore throat. There is diphtheria going around, so the doctor attempts to look at her throat, but she claws his glasses from his face, and begins to fight. The doctor and child battle, with the doctor using more and more force. The mother leaves the room while the father tries to hold her down. The child splinters the wooden tongue depressor, and with her mouth bleeding the doctor tries again, knowing the child may die if it is diphtheria. Finally, the doctor manages to look at her throat, only to find her tonsils covered in fluid. She had hidden her sore throat to avoid this encounter and now she screams in defeat.

'A Spinster's Tale', 'You Could Look It Up', 'Why I Live at the P.O.' and 'The Use of Force' Analysis

'A Spinster's Tale' is a story of a young woman facing her fears as she grows into a young lady. Young Elizabeth is frightened of the world after her mother's death, as she was often sheltered by her during her life. Although her father and brother are kind and very good to her, they shelter her far less and she hears daily of war and other news that she would otherwise have been protected against. Elizabeth also has fears of her brother's behavior and how this behavior will affect his soul in the afterlife. All these fears come to be symbolized by a local drunk, Mr. Speed. An angry, drunk, unstable man, Mr. Speed is looked on in the community with contempt by some, and pity by others. Elizabeth sees that father himself displays both when dealing with Mr. Speed, and she comes to understand that it is because father sees within himself many traits of Mr. Speed. As Elizabeth learns to deal with her fear, she begins to become more assertive in her own world, as well, as she flirts with her brother's friends, changes her hair style, and deals with the servants. In short, Elizabeth finds herself growing up. However, it is only when Mr. Speed comes to the door, and she calls the police, that Elizabeth learns the difference between sympathy and power. Elizabeth has the power to rid herself of Mr. Speed and she uses that power, only to discover that she feels pain at her act. She realizes that her own fear has caused her to dole out pain to an already harmed individual. While she does not feel sorry for her action, she does learn from it, and uses the lesson throughout her life.

'You Could Look It Up' is a humorous tale that focuses on language as a method of humor. The story is told from the standpoint of a ball player thirty years after the story is said to have taken place. This alone sets the story up as a yarn, or a tall tale, as the title suggests. The use of a slang form of language during the story helps the author to



convey the setting in the story of a ball club, which is not well known for proper language. The story itself is a tale of a midget playing baseball, but the delivery method is what makes the tale worthy. One is able to picture an old, undereducated baseball manager telling the story years later, embellishing it over time, knowing no one will be able to verify the contents. It is meant to be a baseball story, and it succeeds as being not just that, but a wonderful piece of humorous literature, as well.

'Why I Live At the PO' is another tale of family drama. The names of the characters given in the story suggest strongly that Stella is the controlling factor in the family, and this is supported by the storyline. Stella is the one people in the family cater to, and she and Rondo are the only two given names in the tale. Mama is just that, as is Papa-Daddy and Sister, the narrator. She is clearly jealous of her sister, but seems to have a right to be, after noting how the family appears to cater to her. Sister herself has a crisis of identity, in that her entire life, her views of the world have been based on how her family behaves. When she is shown their favoritism for Stella, however, Sister is certain she can exist outside of the family and takes the bold leap to move out on her own. She realizes then that her way of viewing the world as factual is no longer the same as her family that views the world as others dictate. The sister is thus able to leave the family and take with her the knowledge that she has acted on her principles and done what she believes to be right.

'The Use of Force' forces readers to ask the question of whether or not hurting someone, even if for their own good, is a moral and ethical behavior. It is clear in the beginning that the doctor cares for this child, and worries for her health. He has seen the death of children from a disease he knows the child might have, and he wants to save her from the same fate. In doing so, however, he uses increasingly brutal force to the point where he seems to be enjoying it. On one hand, the doctor's actions appear justified, but on the other, his own shame at his behavior suggests another motive. He loathes the parents for their lack of strength, and praises the child for her fighting tendencies, suggesting the doctor may value the struggle. While his findings in the end, that the child does have diphtheria, does seem to support his behavior, one is left with the question of whether the end actually justified the means.



Characters

Michael Lowes appears in Impulse

Michael Lowes is the main character in the short story 'Impulse.' Michael believes himself to be a good person with strong morals and a kind heart. He has a job, but often finds himself unemployed and skipping town with his wife and children to avoid his debts. His friends and family, however, see Michael as a loser, whose spending habits and laziness leave the family penniless and near the point of poverty. Michael cares little for his children, as he worries more about the bill for their health than their health and cares little for his wife, whom he persistently lies to about where he is going and why. When Michael steals an item from a store on impulse, he feels he is treated badly when he is imprisoned, his friends refuse to vouch for him, and his wife divorces him, but in reality, Michael is simply treated to the consequences he deserves after a life of lies and deceit. Michael's view of himself leads to his downfall and shows the dire consequences of denial and self deceit. If Michael, even at an early age when he was first caught stealing, could have seen his faults, he would likely have been in a better place later in life.

Bruno 'Lefty' Bicek appears in A Bottle of Milk for Mother

Bruno 'Lefty' Bicek is a young Polish boy who finds himself the prime suspect of a murder. As a member of the Baldhead True American Social and Athletic Club, a local Chicago gang, Lefty is a small time criminal in the neighborhood, and a left-handed batter for the baseball team. He is also involved in the local boxing club, and aims to go pro. Lefty is originally arrested for jackrolling, or robbing a local Polish man at gunpoint. However, through the course of the interview, it is revealed that the man has died of a gunshot wound. Lefty is proud of his Polish heritage, and seeks to prove himself as more than just a punk kid. When he does, he is a murderer. Lefty knows his crimes have left him alienated from the gang, and that in the end, his search to prove himself has left him a criminal. To the police, Lefty is considered a low Polish immigrant and proof of why the Polish do not have the power of the Irish in Chicago. Lefty, to them, is merely a criminal, and although he has talent, he is merely one of many who will spend the remaining years of his life in jail. Lefty's character seems to symbolize wasted youth in American gangs, both past and present.

Jack Lorey appears in Torch Song

Jack Lorey is a kind and caring man in 'Torch Song.' Originally from Ohio, Jack moves to New York in his mid-thirties and meets Joan Harris, a woman who becomes his lifelong friend. Jack's story is told through his meetings with Joan over the course of several years. Jack marries twice, has a son, and at one point joins the military and



serves his country. Jack realizes Joan has a series of bad relationships, but it is not until the end of the story that Jack realizes the vampire nature of Joan, in that she seems to feed off the deaths of others. Jack is quick to tell his friend he will call her as he is dying, showing he finally understands the true nature of his friend, but his tears and fear also show Jack to be a sensitive man who fears his own demise.

Joan Harris appears in Torch Song

Joan Harris is a friend of Jack Lorey in Torch Song, and is a woman of questionable ethics and morals. Joan, from the beginning, has a series of relationships with men that are questionable and dangerous. Her loves include a drunk who passes out in public, a count who abuses drugs, beats her, and forces her into drug dealing, another drunk, Hugh, who is abusive, a German alcoholic who is also abusive, an ill Englishman named Stephen, Pete, who steals her money, and a host of other men who seem to Jack to be wrong for Joan. In the end, however, it is revealed that Joan chooses these men not for their abusive behaviors towards her, but for their abusive behaviors towards themselves. Joan seems to thrive on the deaths of others as a way to preserve her own youth and her own identity. Rather than lose lovers due to infidelity or other reasons, Joan chooses to lose hers to death. Her character is almost a black widow, but instead of killing her lovers, Joan simply allows them to kill themselves in her presence. She is not cruel in this, but instead seems to see herself almost as an angel of death. She does not cause the death, but merely watches as it occurs.

Foiral appears in Witch's Money

Foiral is a simple man, who lives a simple life in his village, of which he is chief. However, when a stranger arrives, Foiral is shown to be more shrewd and less simple than he originally appears. When Foiral is first introduced, he is fearful of the stranger, showing him to be reluctant to change. However, when money is introduced, Foiral is shown to be more shrewd, in that he sells his property for more than it is worth. When he is taught how to cash a check, however, and discovers he has lost part of his money in bank fees, Foiral is shown as a cruel man, who is willing to kill another human being for a mere 100 dollars. It is clear that, as simple as Foiral seems to be, he is easily corruptible, and quick to put the value of money over that of human life.

Carlier appears in Outpost of Progress

Carlier is the assistant chief of the outpost station in Africa. He is tall man with long and thin legs who is a military man by nature. As a non-commissioned officer of the Calvary, Carlier is used to civilization. He has only come to the outpost because his family, tired of his laziness, has given him no other option. He is moody, and tends to be quarrelsome. When pushed into a situation where civilization is far away, Carlier is the first to crack under the pressure. He is cruel to the locals, and does not seem to



understand the dangers of the area. In the end, his own anger and bitterness cause him to fight with his partner, Kayerts, and lead to his death.

Kayerts appears in Outpost of Progress

Kayerts is the chief of an outpost station in Africa. Kayerts is a short man and heavy set. He is at the outpost station only for his daughter, who is soon to wed and needs money for the dowry. As a widower, Kayerts seeks to earn money while his daughter is raised by his sisters. Originally a clerk, Kayerts took the position for the pay. Once in Africa, however, it is clear Kayerts is not suited for the life. He is uncaring about the local villagers, and does not seem to understand the dangers of the area. His complete acceptance of civilization leads to his rejection of the more adventurous life of the outpost station. In the end, his inability to tolerate the area and the consequences of life in uncivilized society leads to his madness and his killing of an unarmed man. His guilt, when forced to face civilization again, leads him to commit suicide.

George Robbins appears in The Third Prize

George Robbins is a runner who enjoys competitive running. George is a good and kind man who is fun-loving and a little feisty. When he is presented with a problem of morality, George chooses a path many would consider wrong by accepting two prizes for his race. He is considered cute by Margery, and the two seem to get a long well. George does not seem to see any problem with his behaviors in the story, which would make him seem to be uncaring and immoral. However, in the end, he gives his second prize to a disabled couple, showing a true sense of compassion.

Jack Potter appears in The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky

Jack Potter is the Marshall of a frontier town called Yellow Sky. He is a shy man, with a red, lined face from the elements and a concern for his image. Jack knows he has committed a near crime by marrying outside of his city, and without telling anyone, but Jack also knows he is in love with his new wife. Jack is tough but fair and seems to be excited to start his new life with his wife. He is not wealthy, but is proud and seems to enjoy showing his new bride her new surroundings. Jack is brave as he shows when confronted with his enemy Scratchy Wilson and a committed man.

Pop Apling appears in Open Winter

Pop Apling is an older man, nearly sixty, who has worked ranching most of his life. Apling is nothing if not responsible and shows throughout the story that he takes great pride in his work, and in his performance. Faced several times in the story with obstacles that he could have simply walked away from, Apling chooses to continue pushing forward, never allowing himself to be beat. He is brave, and almost fatherly to



his young helper, Beech. Through the story, Apling teaches Beech what it means to be a man and how it feels to be proud of what you do.

Beech Cartwright appears in Open Winter

Beech Cartwright is a sixteen-year old young man hired to help herd horses for a rancher. He is inexperienced, and believes in the beginning of the story that his job is about money, and that anything outside of his job is not paid for, and therefore is not worth his time. Beech only follows Apling, at first, out of fear of repercussion. However, as the story unfolds, it is clear that Beech has listened to Apling, and has learned a responsibility to others. Beech's refusal to sell out Apling to the ranchers shows the beginnings of his new sense of responsibility. Beech also shows himself to be incredibly logical and resourceful as he figures out where water is, and how to manage the herd. In the end, Beech is rewarded with pride in his work and a sense of well being as he brings in the horses.

Satoris Scopes appears in Barn Burning

Satoris Scopes is a young boy who finds himself at a crossroads in 'Barn Burning.' Torn between a loyalty to his father and a sense of right and wrong, Satoris struggles with himself throughout the story, trying to figure out how to stop his father's arson, and maintain his own identity. Satoris is strong willed and loyal to his family, but also knows his father's actions will continue to disrupt his own, and his family's life. In the end, Satoris chooses to stop his father's actions, knowing that means danger to his father, and knowing he can no longer go home. Satoris realizes he has a path other than to walk in the shadow of his father.

Dexter Green appears in Winter Dreams

Dexter Green is the son of a local grocer who aims for success in life. He is good at locating opportunity and seems to have an affinity for business. However, his lifelong obsession with a young woman named Judy leads him throughout his life to make bad decisions, in the hopes that her love will someday belong to him. He seems to see Judy as the embodiment of all his hopes and dreams, and when he fails to obtain her, he sees himself as a failure. It is only when he realizes Judy has faded that he is able to grieve for the loss of his inner self.

Harold Krebs appears in Soldier's Home

Harold Krebs is a young man who has returned to his childhood home in Oklahoma following his time in the war. Prior to the war, Harold was attending a college in Kansas and was a pleasant young man. Following his time in the war, however, Harold finds himself alienated from society. His stories of the war fall on deaf ears, as many do not wish to hear the reality of war. As a result, Harold becomes more withdrawn. He is



unwilling to waste time finding a girl, since he wishes his life to be free from consequences. Harold clearly has been affected by the war and his life is now a struggle for non-complexity.

Peter Brench appears in Tree of Knowledge

Peter Brench is a man whose life has been spent harboring a deep secret. Brench is in love with his friend's wife and as a result, he keeps secret his hatred for his friend's artwork. Brench is not a bad person, nor would he think of taking Mrs. Mallow from her husband, but instead he remains a faithful and loyal friend to the family. Brench's secret is not meant to harm, but is instead meant to maintain peace and harmony. Even his efforts to protect the Mallow's son, Lance, show him to be a good and faithful friend. In the end, however, Brench has to admit that his secret was, in part, kept because he wanted to maintain the fantasy that Mrs. Mallow did not know. In doing so, he could pretend that he didn't know the woman loved her husband enough to pretend to like his work.

Mrs. Mooney appears in Boarding House

Mrs. Mooney is the mother of Polly in 'Boarding House.' As a single mother, Mrs. Mooney seems to plan for her daughter's future in a way that is highly subtle. She takes her from a position as a typist, and puts her in charge of entertaining the men at the boarding house. She stands by and watches as Polly begins an affair with one of the men. It is only when the affair is far enough along that Mrs. Mooney traps the young man, and forces him to marry Polly. While Mrs. Mooney's intentions are good, her actions are questionable. She is a strong woman however, and one that will get her way in the end.

The Thayer's appears in Liberty Bell

The Thayer's are a couple that are determined to make their new guests, the Drake's, welcome. Their attempts, however, become more and more pushy as they try so hard to set the Drake's at ease. Their manners are lacking, and their sense of what makes one comfortable is severely questionable. In the end, their behaviors cause the Drake's endless discomfort, showing that even the best intentions can be bad if their delivery is faulty.

Mabel Pervin appears in Horse Dealer's Daughter

Mabel Pervin is the daughter of a horse dealer who has recently passed away. Mabel cared for her father and brothers for many years when the family fortune was still present, and even after. However, while wealthy, Mabel was able to be safe and confident, knowing that she needed no one to maintain her life. Once the money is gone, however, Mabel becomes despondent and depressed, as she believes her life is



over. With nothing left to look forward to and no one left to take care of, Mabel attempts suicide as her only solution. When she is saved by local doctor Jack, she convinces herself temporarily that he is in love with her. She uses Jack's saving of her to bind him to her. As Jack falls in love with her, however, she begins to question her own actions, and her own feelings.

Isabel appears in Marriage A La Mode

Isabel is the wife of William in 'Marriage A La Mode' and is his primary source of agony. Isabel loves her husband, but has found a new love for the whimsical and carefree life of the artist society of England. She does not work nor does she care for her children, but instead spends time and money with a group of friends who simply pass the day lazily, with little ambition or goals. Her husband, William, is the exact opposite of this, with ambition, and a great sense of family and loyalty. When confronted with William's emotions, Isabel shows her true selfish nature as she chooses her friends over her family.

Mr. Warburton appears in The Outstation

Mr. Warburton is a fifty-year old colonist whose previous life as a socialite has left him a snob. He is now balding, and heavy, but in his day he was a wealthy man who kept company with some of the finest in England. Although often thought a snob, Warburton is a kind enough man, willing to help his fellow man without question. However, when confronted with someone he sees as lower class, Warburton's snobbish behavior begins to deepen to the point of alienation. In the end, his snobbish behavior drives his assistant, Cooper, away to the point of agony and frustration. When he perishes, Warburton does not feel sorrow, showing again his belief that he is better than those of a lower class.

The Adulteress appears in Cruel and Barbarous Treatment

The young woman in 'Cruel and Barbarous Treatment' is a woman who lives her life as a play. She uses every opportunity to place herself at center stage, and to reinvent herself to play a new role. As a mistress, she toys with the idea of being found out, and plays the role of concerned wife. As a confessing wife, she plays for sympathy, and to lure her husband in to giving himself, pain and all, to her, so she can experience him in totality. As a pending divorcee with a lover, she seeks acceptance, and uses social engagements to place herself in the center of a love triangle. When she realizes, however, that she does not love her lover, she again reinvents herself as a divorcee. Only concerned with how she appears to others, the adulteress will never find happiness.



Jack Ferris appears in The Sojourner

Jack Ferris is a man whose life is filled with temporary statuses. Faced with his own age at the death of his father, Jack finds himself reminiscing about his marriage to Elizabeth, a beautiful charming young woman. When he calls her unexpectedly and is invited to dinner, he sees her happy family, and finds himself lying to her about his own life to appear a more stable, permanent individual. He becomes aware, through viewing Elizabeth's life, that his own is merely passing him by. He himself admits he is a sojourner, or temporary resident, and while he means this to pertain to his life in France, he does realize it applies to his entire existence. When he returns home, Jack finds himself promising the son of his girlfriend that they will spend more time together, showing that Jack does plan to change his ways in the future.

Larry appears in My Oedipus Complex

Larry is a young boy whose love for his mother interferes with his love for his father. Larry is used to being the center of his mother's attention since his father went to war. When he returns, Larry finds himself losing his privileged place in his mother's life, which causes him to despise his father. His father is exasperated as well with Larry, and treats him as a child. While this is normal behavior for a father, Larry has been spoiled by his life alone with mother. It is only when Larry is faced with a new threat, a little brother, that he and his father are able to join sides. No longer the only threat, Larry begins to understand that with the new baby, father and he are in the same boat. The two are able to make amends, and become allies, showing that Larry is beginning to understand the world around him.

Joanna appears in The Nightengales sing

Joanna is a young woman who has led a normal, middle class life. Her existence is well structured and safe, having come from a fairly well to do family who does little outside of their safety zone. When Joanna spends time with older individuals at a ranch house in the country, she learns of a life outside of the one she knows. In this new life, she learns of dangerous jobs, heartache, and love outside of what is considered normal. Once back home, then, Joanna has to face her life in a new way, knowing there is more than what her own family sees day to day and knowing she now will likely want more.

Laura appears in Flowering Judas

Laura is a twenty-two year old American living in Mexico as an aid to the revolution. A teacher by day and a revolutionary at night, Laura still on occasion goes to church, although she betrays her own belief in the revolution. Laura spends much time fighting off advances from the men around her, including the revolutionary leader, Braggioni. There are other men as well that she must quell. Laura does not know why she stays in Mexico, nor why she continues fighting for the revolution. She is a kind woman, but



seems unwilling to do what she needs to do to escape. In the end, it is the death of a revolutionary she has tried to help that appears to cause her to begin questioning her loyalties.

Christian Darling appears in Eighty Yard Run

Christian Darling is a well-built thirty-five year old man who has spent much of his life looking backwards. Once a star football player, Darling spend the first part of his marriage to college sweetheart Louise taking her for granted and cheating on her. Darling lived through his football, and later, through his job with her father as a successful businessman. When the depression hit, however, and Darling was left with nothing, he became jealous of his wife, and angry at her as she began to succeed without him. Instead of being supportive, Darling was selfish, and still took her and her kindness for granted. It was only when Darling realized she had begun to pull away from him that he attempted to make amends, but it was too late. Now, Darling is left with a job that takes him away from home for most of the moth, and left with the knowledge that his wife is spending her time with other, more educated individuals that could have been him, if he had cared enough to pay attention.

May appears in Country Love Story

May is a woman married to a man twenty years her senior. When he becomes ill, May attempt to do what is best for him, but soon learns that she does not know him as well as she believed. When the two move into the country, she soon realizes that her husband's illness is driving him away from her, and causing him to be violent and angry at her. Confused, angry, lonely, and hurt, May invents a lover to spend her time with. When her husband does recover, May is dismayed as she finds she no longer loves him, but can also no longer imagine her lover. May is not a cruel character, but one who simply responds to the world around her in such a way as to cope with her life. Unfortunately, her coping leads to a fantasy that is better than her own reality.

Tory appears in Red Letter Day

Tory is a recently divorced mother of one, Edward. Tory is flirtatious and cares about what others think of her, but thinks little of herself. She sees herself as fragile and broken after the divorce and as a bad mother. She knows she is less than qualified as a mother, and knows that she has little stability to offer her son. When she sees another mother, Hay-Hardy, she therefore imagines her to be all the things Tory herself is not, which is fun, boisterous, confident, loving, and nurturing. Even Tory's son sees that she is dangerous and he feels uncomfortable with her, only because she is so uncomfortable with herself. Tory is not a bad mother, but simply one who suffers too much from low self-esteem and a lack of parental experience.



Elizabeth appears in A Spinster's Tale

Elizabeth is a thirteen-year old young girl filled with fear. Having recently dealt with the death of her mother, the young girl is still trying to learn to face the world alone. Her father and brother, both caring and loving individuals, have within them a wild streak that Elizabeth sees, and fears. She transfers these fears to a local drunken man, Mr. Speed. Elizabeth is not truly afraid of Mr. Speed, but is instead afraid of what he symbolizes to her. As Elizabeth deals with her fear, she slowly learns to deal with the world, and to come out of her safety zone to deal with the household as a young woman. Over the course of time, her facing of her fear transfers over into the rest of her life, as she takes on the role of woman of the house. In the end of the story, it is Elizabeth's dealing with Mr. Speed that allows her to truly be a woman symbolically to herself and be free of the young girl fears of her childhood.

The Doctor appears in The Use of Force

The doctor is a caring young man who is tainted by his recent dealings with diphtheria taking the lives of local children. When the doctor then encounters a young girl who refuses to be looked at, his anguish over the lost children boils over and he uses more force than necessary. While he admits the child must be looked at, for her own safety and the safety of others, he also realizes that he enjoys the struggle, as it symbolizes to him the struggle against the disease its self. He feels furious, but he also admits he loves the child for fighting as her combative nature is endearing. When the doctor overpowers her, he realizes his struggle was worthwhile as he can now save the young girl.



Objects/Places

Jackroller appears in A Bottle of Milk for Mother

A jackroller is a person who robs another person with a weapon such as a knife or gun.

Torch Song appears in Torch Song

A torch song is a song told about lost loves, often with sentimentality and deep emotion.

Open Winter appears in Open Winter

The term 'open winter' represents a winter that is free from frost.

Duffer appears in Tree of Knowledge.

A duffer is a person who sells cheap and worthless merchandise.

Liberty Hall appears in Liberty Hall

Liberty Hall is a concert hall in Lawrence Kansas known for its ambiance and rich atmosphere. In the short story, the name is used to represent a place of rest and relaxation for Ben Drake.

Tuan appears in The Outstation

Tuan is a phrase used to indicate a master in Malaysian culture.

Sojourner appears in Sojourner

A sojourner is a temporary resident of an area.

Oedipus Complex appears in Oedipus Complex

The Oedipus complex was a psychological theory by Freud that argued young boys wish to unconsciously kill their fathers and sleep with their mothers.



Judas Tree appears in Flowering Judas

The Judas Tree is a small, flowering tree, believed to be the type of tree that Judas, betrayer of Jesus, hanged himself on.

Privy appears in The Nightengales Sing

A privy is an outhouse or a bathroom located in a building outside of the main premises.

Motoring appears in A Spinter's Tale

Motoring is another term for riding in a vehicle.

Ball Club appears in You Could Look It Up

A ball club is another term for a baseball team.



Themes

Coming of Age

One of the main themes throughout the stories in this collection is the coming of age of the characters, or the transition from childhood to adulthood. In 'Bottle of Milk for Mother,' Lucky unfortunately comes of age because he accidentally kills someone that he is attempting to rob. His behaviors lead him to prison, where he will likely perish and even he himself admits he will not live to twenty-one. He is forced to grow up and face his responsibility. In 'Open Winter,' young Beech begins as a cocky young man who would prefer to leave animals to their death than put himself out. By the end of the story, however, Beech understands what it means to be responsible for himself and his job and understands pride in his work. In 'Barn Burning,' a young man is forced to choose between what is right and his father. His choices lead to the death of his father and an end to his home life, but lead him to understand his father's courage and strength. 'My Oedipus Complex' focuses on a boy's jealousy of his father's relationship with his mother and his growing understanding that they are in the same position. In 'The Nightingales Sing,' young Joanna learns that the world outside her middle class home is filled with new ideas, new ways of living, and new ways to love. She returns to her home, feeling sorry for those who are unable to see such freedoms because of their upbringing. 'Flight' deals with a boy's journey to manhood as he seeks freedom from his crimes. It is only when he is beaten by nature, tired, and broken that he truly becomes a man and faces punishment for his crime. 'A Spinster's Tale' is the journey of young Elizabeth who fears everything after the death of her mother, but who, through a drunken man, learns to stand on her own feet as a young woman. In all these stories, the concept of a child growing into an adult as a result of his or her experiences is the key component to the story.

Consequences of Selfishness

Another theme throughout the stories in this collection is the consequences of selfish behaviors. In 'Impulse,' Michael is a man who cares only for himself. He has spent his life lying to his wife and caring little for his children. In the end, his selfish behavior takes him to jail and he loses his family. In 'Witch's Money,' Foiral is selfish in that when he sells his home for more than it is worth, he still seeks revenge for having to pay bank fees on a check. In his case, his selfishness appears to be rewarded, as he and his friends are made wealthy in the village. In 'The Third Prize,' George seems selfish as he takes money for third place twice in the story. However, he redeems himself by giving a part of his winnings to a local disabled couple. In 'Marriage A La Mode,' the behaviors of Isabel lead to the depression and extreme sadness of husband William. While it seems as though her selfish behavior is recognized by the end of the story and she feels remorse, it is clear she has only temporary remorse. In 'Cruel and Barbarous Treatment,' the selfish behaviors of the woman having the affair lead to her own title as divorcee, without a new fiancée to show off. Again, however, her selfishness is so deep



that she is unable to see her new title as derogatory. In 'The Eighty Yard Run,, Darling's whole life is ruined by his selfish behavior. Had he only listened to his wife and showed her the love and attention she needed, he would have kept her happy. Instead, he chose to focus only on himself and as a result, alienated her. In some cases in these stories, the result of selfishness is the demise of the character. In other cases, as in real life, the selfishness of the character is so severe and so deep that the character never fully realizes the extent of the harm he or she inflicts.

Colonization / War

Colonization and war make up another theme within this collection of stories. In some cases, such as in 'The Outstation' and 'Outpost of Progress,' the point of colonization is clear. In both cases, the men sent to work the outposts within the new territories are snobbish men who are ill equipped to deal with the harsh lands of the colonies. Their horrible treatment of the natives when combined with their complete lack of knowledge of the area lead to their demise, showing clearly the author's point that colonization is not something to be taken lightly. In other stories, such as 'Torch Song,' the concept of war is introduced only as a backdrop to the ongoing lives of the characters. The war clearly influences them, but indirectly. In others, such as 'Soldier's Home,' the effect of war on the characters is more direct. Krebs is forever damaged by his experiences in the war, and he can never again return to what he was prior to his experience. In 'Barn Burning,' the father's experiences in the war have clearly shaped him as well, although the tale within the story is subtle. It is clear Abner was in the war, and that his experiences led to his arson behaviors, although the cause of those behaviors is unclear. In 'My Oedipus Complex,' the father of Larry in the story is absent because of his role in the war. It is this absence that causes the conflict within the story, and although that conflict is resolved by the end, it is clear the war played an important part on shaping the lives of the characters. 'Flowering Judas' introduces another look at war from the viewpoint of the revolutionary. Unlike traditional war, Laura makes a choice to continue to participate in the revolution, even though it is clearly taking a toll on her sense of self. She sees herself as a betrayer, even though she still fights for what she believes. In each of these stories, the concepts of colonization and war either play a major role in shaping the story or play a part in shaping the characters and their motivations.



Style

Point of View

The points of view in the stories in this collection range from first person to third person. Stories such as in 'The Egg,' 'Liberty Hall,' 'My Oedipus Complex,' 'Innocence,' 'A Spinster's Tale,' 'You Could Look It Up,' 'Why I Live at the PO,' and 'The Use of Force' use the first-person point of view. This is necessary, because these stories all involve either deep emotional issues or a very personal recollection of events. These deep emotions, such as the depression felt in 'The Egg,' the jealousy in 'My Oedipus Complex,' and the shame in 'The Use of Force' can only really be understood through the eyes and heart of the person feeling these emotional connections. Without an understanding of the character's personal behaviors, such emotions would be lost. In addition, the personal recollection of the ball player in 'You Can Look It Up' is based on the idea that this person was directly involved in the story and since it is told as a tall tale, a first-person perspective helps the story to feel like a tall tale, as it is designed to be. Conversely, many of the stories in the book are told in the third-person point of view. Stories such as 'An Outpost of Progress' rely heavily on this point of view, since there are many different perspectives that must be understood simultaneously. Without an understanding of both the European perspective and the native perspective, this story would not be as poignant. Stories such as 'Red Letter Day' and 'The Horse Dealers Daughter' rely on the balance of emotions between two characters. If told in the first person, the emotion of the other characters would be lost, preventing the painting of the whole picture for the reader.

Setting

The settings of the stories in this collection range across the globe. Some stories fail to mention a location, allowing the reader to assume a location based on characters, sights, sounds, and other clues within the story. Others, such as 'Torch Song' are set within the cities of the United States and as these stories were mostly written in the first half of the last century, these stories are often told with clear social class lines and images of war as the country was just beginning to see the wars of this time period. Other stories, such as 'The Outstation' are set in Africa as Europe begins to colonize the area. Again, such stories rely on such locations for the backdrop to tales of race relations and colonization. Still other stories in the novel are set in the wild frontier of the plains, such as 'Open Winter' where the lives of the characters tend to be more free, and less restrictive than those in the cities. Still other stories, such as 'Flowering Judas', are set in Mexico and other countries, where civil unrest and revolution serve as a backdrop to the lives of the characters. In all cases, the settings of these stories serve not only to set the stage of the tale, but also to give the reader an insight into the prejudices and conflicts these characters face outside of the storyline to better understand their motivations.



Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of the stories in this collection vary as much as the stories themselves. When the story is set within the bourgeois class, such as in 'Cruel and Barbarous Treatment,' the language of the tale is often more formal, with proper sentence structure and a more sophisticated language style. The emphasis in these tales is often on the effects of behaviors on the character's images by the public. Other stories, set amongst the blue collar working class, such as 'Bottle of Milk for Mother', have a less structured feel to the language, and use more slang. Their language tends to lean toward casual conversation, with an emphasis on fact rather than thought or emotion. In other stories, such as 'You Can Look It Up' the language helps set the story by using the dialect of the characters. In this case, the ball player's in the club are simple, and their language reflects a more sportsmanlike atmosphere. In some cases, the language of the novel helps convey a sense of class, such as in 'The Nightingales Sing,' where Joanna admits the language of her new friends would shock her middle class parents, or in 'Barn Burning,' where the main characters are of a working class family with little education. Throughout these stories, the language used helps convey social status, education, and ethnicity as well as helps to convey the true meaning of the character's actions and behaviors.

Structure

'Short Story Masterpieces' is a collection of thirty-five different stories by different authors. These stories are of unequal length, ranging from just a few pages to nearly thirty pages in length. While most stories are told in one section, some, such as 'Winter Dreams', are broken into different sections, with each section representing a new phase in the lives of the characters. Some stories span mere moments, such as in 'Use of Force,' whereas other stories span entire life spans, such as 'Torch Song'. In some cases, such as 'Bottle of Milk for Mother', the story is told from within a single room, whereas other tales, such as 'Flight,' are told as part of a journey that stretches for many miles. The book, in total, is five hundred and twelve pages in length, which includes a brief introduction by the editors. The editors note that the structure of the novel, which is the inclusion of thirty-five of the best stories written in English in the first half of the twentieth century, limited the selection of stories possible for the collection. They remind readers that the novel includes authors who sought to challenge the structure of the short story through their use of controversial subject, language, or tone.



Quotes

"Have you got impulses? Of course you got impulses. How many times you think - suppose I do that? And you don't do it, because you know damn well if you do it you'll get arrested" (Impulses, pg. 3.)

"But about feelings, people really know nothing. We talk with indignation or enthusiasm; we talk about oppression, cruelty, crime, devotion, self-sacrifice, virtue, and we know nothing real beyond the words. Nobody knows what sufferance or sacrifice mean - except perhaps the victims of the mysterious purpose of these illusions" (Outpost of Progress, pg. 91.)

"None of them know about the things they saw every day. None of them knew what it meant to be in a place where there were delicacies to eat and new clothes to wear and look at, what it meant to be warm and out of the wind for a change, what it could mean merely to have water enough to pour on the ground and grass enough to cut down and throw away" (Open Winter, pg 147.)

"They are safe from him. People whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity are beyond his touch, he no more to them than a buzzing wasp: capable of stinging for a little moment but that's all" (Barn Burning, pg. 154.)

"He loved her, and he would love her until the day he was too old for loving - but he could not have her. So he tasted the deep pain that is reserved only for the strong, just as he had tasted for a little while the deep happiness" (Winter Dreams, pg. 189.)

"She need not demean herself any more, going into the shops and buying the cheapest food. This was at an end. She thought of nobody, not even of herself. Mindless and persistent, she seemed in a sort of ecstasy to be coming nearer to her fulfillment, her own glorification, approaching her dead mother, who was glorified" (Horse Dealer's Daughter, pg. 245.)

"When a white man surrenders in the slightest degree to the influences that surround him he very soon loses his self-respect, and when he loses his self-respect, you may be quite sure that the natives will soon cease to respect him" (Outstation, pg. 278.)

"Ferris felt himself suddenly a spectator - an interloper among these Baileys. Why had he come? He suffered. His own life seemed so solitary, a fragile column supporting nothing amidst the wreckage of the years" (The Sojourner, pg. 327.)

"Everything must be torn from its accustomed place where it has rotted for centuries, hurled skyward and distributed, cast down again clean as rain, without separate identity. Nothing shall survive that the stiffened hands of poverty have created for the rich and no one shall be left alive except the elect spirits destined to procreate a new world cleansed of cruelty and injustice" (Flowering Judas, pg. 383.)



"Somewhere, he thought, there must have been a point where she moved up to me, was even with me for a moment, when I could have held her hand, if I'd known, held tight, gone with her. Well, he'd never known" (Eighty Yard Run, pg. 410.)

"In her life, all was frail, precarious - emotions fleeting, relationships fragmentary. Her life with her husband had suddenly loosened and dissolved, her love for her son was painful, shadowed by guilt - the guilt of having nothing solid to offer, of having grown up and forgotten, of adventuring still, away from her child, of not being able to resist those emotional adventures, the tenuous grasping after life" (Red Letter Day, pg. 447.)

"I saw myself as a little beast adding to the injury that what was bestial in man had already done to him" (A Spinster's Tale, pg. 478.)

"But the worst of it was that I too had gone beyond reason. I could have torn the child apart in my own fury and enjoyed it. It was a pleasure to attack her. My face was burning with it" (The Use of Force, pg. 513.)



Topics for Discussion

There are many uses of nature within the short stories in the novel. For example, nature is used as part of Pepe's struggle in 'Flight' and is used to convey a sense of loneliness in 'A Country Love Story.' Describe the use of nature in at least two stories in the novel. Make sure to note the story, how nature was used, and what the effect was on the overall plot or feel of the story.

There are several coming of age stories in this collection. Choose two, and describe what experiences the characters have that cause them to mature, and what that maturity means to them. For example, in 'The Nightingales Sing,' Joanna's exposure to new people and to new ideas lead to her recognition that her own life is safe and secure as well as highly structured. The knowledge that there are professions that are dangerous as well as relationships outside of social boundaries leads her to feel sympathy for her own family as they will never truly experience freedom. Using this example, formulate your own answers based on two stories in the book.

There are many selfish characters within the stories of the novel. Choose two and compare and contrast them. Do these characters know they are selfish? Why are they this way, what are their motives? Do others recognize their selfishness? Why do you think they are selfish? Do you think they can change or will change? Why or why not?

Lost love is another concept that runs throughout the novel. Compare and contrast Christian Darling's experiences in 'Eighty Yard Run' with those of Dexter Green in 'Winter Dreams'. How are their situations similar? How are they different? Are either character's at fault for their lost love? If so, how? If not, what caused the loss? Do they accept the loss or do they fight it? Why? What does this say about the characters themselves?

Colonization plays a role in several of the stories in the novel. Based on those stories, describe what you believe the author's were trying to say about the practice of colonization. Were the descriptions of native populations positive or negative? Were the relations with the Europeans in the story positive or negative? How were the English portrayed in these stories? What were the outcomes of the stories? What were the attitudes of the native populations toward the colonizers?

Explain how language is used in 'You Could Look it Up' to help tell the story of the baseball club who hires a midget. What is the purpose of the language used? Does it help or detract from the story? Why? Why do you think the author chose to use this style of writing? Are there any other stories in this book that use a similar style, or that use language as a tool for story telling? Which one?

In the final story in the book, the question is raised as to whether or not the means justify an end. This is a common question in any form of literature. Based on this story alone, do you think the means justify the end? Do you think the doctor was right in his use of force, if it helped to save the child's life? Why or why not? Do you think the doctor

acted morally? Why or why not? Were there other alternatives? Why did he not pursue them?