

Songs of the Humpback Whale Study Guide

Songs of the Humpback Whale by Jodi Picoult

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



Contents

Songs of the Humpback Whale Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Prologue Rebecca November 1990.....	5
Chapters 1-3.....	6
Chapters 4-6.....	8
Chapters 7-8.....	10
Chapters 9-11.....	11
Chapters 12-13.....	13
Chapters 14-15.....	14
Chapter 16, Rebecca July 25, 1990.....	15
Chapters 17-18.....	16
Chapters 19-21.....	17
Chapter 22, Rebecca July 21, 1990.....	19
Chapters 23-25.....	20
Chapter 26, Rebecca July 19, 1990.....	21
Chapters 27-28.....	22
Chapters 29-30.....	23
Chapters 31-33.....	24
Chapters 34-36.....	25
Chapters 37-38.....	26
Chapters 39-41.....	27
Chapters 42-44.....	28
Chapters 45-46.....	29
Chapters 47-48.....	30



[Chapters 49-50..... 31](#)

[Chapter 51-52..... 32](#)

[Chapters 53-56..... 33](#)

[Chapter 57..... 34](#)

[Chapters 58-59..... 35](#)

[Chapters 60-61..... 36](#)

[Chapters 62-63..... 37](#)

[Chapters 64-65..... 38](#)

[Chapter 66..... 39](#)

[Chapters 67-70..... 40](#)

[Chapters 71-72..... 41](#)

[Characters..... 42](#)

[Objects/Places..... 47](#)

[Themes..... 51](#)

[Style..... 53](#)

[Quotes..... 55](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 58](#)



Plot Summary

Songs of the Humpback Whale: A Novel in Five Voices, published in 1992, was Jodi Picoult's first novel. Set in 1990, the story spans the journey of three family members from San Diego, California to Stow, Massachusetts as they discover the reasons their family broke apart and the need for each other that drives them back together. Eminent marine biologist Oliver Jones understands whales better than he understands how to be a father and husband and so he uses his whale-tracking skills to track his wife and child across the country after they leave. Jane Lipton Jones, his wife, is a woman in search of herself after an abusive childhood and a verbally abusive marriage. Daughter Rebecca Jones at fifteen has survived a plane crash, a distant father, and an unhappy mother. She longs for the love she cannot find at home.

The story is told in fragments of 72 brief chapters over 346 pages from the points of view of Oliver Jones, Jane Lipton Jones, Rebecca Jones, Joley Lipton (Jane's devoted younger brother), and Sam Hansen, Joley's employer and friend. Reading the story is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle without the overall picture as a guide. The fragments gradually connect as the reader explores them from the different angles or points of view. Incidents are repeated from the various points of view so that the reader enjoys a richer, deeper experience of the conflicts among the characters.

Each of the voices telling the story is set off by a separate typeface and the chapters are titled with the name of the point of view character. Jane has 24 chapters. Oliver and Rebecca have an equal number of chapters with an unlucky 13 each. Sam, Jane's love interest, has 12 chapters. Joley has eleven. By this measure, the story is predominantly Jane's story with all the other voices blending into a background chorus to add depth.

The main action of the story is set into motion when Jane strikes her husband. Fearing that she has become violent like her father, she flees to the only person she really trusts—her younger brother Joley. Rebecca hastily packs and joins her mother on the cross-country journey from San Diego, California to Stow, Massachusetts. Jane calls her brother who directs her across country day by day through a series of letters at post offices along the way. He directs them on a scenic route to places he believes will help his sister and niece grow through discovery. Meanwhile, Oliver Jones has decided to track his wife and child using his whale hunting skills but he does not know his family well enough to effectively locate them. During his trek across America, his arrogance softens and he learns how to speak about his feelings.

When Jane and Rebecca reach Stow, Massachusetts and Joley, they both find real love. Jane falls in love with the orchard owner, 25-year-old Sam Hansen, who is ten years her junior. Rebecca falls in love with Sam's best friend Hadley Spreng who is 25-years-old, ten years older than Rebecca is. Jane's protectiveness or jealousy drives her to separate Hadley and Rebecca, which results in tragedy. In the end, she either repents or punishes herself for her love of Sam by returning with Rebecca and Oliver to San Diego. When the puzzle of the story is pieced together, the overall picture is a tragic opera told in lyrical prose.



Prologue Rebecca November 1990

Prologue Rebecca November 1990 Summary

Songs of the Humpback Whale, published in 1992, was Jodi Picoult's first novel. It spans the journey of three family members on their way from San Diego, California to Stow, Massachusetts as they discover the reasons their family broke apart and the need for each other that drives them back together. Eminent marine biologist Oliver Jones understands whales better than he understands how to be a father and husband and so he uses his whale-tracking skills to track his wife and child across the country after they leave. Jane Lipton Jones, his wife, is a woman in search of herself after an abusive childhood and a verbally abusive marriage. Fifteen-year-old daughter Rebecca Jones has survived a plane crash, a distant father, an unhappy mother and longs for the love she cannot find at home.

Months after Jane and Rebecca runaway from home, fifteen-year-old Rebecca examines a photo taken by a trucker of Rebecca and her mother at the border of California and Arizona. In the background of the photo is an airplane. The photo triggers memories of the plane crash Rebecca survived at three and a half when her mother ran away with her. After Oliver threatened Jane with legal action, Jane placed Rebecca on a plane back to Oliver but the plane crashed in Iowa. Rebecca was one of five survivors and had her picture on the cover of Time magazine. The trucker mails the photo to Joley in Stow, Massachusetts where Jane and Rebecca receive it. Rebecca looks at the photo back in San Diego, a memento of her tragic summer.

Prologue Rebecca November 1990 Analysis

A miniature airplane in the photo reminds Rebecca of another airplane from the time she and her mother left home once before. That trip ended in tragedy when the plane crashed. After that tragedy, the family reunited. This foreshadows the latest runaway attempt. All of the Rebecca point of view chapters are told in reverse chronological order. They are the only chapters titled with dates. The photo is symbolic of crossing the line, the women are trying to make a break from Oliver and this state line marks a meaningful step for them.



Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary

Jane remembers the day before her wedding because she woke up screaming and did not understand why. Now a speech pathologist for the San Diego school system, she and her husband Oliver have grown distant. She stands by him as a dutiful wife at fundraisers for the San Diego Center for Coastal Studies but they are both unhappy and long to be elsewhere. Oliver longs to be near the East Coast humpback whales. Jane longs to be back in the early years of their marriage when Oliver spoke to her about his discoveries. Jane demands that Oliver be home for their daughter Rebecca's fifteenth birthday. Oliver has committed to a whale watching expedition off the coast of South America. Jane seethes about it but does not speak up because she harbors guilt about their last fight when she ran away with Rebecca and ended up sending Rebecca back on a flight that crashed.

Oliver thinks about the differences between the Hawaiian and West Indian humpback whales and his favorite, the Northern Atlantic humpback whales. He first fell in love with whales when he heard the mournful songs of the Northern Atlantic humpbacks. He recalls trying hard to convince Jane and Rebecca to love the whales by taking them on an expedition and by piping whale song into the house. To Oliver's dismay, Jane and Rebecca are not impressed.

Jane tries to get something planned to celebrate Rebecca's upcoming fifteenth birthday. Rebecca shrugs it off, having been disappointed so many birthdays before. Oliver arrives to announce that he has committed to a whale expedition off the coast of South America and will not be in town for Rebecca's birthday. Jane fumes at how much he has changed since they first met when he shared his news with her first. Jane goes upstairs to change her clothes and finds her shoe boxes have been replaced by whale research boxes. She hauls them out to the hallway. Oliver moves them back into the bedroom. When he tells her to sit, she kicks boxes back into the hall. Just to provoke him, Jane holds one box over the railing and the bottom breaks spilling bags of baleen and papers two stories to the floor. Oliver grabs Rebecca's wrists and calls her a bitch. Jane draws on years of pent up anger, breaks his hold and slaps him hard. He responds by insulting her, "like father, like daughter" reminding her of her abusive father. Her anger turns to purpose-driven fury in which she grabs a minimum of clothing, car keys, her brother's address and she goes to her car. She is shocked to find Rebecca, clutching a suitcase, in the car. They leave Oliver behind and drive away. It is July 3, 1990.

Chapters 1-3 Analysis

Jane's point of view reveals inner turmoil, anger and repression. Her unexplained screaming the day before her wedding seems to have been a warning from her subconscious not to marry Oliver. She seems to cope with her husband's detachment



by suppressing her own emotions. Her passive behavior and aggressive speech do not move Oliver to pay attention.

Oliver's love of whales brings him joy and fame so he cannot comprehend why Jane and Rebecca do not feel the same passion. The reader gets a glimpse of his frustration when he describes living in limbo, unable to devote enough time to his career or his family. It seems that he envies whales because they never sleep and never rest. His voice in this story is academic in tone and analytical as if he is documenting the behavior of his family members the way he studies the behavior of whales.

Though Jane uses Rebecca's birthday to test her husband's loyalty to the family, she is testing him to get his attention. When that fails, she escalates the test by putting his treasured research at risk. He fails the test by placing his whale research above his relationship with his wife—giving her an emotional gut punch by accusing her of becoming like her abusive father. When she flees, Rebecca joins her. This event is the inciting incident that triggers all that follows.



Chapters 4-6

Chapters 4-6 Summary

Jane remembers being ten years old when her father took her goose hunting in a cornfield early on a Saturday morning. Her father warned her to stay put under a pile of corn stalks. After an hour when the geese settle on the field, Jane cries out that she has to pee. The startled geese fly off, enraging her father. He tells Jane he could kill her. Instead, he shoots a crow and wrings its neck in front of Jane then he threatens her to keep it a secret.

At La Jolla, Jane stops to walk on the beach and think. She leaves Rebecca with the car to watch boys playing volleyball. On her walk, she remembers when she and her brother bodysurfed off Plum Island, Massachusetts in ten-foot storm waves. Joley was seven and Jane was eleven when Jane rescued Joley from the surf. From that moment on, she developed a fear of surrendering herself to the water. Later she discusses with Rebecca, in vague terms, what happened to make her leave Oliver. They generally agree that they will have to go back to San Diego eventually for work and school so Rebecca declares that she would rather live with her mother because she feels safe with her. Jane, in turn, seeks Joley because she feels safe with him.

Telling her story in reverse chronological order, Rebecca recalls August 2, 1990. Sam and Rebecca sit in the cellar of Sam's Big House on the apple orchard. Sam talks about Chinese funeral rituals while Rebecca is ill. Both are in mourning over the death of Hadley and then Sam gives Rebecca Hadley's blue flannel shirt. Sam then picks up Rebecca, carrying her to the back seat of her father's car where he kisses her forehead and says that she has no fever. Outside the car, Joley and Sam say goodbye to Jane while Oliver stands by. Jane and Oliver climb into the car and drive off. Rebecca remembers Hadley grafting a young branch onto an older tree so that the older tree would bear fruit. All around her in the car are bushels of different varieties of apples from Sam's orchard. Rebecca bites into one and shares it with her mother.

Chapters 4-6 Analysis

Jane's father reveals his cruelty and couples it with the demand for secrecy. This foreshadows his future behavior with Jane that combines abuse and secrecy. In both cases, he shows a need for violent domination. Because this memory follows her running away it also ties in the fact that both men she trusted and depended on have treated her with cruelty. Also with both men, they do not tell Jane what is expected of her as if she is supposed to read their minds. When she fails to meet their unspoken expectations, they turn cruel.



In a role-reversal, Rebecca plans their budget and strategy while Jane wallows in self-absorbed emotional turmoil. This pattern will repeat throughout the story as Jane reacts impulsively and emotionally to issues.

The symbolism of the apple as a forbidden fruit reminds the reader that Jane and Rebecca have been in a fruitful, Eden-like place that they are forced to leave. Like Adam and Eve driven from paradise by their disobedience, Jane and Rebecca have sinned and must leave the apple orchard.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

Twenty-six-year-old Sam recalls his childhood fascination over his father's broken gramophone. The orchard suffered a parasite causing loss of half of the crop when Sam was fourteen. He comforted himself by learning electronics. He wondered if fixing the gramophone would make it play big band music and other music of the 1940s. He took over the family orchard at age twenty when his parents moved to Florida. He had the gramophone repaired and it played garbled Madonna music.

Emotionally repressed Oliver attempts to get back to work by drafting an article on humpback whales for the *Journal of Mammology*. His scholarly report is written in cold, scientific language about the timing of changes in the whale song from season to season. Bubbling up through the paragraphs of his report are the self-justifying arguments he tells himself to blame Jane for all the problems in the marriage. Gradually, the inner argument shifts from blame to analysis to hints of the possibility of personal responsibility.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Sam's reverence toward the gramophone suggests an equal respect for his father—though both the gramophone and his father lost their ability to do their work.

Oliver's ego, pride and self-justifications prevent him from seeing the seriousness of his situation. He tries to plod on with his oh-so-important career by ignoring the fact that his wife and child have left him. Because his family is interfering with his work, he finally pays attention to them.

These two chapters contrast the personalities of Jane's two love interests. Sam is sensitive and adores his father. Oliver is so egotistical that he pretends his life will go on as normal without his family.



Chapters 9-11

Chapters 9-11 Summary

Jane thinks about her relationship with Joley, whom she rescued from jail and kept in touch with during his years of wanderlust. He repaid her by believing in her. Jane stops at a convenience store to call Joley while Rebecca gets food. Jane tells Joley about leaving Oliver so Joley directs her to come to him. Joley sends her on the scenic route to give her time to think. The first instructions send her to the post office in Gila Bend, Arizona where Joley's letter will give her instructions for the next leg of her journey. They stop for the night at Dog Forked Road, near the Indian Reservation at Gila Bend, where an Indian named Hilda takes them in for the night.

In his first letter to Jane, he writes about their childhood trip to the circus. His doting mother had named him Joley for the French word for pretty—joli. The circus performers invite the beautiful boy to ride Sheba, an elephant, in the show but Joley refuses to go without his sister, so the circus people put Jane on the elephant behind Joley. He later refused to hang up the photo of his elephant ride because Jane's face was not shown in it and he believed she was the beautiful one. He instructs Jane to go next door to the apothecary's office to ask Joe for directions to the north end of the Grand Canyon where the next letter will be waiting.

On July 29, 1990, Rebecca has a feverish nightmare about the plane crash she survived at age three and a half. When she wakes, she is in the Big House at Sam's apple orchard recovering from pneumonia and the death of Hadley. Her father is there telling her that they are going home to San Diego. Privately, she asks her mother to explain what is going on. Jane confirms that Hadley is dead and that Rebecca tried to claw her own heart out. Jane then asks for forgiveness for being violent. Jane denies herself the happiness she found with Sam by agreeing to go back to San Diego. Later that night, Joley sneaks Rebecca out to his pickup truck. They go to Hadley's funeral in Carroll, New Hampshire where Rebecca is welcomed by Mrs. Slegg and Hadley's younger brother Cal. During the ceremony, Rebecca does not cry. She remembers a verse from *Romeo and Juliet*—"Here I will remain with worms that are thy chambermaids." She covers her ears so she will not hear the coffin hit the bottom of the grave hole.

Chapters 9-11 Analysis

For all the times Jane has rescued Joley, this is the time for him to rescue her. He encourages her and guides her to retrace some of his wanderings on the way to Stow, Massachusetts.

This love letter encourages Jane while it also allows Joley to express his love. Whereas Jane's husband fails to speak his feelings, Joley puts them in writing. Joley also

demonstrates his vast knowledge of the world by naming the owner of the apothecary. Jane cannot even name the states between California and Massachusetts.

On July 29, 1990, Rebecca's relationship with Hadley ends with his death and her desire to tear her own heart out. The limited information suggests a love relationship and no more, but the reader will learn more as the story continues. The quote from *Romeo and Juliet* reminds the reader that this love is also marred by death. Hadley's death, his fall, echoes in the lowering of the casket so that Rebecca cannot stand to hear his coffin hit bottom.



Chapters 12-13

Chapters 12-13 Summary

Continuing his state of denial, Oliver goes to work as usual. There he recalls when Jane stained the oak door to his office and shrieked about seeing the face of the devil in the wood grain. He calmly weighs his options for getting Jane back with the minimal amount of effort and time. He decides that the most efficient course of action will require a month so he calls in his secretary Shirley and tells her to cancel his trip to Venezuela. Though he knows that his departure will cost Shirley her job, he dumps his responsibility on her. He confidently forms a plan to track Jane and Rebecca using the same techniques he uses to track whales. Suddenly, he sees the image of the devil in the door.

Sam talks to students about farming at Minuteman Tech in Lexington, Massachusetts, where he graduated. Hadley goes with him to hand out apples. After the talk, Sam sends Hadley home with the truck while he goes out with his old girlfriend, Joellen. Joellen teaches math at Minuteman Tech. At dinner, Joellen announces her engagement to Edwin Cubbles and how they met. Joellen offers Sam a ride back to the orchard but she stops at a church parking lot on the way and coerces him into one last fling in the car. Afterward, Sam enters the house, shrugs off conversation with Hadley and Joley, and takes a long, hot shower to feel clean again.

Chapters 12-13 Analysis

Cold, calculating and detached, Oliver takes the scientific, reasoned approach to tracking his wife and child. His confidence reveals his swelled ego. He has not even considered what he will say or do when he finds them. The image of the devil foreshadows death as well as coming to face one's demons.

The chapter begins with a Biblical reference to Adam and Eve and carnal knowledge. Sam has reached success as a businessman. His loneliness leads him into a situation that his moral character finds shameful. He tries to wash away his guilt and sin with soap and water. The chapter ends with a moral fall from grace.

These chapters again contrast the personalities of Oliver and Sam. Oliver has a family he does not appreciate whereas Sam longs for a family. Oliver barely remembers his child's name while Sam gives talks to encourage high school students.



Chapters 14-15

Chapters 14-15 Summary

At the Grand Canyon, Jane follows signs to Jake's hoping that it is a diner. What she finds is an airfield where pilot Jake offers flights over the canyons for \$50. Rebecca stays on the ground while Jane takes flight.

In his second letter to Jane, Joley writes about his memories when he was nine and Jane was thirteen and he would sneak into her room at night while their parents fought. Their father would come home drunk and rage at the family. When their mother found Joley in Jane's room one morning she warned him to stay in his own room at night. Mother bought Joley a machine that played water sounds to help him sleep. In his instructions for the next leg of the journey, Joley directs Jane to Salt Lake City where there is hidden water.

Chapters 14-15 Analysis

Jane spreads her wings, enjoying freedoms and experiences as they appear. Joley encourages Jane to look deeper for unseen things. He reminds her of the differences between the appearance of their family and the ugly reality. He writes for Jane to look for water she cannot see.



Chapter 16, Rebecca July 25, 1990

Chapter 16, Rebecca July 25, 1990 Summary

On July 25, 1990, fifteen-year-old Rebecca is hitchhiking to Hadley's mother's home alone on a rainy night when two lecherous truckers, Earl and Spud, offer her a ride. They let her ride in the back of the freezer truck with the meat. To stay warm, Rebecca constructs a makeshift igloo of frozen foods while she recalls falling in love with twenty-five-year-old Hadley Spregg. She is hitchhiking from Stow, Massachusetts to Carroll, New Hampshire. The truck stops at a roadside diner where Earl attempts to molest Rebecca. She kicks him hard in the groin and flees to the diner restroom. At the diner, Rebecca meets an older woman named Mrs. Phipps who gives her a ride to Laconia, a bus ticket and ten dollars. Rebecca has the beginning of pneumonia.

Rebecca arrives at the Spregg home, 114 Sand Castle Lane, Carroll, New Hampshire, after dark. Hadley hides her from his mother by packing supplies and hiking with Rebecca to a campsite on Mt. Deception behind his house. That night they promise to find a way to be together and make love for the first time.

The next morning they awaken to find Sam, Oliver and a park ranger. Sam tells Hadley to let Rebecca go with her father alone. Hadley declares his love, which infuriates Oliver who tells him to get away from Rebecca. Rebecca, sick with a fever, launches herself at Hadley and clings to him. He gently tells her to go with her father but Rebecca will not let go of him. This forces Hadley to shove her, which leads him to lose his balance and fall over the edge of the cliff to his death. Rebecca hears his body strike the rocks below. She howls in grief like an animal.

Chapter 16, Rebecca July 25, 1990 Analysis

Rebecca pursues Hadley to a place called Sand Castle Lane by Mt. Deception. The names suggest the temporary place of illusion where they get to be together. On Mt. Deception, the young couple's love is mistaken for infatuation, Hadley's noble character is mistaken for opportunistic selfishness, and Oliver's bullying behavior poses as protectiveness. In the end, an innocent is killed, and Rebecca's innocence is lost.



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

Oliver's car runs out of gas in Carefree, Arizona, so he walks with his Marine Midland Bank gas can which is adorned with the logo of a whale. The attendant at the Texaco station, a seventeen-year-old boy, recognizes the can and comments that he saw one like it the day before. Though Oliver is condescending, sarcastic and threatening, the boy says the woman and teen girl who had a can like it are headed on the highway to the Grand Canyon.

The morning after having sex with Joellen, Sam stands near the barn thinking about his methods to minimize the pesticides on his farm. He uses sheep and pesticides with lower toxicity to maintain a more natural environment. He also hired Joley for his uncanny farming skills and quickness in learning. When Joley asks if his sister and niece can stay on the farm for a while, Sam agrees to let them stay. Joley breaks from his usually calm manner when he describes his sister's husband, calling him names and swearing. Sam then confesses about his awkward evening with Joellen. He trusts Joley. Joley then jokes that he might introduce Sam to his big sister.

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

The author builds dislike for Oliver by showing his mean-spirited treatment of a young man who helps him. The author also shows that it is through luck that Oliver finds the trail of his wife and daughter, not because of his brilliant deductive skills or keen tracking ability. Oliver will run out of gas one more important time in the story.

Twice in this chapter, Sam's philosophy about the way of nature is to go bad—the concept of entropy. His farm would not be as productive without his constant intervention and management. When the two natural farmers, Sam and Joley, discuss women, they hint at parallelism—relationships naturally go bad. Joellen turned rotten and Jane entered a miserable marriage. The author leads the reader to hope that Joley's healing skill can help Jane.



Chapters 19-21

Chapters 19-21 Summary

Rebecca relates what happened on July 22, 1990. At an ice cream parlor, Jane asks Rebecca about Sam, the owner of the apple orchard who is 25 years old. Rebecca sees her mother giddy in love with a man she seemed to despise. Sam, Hadley, Jane, Rebecca and Joley go to Pickerel Pond for a picnic and to swim. Rebecca is appalled by her mother's flirtatious behavior with Sam. Everyone but Jane swims until Sam carries her into the water and goes underwater with her. After years of being unwilling to swim, Jane now regains her love of the water. Later, while the others nap, Jane warns Rebecca to steer away from Hadley because he is a man and she is a child. Soon after their talk, Rebecca spies on Sam and Jane who are in a rowboat kissing. She is angry and confused when she returns to her towel on the beach.

On the highway between the Grand Canyon and Salt Lake City, Jane races against the Oscar Mayer wiener mobile when it tries to pass. Ernie Barb, the driver who sports a yellow spiked crew cut, invites them to breakfast at the Pillar O' Salt diner. Jane and Rebecca introduce themselves as Lila and Pearl. The waitress, Annabelle, greets Ernie with a kiss. They eat a hearty breakfast. During small talk, Ernie learns about Rebecca's upcoming birthday, so he goes into the kitchen and returns with Rebecca's food with a lit candle in her scrambled eggs. Annabelle tells them the food is on the house.

Jane and Rebecca arrive in Salt Lake City, Utah where they check all three post offices for a letter from Joley. At the third post office, Jane faints in dry ninety-five-degree heat. She is revived by a pediatrician named Eric and his three wives. They invite Jane and Rebecca to the Great Salt Lake to cool off so Jane accepts. Once at the lake, Rebecca eases her mother out into the water where she floats easily on her back thanks to the high salt content of the lake.

Chapters 19-21 Analysis

Jane behaves more like a teenager in love than Rebecca does. Ironically, Jane warns Rebecca not to fall in love with an older man, meaning Hadley, but Jane is married and falling in love with a man who is the same age as her daughter's boyfriend. Rebecca sees her mother's hypocrisy but does not call her on it. The reader witnesses Jane re-entering the dating pool symbolized by Pickerel Pond.

Through this encounter with the driver of the Oscar Mayer wiener mobile, the author presents a wide-open road for unexpected relationships with strangers, hinting at things to come. Either Jane and Rebecca use false names to protect themselves or because they consider their escape a temporary fantasy—a role-playing exercise.



Jane's unhappy marriage stands in stark contrast to the irregular, but happy marriage depicted in Utah. There is also a contrast in these chapters about fresh and salt water. The author brings Jane and Oliver to the same salty lake with different responses.



Chapter 22, Rebecca July 21, 1990

Chapter 22, Rebecca July 21, 1990 Summary

Hadley is avoiding Rebecca the day after Rebecca confided her life story to him, about how her father ignores her and that she nearly died in a plane crash after her parents separated once before. Confused, Rebecca wanders the orchard until she finds her mother sitting under a newly-sprayed tree. In a role-reversal, Jane whines about Sam's rudeness while Rebecca reminds her that they arrived uninvited. Jane describes the mutual disgust between the college-bound children of Newton and the Minuteman Tech students. Jane's real frustration seems to be that Sam, a graduate of Minuteman Tech, is happy running an orchard. Jane's snobbishness cannot accept happiness outside of greater academic achievement.

Later at diner, Joley makes small talk while Sam and Hadley talk business. Jane tries to enter the conversation by asking questions about the orchard. Sam, who holds a grudge against Newton girls like Jane, reacts rudely driving Jane from the table. Joley asks Sam to apologize, so Sam follows Jane out by the shed. Rebecca and Hadley eavesdrop. Sam explains how his father never took his farming suggestions seriously and that he has since turned the farm profitable on his own. They shake hands in a truce.

Rebecca stumbles onto Hadley's eavesdropping spot and they joke that they came out to watch the fight. Rebecca asks Hadley why he avoided her all day. Hadley says he has to work. Hadley embraces and kisses Rebecca opening her eyes.

Chapter 22, Rebecca July 21, 1990 Analysis

In this chapter, both Jane and Rebecca reach a turning point in their relationships with men. Feuding Jane and Sam call a truce and shake hands. Rebecca's fondness of Hadley becomes physical when Hadley kisses her. After all Rebecca's thoughts about failing to gain her father's love and attention, she at last finds both in Hadley.



Chapters 23-25

Chapters 23-25 Summary

Joley recalls the night before his father's funeral when Jane admitted she did not feel loss or grief about his death. They go through the motions of the funeral, supporting one another and their mother whose grief seems genuine. Jane mentions that she does not understand her mother's grief. After the funeral, Joley finds Jane standing over the casket with her hand raised to strike. Joley grabs her hand.

Sam recalls being cross-eyed as a child and being teased about it. He has two operations to correct his eyes. His father gives him a soccer ball that he recognizes even before the bandages on his eyes are removed. He keeps the soccer ball. His mother burns all the photos of him before the surgery.

Jane recalls her five-years of dating Oliver before they made love. As a student at Wellesley College, she rooms with a sexually active roommate named Ellen who confides in her about her sexual exploits. Jane and Oliver finally have intercourse in the balcony of a movie theater during a showing of *The Way We Were*. Oliver withdraws when he discovers that Jane is a virgin. They have sex nightly after that until Oliver mysteriously stops. Jane cries to her roommate that Oliver might be breaking up with her, but two days later, a half—carat diamond ring at the ready, Oliver proposes. They set their wedding for the day after Jane's graduation. Their sex life becomes a matter of convenience once they are married.

Chapters 23-25 Analysis

Joley witnesses Jane's rage and numbness toward their father but he does not know yet about the nature of the abuse.

The Author reveals Sam as a humble man who remembers being teased as a child. This event foreshadows another incident in which he is humiliated by his peers as a teen.

Just as Jane went through the motions of her father's funeral, Oliver went through the motions of courtship. In her relationship with Oliver, Jane initiates and Oliver tags along. The only act that Oliver initiated was the engagement.



Chapter 26, Rebecca July 19, 1990

Chapter 26, Rebecca July 19, 1990 Summary

Jane and Rebecca arrive at Hansen's orchard and look for Joley. They find instead a man sheering sheep who offers to take them to Joley after the next ewe. The man asks Jane to help so they go to the barn and come back holding a ewe by its fur. When the man lets go to pick up the razor, Jane also lets go freeing the ewe. The ewe bolts. Jane tries to catch the animal but ends up falling in manure. The man recaptures the ewe, shears it then turns his attention to Jane. Furious, Jane warns the man that her brother works here and then Sam introduces himself as the owner. Sam leads them to the Big House. Jane showers and changes clothes.

Sam gives Jane and Rebecca a quick tour of the orchard and Lake Boon. Sam is twenty-five years old as is his friend Hadley Spregg who works on the orchard. Sam, Joley and Hadley live in the Big House at the top of the hill with the 100-acre orchard below. Jane spots Joley and runs to him leaving Hadley to give Rebecca the rest of the tour.

Hadley explains that Sam is not fond of girls raised in the suburbs of Boston, like Newton. He flirts with Rebecca complimenting her on her green eyes. They catch up with Sam, Joley and Jane who are discussing apple varieties. Jane plucks an apple and is about to bite into it when Sam knocks it from her hand. He says the tree was just sprayed. "You eat it, you die."

Chapter 26, Rebecca July 19, 1990 Analysis

Jane and Sam clash just as if they are both in high school again. The forbidden fruit, symbolic of passion, is poisoned at this point in the story. Jane and Sam exhibit the passion of hatred though Jane has done nothing to earn it other than being raised in Newton. The author provides the sheep shearing encounter from the points of view of Jane, Rebecca and Sam. The incident is hysterically funny to Sam and to Rebecca but not so much for Jane.



Chapters 27-28

Chapters 27-28 Summary

At Salt Lake, Oliver follows cars to the Great Salt Lake where he frets about Joley. Oliver believes that he has to intercept Jane and Rebecca before they reach Joley or Joley will poison them against him. He remembers Joley boycotting their wedding only to relent and make a pest of himself at the wedding. He is jealous and suspicious of the close relationship between Joley and Jane. At the Great Salt Lake, Oliver imagines whales breaching the salty water. After a bi-plane flies overhead, Oliver reasons that Jane and Rebecca will revisit the plane crash site in Iowa on the way to Massachusetts. He recalls the behavior modification therapy that Jane took Rebecca to in hope of overcoming her fear of planes. It was a failure. He knows that Jane will not take Rebecca out of the country by plane. He confidently plans to be in Iowa ahead of them so he can fulfill his plan to get to them before Joley can.

In his letter to Jane at Fishtrap, Montana, Joley writes about his disapproval of her marriage to Oliver and that he threatened to boycott the wedding because Jane would not listen to his objections. When he asked Jane why she wanted to marry Oliver, Jane explained that it would take her out of her house. Joley, as one who seeks signs, sees hawks mate in flight over the wedding tents so he agrees to attend the wedding. He also writes of a dream in which Oliver made love to Jane who was a Russian nesting doll that broke apart revealing a smaller version of herself repeatedly until nothing was left. He ends the letter with instructions to go to Towner, North Dakota.

Chapters 27-28 Analysis

Sam's first and deepest love is for humpback whales. Even during his chase for his wife and child, his mind returns to whales. He is beginning to think like Jane and Rebecca, which is a great step for him.

Joley aptly describes his premonition that Oliver would repeatedly break Jane until she was gone. He saw his sister as a precious doll within a doll within a doll, an allusion to her immaturity and fragile nature. The author shows that the only thing these two characters agree on is hatred for one another.



Chapters 29-30

Chapters 29-30 Summary

Jane and Rebecca decide to sell the car for a cheaper one so they can use the cash. The road ends at a field so Jane drives through tall grass until she reaches a soft-drink machine at a combination gas station/used car dealership in Poplar, Montana. Jane tells the owner about leaving her husband and how she wants cash to celebrate her daughter's birthday the next day. Joseph Tall Neck does not believe the truth, so Jane lies about taking her to a tap dancing audition in Hollywood. Tall Neck buys their car for three thousand dollars and sells them a convertible MG for \$500, unaware that he has left a manila envelope with \$600 in the MG. Rebecca finds the envelope while Tall Neck prepares the paperwork for the title transfers. Soon after they depart with their cash and the MG, Rebecca gets her first period.

At Port Jefferson, on July 18, 1990, Jane and Rebecca take the ferry to Bridgeport. Ernest Elkezer, curator for the Barnum Museum, backs into their MG bending the front fender. Jane assesses the damage at \$400. Elkezer offers cash rather than report the accident to insurance so he leads the ladies to the museum. There, Elkezer takes \$400 cash from the safe. Jane and Rebecca notice a photo of Elkezer and Jumbo the Elephant. Elkezer talks fondly of Jumbo. Jane and Rebecca leave richer. This chapter is told from Rebecca's point of view.

Chapters 29-30 Analysis

Jane alone witnesses the day Rebecca passes a boundary from childhood to adulthood the day before her fifteenth birthday, thus taking another critical step away from her father.

Rebecca sees the mouth of the ferry as the mouth of a great white whale. This imagery suggests that the whale is consuming them just as life with their whale-loving relative has eaten away at them. Elkezer's love of Jumbo resembles Oliver's love of whales. Both men seem more comfortable with mammals other than humans.



Chapters 31-33

Chapters 31-33 Summary

Jane and Rebecca celebrate Rebecca's fifteenth birthday in Towner, North Dakota, the geographical center of North America by shopping for clothes at a barn store called Eloise's. Inside the stalls serve as changing rooms that have straw on the floor.

Rebecca buys a wardrobe, including designer jeans, for \$50. She urges her mother to splurge, so Jane buys daring clothes—a leopard print G-string, a slim black skirt and a rose-colored satin gown.

Smug in his belief that he will intercept Jane and Rebecca in Iowa, he judges that he will be back home in time to go to the humpback whale migration in Hawaii. He celebrates his own brilliance at noon in the bar of a Holiday Inn. He is served by a surly, foul-mouthed, young barmaid dressed in a red leather skirt and a studded bustier. She serves him a Jack Daniel's then she complains about her boyfriend stealing her car. Oliver creates a tone by rubbing his wet finger on the rim of his glass. Entertained, the waitress flirts with him. Oliver responds by giving her a five-dollar tip and his spare room key card. While he waits naked in the room for the waitress, he thinks about his family. He quickly dresses and sneaks out.

In Indianapolis, on July 15, 1990, Jane takes Rebecca to a YMCA to swim. It is 118 degrees so even Jane climbs into the shallow end of the pool. Rebecca sees Jane hold the edge of the pool and wade into waist-high water so she can slide one foot down the slope of the deep end.

Chapters 31-33 Analysis

Mother and daughter bond over shopping. Rebecca encourages her mother to break down her inhibitions by trying new styles. They cross a boundary, the halfway point, on their way to Joley.

Oliver uncharacteristically passes an opportunity to have sex with an anonymous stranger. He becomes aware of his behavior, and it shames him. Though he has been unfaithful to Jane before, he stops himself this time marking a step of maturity. Jane becomes braver and more daring the farther she travels from San Diego and Oliver.



Chapters 34-36

Chapters 34-36 Summary

Sam, Hadley and Joley are telling stupid jokes. Their rule is that the one who tells the stupidest joke gets out of paying the tab. Sam holds a casual business meeting every few weeks at the bar in the evening. The rest of the crew has left so talk turns more personal. Joley renders his low opinion of his brother-in-law. Sam recalls a girl named Emily who lived on Joley's block in high school. The girl invited him to a party to embarrass her ex-boyfriend. Joley tells the most stupid joke so he wins the contest.

His letter to Jane describes the neighbor's house fire. The same week the windows of the new Boston skyscraper, the John Hancock building, popped out because they were not properly treated for the air pressure of a 50-story building. The neighbors, the Cosgroves, used their insurance money to build the same house they had adding a large window removed from the John Hancock building. He instructs Jane to go to Minneapolis for a must-see event at 7:30 a.m. Iowa is next.

Jane and Rebecca arrive in Minneapolis in time to witness the demolition of the old Pillsbury building, an early skyscraper that has been replaced by a newer building. The sound and the fine dust of the demolition reaches them later. Over breakfast, Jane tells Rebecca that their next destination is the ruins of the plane crash in Iowa. Rebecca asks why the wreckage is still there.

Chapters 34-36 Analysis

The reader learns the deep-seated history of Sam's dislike of Newton girls. This serves as a warning about how he is likely to treat Jane.

Joley describes destruction of two buildings as a hint about what event they will see in Minneapolis. His story indirectly says that the windows worked perfectly well in one place but were not a fit in another place. Like Jane, the windows had to find a place that suited them. Joley's unspoken message to Jane is that the outdated building, like her marriage, may need to be demolished to make room for improvement.



Chapters 37-38

Chapters 37-38 Summary

Rebecca recalls tagging along with her mother to group therapy sessions for abused women after the plane crash. While the other women showed their injuries, Jane told of her verbal abuse. Jane stopped going after a while. She probably would not have gone at all except for Joley's recommendation.

In his letter to Jane, Joley reminds her that he had warned her not to send Rebecca back to Oliver. Because Rebecca is a replica of Jane, sending her to Oliver is repeating a mistake. He writes that Rebecca was spared because her plane crashed while Jane and Joley were arguing on the phone. Only souls at peace, he explains, can go to heaven. Now it is perhaps Rebecca's turn to save Jane. The crash site is not cleared for farming because the ground beneath the crash is dead. Joley instructs Jane to the Lenox Hotel in Chicago.

Chapters 37-38 Analysis

This chapter from Rebecca's point of view breaks her pattern of reverse chronology. Tragedy leaves a legacy. Long after the crash, the tragedy haunts the place. Perhaps Joley is trying to tell Jane that she has not escaped the effects of the crash even now.



Chapters 39-41

Chapters 39-41 Summary

On July 13, 1990, Rebecca is greeted like a celebrity by Arlo van Cleeb. She goes out to the field and climbs through the remains of the wreckage. She finds her seat. There she remembers waking up in the hospital to see her parents cuddled up together asleep. The wind howls through the metal and the corn stalks like ghosts of the people killed in the crash. Rebecca covers her ears and runs out of the wreckage screaming.

While Rebecca climbs through the ruins of the Midwest Airlines Flight 997 crash, Jane remembers how she put holes in her diaphragm to get pregnant because Oliver did not want children yet. Jane blames herself for putting Rebecca in danger as if it is cosmic payback for tricking Oliver into having a child and for leaving him. She remembers finding her daughter at the hospital under the name Jane Doe. Suddenly, Rebecca runs screaming from the wreckage and Jane is there to comfort her.

Oliver sets up an observation post in the cornfield of van Cleeb's farm as if he is an anthropologist on an expedition. Patiently waiting two days, binoculars at hand, he observes that the aircraft ruins resemble a beached whale. He spies Rebecca and Jane with van Cleeb so he watches them. He yearns to gather up his family and go home but he realizes that he does not know what to say to them that would make them want to return with him.

The wind blows through the wreckage with a shrieking sound followed by the shrieks of Rebecca. Oliver sees Rebecca run into Jane's arms and he knows that Rebecca would not have run to him. He decides to delay contacting Jane and Rebecca until he is prepared to prove that they have reason to return.

Chapters 39-41 Analysis

In these consecutive chapters, the author shows the same event from the points of view of father, mother and daughter. Rebecca's memories foreshadow a pattern of arguments, separation, tragedy and reunion in which she suffers the brunt of the tragedy.

In contrast to Jane who screamed uncontrollably about her future just before her wedding, Rebecca screams uncontrollably about her past. Both women seem haunted by events out of their control.

Ever the behaviorist, Oliver realizes that he does not know his wife and daughter well at all because he cannot predict their behavior. He questions his right to call himself a father or a husband. This epiphany means that Oliver has at last stopped blaming others for his failings.



Chapters 42-44

Chapters 42-44 Summary

In the hotel room in What Cheer, Iowa, Jane recalls when her mother left home after an argument. Jane made dinner and later tried on her mother's perfume. That night her father climbs into bed with her and molests her. When he falls asleep, Jane flees in her nightgown to the neighbor's yard. A policeman finds Jane and brings her home where her father and brother are waiting. Jane's father lies to the policeman that Jane's behavior comes from having nightmares, thereby discrediting her. Jane dashes to the bathroom and Joley follows her asking if she is okay. Jane pushes him away and closes the door. Alone, she shreds her nightgown.

Jane and Rebecca visit the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. There they meet a worker who explains that starfishes can regenerate lost limbs. Jane mentions her husband's name, which sends the worker off to find Alfred Oppenbaum, a marine biologist who worships Oliver. Alfred shows them his tribute presentation on Oliver's research. After they leave, Jane and Rebecca talk about who Oliver misses.

Oliver remembers being twenty years old, about to graduate from Harvard with his Master's in marine biology. He finds Jane's purse in the tide pool so he returns it to the address listed inside the purse. Over lemonade and small talk, Oliver meets Jane, her beautiful brother Joley, and Jane's parents, Alexander and Mary Lipton. Mr. Lipton privately threatens Oliver to keep his hands off Jane. Oliver senses tension between Jane and her father but he does not understand it until much later. He says goodbye to Jane with a kiss on the forehead.

Chapters 42-44 Analysis

Jane's father effectively silences Jane into submission. Love and trust shattered, Jane withdraws into self-loathing and guilt. Jane's mother ran away from her problem marriage inadvertently teaching Jane the same behavior.

The author shows the difference between Oliver Jones the legend and Oliver Jones the man through Jane and Rebecca's glimpse into his world. How does one compete for Oliver's attention when he has adoring colleagues?

Oliver knows that Jane tossed her purse into the tide pool to get his attention. When it comes to dealing with people, Oliver is reactive not proactive. He allows others to handle relationship building for him.



Chapters 45-46

Chapters 45-46 Summary

Jane writes a letter to Joley bragging about riding a bus on one lap of the Indianapolis Speedway. When given a certificate about the lap, Jane writes that her father would have displayed it. Jane lets hers go in the wind. She writes about her father's monthly molestations from age ten to eleven. When she told her mother, her mother denied it at first then promised it would stop. That night her parents argued and her mother ended up with broken ribs and her arm in a bandage. The abuse stopped. Jane shreds and burns the letter while Rebecca is in the shower of the hotel room.

In his letter to Jane, Joley reminds Jane of the time their father broke two of mother's ribs. Jane refused to eat or sleep so her father bought her a rabbit she named Fitzgerald. It died soon after so Jane and Joley buried it in the frozen schoolyard using mother's silver spoons. Joley instructs Jane to go to the John Hopkins Medical Museum in Baltimore.

Chapters 45-46 Analysis

Jane cannot reveal her awful secret to the one person she trusts most as if hiding it will protect her. As if they share a telepathic connection, both brother and sister think about the same incident at the same time. Joley alone has the courage to mail his letter.



Chapters 47-48

Chapters 47-48 Summary

At the John Hopkins medical museum, Jane and Rebecca gape at a series of pickled fetuses and discuss Rebecca's childhood. Jane reveals that for the first six months after Rebecca was born her father took care of her because Jane had to finish her student teaching commitment. There, amid displays of fetuses and mammal hearts, Rebecca hugs Jane and tells her that she loves her.

After a non-stop three-day drive from Iowa to the 24-hour Blue Diner in Boston, Massachusetts, Oliver sings along with the piped music. Hugo, the cook, comments that Oliver has a nice voice. Oliver says he is known for his songs. He faces the probability that he is responsible for driving Jane away from their marriage. He remains in the diner through a full cycle of shift changes to talk to the waitress Mica who listens to his tale of woe. She takes him to her apartment to sleep.

Chapters 47-48 Analysis

Jane reveals to Rebecca that Oliver took care of her when she was at her most vulnerable stage of life—as a newborn. This softens the reader's view of Oliver. Oddly, Rebecca does not declare her love for Oliver, but for her mother. Having taken the step of recognizing his role in the breakup, Oliver makes a public confession of it.



Chapters 49-50

Chapters 49-50 Summary

Jane tells of the sheep shearing incident where she meets Sam Hansen. When she and Sam chat about travel, Jane explains that she has been to Europe and South America because of her husband's research. Sam admits that he travels vicariously by reading about exotic places. He longs to go to Tibet to smuggle back a strain of apple. Jane does not understand Sam's rudeness so she flees to Joley at the first chance. With Joley, she explains that this short break will solve the problems of her marriage.

Sam's view of the sheep shearing incident shows that he meant to have a little fun with Jane but it got out of hand after she fell in the sheep manure. By apology, he offers his mother's clothes for her to wear. He finds Jane refreshing and attractive but he feels so awkward around her that he hands her off to Hadley and Joley at the first opportunity. Later, when Jane is about to bite an apple sprayed with pesticide, he knocks it out of her hand. This alienates her completely but he does not apologize.

Chapters 49-50 Analysis

Jane Lipton, queen of denial, cannot confide her true feelings about herself or her marriage to her brother. Just as the tragedy of the plane crash haunts Jane, Rebecca and Oliver, Sam is haunted by the cruelty he suffered from the snooty Newton girls. He indirectly exacts revenge on them through Jane who does not deserve it.



Chapter 51-52

Chapter 51-52 Summary

Jane showers in the shared bathroom upstairs at the Big House. When she finishes her shower, she is appalled to find Sam calmly shaving at the sink. He sees her naked and continues to shave. Once dressed, Jane finds Joley, Hadley and Rebecca preparing to go into town for ice cream. On the ride into town, Joley tries to get Jane prepared for Oliver's inevitable arrival. Jane's flippant replies irritate Joley. He urges her to tell Rebecca her plans and to take the power position with Oliver by listening to him instead of talking. Jane shrugs off the advice. Later, when Jane and Rebecca are alone, they discuss the mutual loathing between Newton girls and Minuteman Tech boys. Rebecca suggests that Jane dislikes Sam because he is happy. Jane asks Rebecca if she misses her father. Rebecca says she does not but she is crying. Jane does not want Rebecca to grow up hating her father.

Sam and Joley return from renewing a contract with Purity Foods' buyer Regalia Clippe when Joley brings up the topic of Jane. Sam has a two-day-old headache thinking about Jane. He assures Joley that he will behave. When they reach the orchard, Sam heads into the house to prepare dinner. At dinner, Joley tries to get conversation going but he runs into dead ends. Hadley is unusually quiet and leaves the table after being asked what he and Rebecca did during the day. Jane tries to get conversation going by asking about farming. Sam insults Jane causing her to leave the table. At Joley's suggestion, Sam goes out to apologize to Jane. He apologizes and explains his sensitivity on the topic of farming comes from having his suggestions ignored by his father. The next morning Sam invites Jane to fish with him on Lake Boon in an old wooden boat. They fish and chat. Sam gently digs a splinter out of Jane's hand using a clean fish hook. They make plans to go to Pickerel Pond to swim later that day with the others.

Chapter 51-52 Analysis

Jane's immaturity toward her situation makes her look like a teenager. Joley struggles in vain to help Jane grow up and face her problems. In this chapter, the author contrasts Sam who pays attention to Jane's small wound with Oliver who ignores her. Jane had to backhand Oliver to get his attention.



Chapters 53-56

Chapters 53-56 Summary

Oliver awakens in Mica's apartment three days after he fell asleep. He asks Mica how to get to Stow, Massachusetts to find Joley Lipton. He knows Jane will be with Joley. Mica suggests going to Stow and asking around since it is such a small town. Mica orders out for food. When it arrives, Oliver gets dressed and turns on the news. A humpback whale is beached at Gloucester, Massachusetts. Oliver calls the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies and tells them what he needs and that he is on his way. Mica takes him back to his car where she makes him promise to find his family next. She hands him a postcard of the Blue Diner with her phone number on it. She says she wants to know how it works out.

Jane surprises herself by enjoying Sam's company. She rides in the cab of the truck with Sam while Joley, Hadley and Rebecca ride in the back. They stop for ice cream on the way to Pickerel Pond. Rebecca asks about Sam so Jane insists that they are just friends. She wishes for more. Later, at the pond, Jane asks Sam about Hadley. Sam assures Jane that Hadley can be trusted with Rebecca. Jane tells Sam about saving Joley from drowning and how she has avoided the water since then. Sam carries Jane into shoulder-high water where they both ease underwater face to face.

Joley thinks about the swimming accident at Plum Island when Jane saved him. He watches Sam carry Jane into the deep water at Pickerel Pond and he hopes that Sam and Jane will bond. Joley believes in soul mates. He has never married because he has never found a woman to measure up to his sister.

After Sam takes Jane underwater, Jane plays in the water. Later he wakes up on his beach towel to overhear Jane warning Rebecca that Hadley is too old for her. Rebecca challenges her by asking how old she was when she started dating Oliver. Jane claims that that was different. Sam pretends to wake up. He invites Jane to fish on the rowboat and while they are out on the boat, Sam kisses her.

Chapters 53-56 Analysis

Once again Oliver puts whales ahead of his family, but this time he hopes that he will attract Jane's attention by rescuing the whale.

Jane denies that she is falling for Sam, but even Rebecca sees it. The author uses this to demonstrate that Rebecca is often more mature than her mother, especially when it comes to understanding relationships.

Once again, Jane and Joley think about the same event at the same time as if they share a telepathic connection. Sam witnesses Jane's protectiveness toward Rebecca even though he has told Jane that Hadley is trustworthy.



Chapter 57

Chapter 57 Summary

Oliver goes to Gloucester where he meets marine biologist Windy McGill whose career parallels Sam's. They head out on an inflatable 15-foot Zodiac to Marble, a three-year-old, thirty-foot long, fifty-thousand pound, female humpback whale tangled in a gill net. Oliver dons a wetsuit and dives under the whale to identify where the net is caught. Oliver directs the rescue as he and Windy nudge their Zodiac around and onto the whale. They are tossed off the whale luckily landing in the Zodiac unharmed. Oliver has successfully cut away most of the gill net freeing Mable to swim off to join other whales nearby.

On the ride back to shore, Oliver confides in Windy about Jane and how he wants Jane to know he is in Massachusetts. Windy graciously introduces Oliver to the media, crediting him with the rescue. Oliver describes the procedure he used to free the whale then he makes a plea for help in finding his wife and child. He holds up a photo of them and declares his love.

Chapter 57 Analysis

Oliver finally voices his feelings in a big, public way. Like a whale sounding for his family, Oliver sends his plea across the country on national news.



Chapters 58-59

Chapters 58-59 Summary

Jane tiptoes into Sam's bedroom at 1:23 a.m. She whispers that she has never been with anyone but Oliver. They talk about marriage, about their age difference, and then they embrace. Jane cries under the weight of her secret. She starts to tell him about her father's abuse when he says he knows. She cries in his arms releasing years of pent up feelings. After that, they make love.

The lovemaking from Sam's point of view is more explicit and physical. At one point, he notices Jane's wedding ring and flinches. Jane tosses the ring on the nightstand. They continue. Jane looks astonished. Sam feels complete.

Chapters 58-59 Analysis

In their few days together, Sam has become more intimate with Jane than Oliver has in over fifteen years. Perhaps they are the soul mates that Joley had hoped they were. Jane comes to Sam's bedroom wearing the rose-colored slip gown she bought at Eloise's.

Jane's reaction—her wide-eyed look of wonder—during lovemaking suggests that Jane has experienced her first orgasm. Sam is the man.



Chapters 60-61

Chapters 60-61 Summary

At an Elvis-themed diner on July 7, 1990, Rebecca plans the trip from Idaho to Fishtrap, Montana. Jane promises to celebrate Rebecca's birthday in Minnesota. They do not have enough cash to pay for their meal so they sneak out.

The morning after having sex with Sam, Sam serves Jane breakfast in bed. Rebecca knocks on Sam's bedroom door and is shocked and angry when Jane answers wearing her nightgown inside out. Rebecca runs outside into Hadley's arms for comfort. When Jane sees this, she is either furious or jealous. Sam gives instructions to Joley so he can leave for the day. When Sam returns to the bedroom Jane says that while she was busy with Sam she neglected to watch over Hadley and Rebecca. Sam pleads for a day with her so they go to a nature sanctuary and tell each other about themselves. Jane asks Sam to fire Hadley. Sam balks at the ultimatum, asking Jane to leave Oliver and stay. He agrees to talk to Hadley. They return to the Big House where Joley asks to talk to Sam. Meanwhile, Jane turns on the news and sees Oliver proclaiming his love for her.

Chapters 60-61 Analysis

Jane's impulsive departure leads to another moment of desperation. The author uses this incident to show how Jane and Rebecca are breaking rules to continue their unconventional behavior. They are breaking routine and changing the patterns of their behavior.

The author shows how Joley's and Sam's hopes are ruined by Oliver's emotional appeal shown on the news. Jane once again puts the man in her life to a test; she gives him an ultimatum.



Chapters 62-63

Chapters 62-63 Summary

Sam leaves immediately after Oliver's broadcast. Joley leads Jane into the kitchen to talk while he prepares dinner. Jane admits her love for Sam. Torn between pleasing herself or her daughter, Jane argues that she belongs with Sam. Joley reminds her that she has known Sam only five days. He then tells her that Rebecca asked him if Jane and Oliver were getting a divorce. Joley is jealous of Oliver and Sam for being so close to Jane. Hadley carries Rebecca on his back into the kitchen where they tumble to the floor laughing. When Rebecca stands, Joley notices that she is as tall as Jane is.

Immediately after Sam sees Oliver's media plea, he goes for a walk in the woods. He comes upon a place where he and Hadley built a clubhouse during their 18-year friendship. When he returns to the Big House, he invites Hadley out for a beer. Over drinks, Sam asks Hadley about his relationship with Rebecca so Hadley counters with a question about Sam and Jane. Sam tells Hadley to take a vacation to visit his mother. Hadley argues that Rebecca is the mature one and that he can take better care of Rebecca than Jane has. Nonetheless, he agrees to leave for a few weeks vowing to get back with Rebecca. They ride back to the orchard in silence. Sam tells Hadley to break the news to Rebecca.

Chapters 62-63 Analysis

Joley seems to reverse his position on Jane and Sam's relationship but in fact he is trying to convince Jane to consider how her decision will affect Rebecca. Unlike Oliver who failed Jane's ultimatum testing his devotion, Sam succeeds in his test at great personal sacrifice.



Chapters 64-65

Chapters 64-65 Summary

Calls roll in to the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies informing Oliver that Rebecca and Jane are staying at Hansen's orchard in Stow. Oliver arrives at the orchard at 5 a.m. with plans to surprise Jane by waking her with a kiss. He sneaks into rooms in search of her. First, he finds Joley asleep, secondly he finds an empty room with Rebecca's things in it and lastly, the surprise is on him, he finds Jane and Sam in bed. Oliver wakes Sam and Jane. Oliver beats Sam until Jane steps between them. Oliver orders Jane to get Rebecca so they can leave. Jane tells him no. Joley rushes in to subdue Oliver who demands to see his daughter. They all realize that Rebecca has gone after Hadley. Jane, stricken with the news that Rebecca has run off, falls into Oliver's arms.

The adults bicker over who should go to Hadley's mother's home and who should stay in case Rebecca comes back. Oliver demands that Sam go with him in his car to get Rebecca. They leave Joley and Jane alone in the Big House. Jane wades into self-blame, babbling that she got Rebecca because she did not get Sam, the one she was meant to marry. Joley points out that if not for marrying Oliver, Jane would not have Rebecca.

Chapters 64-65 Analysis

Jane falls back into her pattern of protecting a loved one from a brutal male. Just as she protected Joley from her father, she protects Sam from Oliver. The payment for this allegiance with the brute is sexual similar to the unspoken agreement between Jane and her father. Jane endured molestation from her father so that Joley would not be beaten.

Jane's decision making is marred by either/or choices. She could stay with Sam and keep Rebecca's love, but in her skewed logic, she must balance something she wants (Rebecca) along with something she does not want (Oliver). Joley understands that his sister cannot accept true happiness, so he falls into her pattern of thinking.



Chapter 66

Chapter 66 Summary

Sam keeps quiet while Oliver, who insisted on driving his car, pretends to have control of the situation. The car runs out of gas three miles from a station. Sam offers to stay with the car to keep it from being towed but Oliver demands that Sam go with him. By the time they return with the gas, the car has been towed. Five more miles, two hours and sixty-five dollars later, they are ready to get back on the road, so Sam offers to drive so they get there before nightfall. Sam knows that he has the advantage over Oliver in height and strength and youth but he shows maturity and restraint by not provoking Oliver into a fight.

At the Slegg home, Oliver kindly bullies Mrs. Slegg into letting him check the house for his daughter. Mrs. Slegg mentions that two blankets are missing. Oliver finds tracks leading toward the mountain but it is too late to hike. Oliver and Sam go to the ranger station for the night.

At dawn Sam, Oliver and a ranger climb the path led by Oliver who is hiking in loafers. They find Hadley and Rebecca asleep on a blanket near the edge of a cliff. Sam notices that Rebecca is listless but his greater concern is protecting Hadley from Oliver. Sam tells Hadley to back away from Rebecca. Hadley asks for Sam's support that he is not a danger to Rebecca, but Sam fears that anything could set Oliver off so he tells Hadley to stay put and let Rebecca go with her father. Rebecca rallies and throws herself on Hadley clinging to him with feverish desperation. Hadley has to pry Rebecca off and shove her toward Sam but in doing this, he loses his balance and falls over the edge of the cliff to his death. Rebecca howls and tears at her own flesh.

Chapter 66 Analysis

Hadley's death represents the end of innocence. Rebecca cannot return to childhood anymore than Hadley can return from his fall. At the end of their time in paradise, the Eden-like orchard, the young man and woman face suffering and death. The author creates tension in this chapter by forcing two enemies to share a confined space, the car. The reader watches as Oliver struggles to maintain status as the Alpha Male but he fails repeatedly because he refuses to take advice from his enemy. In a time of stress, Oliver reverts to his old behavior pattern of bullying and believing in his own superiority. Both men have loved ones at stake, Sam fears his friend Hadley may have crossed the ethical line that could put him in jail and Oliver fears that he has lost his daughter to a scoundrel. In this chapter, the author presents Jane's love interests in stark contrast, side by side, and Oliver comes up short.



Chapters 67-70

Chapters 67-70 Summary

Jane sets up a three-day vigil at Rebecca's bedside where she tells Oliver about her love for Sam. Oliver listens then he reminds her of their travel and history together. Rebecca wakes asking immediately about Hadley's death. Oliver tells Rebecca that they are going to go home and then he leaves the room. Jane says that Hadley died quickly and his funeral is tomorrow. Jane apologizes for misjudging Hadley, for misjudging Rebecca's love for him, for letting her down. Rebecca just lets her talk.

Oliver recalls the morning after his wedding. Their plans for a European honeymoon change when Oliver learns that there are beached whales in Ogunquit. Jane gamely dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt to help save the whales. She mourned the whale they could not save. Oliver wonders how his family drifted apart. Longing for a second chance, he wants to prove he's a new man prepared to rescue their family.

Joley may be expressing his thoughts or writing them in this chapter. He describes different kinds of love and how one can carry the memories of a soul mate through life.

Sam thinks about his once-in-a-lifetime love with Jane. He knows he will mourn the loss of his best friend and his soul mate in the same week, but it has not hit him yet. He believes he will love Jane and think of her every day. He knows he has changed her with his love the way she has changed him.

Chapters 67-70 Analysis

Though Rebecca is feverish, scarred and weak, it is Jane who needs healing. Like it was in therapy, Jane's wounds are deep, unseen and ongoing so it contrasts with Rebecca's visible wounds the same way it contrasted with the abused wives in the therapy group years earlier.

Since day one of his marriage he put whales first. Can he really put his family first after the crisis passes?

Joley understands lost love because he clings to memories of his brave, protective sister. Sam and Joley, the two people who know Jane best, both identify the relationship between Jane and Sam as soul mates.



Chapters 71-72

Chapters 71-72 Summary

In San Diego, Rebecca witnesses parts of an argument between her parents. She sneaks around to watch because it represents such a change from the way they usually ignore each other. When the contents of a research box fall over the banister to the floor, it triggers memories of the plane crash. Suddenly, Rebecca feels the need to get away so she hastily packs a bag of clothes and shoes. She climbs into her mother's car. Soon Jane appears in her underwear with clothes in her hand. Jane climbs into her car and is startled to find Rebecca there. They leave on July 3, 1990.

Oliver, Jane and Rebecca are going back to San Diego. Sam and Joley have come out to say their goodbyes under the glare of Oliver. Sam loads Rebecca into the backseat of Oliver's Town Car. Joley hugs Jane and whispers that this is his goodbye present. Joley then a little forcefully leads Oliver to go see the greenhouse. This allows Sam and Jane privacy to embrace and kiss. Sam tells Jane that he's put something in the car for her. Jane climbs into the passenger side of the Town Car while Joley leans into the backseat to say goodbye to Rebecca. Jane leaves her convertible MG for Joley and her heart with Sam. Oliver takes his place in the driver's seat. As they leave the orchard, Jane and Sam maintain eye contact until the car passes the orchard's mailbox. Jane stares at Sam to imprint his face on her memory so that if they meet again in months or years she will recognize him. Rebecca reveals bushels of apples on the floor of the backseat. She bites into a Cortland and shares it with Jane.

Chapters 71-72 Analysis

Jane and Rebecca behave as if on autopilot. Pre-programmed by behaviors they learned in childhood, they flee violent conflict. Jane saw her mother run away, so she runs away. Rebecca was taken along when Jane ran away before so she knows what to do this time.

Jane and Rebecca leave their symbolic Eden with some of the fruit. The author leaves the reader with the suggestion that Jane might one day return to Sam. The reason she returns with Sam this time, like last time, was for the sake of Rebecca. Rebecca is almost an adult and therefore will not last as reason to stay with Oliver. The imagery of both women enjoying the fruit suggests that they will heal and find love again. Though the women have fled from problems in the past, they are stronger and more mature in facing the future. They are both in the process of healing.



Characters

Jane Lipton Jones

Jane Lipton Jones is the 35-year-old reluctant wife of Oliver Jones and mother of 15-year-old Rebecca. She is five years younger than Oliver whom she met when she was 15 at Cape Cod. She graduated from Wellesley College at 19 in 1976 with a degree in speech pathology. She married Oliver the day after graduation. She works for the San Diego school system by helping students find their voices by overcoming speech problems. Ironically, while she helps others learn to speak she finds that when she speaks up for herself nothing happens. She has a brother Joley who is four years younger. Her mother ran away once when Jane was young. Her father was an alcoholic who molested her for two years about once a month but did not have intercourse with her. When she ran away from her father's abuse the policeman who found her believed her father's excuse that she had nightmares. When she tried to tell her mother about the abuse her mother immediately denied it. Jane married Oliver to get away from her father and simply traded sexual abuse for verbal abuse and being ignored.

She seems driven by guilt and emotional extremes that distract her from facing her personal demons. When she strikes Oliver she fears that she has become violent like her father so she reacts in the only way she knows how—she flees. She fled her marriage once before when Oliver struck her. In that incident, she fled with three-and-a-half-year-old Rebecca to Joley's. She sent Rebecca back to Oliver by plane and the plane crashed in What Cheer, Iowa, reuniting the family by tragedy. Rebecca was one of five to survive the crash on September 21, 1978. In 1992 during her second runaway attempt, Jane falls in love with Sam Hansen, a gentle loving younger man who listens to her. Their blissful time together ends when Oliver finds them in bed. Jane repeats her behavior cycle by returning with Oliver and Rebecca to San Diego after a tragedy.

Oliver Jones, Ph.D.

Forty-year-old marine biologist Oliver Jones is an absent father and unfaithful husband obsessed with whales. His breakthrough research into whale song proves that only the male whales sing, passing their songs from generation to generation. This information helps scientists track whale groups and makes him famous in the scientific community. His wife Jane and daughter Rebecca hunger for his love but he treats them with less passion than he has for whales. He tries to bring them into his world of whales but they do not enjoy the whale hunt at all. When his wife leaves the first time, he reacts by threatening Jane with legal action. Jane responds by sending Rebecca by plane back to San Diego. It is only after the plane crash that he discovers Jane was not on the flight with Rebecca but he convinces her to come home for Rebecca's sake.

He returns to ignoring his family once they are back. Near Rebecca's fifteenth birthday, he plans a whale research trip off the coast of South America. Jane reacts by moving



his whale research boxes out of her closet. They argue and one of the boxes breaks spilling Oliver's treasured research over a stair railing, destroying it. Their argument escalates until Jane slaps him hard across the face. He says, "like father, like daughter" leading her to flee with Rebecca. After they leave, he realizes they will not come back on their own so he applies his tracking skills to intercept them before they reach Joley. He is driven at first by righteous indignation more than love for them. When he finds them visiting the crash site he realizes he does not know how to express his feelings so that they will want to return with him so he passes on the opportunity. During his journey to Joley's he changes from blaming Jane to blaming himself. He understands why they left and that he has to become someone they want to return to. After saving a whale in Massachusetts, he uses his fame and the media to appeal to the public to help him find his wife and child. On air, he declares his love for Jane. He has at last discovered his own voice so that he, like the whales, can draw his family together and lead them.

Rebecca Jones

Rebecca Jones is born on July 15, 1975 to Oliver and Jane Jones. As a fourteen-year old when the story begins, Rebecca Jones seeks solid, unshakable love. Her father, Oliver Jones, loves whales and her immature mother Jane is emotionally unstable. At age three and a half, she is taken across country by her mother and later put on a plane that crashes in Iowa. Rebecca is one of five survivors of the crash and a photo of her appears on the cover of Time magazine. Her parents get back together but they remain in conflict. At 14, she becomes a lifeguard. She is a lonely, cynical stoic. When her parents have another violent fight, she flees with her mother to Uncle Joley's. She resigns herself to never seeing her father again.

On the trip, she acts like the responsible adult while her mother is an emotional mess. She tells her chapters in reverse chronological order, which separates her from the narrative of the other major characters. When they reach Uncle Joley at the Hansen orchard, Rebecca discovers love in 25-year-old Hadley Spregg. She is horrified when she learns that her mother has fallen in love with Sam Hansen. She is angry when her mother forces Hadley to leave so she goes after Hadley. She bravely faces lecherous truckers and nasty weather to find him. He takes her up to a camp site on Mt. Deception where she convinces him that her love is real and that she will love him even if they are separated again. They awaken to a park ranger, Oliver and Sam. Rebecca, delirious with pneumonia, clings to Hadley who has to push her away to her father and in so doing loses his balance and falls over the cliff to his death. Rebecca howls like an animal in despair. She wakes three days later and goes with Uncle Joley to Hadley's funeral. Numb with grief and illness, she leaves with her parents to return to San Diego.

Sam Hansen

Twenty-five-year-old Sam owns and operates one of the few profitable apple orchards in Massachusetts. Raised on the farm, he followed his father into the business. He graduated from Minuteman Tech where he developed a keen hatred for girls from



Boston, and its suburb Newton, who treated him like a joke. His best friend of 18 years is Hadley Spregg who graduated with him and was raised on a nearby family farm.

When his parents retired to Florida, Sam renovated the orchard, applying all the ideas his father rejected. He hired on Hadley and later hired a gifted grafter named Joley Lipton. They all live in the Big House, a sprawling farm house on a hill overlooking the orchard and Lake Boon. When Joley's sister Jane and niece Rebecca show up Sam offers them rooms at the house. Jane, a Newton girl, reminds him of all the cruel girls from Newton so he treats her rudely and assumes she looks down on him. This hate turns to soul-stirring passion. When Jane later asks him to send Hadley away from Rebecca, Sam sends his best friend away even though he knows that Hadley would not seduce the 15-year-old Rebecca who has a crush on him. In his confrontation with Oliver, Oliver has the advantage of surprise but Sam is taller, stronger and younger. Sam and Oliver track the young pair up the mountain and while Sam convinces Hadley to let Rebecca go with Oliver, Hadley falls off the mountain to his death. Sam loses his best friend and Jane in the same week. He is left with less than he started with by the end of the story.

Joley Lipton

Thirty-one-year-old Joley, younger brother of Jane, has never found a woman to measure up to his sister. Jane protects him from their father and saves him from drowning in ten-foot surf at Plum Island, Massachusetts when he is seven. Later Jane bails him out of jail and keeps in touch with him during his worldwide wanderings without revealing his whereabouts to their parents. When he returns to Massachusetts in search of a job, he finds Hansen's orchard where he learns to graft, trim, and farm. He earns the respect and friendship of Sam Hansen and his friend Hadley Spregg.

When his sister calls hysterical about her marriage, Joley guides her across the country through a series of letters that lead her leg by leg on her journey to Stow, Massachusetts in a route that zigzags so that Oliver cannot easily find them. In each letter to Jane, he reminds her of an incident from their childhood before he gives her the directions for the next leg of the trip. Joley has a mystical quality about him that resembles a monk. He is insightful in his understanding of others and he has a calming, healing skill with people and with the trees in the orchard. Though he tries to guide Jane into seeing her miserable marriage the way he does, he realizes that she will go back to Oliver after the news broadcast shows Oliver declaring his love.

Hadley Slegg

Twenty-five-year-old Hadley Slegg is raised on the orchard near Sam Hansen and is his best friend for 18 years. They graduate together from Minuteman Tech. He has fair hair and brown eyes. After Hadley's father dies, his mother sells their farm and moves to Carroll, New Hampshire. He has a younger brother named Cal. Hadley then goes to work at Sam's orchard. When Jane Jones and her daughter Rebecca show up to visit



Joley, Hadley is attracted to the 15-year-old Rebecca and he behaves as a gentleman out of respect for her age. When he sees that Rebecca is in love with him he struggles to keep his distance, but then Sam orders him off the orchard for a few weeks, he is angry and disappointed. He knows that Jane is behind it. He goes to Carroll, New Hampshire to stay with his mother. Rebecca follows him so he takes her up Mt. Deception to hide her for at least a night. He pushes Rebecca toward her father, loses his balance and falls off a cliff to his death. He is buried in Carroll, New Hampshire.

Ernie Barb

Driver of the Oscar Mayer wiener mobile, Ernie meets Jane and Rebecca on the road and offers to buy them breakfast at the Pillar O' Salt diner near Salt Lake City. He has a spiked blonde crew cut and a high voice.

Regalia Clippe

As a produce buyer for Purity Foods, Regalia weighs in at two hundred pounds and stands five feet tall. She flirts with Sam Hansen so much that Sam always brings Joley along to their meetings.

Ernest Elkezer

Curator for the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Elkezer was once the handler of Jumbo the Elephant. He meets Jane and Rebecca when he backs his van into their MG while leaving the ferry. He leads them to the museum where he gives Jane \$400 for repairs from the museum safe.

Eloise

Owner of Eloise's barn-like store in Towner, North Dakota, Eloise is four feet six inches tall. She has red spit curls and a triple chin. She also has a gift for knowing what people want. She sells clothing to Jane and Rebecca on Rebecca's fifteenth birthday.

Alexander and Mary Lipton

The parents of Jane and Joley are Alexander and Mary Lipton. Alexander is an abusive alcoholic who strikes his wife and molests his daughter. He uses his charm and social standing to convince a police officer that Jane ran away because of her nightmares rather than his abuse. When Mary discovers Alexander's sexual abuse of Jane, Alexander breaks two of Mary's ribs, and the sexual abuse ends.



Windy McGill

Marine biologist for the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, Windy is a colleague of Oliver Jones who gladly enlists Oliver's help in the rescue of Mable a humpback whale beached near Gloucester, Massachusetts. He graciously gives all the credit for the rescue to Oliver allowing Oliver to make his appeal to his wife and child through the media.

Mica

Mica, waitress at the 24-hour Blue Diner in Boston, Massachusetts, takes Oliver to her apartment to rest. After hearing his story about his runaway wife, Mica urges Oliver to go to her and tell her how he feels. At Mica's apartment, Oliver sees the news about a stranded humpback whale near Gloucester and heads there instead.

Alfred Oppenbaum

Twenty-year-old Alfred works at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. When he meets Jane and Rebecca there, he shows them his presentation on the research of Oliver Jones.

Mrs. Spregg

Mrs. Spregg is the mother of Hadley Spregg. She and her husband owned an orchard near the Hansen's. After her husband dies, she moves to 114 Sand Castle Lane, Carroll, New Hampshire by Mt. Deception. She has a second son named Cal.

Joseph Tall Neck

Gas station owner and used car dealer in Poplar, Montana, Tall Neck sports a long white braid down his back and coal-colored eyes. He buys Jane's used station wagon with 30,000 miles on it for \$3000. He sells Jane a used MG convertible for \$500, unaware that he has left a manila envelope under the seat containing over \$600.

Arlo van Cleeb

Arlo is the owner of the corn farm near What Cheer, Iowa, where Midwest Airlines flight 997 crashed on September 21, 1978.



Objects/Places

Apples

Symbolic of the forbidden fruit in Eden, the apples in the story appear often. Sam, Joley and Hadley tend and harvest the fruit on one of the few profitable orchards in Massachusetts. Jane and Sam argue about apple farming. Joley grafts branches from one kind of apple tree to another. The orchard grows many varieties: Astrachan, Cortland, Red Delicious, Puritan, Bellflower, Macoun, Jonathan, Golden Delicious, Gravensteins, Miltons, McIntosh, Bottle Greening and others. In Chapter 18, Joley tells Sam that Jane used to be an Astrachan before she met Oliver, now she's a crab apple. When the Joneses leave the orchard, they are given bushels of apples to remind them of the place where they found true love.

Arlo van Cleeb's Farm

Near What Cheer, Iowa, the van Cleeb farm is famous for being the site of the September 21, 1978 crash of Midwest Airlines Flight 997. Rebecca Jones was a toddler and one of five survivors of the crash. When Jane and Rebecca re-visit the farm, they are unaware that Oliver is behind corn stalks watching them. It is here that Oliver realizes he does not know what to say that will invite them back to San Diego, back into his family.

Blue Diner, Boston

At the 24-hour Blue Diner in Boston, Oliver accepts the fact that he could be to blame for the breakups. He pours his tale of woe out to waitresses until one named Mica takes him to her apartment where he sleeps for three days.

Gloucester, Massachusetts

Off the coast of Gloucester, Mable the three-year-old humpback whale is caught in a gill net. Windy McGill, a marine biologist from the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, leads the rescue until Oliver shows up, then the two of them work together to cut the lines freeing Mable. On the beach, Oliver addresses the media about the whale and then he makes a public plea to find his wife and daughter. He declares his love on camera.

Lake Boon

Lake Boon sits at the bottom of the hill of Sam Hansen's orchard. At the top of the hill is the Big House. This small lake is where Sam and Jane fish.



Mt. Deception

Things are not what they seem on Mt. Deception, New Hampshire, where Hadley and Rebecca set up camp to share one night together. The couple knows that they will be found and separated so they prolong their time together by climbing the mountain before nightfall. This mountain rises up behind the Slegg home. This is the site where misunderstandings culminate into tense arguments between Hadley and Rebecca, Hadley and Sam, Hadley and Oliver, and Rebecca and Oliver. This is where Hadley falls to his death.

Pickerel Pond

The local swimming hole near Stow, Massachusetts is a man-made pond where Sam, Hadley, Joley, Jane and Rebecca go for a leisurely afternoon. Sam and Jane first kiss in a rowboat on this pond. Rebecca witnesses the kiss. This is also the place where Sam erases Jane's fear of the water by luring her into the act of ducking under the water with him.

Pillsbury Building, Minneapolis

Jane and Rebecca witness the scheduled demolition of the old building which is blocks away from the new one. This is their last stop before they reach the site of the plane crash that Rebecca survived.

Plum Island, Massachusetts

On the beach at Plum Island, Jane and Joley bodysurfed in the high waves. Jane rescued Joley from drowning and refused to swim after that because it frightened her that she nearly lost the only family member she loved. She was eleven, and Joley was seven.

Poplar, Montana

Jane sells her old car to Joseph Tall Neck at his gas station/used car dealership. She also buys a used convertible MG there that has an envelope of cash tucked under the seat.

San Diego, California

The story begins and ends at the home of Oliver, Jane and Rebecca Jones in San Diego, California. The majority of the story is the journey away from this place, but the Jones family cycles back here after tragedies. To Oliver Jones this is the place where his family belongs, where they are to wait for him and wait on him even though he



ignores them. To Jane it represents her place of duty as a wife and mother and speech pathologist for the school system. The family lives in San Diego at the convenience of Oliver and his work.

Stow, Massachusetts

Sam Hansen's apple orchard, one of the few profitable orchards in the state, is in Stow. This is the dwelling place of Sam, Hadley Spregg and Joley Lipton. For a brief while, Jane and Rebecca Jones live in joyous freedom and find true love here. To Jane and Rebecca this place offers a taste of Eden, and they know that they must enjoy it to the fullest as their time here will not last.

Towner, North Dakota

Home of Eloise's discount clothing barn, Towner is also the geographical center of North America. It is where Jane and Rebecca celebrate Rebecca's fifteenth birthday by buying clothes. This marks the halfway point in their journey.

Wedding Ring

Jane tosses away her wedding ring while making love to Sam. When she leaves the orchard to go back to San Diego with Oliver, she leaves the ring behind.

Water

Bodies of water feature prominently in this story. Jane rescues her beloved younger brother from ten-foot waves when Jane is 11 and Joley is 7. From this moment on she refuses to swim. Jane meets Oliver when he is working in a tide pool. He later grows into a world-renowned scientist who travels the oceans to study whales. His attempt to bring his wife and child along is unsuccessful. They prefer life on land. When Jane runs away from home with Rebecca, they pause for soul-searching at La Jolla beach but neither of them enter the water. When Jane meets Sam, he invites her to go fishing on Boon Lake. It is a trust-building moment for Jane to get into the rowboat. Jane later shares an intimate moment of life-changing trust when Sam pulls her into Pickerel Pond to re-introduce her to swimming. She revels in it after that. At the end of the story, she returns with her family to San Diego.

Whales

Northern Atlantic humpback whales are Dr. Oliver Jones' first love. He built his career on the discovery that male humpback whales pass along songs from generation to generation. In San Diego, he studies Hawaiian and West Indian humpback whales. Because of Oliver's devotion to whales he neglects his family. In the end of the story he



rescues a female humpback whale named Mable to gain media attention so he can plead for his wife to call. Just as the humpbacks sound to attract their family together, Oliver sounds out his cry over the airwaves for his family.



Themes

Communication versus Miscommunication

Oliver Jones became famous for his discovery that male whales pass on their songs from generation to generation. These songs help the whales of the same family stay together. He habitually ignores his own family until they leave. Speech pathologist Jane Lipton Jones built her career on teaching others to overcome their speech problems. Ironically, these two people with careers based on communication cannot talk to each other honestly and openly about their feelings. Neither one listens to the other. Their inability to communicate drives them apart gradually and silently until Jane's pent up emotions burst to the surface through violence.

Jane turns to the only person she trusts, her younger brother Joley. Their close bond allows them to communicate openly and honestly, with understanding that transcends speech. Though they often disagree, they trust one another and so they listen. During the story, they think about the same events from childhood at the same time though they are thousands of miles apart.

Rebecca and Jane communicate fairly well except on the topic of men. Jane closes her mind and becomes led by her fears when Rebecca and Hadley develop a friendship. Jane refuses to believe Sam, Hadley and Rebecca when they tell her that the relationship is not sexual. Jane's affair with Sam leads her to conclude that her daughter is behaving the same way with Hadley.

Image versus Reality

Oliver represents the stark contrast between image and reality. His celebrity image spreads through the scientific community as a genius who breaks the communication code of humpback whales. When he is The Oliver Jones on the scene of a whale expedition or rescue, he comes off like a hero, the confident man of action who can handle emergencies. In reality, Oliver is a faithless, self-absorbed, condescending husband and absent father. He heartlessly sacrifices his secretary's job when he cancels his expedition to chase after his wife. He is also a bully. He assaults Jane, Sam, a gas station attendant and he bullies Mrs. Spregg.

Alexander Lipton's public image is that of a Harvard-educated, wealthy community leader and family man. In reality, he is a wife-beater and child molester. When he dies, his children celebrate.

Sam Hansen's image is one of a farming prodigy who turns around the 100-acre family orchard from ruin to success at the age of twenty. He is a featured speaker at his alma mater Minuteman Tech. In reality, Sam is lonely and awkward with women like Regalia Clippe and his first girlfriend Joellen.



Coming of Age

The coming of age theme is used to highlight the key points of transition from childhood to adulthood. During this story, two females come of age. At age fifteen, Rebecca passes through milestones of puberty, first love and first sexual encounter in the summer of 1990. Though she impresses others as being stoic, mature and level-headed, she remains emotionally a teenager. She falls in love with an older man, Hadley Spreng, who is ten years older. Rebecca's coming of age summer ends with Hadley's death—the ultimate event that forces a person to face the harsh reality of growing up. Though Rebecca has faced death once before as a toddler, she is old enough at fifteen to fully understand it.

Jane, at thirty-five years old, is emotionally retarded. Her father's sexual abuse stunted her childhood and rendered her emotionally withdrawn, unsure of herself and impulsive. Through most of the story, Rebecca seems more mature. Rebecca reads the maps and budgets the cash. Jane acts like a teenager away from home for the first time on the trip from San Diego to Stow. In fact, Jane is on her own for the first time in her life. She moved from her abusive home to college to marriage without a break on her own. She indulges in sexy clothing, fast driving, and risk-taking behaviors like a teenager. She has illicit sex with someone she met a few days earlier and she acts jealous when Rebecca falls in love. In the end, Jane leaves the orchard with her eyes wide open toward the future.

Boundaries

In addition to watching Jane and Rebecca cross the boundary from immaturity to adulthood, the reader can follow the progress of the Joneses across America by the boundaries of states. Jane and Rebecca zigzag on the scenic route at Joley's direction.

Jane crosses over the boundaries of acceptable behavior when she strikes her husband, runs away from home and has an affair.

Sam acts against the boundaries of his own standards. He hires a city-raised man named Joley to help on the farm. He falls in love with a married woman. He falls in love with a Newton girl. He has a one-night stand with his old girlfriend after she announces she is engaged. He sends his best friend of 18 years away at the request of a woman he's known only a few days.

Style

Point of View

There are five distinct points of view telling the same story. Each one is identified by title by chapter and told in first person present tense. Jane's point of view appears in 24 chapters. She contradicts herself often and is prone to dramatic expressions and thoughts. She doesn't want to be a good mother; she pledges to be the perfect mother. Her responses are triggered by outside stimulus more often than by her own will.

Oliver and Rebecca each have thirteen chapters. Oliver's thoughts and dialogue reveal his enormous ego and Harvard education, which he seems compelled to show off. His logical, plodding thoughts come off to the reader as cold and purposeful. Rebecca's perspective is matter-of-fact observant except in times of emotional distress. During her visit to the airplane crash site and during memories of it her sentences become fragmentary. Rebecca's chapters are told in reverse chronological order.

Sam has twelve chapters and Joley speaks through eleven chapters. Changes in point of view occur chapter by chapter and appear as changes in typeface. Joley's chapters appear in italics perhaps in keeping with the concept that his chapters are handwritten letters that guide Jane from point to point on the route to Stow, Massachusetts.

The story is told mainly through exposition with snippets of dialogue.

Setting

The main action of the story takes place in July 1990. The main story begins in San Diego, California and ends in Stow, Massachusetts. At the landmarks along the way, Jane and Rebecca experience small towns, big cities and a range of climates and altitudes. Each place represents a growth experience for the travelers. Close behind Oliver is tracking them. As a marine biologist, he knows his way on the oceans but flounders on land. He also becomes changed by the places he encounters because they force him to examine his failings as a father and a husband.

Jane and Oliver belong on the east coast near friends, family and the whales Oliver adores. When they return to the east coast, they learn who they are. At the Hansen orchard, true love is found between Jane and Sam as well as between Rebecca and Hadley. The orchard's self-contained paradise is fruitful and beautiful as if representing Eden.

Language and Meaning

The language of the narrative changes dramatically among the five point of view characters. Picoult masterfully handles each point of view character's language and



thoughts creating five distinct voices. In Oliver's chapters the vocabulary is formal, scholarly, representative of his Harvard-educated, doctoral, scientific background. The sentences are longer and more complex in Oliver's chapters than in the rest. Logical, methodical, the character reasons his way through his journey in search of his family.

Jane and Rebecca's chapters speak directly in Anglo-Saxon language about feelings, memories and navigating relationships. Joley's chapters speak through analogy and insight to gently guide Jane into self-discovery as if he is a philosophical Zen master addressing a student. He writes of signs, and listening and finding one's center. Sam's language is plain, conversational and evokes kindness. He relates to the world as a grower of things, a manager and a trusted friend.

Structure

The story is presented in fragments. There are 72 chapters in 346 pages. The longest chapter is nine and a half pages. The narrative is chopped into five points of view alternating by chapter with Jane telling the majority of the story through her 24 chapters.

Rebecca's chapters relate the story from her point of view in reverse chronological order that gives the reader hints of tragedy and loss and adventure. The reader is forced to piece together the story, parts of it retold from each point of view, to see the whole thing.

Thankfully, much of the story reveals the thoughts of the point of view characters so the reader can piece together the intentions of characters along with the results of their actions. Specific important details, like the fact that Sam is taller and stronger than Oliver, emerge after reading a few versions of the same part of the story.



Quotes

"It involved all of us—Mom, Daddy, Uncle Joley, Sam, even Hadley—but we all see it different ways. Me, I see it going backward. Like rewinding a movie. I don't know why I see it like this. I know, for example, that my mother doesn't." Prologue, p. 2.

"My job is to help children find their voices—kinds that come to school mute, or with lisps or cleft palates." Chapter 1, p. 4.

"I don't understand much about his work, but that is just as much my fault as Oliver's. He never tells me about the ideas burning in his mind anymore, and I sometimes forget to ask." Chapter 1, p. 5.

"But the humpbacks in Stellwagen Bank sing songs that fill you to the core, that swell inside you. They are the whales with which I fell in love when I first heard the calls—eerie, splayed, the haunted sound your heart beats when you are afraid of being alone." Chapter 2, p. 7.

"But you won't find Oliver Jones apologizing. She's the one at fault here. She's the one who is to blame. I still have her mark on my face." Chapter 8, p. 30

"The apple, I tell them, came before Adam and Eve in the story of Creation. It had to have been there at least three years because that's how long it takes for a new tree to bear fruit, much less carnal knowledge." Chapter 13, p. 54.

"Thick as breath, I hear his spine hit the rocks and the water below. After this, everything that has build up inside me spills out. It is nonverbal. It is a chord that comes when a knife cleaves your soul. And only now, with this sound surrounding, does everyone choose to listen." Chapter 16, p. 78.

"In my opinion, if you leave things to their natural course, they go bad." Chapter 18, p. 80.

"I used to think that the best feeling in the world was flying on my bicycle down a hill that I had worked so hard to climb, flying faster than the speed of sound, with my arms and my hair waving. I'd cup one hand and try to catch the air and when I got to the bottom, after all that, there was nothing in my hand." Chapter 22, p. 117.

"Sam's got a chip on his shoulder about the suburbs in Boston. They're the ones with all the power who always vote down local aid to farms, but they haven't got any idea what kind of work we do here. Newton girls, when we were in school, were the ones who used to giggle when we walked by, you know, come on to us but not let us near them." Chapter 26, p. 133.

"I close the door behind me and very slowly pull the negligee over my head. Talk about a waste of money. The truth is, I've left the only man I've ever slept with. So who am I going to wear it for?" Chapter 31, p. 163.



"When I first came back from Mexico, before I went to visit either you or Mama, I stopped in What Cheer, Iowa, to see the remains of Rebecca's plane, and I realized why that farmer had never bothered to remove the wreckage. It had nothing to do with posterity, or tribute. It was simply that the ground was dead. Nothing will ever grow there again." Chapter 38, p. 188.

"But it became clear to me that I was three thousand miles away from my friends, from my home. Oliver was too involved in his new job to pay attention to me, and we couldn't afford for me to get a master's degree in speech pathology, and I started to get lonely. So I poked pinholes in my diaphragm." Chapter 40, p. 192.

"It hits me: I am not part of this family. I would never say I am a scientist without offering proof. How can I say that I am a father, a husband?" Chapter 41, p. 198.

" 'I fix the unfixable. I bring trees back from the dead.' He looks into my eyes. 'I've become mythic. The god of second chances.' " Chapter 49, p. 233.

" 'Oh, Joley,' I say, 'I'll go home and be the ideal wife, the perfect mother. I'll do everything I've been doing and I won't ever bring this up again. I'll live the most ordinary life there ever was, just as long as you promise me that I'll get five minutes of wonderful before it's all over.' " Chapter 49, p. 234.

"Well, I saved a whale today. And I want you to know it wasn't any fun without you. If you're watching this, I hope you'll let me know where you are." Chapter 57, p. 287.

"Hadley drains his glass, and then reaches for mine. 'So if you want to know, Am I in lover with her, the answer's yes. If you want to know, Am I going to take care of her, I will. No one else seems to be doing a bang-up job of it.' When Hadley looks at me, there's a purpose in his eyes I've never seen before." Chapter 63, p. 312.

"It is up to me to put my family back together. I squeeze Jane gently. Then I close my eyes, and press my lips against hers. Her mouth is quivering. But she is kissing me back. This much I know: she is kissing me back." Chapter 64, p. 317.

"I look from Hadley's face to Oliver's. He's got a look in his eyes that I didn't see even yesterday morning. I have never seen it on a human. It's the way raccoons get, when they're rabid. They walk right up to you, even though normally they're scared shitless of people, and they just attack, scratching and biting and clawing. It's like they have no idea where they are or how they got there." Chapter 68, p. 327.

"The human body can withstand so much. I have read accounts of people who have survived extreme cold, brutality, bludgeoning, terrible burns. I have read the testimonies of these survivors. They all make it sound so simple, really, the ability to keep on living." Chapter 72, p. 343.

"You can take dead trees in an orchard, and bring them back to life. You can take two different strains of apples and they will bear fruit on the same tree. Grafting: the science

of bringing together the unlikely; of bringing back what is past hope." Chapter 72, p. 346.



Topics for Discussion

What does the apple symbolize in this story?

Compare the couples Sam and Jane with Hadley and Rebecca and how their age differences affected their relationships.

What effect does the author achieve by using five points of view in telling this story? Describe how it works well and how it works against the storytelling experience from the reader's point of view.

How does Picoult create suspense through the structure of the novel?

Of all the characters in this story, which ones would you like and which ones do you dislike? Explain using examples from the book.

Describe the approach Dr. Oliver Jones uses to find his family. What skills and methods does he use and which ones prove successful?

Discuss the theme of communication that flows through the story.

Using two characters, describe their coming of age in the course of the novel.

Describe the patterns of behavior that Jane seems to repeat throughout her life.