

The Story of the Trapp Family Singers Study Guide

The Story of the Trapp Family Singers by Maria von Trapp

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Contents

[The Story of the Trapp Family Singers Study Guide.....1](#)

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

[Plot Summary.....4](#)

[Part One: Chapter I, Just Loaned.....7](#)

[Part One: Chapter II, Glories of the Past.....8](#)

[Part One: Chapter III, The Baron Doesn't Want It.....9](#)

[Part One: Chapter IV, An Austrian Christmas.....11](#)

[Part One: Chapter V, God's Will Hath No Why.....13](#)

[Part One: Chapter VI, Feasts in a Family.....15](#)

[Part One: Chapter VII, A Festival Summer and a Baby.....16](#)

[Part One: Chapter VIII, Uncle Peter and His Handbook.....17](#)

[Part One: Chapter IX, An Operation, a Turtle, and a Long Distance Call.....18](#)

[Part One: Chapter X, Aren't We Lucky?.....19](#)

[Part One: Chapter XI, Never Again.....20](#)

[Part One: Chapter XII, From Hobby to Profession.....21](#)

[Part One: Chapter XIII, And the Lord Said to Abram22](#)

[Part Two: Chapter I, On The American Farmer.....24](#)

[Part Two: Chapter II, The First Ten Years Are the Hardest.....25](#)

[Part Two: Chapter III, Getting Settled.....26](#)

[Part Two: Chapter IV, Barbara.....27](#)

[Part Two: Chapter V, What Next.....28](#)

[Part Two: Chapter VI, In Sight of the Statue of Liberty.....29](#)

[Part Two: Chapter VII, Learning New Ways.....30](#)

[Part Two: Chapter VIII, The Miracle.....31](#)

[Part Two: Chapter IX, Merion.....32](#)



[Part Two: Chapter X, The Fly..... 33](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XI, Stowe in Vermont..... 34](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XII, A New Chapter..... 35](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XIII, The End of a Perfect Stay..... 36](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XIV, The New House..... 37](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XV, Concerts in Wartime..... 39](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XVI, Trapp Family Music Camp..... 40](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XVII, Snapshots of the Camp..... 42](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XVIII, Trapp Family Austrian Relief Inc..... 43](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XIX, The Letter..... 44](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XX, The Memorable Year..... 46](#)

[Part Two: Chapter XXI, Cor Unum..... 47](#)

[Characters..... 48](#)

[Objects/Places..... 51](#)

[Themes..... 53](#)

[Style..... 55](#)

[Quotes..... 57](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 59](#)



Plot Summary

The Story of the Trapp Family Singers, by Maria Augusta Trapp, inspires stage and screen adaptations known to theatergoers as *The Sound of Music*. In her memoir, Maria is a recent graduate from Teacher's College. She is reviewing fifth grade workbooks when Reverend Mother Abess summons her. Novitiate candidates only see the Reverend Mother from afar. Worried over being in trouble over her tomboy antics, Maria takes a longer route to examine her conscience on her way to her superior's quarters.

Reverend Mother eases Maria's conscience, but informs her it is God's Will that she leave the abbey for a year to teach an ailing child of a former sea captain. Maria falls in love not only with her pupil, but with the girl's six other siblings. The "Hausdame", Baroness Matilda, who supervises the servants, divulges the Captain's troubled life to Maria. Maria sympathetically prays for the Captain, but notes how rigid the children's lives are. One rainy day, the children become interested in her guitar. She starts teaching them folk songs, and singing becomes a favorite family pastime. Maria's manner affects everyone, including the Captain, who proves not so tyrannical as the Baroness describes.

Word is, the Captain plans to marry Princess Yvonne, who arrives to visit. The Princess tells Maria that the Captain is in love with her, but he can only be in love with what she does for the children. The Princess also lets slip her plan to send the children to separate boarding schools. The disclosures unsettle Maria, who decides to return to the convent at once. Fearing she will go, Princess Yvonne brings a priest to convince Maria that it is the Will of God that she stay until the wedding.

Maria stays but is now uncomfortable around the Captain. Baroness Matilda breaks her leg, and the Captain asks Maria to take over house management until he finds a replacement. Maria explains she has no housekeeping experience, but the Captain persuades her. Maria's new duties include writing the Captain a letter detailing daily events. Her return to the convent is imminent. She has not heard from the Captain and dares ask in one of her letters when he will get engaged. The Baron's mock response prompts Maria to send an angry response. The Captain interrupts his proposal to read her registered letter. He returns home unengaged. Teasing, he proposes to Maria, whose confusion leads her to the abbey to consult the nuns. Mother Abess deems it is the Will of God is that Maria marry the Captain.

Maria and Georg settle into married life. Adherence to their Catholic faith dominates all aspect of family life. The couple have their first child. Hard times set in when their bank goes bankrupt. Needed income results in their renting out several rooms and converting one room into a chapel. This leads to meeting Father Wasner, a musician, and who is impressed by the family's vocals. Under his tutelage, the Trapps learn complex classical pieces. They begin public performance, and ultimately tour Europe.

In March 1938, Hitler invades Austria. Hans, the Trapp's butler, is a Nazi sympathizer and they learn to watch what is said. The Trapp Choir is asked to perform at Hitler's



birthday. The opportunity to make a fortune is at hand, but they cannot follow through. Saying no to the Nazis is dangerous. The family flees Austria with Father Wasner, who is granted permission to go with them by the Archbishops.

In September 1938, the Trapps embark for America and Maria is again pregnant. Their introduction to America begins at New York City, where cultural shock and language barrier results in comedic misunderstandings and adventures. Mr. Wagner, their manager, is unaware of Maria's pregnancy as they start their first tour. Upon realizing her condition several months later, Wagner cancels the rest of the tour when they need money most. They meet an Austrian acquaintance, who introduces them to a publicity agent, who books them for a Town Hall performance. The concert results in their meeting a Professor Albrecht, who introduces them to other music aficionados, who find the Trapp's a house to rent in Pennsylvania.

After Maria gives birth, Wagner plans a new tour. However, Immigration denies an extension on their visitor's visa. They must leave by March 4th, with nowhere to go. Georg cables an impresario who once proposed a tour in Copenhagen. The next months are uncertain. The Trapps survive on what Maria attributes to God's Will. Concert tours in Scandinavia crop up in time to carry them until May. In September, concerts in Sweden get cancelled, and all foreigners deported because the war breaks out. Intense prayer is answered in the form of Wagner sending the family tickets back to America for a second tour.

To recoup his investment on their boat tickets, Wagner books large venues. There are too many empty seats for lack of publicity. After twenty-four concerts, Wagner drops the Trapps because he has lost money. They audition for new management. Mr. Schang tells them their material is too long and too serious. He will give them a year's try if they come up with \$5,000 for publicity and wear a little makeup on stage.

The family has no real home and little in the bank, but friends lend them the publicity money. On the road, life is rough due to the constant bus rides and cheap motels. An opportunity arises, and they purchase two cars. One summer, they vacation in Stowe, Vermont where the views remind them of Austria. A friend suggests they buy a farm there, and after almost giving up, a farmhouse on seven hundred acres presents itself.

They now own their own place. On the road, while making plans for the farm, Rupert and Werner are drafted. The family owes the biggest debt of their life, and Father Wasner must now rearrange all music to accommodate an all-female choir. There is uncertainty as to how the public will receive the new format; however, doubt is cast aside after triumphant reviews of their all-female debut.

The family moves into the farm, and a worker announces "sugaring season". They never heard of maple syrup, but soon learn everything about maple syrup and needed income results. Georg has misgivings regarding the deteriorated condition of the cabin. There are six months to go before they earn money performing. An architect and carpenter are consulted, but a blizzard knocks down the roof they have just begun to raise. From then on, construction is constant. Georg and all the girls are hammering.



Trucks come and go. Friends come and help. Most men are at war. The Trapps overcome war restrictions on building materials. Money, as always, is scarce. Weekly, God comes through and they meet the payroll for the workers they hire. A teacher drops by with a truck full of schoolboys to help the Trapps build after the family gives a benefit concert to repair the school's leaky roof.

On a sixth concert tour, gasoline is rationed because of the war. They travel by rail and spend hours waiting on freezing platforms. Home again for a break from concerting, they pick up hammers and continue building. Someone informs Maria that an old CCC camp, where the family first performed in Vermont, will be torn down. The thought nags at Maria. She receives government permission to start a music camp. Pamphlets are printed to announce the camp. On the road, Maria reconsiders. Their house is not yet finished, and now another big project is planned. There is no backing out.

The tour is long and time to prepare for the Trapp Family Music Camp is short. They return from tour on May 24th. Campers are set to arrive on July 12. In this period, they must convert the army camp into a music camp. Carpenters, painters, and plumbers work around the clock. Beds, benches, toilets, and wash bowls are needed during a time when everything is rationed. The War Production Board is suspicious of so many permit requests. A hearing orders a year in jail for Maria on top of a \$10,000 fine. Her tearful plea softens Board members into revising the campsite. Obstacles occur until the last minute, but their first music camp opens on time and proves successful.

Soon the family receives a letter describing the post war suffering of the Austrian people. The family forms the Trapp Family Austrian Relief Inc. This allows them to collect money, clothes, and non-perishables from coast to coast while on tour.

During a tour in 1947, the Captain becomes ill. He consults a doctor in New York. At first, Maria is told it is pneumonia. She cannot communicate with Georg, because of a telephone strike. When they speak, he tells her he is better but to please come. She arrives and his cheeks have hallowed. The doctor tells Maria that a cancerous tumor is inoperable. She faces her husband at the hospital without telling him the doctor gives him three months to live.

At home in Stowe, Vermont, a second doctor concludes that pneumonia is the culprit and does not agree with the cancer diagnosis. Georg will recover, he assures. In spite of the second doctor's words, Maria can't forget the first prognosis. Georg begins to ask for the children who are touring. When they arrive, they are shocked at the sight of their father. Maria finds it more difficult to hide sorrow. She watches Georg struggle for breath. No medicine relieves him. She knows his time is near. A new doctor confirms that the end is at hand. The family is at his bedside when he passes. He is laid to rest on their land, to satisfy a request he once jestingly made of Maria.

Maria herself becomes deathly ill and receives last rites. Another tragedy befalls the family in the form of a mental illness for one daughter. Two others fall seriously ill and another has an accident. However, all recover. Maria becomes a US citizen. The family decides to name their home "Cor Unum", or "one heart", symbolizing their united heart.



Part One: Chapter I, Just Loaned

Part One: Chapter I, Just Loaned Summary and Analysis

The Story of the Trapp Family Singers, by Maria Augusta Trapp, inspires stage and screen adaptations known to theatergoers as *The Sound of Music*. In her memoir, Maria is a recent graduate from Teacher's College. She is reviewing fifth grade workbooks when Reverend Mother Abess summons her. Novitiate candidates only see the Reverend Mother from afar. Worried over being in trouble over her tomboy antics, Maria takes a longer route to examine her conscience on her way to her superior's quarters.

Reverend Mother's sacred presence eases Maria's mind; however, a doctor prescribes time away from the convent to cure Maria's headaches. It is the Will of God that Maria leaves the abbey for a year to teach the bedridden child of a former sea captain, known as Baron von Trapp. Maria obediently packs and departs for the villa.

Upon arriving at the Trapp villa, Hans the butler perfunctorily greets her. Thoughts of meeting a grizzly sea captain intimidate Maria, but Baron Georg von Trapp's character contradicts those she envisions from fiction novels. She is taken aback when he uses a whistle to summon Agathe, Hedwig, Martina, Johanna, Rupert, and Werner down the stairs, wearing identical sailor suits, to greet her. The Captain explains that her pupil, also named Maria, is upstairs in bed.

After introductions, the Captain asks how she likes the children. Outspoken Maria responds that they have beautiful eyes but look "pale and serious". To correct herself, she comments on their good behavior. The Captain informs Maria she is the twenty-sixth in a line of teachers and governesses. He shows her to her room and tells her the dinner bell will soon ring.

Her room is too lavish, and she compares it to the Abbey décor, with holy water fonts at every entrance. At the dinner table, she finds herself in a splendid dining room where the Captain heads the table. The children are seated, and at the other end of the table, sits Baroness Matilda, the "Hausdame", who presides over household staff. Maria wonders why there are so many crystal dishes and why Baroness Matilda tingles a bell to summon Hans the Butler, who is only a foot away. Curiosity is overtaken by homesickness later, in her room unpacking. The sight of the "Untersberg", her favorite mountain, eases Maria's longing. She thinks, "Our Lord, when He was weary and tired out and wanted to be alone with His Father, ascended a mountain". She makes a calendar to mark the days until her return to the Abbey.



Part One: Chapter II, Glories of the Past

Part One: Chapter II, Glories of the Past Summary and Analysis

Maria must get used to the giant house and the many people in the mansion. Aside from the Captain, his children, Hans, and the Baroness, there is Resi, the cook, the kitchen maid, "Mariandl", other housemaids, a gardener, and Franz, who looks over the farm.

Baroness Matilda invites Maria to her room and tells her about the baron's life. The Captain, the Baroness explains, is the first to command a submarine for Austria. During World War I, his military heroism earns him the title of "Baron". His wife, the grandchild of the inventor of the torpedo—Robert Whitehead, dies of scarlet fever soon after their seventh child is born. Ever since his wife's death he is a sad man who provides anything money can buy for the children, including teachers, nurses, and governess. Now, the Captain plans to announce his engagement to a Princess Yvonne. Baroness Matilda's confidences move Maria to include the Captain in prayer that night.



Part One: Chapter III, The Baron Doesn't Want It

Part One: Chapter III, The Baron Doesn't Want It Summary and Analysis

Maria gradually adjusts to the routine. The Baroness rests mornings, so Maria wakes the children up, handles breakfasts, and readies the older ones for school. Notably, the author never complains how these are not duties she was hired to do. She mismatches gloves and leggings and has a hard time keeping order. In her frankness, Maria suggests that hobnailed boots, mittens, and a "Wetterfleck for each child would really be a bargain". She explains to the baroness that everyone wears Wetterflecks. The Hausdame listens, but explains that this is how the Captain wants things done.

After the older kids leave for school, Maria begins teaching Maria and Johanna, who is too small to join the others. Little Maria's condition keeps her in bed, and Maria sees the longing in the child's eyes when the others are playing. She resolves to make lessons fun. Little Maria loves to learn, but confides to Maria that she misses piano lessons. Maria remembers seeing two violins in a music room and asks the Baroness if her pupil can practice. She gets permission and they soon find a violin teacher.

Johanna, Maria finds, is the opposite of Little Maria. She uses every trick in the book to get out of schoolwork. She is affectionate and tells Maria how much she likes her. Martina, the baby, is different. She shows no affection and does not want any. She is curious in lessons, but hides when addressed. This is not shyness, she is matter of fact and says what she thinks. She does love her teddy bear. Maria perceives it is not right to force herself on her and waits patiently for acceptance. Rupert shows pride during a tour of a large garden that Baroness Matilda and his siblings give Maria. They pass by a bed of flowers he describes as "amerikanische Godrute" or American Goldenrod. He explains that they are expensive and are not to be touched. Werner points out fir trees, which are foreign as well. He allows Maria to have a piece.

Maria is impressed by the size and beauty of the garden and calls it a "paradise for children". Agathe asks Maria why she calls it that. Maria explains the possibilities for games and play. Agathe tells her they don't dare play, because their clothes may get ripped and they will be scolded. What they do is walk. Baroness Matilda agrees.

Maria brings up the idea of playsuits and sandals for the girls, to avoid worries of ruining their sailor suits and shoes. She can't imagine a youth without these items. The Baroness explains that the Baron wants his children dressed neatly. She is not familiar with the games Maria mentions. Maria wonders how the Baroness puts up with all the Captain's orders. She resents the Captain a little and that night prays for the children's happiness.



One rainy afternoon, Werner sees her guitar and asks if she plays. She starts a folk song and is surprised when the children don't join in. They don't know it, they say. They don't know any of the songs she plays. She is stunned that these children know no folk songs. The only song they know is Silent Night. She begins playing it, and each shyly joins in. The outcome of their vocal sound is surprising to Maria. The children's enthusiasm for learning songs sweeps them. They start sitting on the floor around the fireplace, but the Baroness returns and announces that "Ladies never do that!"



Part One: Chapter IV, An Austrian Christmas

Part One: Chapter IV, An Austrian Christmas Summary and Analysis

As Christmas approaches, Maria not only teaches the children more carols, but they are also now crafting gifts for their father, the Baroness, their grandmother in Vienna, and for each other as they sing. Maria credits her vast repertoire to having been a part of the Austrian Catholic Youth Movement in her youth. They traveled the Alps from town to town learning songs handed down over many generations, the author explains.

While the Baroness visits friends, they sit on the floor. In the middle of rehearsing new songs one day, their father arrives from a trip. Maria apologizes, but the Captain is not bothered because they are sitting on the floor. He comments on how wonderful they sound. Sitting on the floor himself, he asks that they sing the "new" song again. Maria can't believe the Captain is telling her to join them on the floor. He compliments Little Maria and Agathe's playing, and picks up a violin himself.

With Christmas getting close, Maria asks where the Advent wreath is usually placed. No one knows what an Advent wreath is. Maria is stunned, but explains it is made from branches and holds four candles representing the four Sundays of Advent and is placed in living rooms in preparation for Christmas. The children instantly ask "Papa" to buy one, but Maria explains that it is better to make one than to buy one. The Captain asks how he can help, and goes off to buy thread, candles, and ribbon.

Maria goes into detail for the reader as to how to make an Advent wreath. Once completed, she tells the Captain the wreath must be hung in the living room. She comments that since the house doesn't have a living room, they can hang it there in the nursery. The Captain asks why she thinks there is no living room, when there is the big drawing room, the little drawing room, the library, and the music room. Maria tells him that a living room is where everyone works, reads, and plays together. The Captain hangs the wreath up, following Maria's directive. While all admire the wreath, Maria suggests that their father "read the Gospel of the first Sunday in Advent" and light the first candle while the family sings.

Maria thinks the Captain is teasing when he agrees to meet later in the "new" living room. It troubles her that he may take her comment as criticism and that she is overstepping her bounds. She knows it is not her place to comment on the aristocratic practice to have a governess for older ones, a nursemaid for young ones, and a teacher for the others. The governesses often teach the kids to play tricks on each other. If she adheres to rules, she will have to send away the ones who knock at her door, instead of teaching them to all sing together as they seem to want. She considers that the new living room situation may hurt the Baroness Matilda's feelings, who wants to follow the



Baron's rules. The Baron himself has deemed the nursery to be the new living room. However, the Baroness joins them in lighting the first Advent candle after supper.

Maria explains that Santa Claus does not come down chimneys at Christmas in Austria. Jesus comes down with angels, carrying the Christmas tree and all that comes under it, after children write Him a letter. Maria requests in her letter to Jesus that He please bring each child a pair of boots, a Wetterfleck, and a pair of wool mittens. She asks nothing for herself. The author lengthily details the celebration of "Saint Nikolaus's" visit on every December sixth. She does not connect this tradition to Saint Nick, from which the American concept of Santa Claus derives.

Exhaustive descriptions of other Christmas traditions follow. The author provides play by play of Christmas Day celebration instead of getting directly to details that move the story along, such as how the Captain guides her to a box that contains eight pairs of mittens, eight Wetterflecks, and eight pairs of boots, not to mention two new dresses and a hat for Maria, presumably from the Captain.

Maria returns to the Nonnberg Benedictine Abbey for Midnight Mass. Images of all that has transpired fill her mind. One image superseding all others is of the Captain warmly thanking her for making Christmas beautiful for his family again. The fact of this image haunting her suggests that she may be thinking a little too much about the Captain, although she never states it directly.



Part One: Chapter V, God's Will Hath No Why

Part One: Chapter V, God's Will Hath No Why Summary and Analysis

Boots, mittens, and ski pants are in good use as winter sets in. The Captain cancels invitations, preferring to stay home. In March, a letter comes, announcing Princess Yvonne's arrival. Little Maria ventures to ask if the Princess is needed now that they have Maria. Maria is excited at meeting a princess, imagining her right "out of Grimm's Fairy Tales", classically beautiful and full of love for the children and their father. However, the lady who greets Maria is cold. Hedwig's joy over new ski pants and being able to join in boys games prompts the Princess to say that "Decent young ladies don't wear pants". All turn to Maria for support, but Maria knows it is not her place to speak.

Maria retreats to her room to prepare lessons. The royal guest knocks at her door. She tells Maria that the Captain has told her he is in love with Maria. Taken aback, Maria resolves to pack immediately for the convent, and tells the Princess to "kindly look for another teacher for Maria". The Princess laughs and clarifies that the Captain is only in love with what Maria has done for the children, and insists Maria stay until after they wed. She mockingly discloses plans to send the children to boarding schools to correct their "roughneck" ways, and asserts that she is marrying the Captain, not the children. Maria insists that she will leave immediately.

Maria's resolve to go prompts the Princess to bring a priest to convince Maria to stay. The priest explains that if Maria leaves, the Captain's affections may increase with her absence and this would make things worse. Unable to disobey what the priest refers to as the Will of God, Maria agrees to stay.

After that the Princess leaves, but things are no longer comfortable. Maria avoids the Captain, finding excuse to leave every room he enters. She notices how hurt his is, and how the Captain has no idea what causes her sudden attitude change. One day, the Captain requests Maria to oversee household affairs until he finds a replacement for Baroness Matilda, who has broken her leg. Maria explains that her education never covered anything about holding a broom. The Captain begs her to try, and in a moment of comfort between them, Maria ventures to ask if he will do her a favor in return and "get engaged to the Princess right away". The Captain asks if this is truly a favor for her.

The Captain asks Maria to write a daily letter telling how things go at home and gives her a handbook on housekeeping. Maria's deadline to return to the convent is a month away. After weeks of little news from the Captain, she asks in her daily communication when the Captain plans to get engaged. The Captain replies, "I wish I could see your eyes when you read the announcement of my engagement". His sarcasm incites Maria



to hastily retort via registered mail, "My eyes are none of your business. I thought you were a man and kept your word. I am sorry, I was mistaken".

Maria tells us that her registered letter interrupted his proposal to the Princess. She explains that Princess Yvonne herself delayed the engagement for a variety of errands that needed attention. After the Captain reads Maria's letter, he tells the Princess that he cannot marry her. He loves someone else, and she should have taken up his offer three years earlier.

When the Captain returns home, Maria cannot tell if he is engaged or not. He stays in his study, writing his memoirs, avoiding everyone. One morning while she cleans a chandelier on a ladder, the children run in to ask if she likes their father. She answers absentmindedly, "Of course she likes him". The children run away, and she focuses on cleaning.



Part One: Chapter VI, Feasts in a Family

Part One: Chapter VI, Feasts in a Family Summary and Analysis

After Christmas, Maria settles into married life. The house is the same, but the circumstance is different. She wonders if, given the chance to do it again, would she? The children are now hers. It is daunting to be a second wife and mother, she explains.

Maria outlines family routines, one of which is gathering around a fireplace after supper. She reads literature aloud while the girls knit and the boys and Georg carve wood. After hours of reading, they gather close to sing rounds. Maria describes singing rounds as schooling for the ear, which results in polyphonic music. She tells how after the first World War, the Catholic Youth Movement did wonders for the spread of music. Young folks, bored with the glee club style, searched for "genuine" music. They collected "real folk tunes, delved into archives and libraries and copied unpublished music of the old masters, the greater unknown ones".

Maria remembers how, in her student years, instead of going steady, boys and girls gather in groups. Most spend time on music singing a cappella. The recorder, or ancient flute, is revived. Thanks to Maria's experience, the von Trapps learn a new song every night.

There are entire seasons when the Trapp family does not have time to sing, Maria explains. One such time is the "birthday season". Not only are individual birthdays celebrated, but the feast day of the Saint each person is named after is celebrated. Much of this chapter is spent detailing these events. Instead of skipping to significant matters, Maria stagnates the story's flow and plods through birthday "Vigils" that begin the night before. The family partakes in universal traditions such as flowers, candles, gift opening, birthday cake, and gratitude, mixed with Catholic ritual. Every presents is homemade, not store-bought or turned out by a factory. "A loving heart and gifted fingers can produce a wonderland of little miracles," Maria moralizes. Handmade gifting is facilitated by a workshop room equipped with work tools.

Maria now describes what she refers to as "the firsts", such as First Holy Communion and the first day of school. Also there are "the lasts", such as grade school, high school, and college graduations. Maria asserts "you cannot buy feasts with money" before trudging on about "the time between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday", Mardi Gras, and Lent season, which has the entire family readings the Gospel together for six weeks. On Palm Sunday, the family collects branches in the woods. On Holy Thursday, they reenact The Last Supper. Maria's specificity denotes her pious Catholicism.



Part One: Chapter VII, A Festival Summer and a Baby

Part One: Chapter VII, A Festival Summer and a Baby Summary and Analysis

Salzburg is the world center for music festivals during summer, Maria explains. She provides a brief history of the city and tells how it traces back to the Romans and became Christian in the fifth century. Saint Rupertus and his monks built the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Peter. He commissioned his niece, Saint Erentrudis, to build the abbey in Nonnberg. Salzburg developed around these two structures. The older town structures remained, resulting in a mix of Romanesque and Gothic churches, Renaissance palaces, and Baroque chapels, which stand side by side.

Famous musicians, including Toscanini, Richard Strauss, Lotte Lehman, and Bruno Walter perform at these festivals. Tourists crowd in, and it is impossible to find a room without reservations. Georg receives letters from long-lost relatives requesting lodging. Letters arrive claiming to know someone who knows Georg for the purpose of rooming. Naturally, Maria tells, all of these guests want sight-seeing tours of the town. This business goes on for thirty days. After Festival season ends, the tired family gathers to compare notes on how they "visited Mozart's birthplace nineteen times . . . the fortress twenty-one times . . . the churches fifteen times . . ."

After the Festivals terminate, the children notice that Maria is not joining in on volleyball games. She is compelled to announce that God will soon send a new brother or sister. Everyone starts knitting sweaters and outfits. Most outfits are intended for a boy, being there are already five girls. It is near Christmas once again, and Maria relates her bringing a new life into the world to the story of the Holy Mother and Child. She calls a midwife, Frau Vogl, to assist, and estimates the baby's arrival will be in February.

When the time arrives, Maria describes the pain of childbirth as, "ordained by God Almighty ever since Eve ate the apple". Georg is at her bedside, assisting. He has been through this seven times already, and knows more about childbirth than Maria. He assures she will not die. His eighth child turns out a girl, whom they name Rosmarie Erentrudis, after all the preparation for a boy.



Part One: Chapter VIII, Uncle Peter and His Handbook

Part One: Chapter VIII, Uncle Peter and His Handbook Summary and Analysis

This chapter describes the quirky antics of a family relative and his need for referring to handbooks. Maria's recollection of camping with Georg's distant cousin, Peter, and his family provides an insight to Maria's sense of humor. Much of the lengthy detail of this chapter adds pages with no content to the book. Apparently, Peter uses manuals for every step he takes in life. The first example given is his use of a manual when he and his wife await their first baby. Now the Trapps and Peter's family join forces to go camping.

There is also much in-joking among the campers regarding Uncle Peter and his eighteen pieces of luggage. His desperate search deep in the biggest box during a storm for The Handbook of Camping is one of those "you had to be there" moments. They are on the Island of Veruda, which Georg visited as a boy. The Trapps intervene on Peter's children's behalf because they are not having as much fun. This is because Peter tests the air for wind direction daily according to his manual. Regardless of Peter's military approach to everything, everyone has a great time by the end of the vacation, by which time Peter has abandoned consulting his manual.



Part One: Chapter IX, An Operation, a Turtle, and a Long Distance Call

Part One: Chapter IX, An Operation, a Turtle, and a Long Distance Call Summary and Analysis

Maria is in labor again, and "Tante Lorlein" is born. George confesses he always wanted to name a child "Barbara". The family goes off on another vacation in Veruda, but Maria is sidelined by kidney stones. She goes to Vienna for surgery to have nineteen stones removed. Georg brings her three baby chicks to accompany her. When the chicks get too big, he brings her a turtle. Here, Maria reveals a side to her unbecoming to her nun background. She tricks her nurse, Sister Agrosia, who has never seen a turtle before, into believing that turtles eat the toes of newborns. The maternity ward is next to Maria's room and the nun sits outside the door making sure that the turtle does not leave the room.

Upon Maria's return to Salzburg, there is a long distance call. In Europe, Maria explains, long distance calls are not taken casually as in America, where people discuss the weather before getting to business. Long distance calls are not everyday occurrences in Europe at that time. This call is from their bank, Lammer and Company. The call is to inform Georg that the bank has gone bankrupt.



Part One: Chapter X, Aren't We Lucky?

Part One: Chapter X, Aren't We Lucky? Summary and Analysis

This chapter marks the end of affluence for the Trapps. Hitler forbids tourist trade overnight, cutting the lifeline for Mrs. Lammer, the bank owner. Georg, Maria explains, took his money from a safe account in England to help Mrs. Lammer when she was in need. Now he regrets having helped her. Maria's bright disposition attempts to console him. His intentions were to help someone desperate. She refers to the Gospel, "whatever we do for love of Him, He will reward us a hundredfold . . . and on top of it we get life everlasting?"

They are not starving. There's enough to pay bills, but they must face the reality of their financial situation. The real estate they own is set for the children's future and is not to be touched. They fire six servants, with the exception of Hans, the butler, and the cook. They close the big rooms and settle to living on one floor. Georg paces with worry, but Maria doesn't share his anxiety. She describes herself as feeling "elated". The children act similarly. They are not suffering over the loss. Maria tells Georg they are lucky they lost the money. Georg can't believe she acts as if they won a fortune. "I am so happy to know that we don't belong to those for whom it is so hard to enter the Kingdom of God", Maria answers.

However, Maria knows they have to earn a living. As always, she turns to the Abbey for guidance. Frau Rafaela suggests she get permission from the Archbishop to turn a room into a Chapel and that they rent out rooms to students. The Archbishop approves the request, and soon a priest, Professor D., a Theological professor, gives regular Mass and rents the first room. In a year, the house is full of students and university tenants. There is much laughter and interesting discussion. After the professor's book is published, he has to travel and so Father Wasner, a young priest comes to say Mass. The family's singing impresses him. His teaching results in the start of the Trapp Family Choir.



Part One: Chapter XI, Never Again

Part One: Chapter XI, Never Again Summary and Analysis

Father Wasner realizes that singing is serious to the Trapp family, and he becomes a regular at their house. The priest has vast knowledge of music theory and history and from him, they learn Motets and Masses they could never have tackled alone. Their love for the music is so genuine that in mornings they sing in their chapel at morning Mass. Evenings, they sing madrigals, ballads, and ancient folk songs outside in their park.

A famous performer, Lotte Lehmann, comes to inquire about renting, and hears them practicing. Recognizing their artistry, she encourages them to perform in a group singing festival. They are flattered, but thoughts of being on stage are intimidating. Georg can not imagine his family on stage, and tells Mrs. Lehmann that it is "out of the question". Lotte Lehmann stirs them up to agree and enters them in the contest. Although Georg leaves because of embarrassment, they win the contest.



Part One: Chapter XII, From Hobby to Profession

Part One: Chapter XII, From Hobby to Profession Summary and Analysis

The family attempts to return to routines, but a telephone call from the Salzburg radio station manager invites them to sing live. He sets an appointment, not giving them a chance to decline. Georg hopes Maria has said no. They reconsider, feeling no harm can come from singing on the air if their music makes Austrian people happy. The Chancellor of Austria hears the program. A diplomatic reception for dignitaries is in the planning. He already has the Vienna Philharmonic scheduled and is looking to add to the roster. The Trapp Family is invited to perform at that affair as well.

Georg is in agony over the invitation. The family weighs the pros and cons of the Chancellor's request and the bottom line is that it is an honor. From the success of that performance comes a new offer to sing at the "Kleinen Musikvereinssaal" in two months. Georg loosens up with pride. American contralto, Marian Anderson, is on the bill. The next day's newspaper reviews exalt the Trapp Singers. Now they are asked to play at the Salzburg Festivals, which is the ambition of musicians of the world. The performance brings managers from all over Europe, offering contracts. Singing is no longer a pastime. Father Wasner gets busy finding and arranging material. The Trapp family tours Europe and are greeted everywhere with enthusiasm. Newspapers review them as a "musical miracle". They sing for kings and queens and even Pope Pius XI. "Music is an international language", Maria realizes.



Part One: Chapter XIII, And the Lord Said to Abram . . .

Part One: Chapter XIII, And the Lord Said to Abram . . . Summary and Analysis

In March 11, 1938, the family hears Chancellor Schuschnigg resign over the radio. Their butler, Hans, comes in to say that he has been a member of "the Nazi Party" for some time. Georg stares with sadness at the large Austrian flag and at trophies from his submarine days. Everyone is in shock. Bells toll through open windows. Georg orders them shut, but the bells grow louder on the radio from which a harsh voice declares, "We want the whole world to hear how the people in Austria greet their liberators". Maria refers to this as "the first lie in an endless chain". The children return from school describing "flags with the Swasticka practically covering the fronts of houses all over the place". Hans still serves them. The children and he have had a good relationship. Now it is strained. The family is not sure who they can speak freely in front of. People they never imagined, stiffen. The radio reports jubilation in Vienna over the German arrival.

A Nazi comes to say that the Fuhrer will visit Salzburg and that all dwellings must hang Swastika flags. He asks Georg if it is true he does not own one. Georg responds that it is too expensive. The man returns with a "new, huge red flag with a black spider in the middle" suggesting he put it up right away. Georg dares to say that he doesn't like the color, adding sarcastically he has oriental rugs he can hang on the windows to decorate his house. Maria trembles every time the doorbell or phone rings.

The children's principal is replaced and other teachers are no longer there. They are told that parents are too old-fashioned to understand the Party. "We are the hope of the nation . . . the world. We should never mention at home what we learn at school now". Maria is called to school because Lorli, in first grade, does not join in singing the new anthem. She has told the class that her father would rather die than sing that song. The teacher tells Maria that next time she will have to report the matter. Maria warns Lorli never again to repeat what she hears at home because the entire family will all be put in concentration camps.

Maria is pregnant again, and refers to the unborn baby as "Barbara". The doctor warns that she cannot bear another child because of her kidneys, and advises that the pregnancy be terminated. The doctor warns the child will not survive, and that Maria also may not. Maria is indignant. She has more faith in God than in the doctor, but agrees to follow a strict diet until Barbara is born. Georg worries because she has had two miscarriages since Lorli's birth in 1931. After leaving the doctor, the couple attends a new exhibit, entitled the "House of German Art". The Fuhrer himself chooses what goes on exhibit. Maria sees not a single masterpiece, but schools file one after another to see the mandatory exhibit. The museum cafeteria serves Frankfurters and beer, which Maria finds a befitting combination for the low class art. A waiter makes them



aware of the Fuhrer's presence at the table next to them. S.S. men drinking beer and laughing at jokes surround him. He strikes Maria as unimpressive and ordinary.

The Captain receives a letter from the Navy Department offering him command of a modern submarine. His submarine was only forty feet and leaked. The new ones are huge. He thinks it a chance of a lifetime at first, but realizes it means working for the Nazis. He ponders about how being a Navy man is what he does. His children's future is threatened by their bad financial situation. Their oldest son, Rupert, just graduated from medical school, is offered a position in Vienna in an important hospital. Rupert knows he cannot accept in good conscience. Later that week, a call from Munich informs them that The Trapp Family is chosen to represent for the Ostmark, formerly Austria, to sing at Hitler's birthday. They will have to sing the new anthem, and say "Heil Hitler". It will be impossible for them to keep their anti-Nazi sentiment to themselves. Father Wasner will be in danger. It is the third time they say no to a Nazis offer. The entire family chooses to leave everything they know and love. Maria and Georg receive permission to allow Father Wasner to leave with them. The priest is their conductor and they have declined Hitler's order. The Archbishop concludes it "the Will of God" for Father Wasner to escape with the family.



Part Two: Chapter I, On The American Farmer

Part Two: Chapter I, On The American Farmer Summary and Analysis

In September 1938, the family boards the American Farmer in London. Most of the seventy passengers are Americans returning home. The Trapp family gathers at supper to recall how they got permission to travel and left Austria in their usual clothes to go "mountain climbing". They recall how they waited anxiously for tickets from an American who wants them to perform, and how the day after they left, all borders in Austria are closed.

Choppy waters have everyone seasick except Maria, in spite of her pregnancy. It is obvious that they have to learn English. Maria goes around the boat with paper and pen. She points to and gets the name for everything on the ship from the kind Americans they befriend. For "Watch", she writes down "Votsch," and soon learns phrases. One passenger corrects her "Vat?" to "Hoo-wat". Another teaches her slang that she finds handy a few weeks later. She writes down everything. The family is introduced to Ginger Ale, Coca-Cola, and "pennies, nickels dimes quarters and bucks". They learn "My Old Kentucky Home, and Old Black Joe". By the end of the eleven day voyage the family can decipher what Americans are talking about.



Part Two: Chapter II, The First Ten Years Are the Hardest

Part Two: Chapter II, The First Ten Years Are the Hardest Summary and Analysis

Taxis take the family to the Hotel Wellington in New York City. The tallest structure in Vienna is six stories. They rush off the elevator to marvel at little cars and people nineteen floors below. On the ship, they eat three meals a day. It is now eight PM. Everyone is hungry and they have four dollars for dinner and breakfast. They ask Mr. Wagner, their manager, to advance some money.

A night watchman warns them not to leave shoes in the hall, if they want to see them again. Maria discovers that in order to have Georg's hat ironed, she must see a shoemaker and that shoes are shined in barbershops. She gets lost searching for a shoemaker, but is not worried because she lives in the hotel with the drug store, not realizing that most hotels have drug stores. Her first subway ride is traumatic. A guide, from their manager's office, takes them into Macy's. She is afraid of a "staircase which moved by itself".

Wagner has eighteen of forty promised dates set up. A seamstress in Salzburg made three outfits sized to camouflage her pregnancy. Wagner has no clue that she is wearing "number 2". Maria assumed he thinks her portly.

The family knows no one in New York, but they learn their way around. They eat most meals at a Chinese cafeteria and learn to order "Ham on rye". They attend daily Mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral, which reminds them of European Cathedrals. The cheapest way to get laundry done is by a Chinese man who charges six cents per pound. One of their aprons is not colorfast and all their white garments turn blue. Mr. Wagner helps them find a boarding school for the two youngest girls, whom they don't want to take on tour. Maria ventures again onto the subway to visit them in the Bronx and gets lost. She asks a cop, "Dear Mr. Cop Inspector, Help! Children in school, Bronx. How come?" Maria comically explains that he couldn't know how come, but he drives her there. On the way, he explains that they are in a tunnel under the river above. New York is frightening with its elevated and underground subways, moving escalators, and tunnels.

But there is no need for tour guides. Everything is interesting, "those enchanting , winding stairs outside of houses" known as fire escapes. "Negro men, women, and children. Chinese or maybe Japanese people. Italian, Yiddish and Greek spoken. The speed and noise. The rush to cross Fifth Avenue at noon or Wall Street at Five. New York is "thrilling and frightening . . . wonderful and terrible . . . our discovery of America!" While the others find the library, Central Park, and Radio City, Maria stays "with Barbara" in the hotel, trying to learn English. She has a system that comically backfires as a result of all the exceptions to rules pertaining to the English language.



Part Two: Chapter III, Getting Settled

Part Two: Chapter III, Getting Settled Summary and Analysis

A blue bus arrives at the hotel to take the Trapps on their tour. Their first concert is in Easton, Pennsylvania. About to go on stage, the family is terrified. Will they fail or succeed? Maria describes the applause as "thinnish", and goes into a narrative covering different varieties of applause and its effects on a performer. Maria concedes that in retrospect, their first program was too long and serious.

Soon the concerts become routine and what they fear are the obligatory receptions after concerts. They greet and shake hands with hundreds of strangers. These affairs so tedious, that Georg decides to ascribe a number to each handshake, counting aloud in Austrian, "376, 377, 378 . . ." Ladies are charmed, believing he is complimenting them in his native language. Maria has a few incidents with nuns and Bishops when her poor English results in inappropriate expressions not normally intended for clerical ears, such as "Please, Bishop—scram".

By December, Maria is wearing her "Number 3" pregnancy camouflage and newspaper reviews describe her as "stately". Riding buses for hours, changing clothes for concerts, rehearsing and performing, and sleeping in different beds every night is tough during pregnancy. She wants to eat "Apfelstrudel" but can't satisfy any craving. Returning to New York, Maria figures her pregnancy is obvious to their manager, and blurts that she "shall be happy when the baby is finally here". Stunned by the news, Wagner cancels the rest of the tour, when they need every cent.

At the Wellington, they meet a Mrs. Pessl, the mother of a famous harpsichordist. She advises that to succeed, they will need a publicist. They do not know what a publicist is, but dole out \$700 to Edith Behrens for publicity. Miss Behrens photographs the Trapp Family sightseeing, craning their necks at Rockefeller Center, and window shopping. There are interviews with Time, Life, and the Herald Tribune, and the Daily News. At Town Hall, they wear no make up, and do not feel compelled to smile more than necessary. The hall is only three quarters full, despite the publicity. Most of tickets are given away to managers, curious about the singing family's capacity to draw an audience. In spite of the turnout, the reviews are positive.

A young man named Carleton Smith approaches and befriends the family. Carleton introduces them to Professor Otto Albrecht from the University of Pennsylvania, who finds them a place to rent in Germantown, Pennsylvania where he lives. Quakers from the Society of Friends provide the Trapp family with silverware, blankets, and beds.



Part Two: Chapter IV, Barbara

Part Two: Chapter IV, Barbara Summary and Analysis

Through Otto Albrecht, the family is introduced to Henry Drinker, an intense music fan. Henry and his wife throw an a cappella party, which the Trapps attend. The Drinkers ask the family to sing, and the meeting turns into deep friendship. At Christmas, Otto Albrecht and friends bring the family turkeys and a great deal of food.

Maria denotes how the family is regarded as poor refugees. She attempts to humbly accept people's insensitivities, but hurt pride comes through in the mere telling. Mrs. Drinker, for example, pays a visit when Maria is taking stock of baby clothes for Barbara's arrival. Embroidered and muslin shirts with pleats and fancy gowns are spread before her. Maria shows her "treasures" to Mrs. Drinker, who is not impressed and can't imagine having to wash and iron those daily. She takes Maria shopping for practical outfits, telling her she has keep in mind that she is poor and should not forget it. Maria will need a doctor and a hospital to deliver, according to Mrs. Drinker. However, Maria does not consider herself sick, thus, the idea of a hospital is out. She prefers a midwife, like in Austria. The only midwives around are "Negroes . . . interesting to talk to, but a little scary to have around too close". Maria's reasoning typifies her innocent form of ignorance, reflecting a narrow-minded view endemic to whites in the forties. Finding a doctor to deliver at home is almost impossible, but a young doctor finally agrees to come with a nurse named Anne. The young frightened doctor almost drops her newborn, who cannot be named Barbara because the baby is a boy, whom they name Johannes.

The chapter concludes with Maria's commentary on planned parenthood and a quote from the Book, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways. If there is any planning to be done, why don't we let Him do it?" Maria exhorts.

Part Two: Chapter V, What Next

Part Two: Chapter V, What Next Summary and Analysis

This chapter encapsulates too many trivial moments to summarize, such as Johannes being too big a baby to fit into the size Mrs. Drinker coerced Maria to buy. Then the little ones are home from boarding school and the older girls help cook. Martina takes care of the baby. Anne, the nurse, shows Maria how to use diapers the American way. Friends visit daily and take them to concerts and museums. Mrs. Drinker knows of a nearby boarding school for the girls. The house is cheaper than a hotel, but very small. Money and food are scarce. There's not enough of anything for everybody, since the family is so big. They wonder what to do besides pray.

Their visitor's visa expires in March. Friends assure it will be extended. However, their visa is based on the condition that they earn money giving concerts. In February, Mr. Wagner drops in. With the baby born, there is no problem. He offers a contract for forty more concerts. A letter from the Department of Immigration arrives, rejecting their visa extension. They must leave the US on March 4. Georg buys twelve tickets for the Normandie, which leaves on the fourth. They have no idea what is going to happen, until they recall an offer from a Danish impresario for a tour in Copenhagen. They send a cable. Maria likens their situation to that of the Three Kings "who followed an idea represented by a star". This is what they discussed on March 1st. On March 2nd, family prayer and dedication to the Three Kings result in a cable that reads: "Everything ready for first concert March twelfth Copenhagen".



Part Two: Chapter VI, In Sight of the Statue of Liberty

Part Two: Chapter VI, In Sight of the Statue of Liberty Summary and Analysis

Maria quotes Jesus, "Be not solicitous" which she interprets as "Don't worry", because it makes no sense to worry. They are a family of thirteen, who for months to come has no home or country. Six concerts "would provide for three weeks' living". They have no friends in Scandinavia. They don't know the language. War is in the air. Maria notes humorously that God could have shown them his plan ahead of time, since He fixed for enough concerts, money, and helpful people to come to the family's aid in the nick of time. "But then we . . . would not have learned that valuable lesson, so He left us in the dark . . ."

In September, 1939, foreigners are asked to leave, borders are closed, and concerts cancelled because the war breaks out. Mr. Wagner provides tickets back to America. Maria responds incorrectly when an Immigration officer asks how long she plans to stay. The entire family is held prisoner for several days at Ellis Island. People of every nationality accompany them. They learn that a group of Chinese folks have been there for months. Someone explains that "The State pays for it all". They are told that if America deports you, the ship line pays for your return. If the other country doesn't accept you, you travel back and forth continually at no cost.

The family makes the best of prison. They sing to pass the time, and this makes them popular with their fellow prisoners. Ironically, through the bars they can see the Statue of Liberty. On the outside, their friends are writing to senators and congressmen. Their honest intent is soon confirmed and the family is set free and allowed into America.



Part Two: Chapter VII, Learning New Ways

Part Two: Chapter VII, Learning New Ways Summary and Analysis

Although she will not express it out loud, Maria knows their stay is permanent. They reconvene at the Hotel Wellington. The first concert is at Town Hall. Maria accounts for the many empty seats because folks are out enjoying an autumn day. The manager is unhappy. They begin to notice "the color of the upholstery" in most of the places they play. To recoup his investment, Wagner has booked the Trapps in overly large venues without much publicity. How can a crowd be expected if no one announces they are coming? There are no posters, interviews, or photographs on windows. The Trapp Family Choir arrives and leaves with little attention.

The Trapp singers rehearse conscientiously. "Misa Brava" by Palestrina is a master piece they know they well. The few who attend are "deeply moved". Wagner tells them that because of the war, he can only book twenty-four of the forty promised concerts. The Trapps zigzag across the country in their blue bus with the same driver as before. He stops for picture taking when Maria so requests. She photographs roadside graveyards and four-lane highways. In Salzburg, one can count the cars, since so few own them. The family marvels at the Blue Ridge Mountains, the caves in Virginia, and Niagara Falls. They love the beauty and nature as they travel, but are appalled by auto dumps and roadside advertisements that mar the beauty of the land. The family contrasts how people care for their farms in Europe as opposed to the way Americans let the places get run down.

After their twenty-fourth concert, they visit the Drinkers in Philadelphia. The Drinkers tell them they have a house for them directly across the street from them. "Instead of paying me in cash, pay me in music", Harry Drinker offers.



Part Two: Chapter VIII, The Miracle

Part Two: Chapter VIII, The Miracle Summary and Analysis

After Christmas, Mr. Wagner informs the Trapps that he will not renew their contract. He has lost money, and does not consider them entertainment for American audiences. They decide to look for another manager and remember an F. C. Schang from Columbia Concerts Inc. They set a date to audition, and practice complex pieces conscientiously. On audition day, they sing in front of Mr. Schang and five other executives. The word they receive is that they cannot manage the Trapp Family Choir.

Maria insists on another audition for Columbia Concerts Inc. There are more people listening, who walk out before they finish. Maria is given a definite "no". Unable to tell the family, she asks them to wait at the hotel. She questions a secretary why Columbia does not want them. The girl tells her that a Mr. Coppicus says the Baroness has no sex appeal. Maria looks up the phrase "sex appeal" in music dictionaries but cannot find it.

Maria goes to Schang's office to ask why he didn't take them. He explains that they are great artists, but that forty-five minute pieces by Bach satisfy only a few music enthusiasts. People don't have patience to listen to hour-long tunes. He tells her the worst part is their appearance: "deadly serious, you come and go like a funeral procession. No charming smile no good looks either. Can't you get decent . . . clothes so one can see your legs . . . get pretty, high-heeled shoes . . . put a little red on your face and on your lips". Maria retorts that they can't do those things, slams a book, and tells him in broken English how she thinks America is a free country and leaves.

Schang reconsiders. He'll try them for a year, if they provide \$5,000 for publicity. Harry Drinker lends them half, if they can get the other half elsewhere. Maria remembers a rich Mrs. P., who once said that if they ever need any money, she will help them. They get the money and now have a manager, who changes their name from Trapp Family Choir to the Trapp Family Singers.



Part Two: Chapter IX, Merion

Part Two: Chapter IX, Merion Summary and Analysis

Maria realizes they have to do their best to repay these people who show such faith as to invest thousands in them. She proselytizes about God giving second chances and how the trust of others empowers one to do ones best. This chapter portrays life in the house "across the street" from the Drinkers, and hops from one triviality to another.

First, Maria tells that their visa extension, renewable every six months, is easily granted. Next, the little girls are learning to play instruments taught by a refugee from Austria who lives nearby and who once taught Maria. Each family member carries out his own responsibilities. Mr. Schang plans two Christmas concerts, again at New York's Town Hall, and Father Wasner arranges Christmas Motets and American Christmas carols.

A neighbor, Betty, corrects Maria's English. Saying "gee whiz", "Golly Moses", and "jeepers creepers" is vulgar, according to Betty. Like Mrs. Drinker, Betty reminds Maria that she is poor and not to forget it. Maria cannot understand the insensitivity of Americans. However, Maria is impressed how Americans are not embarrassed by manual labor. In Europe, Maria explains, if one is doing housework and guests arrive, one goes out the back door and comes in the front to hide the fact of having been washing dishes. Maria suggests that this lack of pretension enables folks to move ahead instead of sitting around waiting for "leading positions" that cannot come into view, unless one works toward it.

Maria stagnates the story describing how she once dealt with Martina's childhood misbehavior as well as that of rebellious fifteen-month-old Johannes. The chapter concludes with Father Wasner warning that there are fifty dollars in the bank. There are four months until their next concert. A craft exhibit recently attended inspires the Trapps to have a craft exhibit of their own. With friends, they travel to New York. There is clay work by Johanna, jewelry by Werner, leatherwork by Hedwig, carved wood by Maria, Linoleum cuts by Agathe, peasant art by Martina, and children's furniture carpentered by Georg. "Soon there were more orders than time to fill them, and September was reached without . . . more debt".



Part Two: Chapter X, The Fly

Part Two: Chapter X, The Fly Summary and Analysis

In September, the Trapps begin their third American tour. An engagement at an unspecified New York college under F. C. Schang's management is the first of sixty-five. They will travel coast to coast. Schang advises to enhance their programs to satisfy as many tastes as possible. They no longer sing entirely Latin and German. There are English madrigals and folk songs. After the first performance, Schang contends there is something they are "lacking". He has faith that they will discover it for themselves. Mr. Schang, Maria explains, has a talent for saying the right thing at the right time in order to charm people. This ability comes in handy in getting them return engagements

Finally, during a performance in Denver, the family "discovers" the lacking ingredient. In mid yodel, Maria can't hide a sudden cough. She announces into the microphone, "What never happened before, has happened now; I swallowed a fly". The result is audience laughter. Maria then confuses a word, which generates even more laughs. For the first time in their years of performance, the Trapp singers and the audience are "one whole". A humorous rapport has been the lacking ingredient.



Part Two: Chapter XI, Stowe in Vermont.

Part Two: Chapter XI, Stowe in Vermont. Summary and Analysis

Schang is satisfied with the Trapps, who now take advice about wearing stage makeup. He notes their new bond with the audience. The Christmas concerts are a success. The family is able to pay debts and there is money in the bank. They buy a Lincoln Continental for \$400 and a Cadillac for \$500, to facilitate travel and save money.

The family is not used to humidity, which is not found in the Alps. Wool stage clothes are not comfortable during the summer. They find cotton in colors to match their costumes, and Agathe sews two outfits per person. A vacation in the Jersey woods with the Drinkers whets their desire to search for the outdoors. Wondering where to vacation, they receive a timely letter from a "Mr. R", who owns a tourist house in Stowe, Vermont. The rent is affordable and the terrain reminds them of Austria. There are "swimming holes and all around are woods and pastures. The most ideal hiking country". They realize they don't ever want to return to the city. The choice now arises whether they should buy new clothes or a farm. They conclude that people are used to them in their current clothes. They want the farm.

Real Estate agents take them up and down Vermont. Farms in better locations are too expensive. The ones they can afford are too rundown. One day, a Mr. Burt pays the Trapps a visit to request if the family can entertain the troops at the former CCC camp that is now an Army camp. Something about the location enchants Maria, as they sing under the stars. Driving through the valley, Georg stops the car to stare at the view and comments that this is where he would be happy.

The owner of the property knocks at their door because he hears they were looking for a farm. They go to see the place and fall in love with the valleys and mountains. Georg points out the poor condition of the house to Maria, who responds. "Oh, Georg. . . We can build a house and barns, but we can never build a view like this!"

Part Two: Chapter XII, A New Chapter

Part Two: Chapter XII, A New Chapter Summary and Analysis

The Trapps go off on a new concert tour. There is pride and joy over their new home. The photo they show friends is not impressive because the view, which is the reason they bought it, is not captured in the picture. On the road, they make plans for the seven hundred acres.

In the middle of planning, Werner and Rupert announce that they've been drafted. The family returns to earth and the fact that a war is raging. Gasoline rationing begins and they have to report to the rationing board in each state to explain their situation. They come back East under a dark cloud to pack for the new house. Maria and Georg drive their sons to Hyde Park, where new draftees assemble.

They have a \$12,000 mortgage to honor. They also have to rebuild the house and the crooked barns. To make matters worse, their manager, Mr. Schang also signs up for the army. Father Wasner runs around finding and rearranging music for an all female group in time for a concert date that pops up in Bethlehem, PA. If this concert without the boys is not successful, it will be the end of their singing because Columbia Concerts will not want them. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania will either make or break them. "The world-famous Bach Festivals had educated these people to a high taste in music. If we could please them, we would be alright". The concert turns out to be one of their most outstanding and memorable ones.



Part Two: Chapter XIII, The End of a Perfect Stay

Part Two: Chapter XIII, The End of a Perfect Stay Summary and Analysis

Maria contemplates how much has transpired in three years in Merion. It has been a roller coaster of hard and easier times. They are no longer one hundred percent European, but they are not completely American yet. Maria appreciates the opportunities America has presented the family even if the Trapps are registered as "enemy aliens".

The author backtracks to how she became addicted to auctions after a friend in Merion introduced her to the concept. The auctioneer, who takes a liking to Maria, plays down the value of items of interest to Maria as "not worth buying". Thus, she gets some great bargains. Now that they are about to move, the "house was bulging with furniture which belonged to the family who had arrived with a few suitcases and four dollars in cash".

Their last night at the Drinkers is bittersweet. They are grateful to this couple who did so much for them. Maria knows the Drinkers are happy to see them on their feet. They group together and sang Bach's Chorale of Thanksgiving for the Drinkers.



Part Two: Chapter XIV, The New House

Part Two: Chapter XIV, The New House Summary and Analysis

This overly detailed chapter finds the Trapp family heading to their new home during a blizzard. Upon arrival, their living room has a dusting of snow because neither windows nor doors shut tight. There is another farm, referred to as the "lower farm", in which Theophile and his family, who is now their employee resides. He helps them move in and set up beds for the first night. "The beds were pretty large and the house was pretty small". Georg looks disturbed by the shabby condition and size of the cabin.

Theo announces that the "sap is running". The Trapps know nothing about maple syrup, but soon they learn. It is sugaring season. Theo shows the girls how to collect the sap and Georg how to boil it. Maple syrup, described as a cash crop, at \$3.60 a can makes them some money and keeps Georg's mind off the house.

A blizzard hits and stops the sugaring. Cramped inside the house, they face how small the place is and consult with an architect in Stowe. Alfred the architect speaks their language fluently. He tells them the roof can be raised, and suggests a carpenter named Mr. Sears. The Trapps start construction right away, although the weather is too rough. A second blizzard keeps Mr. Sears away. They are eating lunch and a terrible crash occurs. Half of the house falls down. Mr. Sears arrives. Maria tries to lift Georg's spirits, saying it's for the best. Now they can build a new house! Georg asks where the money will come from. Maria responds, "Bah—money! Didn't somebody once say that a nation is worth exactly as much as it is willing to work? What is good for a nation is good for a family . . . we are worth millions. Congratulations!"

Because of the war, new construction is forbidden, but Alfred finds out that building on an existing house is permitted. They salvage as much of the old wood as possible to build the new one. Father Wasner, Maria, and Georg sleep upstairs in rooms with no heat. The girls sleep in a hayloft dorm over the horses. They apply to the War Production Board for permission to construct. The Board agrees the situation is urgent.

Agathe designs a label for the maple syrup. Maria discovers a skunk living under the sink, which becomes somewhat of a pet. Spring arrives, and as if there isn't enough building to do, the Trapps make time to build a small chapel in what used to be a chicken coop. They get permission from a Bishop to "reserve the blessed Eucharist". Father Wasner says Mass in the morning and gives a benediction in the evening. Mr. Sears builds them a temporary cabin for the summer where they can entertain guests and have it serve as a dining room and a living room.

The Trapp family has been out of the limelight and curious reporters come to interview them. Mr. Sears who has become a family friend and directs the entire construction project, becomes ill and dies suddenly. His' absence is painfully felt. Alfred comes



around more. They rent a cement mixer and borrow wheelbarrows. Sand, gravel and cement are ordered. Hardest is getting another carpenter to who knows how to work these materials. A "Mr. R." takes over, and provides the recipe for cement mixing. The cement mixer doesn't always cooperate, but little by little walls are built.

Rupert and Werner return for their furlough to help. A party is held with dancing on the new floor. The skeleton of the roof is up before the boys leave for Camp Hale in Colorado. The family works feverishly on the house. It is difficult to find workers, but Maria contends that this is fine because there isn't money. Prayer somehow always seems to assist in their meeting the payroll.

During all this, they have to take time to rehearse. Mr. R requests the Trapp family to give a benefit concert for a nearby school that has a leaky roof. They sing their new program to a sold out audience of Stowe townspeople. The following week, the carpentry teacher drives over a truckload of school boys to assist in carpentry.



Part Two: Chapter XV, Concerts in Wartime

Part Two: Chapter XV, Concerts in Wartime Summary and Analysis

Maria opens a copy of Life Magazine and finds the entire family is in it. The piece serves as strong publicity for their upcoming concert tour. Columbia Concerts provides them with an itinerary of departures and arrivals. Although there is hardship traveling by rail, the Trapps feels they contribute to the war effort in that their performance keeps up morale.

Traveling with children is hectic. They have to be sure the correct railroad connections are made. They sometimes wait for hours in freezing stations. Often there is standing room only and the family are forced onto separate railroad cars. Maria describes the strain of so many traveling together. There is anxiety over whether everyone will remember the name of the stop and if all the luggage will arrive. At one point, a bus departure in Kansas is discontinued and they are driven in a hearse to their next engagement.

Maria concludes the chapter reasoning that although they miss the boys, it is a necessary sacrifice. Their sons and the sons of every mother are enduring hardship; therefore, it is just that they are getting around without the cars.



Part Two: Chapter XVI, Trapp Family Music Camp

Part Two: Chapter XVI, Trapp Family Music Camp Summary and Analysis

The family takes a short break to return home for Christmas. Again all pick up hammers. They lay floors and set up wall partitions. Mr. R. comes by and tells Maria that the CCC camp will be torn down. The thought of the camp being torn down nags at Maria, because it was the "very camp in which we had sung for the soldiers that first summer in Stowe". At dinner, she comments to a family friend, Uncle Craig, about what a crime it is to tear down the camp. He tells her that the State Forester in charge of the camp is coming the next day and will he introduce her to him. The next day, Uncle Craig brings Mr. Perry Merrill along. At dinner, Mr. Merrill, as well as the rest of the family, listens to Maria speak of her dream for the camp.

Maria explains that in her youth she attended "Sing Weeks", which were country get-togethers that lasted several days and were dedicated to learning and making music. She has not seen anything like it in America in all her travels. Mr. Merrill deems it a perfect recreation to attract vacationers to Vermont. He assures her that if no one else wants the camp, she will be granted the lease. All she needs to do is apply. Merrill himself, the Governor, and other officials will sign and approve it. Maria, Georg, and Father Wasner go to the camp to look at it. "Eight big barracks on top of the hill, one on the slope and two more at the bottom. . . they are large and bright and airy".

Before going on tour, the family stops in New York to speak to their publicist about their music camp. One hundred thousand printed leaflets invite the public to The Trapp Family Music Camp in Stowe, Vermont. Their house is only a third finished. They need permission from the War Production Board for every nail. Maria ponders what she has gotten the family into now. Georg does not comment, but it is clear that he is troubled. There is no turning back on the camp because the leaflets are already distributed. This tour is longer than the others, and time for the opening of the Trapp Family Music Camp is short. One hundred four people have already sent in deposits.

The War Production Board prohibits the use of new materials. There is much to do with little time and giant obstacles to overcome. Maria reads and learns that other recreation camps pivot on "the camp manager and the cook". She hires a camp manager who is reputed to be experienced and efficient. He will not accept the job without seeing the place. They are in need of washbasins, toilets, beds, blankets, pillows, silverware, hot water tanks, and electric fixtures. They cannot find pipes secondhand and must again apply to the War Production Board. There is much to think of and little time to satisfy what their ad promises.



Two officials from the War Production Board arrive. They do not trust the Trapp family because of so many applications. The men inform Maria that she has disobeyed the law. They are ordered to stop construction on the camp and on their house and to appear at a hearing. At the inquiry, Maria is told that she has "transgressed the law" and will have to pay a \$10,000 fine and serve a year in jail. She tearfully explains that she did not know she was breaking the law. "I can not serve my penalty all at once. Will you allow me to do that in installments? Half a year I must have to earn the money to pay my fine. The other half I can spend in jail. I think I can do it in two years". This moves the Board's heart. They re-inspect both premises, and are shown the purpose of house and camp. They realize there is no intent to cheat the government.

In the middle of all this bustle, Johannes' First Communion is celebrated. Maria sidetracks the story to provide the trivialies of the event.

The kitchen floor is being painted when the hired camp manager arrives. He asks to see the camp. Maria tells him he is in it. Instantly he turns around and leaves. In a letter Maria receives two days later, he suggests that she return the deposits and that camping is not the right line of work for her. The cook is more understanding. She agrees to take the job as long as she is supplied with a three-room place and hands a list of appliances and kitchen wares which Maria immediately travels to New York to purchase. With five days left, the beds have not arrived. Two days later only half the beds arrive. Eighty-four guests are on their way to the camp. All supply falls into place just as guests appear. Fast thinking resolves a water shortage. Their first Music Camp succeeds.



Part Two: Chapter XVII, Snapshots of the Camp

Part Two: Chapter XVII, Snapshots of the Camp Summary and Analysis

As its title suggests, Maria details comedic incidents at the camp. Campers put on a little show after only nine days of recorder lessons. This leads to Maria's tribute to the wonders of learning to play a recorder. After short weeks of practice, anyone can make music. There are differently keyed recorders, Maria explains. There is "no end" to the music a recorder or recorders in soprano, alto, tenor, and bass combinations can produce. Folks who start out with Mary had a Little Lamb are soon playing Bach.

The music camp helps resolve the question that many people ask them on the road: How can any family sing together like the Trapp family? The ten day camp tries to acquaint guests with as much musical literature as is possible, from beginner material to "cantatas and fugues". Maria analyzes how people now get too engrossed in movies, television, and ballgames. She says it is good once in a while, but mind and body must be exercised.

There is a "Question Box" at the camp, and one common question asked by campers is what the Trapps think of popular music. Father Wasner replies that real popular music is music that lasts. In his opinion, folk music is more valuable than artificially marketed and publicized music, which is forgotten after two years.

During the August 1945 camp season, they learn that the war is over. The boys return home. The entire camp participates in welcoming them. Camp goers produce many lifelong friendships.



Part Two: Chapter XVIII, Trapp Family Austrian Relief Inc.

Part Two: Chapter XVIII, Trapp Family Austrian Relief Inc. Summary and Analysis

Maria begins this chapter with a Biblical allusion to Joseph, the son of Jacob, likening the Trapps circumstance to Jacob. Like Jacob, the family is exiled against their will. After much struggle, the family thrives. Jacob hears of a famine in his native land, and in his new surroundings is now able to help ease the starvation in his country.

In January 1947, a letter from the "American Army of Occupation in Austria" arrives. The letter outlines the suffering of the Austrian people and pleads the Trapps to do something to help. The Trapps go to Montpelier to incorporate. They start the Trapp Family Austrian Relief, Inc., "for the purpose of aiding the poor and displaced of all nationalities in the U.S. and elsewhere". This foundation allows them to collect money, food, and clothing as they travel on concert tour from coast to coast. Their appeal for Austria reaps thunderous generosity in most cities. A few concertgoers do object on grounds that attending concerts gets one's mind off the horrors of the world. The family feels out the sentiment in each town and does whatever is needed to satisfy. The tour, covering over thirty thousand miles in one hundred seven concerts, ultimately represents the kindness of Americans.

Maria then reproduces excerpts from letters received from Austrians, some describing their destitution, others grateful for "the pound of coffee". Through the Trapps, Americans reached out in other ways. One notable one was a project in which Americans families committed to an address of a particular Austrian family to send food, clothing, and money every so often for support.



Part Two: Chapter XIX, The Letter

Part Two: Chapter XIX, The Letter Summary and Analysis

This chapter constitutes a letter that Maria sent to friends in Europe and America. "While driving up the West Coast from Los Angeles to Seattle, I noticed how pale he looked, but he insisted he felt perfectly all right except for a growing tiredness".

Georg develops a terrible cough and Maria begs him to go to New York to see a specialist who once treated him for bronchitis. The cough worsens and in Colorado he leaves on a plane. There is a nationwide telephone strike and Maria can not speak to him for five days. A telegraph informs her that the Captain is recovering from pneumonia. She speaks to Georg who tells her to come, although he is doing better.

When she arrives at the hospital in New York, she beholds "Sunken, hollow cheeks, deep-set eyes circled in dark shadows, bluish lips—his dear face . . . almost unrecognizable". The doctor in charge tells her she can take Georg home. This suggests to her that if he can go home, perhaps it isn't as bad as it looks. They spend a few carefree hours together.

Later, Maria consults with the doctor who has been treating Georg. The doctor informs Maria that Georg has an inoperable tumor in his lung. It is cancer. She describes a desperate lonely night alone in New York City, where the tall buildings obliterate the sight of every church steeple. In the morning, she does not tell Georg how seriously ill he is. He wants to go home, and they travel to Stowe, Vermont, where another doctor diagnoses his condition as weakness from his pneumonia bout. This doctor assures Maria that it is not cancer. Maria's spirits lift only somewhat, because the words of the first doctor still echo in her mind. She does not see Georg improving. The cough is persistent and relentless and often does not let him sleep. The children are away completing the tour, believing their father is recovering.

George asks for them. When finally the children return, they can't hide the horror the sight of their deteriorated father. Their reaction verifies the sad suspicion, which tugs at Maria's heart that Georg is not getting better. She steps out by herself to cry bitterly. She has not told him what he has. The onset of symptoms the first doctor predicted are now setting in. The cough is relentless. He is having difficulty breathing. None of the asthma prescriptions are helping. She senses the end is near and proceeds to delineate Georg's long painful harsh death. A third doctor confirms that his heart is failing. Father Wasner brings the book of Prayers for the Dying.

Maria describes a pact she and Georg made regarding when the time drew near for one or the other. One would tell the other the end is near. Maria's words dramatize the death process until the end. After Georg's passing, Maria recalls vividly a conversation with Georg in which he tells her specifically where he wants to be buried. To satisfy his

request, they have a two-day wake at home, which is common in those days. They bury him on their grounds, with the permission of a Bishop who allows Father Wasner to "consecrate a cemetery".



Part Two: Chapter XX, The Memorable Year

Part Two: Chapter XX, The Memorable Year Summary and Analysis

Maria opens this chapter with the story of Job, who fears God and avoids the Devil. The Devil points out to God that Job fears him in vain, because he has given him everything as well as "blessed the works of his hands". God warns the Devil "only put not forth thy hand upon his person". Several messengers rush in to tell Job that an enemy has slain his oxen, sheep, and servants. Others are consumed by fire. Camels have been stolen. His house has fallen on his children. Job's only reply is, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord so it is done, Blessed be the name of the Lord".

It is reported in the media that everything the Trapps undertake turns out a success. They never fight, etc. Maria explains how often they tried to change that impression. Maria contends that they are not so exceptional. Things went well for them until what they regard as the memorable year.

After the harsh reality of Georg's death, Rosmarie disappears for several days. The fact that she is missing brings reporters and national publicity. She is eventually found wandering in the woods. The help of psychiatric priests brings her "back to God and society. Johannes then falls ill with 104 degrees. Paralysis is suspected, and then fortunately ruled out. Then Hedwig suffers a headache severe enough to hospitalize her".

In the summer, camp guests arrive. Maria describes herself a robot, smiling and performing and doing host duty mechanically. "Hundreds of people around you cannot console you for the loss of the one".

In August, Lorli gets hit by two cars backing into each other, but is only sidelined by broken ribs. In September, Maria loses her last due baby because of bad kidneys. She cannot attend Rupert's wedding because she is bedridden. In November, Maria goes along on the concert tour, but has fainting spells and convulsions. She is very ill and the doctors tell her there is no hope at all. She receives last rites on Christmas Eve. In January, she begins to recover.

Here Maria again alludes to the story of Job, quoting "the Lord gave and the Lord taketh away . . ." Maria emphasizes this is a story written for us to "Go and do thou likewise".



Part Two: Chapter XXI, Cor Unum

Part Two: Chapter XXI, Cor Unum Summary and Analysis

Maria concludes her book eloquently, referring to the Gospel account of a crippled man brought to Jesus and cured. She attributes the man's recovery to the strength of his faith. In that vein, she credits the thousands of letters and telegrams from all over Austria and America, calling for prayer on her behalf. "Against all hope, I recovered fully".

After five years, Maria takes her oath of American citizen. Maria now describes how on Armistice Day, Rupert and Werner, still in Europe, visit their old home in Salzburg, which was "[c]onfiscated by Heinrich Himmler personally", and used as headquarters during the last months of war. The chapel is a beer parlor. Warner's room is used by Hitler himself when visiting. During a visit, he orders a soldier and those with him shot for humming a Russian song.

With such history, they cannot imagine living in that house again, although the house is returned to them after the war. They sell it to an interested American religious order who establish Saint Joseph's Seminary. The money helps pay off debts and the mortgage. Now they can hire a contractor to add wings to the house. They sit back to watch the bulldozer dig a cellar twice as deep and long than the existing one. Martina and a close friend Erika from Austria reunite after the long war interval. Erika becomes engaged to Werner. The wedding takes place after Christmas in their renovated chapel.

The family decides that their home should have a name. Names such as Heavenly Lobby and Musical Tavern are suggested. Father Wasner believes the name should have deep meaning to them. He opens his New Testament, to the page that speaks of The Acts of the Apostles, describing the life of Christians in Jerusalem, as being of one heart and soul, or Cor Unum, in Latin. Werner sums up that what they have is a similar Christian community, with no private property, everything shared and everyone obligated to meditate daily on the life of Christ.

Maria regards this as the end of the Trapp Family and the beginning of Cor Unum, meaning that the Trapp Family Singers are now an institution "whose existence does not depend on the members of the closest family any more". Their purpose to bring unknown music to the awareness of multitudes resulted in a much expanded family. Their hill with one grave "framed by mountains" is a holy hill to Maria because from there, "the head of the family watches".

Maria concludes with the assertion that the only thing needed for true happiness is "love". She quotes passages from St Paul's "canticle of praise", the author of the Imitation of Christ (not named), and an excerpt from The Story of the Other Wise Man by Henry Van Dyke—which all allude to "love" as the key to happiness.



Characters

Maria Augusta Von Trapp.

Maria never sheds the nun's habit, with which she begins her memoir. She does not allow the reader to forget how important her faith is to her. The purpose of her book seems to be that she wants the reader to experience her almost saintly devotion. However, Maria is not completely pious. The reader sees glimpses of the mischief in her. She shows instances in which she tests people to see how far she can go with them. Perhaps this is her effort to show the reader that she is not all that naive. This characteristic in Maria is at play when the reader meets her for the first time. She worries what she did to warrant being called to her superior's quarters. Her spontaneity is evident as soon after she arrives at the von Trapp villa. In spite of being hired to teach one child, she goes beyond her bounds, getting a violin for Little Maria and teaching all seven to sing and make Christmas crafts. She makes it her mission that they play games and get clothes to play in. She dares to tell the Captain what she thinks.

Maria is so devout and optimistic in her outlook regardless of circumstance, that a Pollyanna image is pervasive. Later, her perspective on America and Americans denotes her simplicity. She is green to subway rides, escalators, and New York in general, but her persona typifies the God fearing mentality of the times. As a refugee, she struggles to fit in, and like most pre-World War II immigrants; she can afford a blind eye to the injustices endemic to America. She believes everyone is good-hearted because so many help her. She does not realize that her European heritage allows her to homogenize more freely into American society than other ethnicities can. The genre of music the family performs is on its way out and reflects a complete ignorance to popular music. Rock and roll has not yet been popularized, but the feeling is in the air for managers who spell out to Maria that American audiences do not want to spend hours hearing ancient religious tunes. Schang, their second manager, tells Maria she has no sex appeal. It is hard to know if Maria is being humorous when she looks for the term in music books, as she is that serious and centered about her music. However, in spite of hardships endured, Maria's faith and prayer always reaps positive results. This in itself documents proof of a higher power. Yet, religious as Maria is, quoting the Gospel at every turn, she is a proud woman. In many respects, the Story of the Trapp Family Singers focuses solely on Maria. The limelight of her description pans quickly on other family members so that she provides very little insight as to what anyone else, including Georg, feels, thinks or experiences.

Baron Georg von Trapp

Known as the Captain because of his World War I submarine heroism, George starts out as Maria's employer and becomes her husband. Maria only hints at what Georg thinks. One never completely gets the sense that he is a rigid or as harsh as his Navy experience suggests, or as Baroness Hilda portrays him for Maria. He proves to be a



gentle, patient man who has been dealt the tragic circumstance of his first wife's death. Left with seven children to care for, he does his best. He hires governesses, teachers, and nurses. They live in a giant villa, with a butler, several maids, a gardener, and a Baroness who sees to it that the house runs smoothly. One never sees an arrogance in his character. Contrarily, he proves open-minded regarding the children singing and is willing to participate in family celebrations that Maria stirs up. He is accepting of Maria's intense faith and is an intensely moral man himself. This is evidenced by the choices he makes, choices that Maria leaves up to him concerning offers from the Nazis. It is hard to say at what point he falls in love with Maria. The fact that he cancels appointments to be home with the family even though he still plans to propose to Princess Yvonne speaks volumes. In some ways he is more saintly than his wife. He has lost his home, his country, and the ability to make a living. He ceases to be the family breadwinner and accepts every circumstance as it comes, including all of Maria's whims, without complaint.

Father Wasner

Maria doesn't provide much information about the priest. She does praise the priest who turns the family singing into a profession. However, he does live with the family for many years, if not the rest of his life, and the reader gets very little information on him. One knows that he escapes with the family, travels, and participates in all daily activity, but little insight into his character is given other than his role of impressive musician. His is a wooden character mentioned when needed and immediately removed.

Princess Yvonne

Maria describes the scene when the Captain interrupts his proposal to the Princess to read Maria's registered letter to him. It is inferred that the Captain relayed these circumstances to Maria in order for her to be able to write about them. Princess Yvonne has never had the upper hand and immediately feels threatened by Maria and lets her know this soon after meeting her. One wonders who has the greater sense of pride here, the Princess, who was once on the verge of marrying the Baron, or Maria, who wins him and gets to tell the story.

Baroness Matilda

Her "Baroness" title confuses. It is never explained how a person of nobility has the duties of head servant. In many regards, she takes advantage of her position, in that she has Maria take care of tasks such as getting all of the children to school so she can get her morning rest. One wonders if Maria relays this with a tone of sarcasm, or if she is really so willing and humble as not to mind. One also wonders if the rules, which the Baroness attributes to the captain, are not really her rules?



Hans - the Butler

The reader sees him opening the front door in his perfunctory manner and likewise at the table awaiting orders. Hans, who has befriended the children, is secretly a member of the Nazis. Perhaps he believes that his position of servitude will be reversed with the new regime.

Little Maria

She is Maria's pupil, the Captain's daughter, who is suffering from scarlet fever. She appears to recover, since the reader never hears anymore about her condition.

Mr. Wagner

He is the Trapp Family Choir's first American manager, who sends them tickets to come to America to play. On the second tour, he begins to have doubts as to their audience drawing power.

F. C. Schang

He is the Trapps' second manager. He doesn't want to accept them into his stable of artists at first. He considers their act tiresome. He tells Maria to wear nylons and high heels and to put on a little makeup. Maria convinces him to say yes and it pays off.

Harry and Sophie Drinker

Are a couple who love music. They become close to the Trapp family and help them very often, in many ways. They let the family have a house across the street from them rent free. Henry Drinker also lends them half the money needed for publicity.



Objects/Places

Nonnber Benedictine Abbey

This is where the reader first meets Maria, f a novitiate candidate.

The Von Trapp Family Villa

This is where Maria goes to work for a year to teach the children.

Austria

The Trapp family's native homeland.

America

To Maria, America is the land of the free and home of the brave.

Town Hall

A well-known concert venue in the heart of New York City.

Hotel Wellington

Where the Trapp family first arrives and returns to several times.

Ellis Island

The family is held prisoner until a blunder Maria makes is investigated by Immigration authorities and they are allowed into the country.

Merion

The town in Pennsylvania where friends allow the family to live rent free until they can get on their feet.



Stowe, Vermont

At last, the Trapp family finds a place of their own to call home in a setting that reminds them of their beloved Vienna.

Cor Unum

The name given to their home and representative of the family as having one heart.



Themes

The Will of God

This concept is woven through the book. Although Maria does not state it directly, it is linked to fate and accepting fate without reproach. One wonders if the use of the phrase is more Maria's than whom she often ascribes it to. Right from the start of the book, Mother Abess deems it is the Will of God for Maria to leave the convent and go to work for the von Trapp family. The phrase "Will of God" usually comes from those wearing clerical clothing. It can be understood more as a presumption than exact knowledge of what God's Will may actually be. Later, the Mother Abess again credits the Will of God to infer that Maria should marry the Captain as being the best course for her life. The idea of the Will of God somewhat contradicts the concept of "free will" taught to Catholic school children, which gives a choice between right and wrong. The Will of God as used in her book is made of unbendable iron and suggests there is no other recourse to be considered. Thus, it is implied that Maria married the Captain only because it was God's Will, which must always be obeyed.

The Captain is at first not very happy over the family performing in public, but a bombardment of offers to sing before an audience begins to come their way. Hitler himself has requested their performance. Somehow, fate overtakes in spite of stage fright, and they acquiesce to all requests to sing publicly. It seems to be their fate that they sing for audiences. Ultimately, it becomes their source of income.

Later, the Archbishop deems it is the Will of God that Father Wasner leave Austria with the Trapp family. Even when fate is not encased in the allusion to Will of God, it is understood. It is understood to be in every hardship that befalls the family and how it is borne, as well as in every blessing. The Will of God is accepted as such through prayer. There is very little complaint over lack of food or money, although the family is often in the dark as to how things will be resolved. Maria compares and contrasts every adventure and situation the family encounters in her life to a Biblical reference, which for her implies a predestined Will of God at work.

Uncertainty

There is a sense of uncertainty in every step of the way, beginning with Maria's first trip to the Reverend Mother's quarters. She questions whether she is in trouble again. Once at the Trapp Villa, Maria is not sure how to behave. She daringly imparts opinions, but she is not sure of the effects of overstepping her bounds. As things progress, the question over whether the Captain will marry the Princess Yvonne or not nags at her. The reader does not know if this is because she is secretly infatuated with him, or because she wants to get back to convent life. The reader can never be certain how Maria feels about the Captain. For all the happiness she brings to the family, she rarely gives proper



intensity of her own feelings about anyone or anything, except that of uncertainty. It is implied by the life that she leads with the Captain that she is happy after they are wed.

After their marriage, uncertainty begins to arise when the Captain's financial institution goes bankrupt. There is uncertainty as to the family performing in public. Not only do the Trapps risk very much in rejecting Nazi orders, they risk everything in leaving their native land. Uncertainty follows them at almost every turn once they are in America. This is evident when their Visas are not extended, concert promoters drop them, and Rupert and Werner are drafted. Their newly bought farm house disintegrates during a snow storm. They have a month to convert an army camp into a music camp. Maria doesn't tell much about her life before the convent, except her involvement in music groups. One can deduce a rise and fall had led her to find solace there, although it is difficult to say what attracted her to into convent life. The Trapp family is well off, but the reader knows the Captain has lost his wife and the children their mother to scarlet fever. Each lives with uncertainty from the start.

Love

Love fills every chapter of this book, although Maria doesn't use the word love to tie it all up until the book's conclusion. There is an immediate affection between Maria and each member of the Trapp family. Her love for the children made her outspoken regarding their lack of practical clothing. It could very well have been her love for the children that made her agree to marry the Captain.

Maria is appreciative of many things in life. She has a love of many things: of music, of life, of nature, of people, of Austria, of America. Regardless of Maria's faults, she overrides them with a kindness and optimism that seems to infect every one she meets and helps the family conquer every hurdle encountered. Maria mostly chooses to see the best in everyone, which consequently results in affection flowing back from everyone who meets her. It is her charm and perhaps the entire family's charm that gets them what they need as they need it. One gets the impression that Maria generates an atmosphere of love that attracts good things that enable her to conquer difficult situations—always. Everything Maria does is heartfelt. This sense of love immerses itself into every member of the family. This is evidenced in how every family member pitches in and contributes to each new project that suddenly arises. Love is a strength that carries through all of the hardships that befall the family.



Style

Perspective

Chances are that throughout her life Maria was asked by many people to write this book. Although the Trapp Family Singer's fame in the United States would equal the success of a one-hit-wonder—not at Superstar level, they are known enough to leave an impact. In her foreword, humorously titled the Chapter before the First, Maria admits to being over age forty when she wrote this book. The entire perspective is the author's and told in the first person.

On occasion, Maria attempts to fill in the mindset of those who surround her. She does not really succeed, because everyone else in her life, including the Captain, comes off like a secondary player. Her mentions of others are without depth. Rarely does she stand long enough in any other family member's shoes to give us a clearer understanding of what makes that person tick. She wears humility like a habit, but a certain egocentricity comes through with many unnecessary anecdotes and a little too much moralizing. This self-centeredness is exemplified in how the author depicts indifference when the Princess notices the children and the Captain being in various stages of infatuation with Maria. That the Captain is said to be in love with her is not a humble detail to include, although it is essential to the outcome of their story.

One also wonders if there wasn't a coy aspect to Maria that drew the Captain's attention. Maria does state that she went beyond the call of her duties to get involved with the children. Maria's injured pride shows through in describing bad moments with insensitive people such as Betty, or Mrs. Drinker, who tell her she is poor. These extra anecdotes don't add to the story at all, at least in the way she includes them. The effect is that the author thinks every detail of her life is of interest to everyone.

Tone

Maria's tone throughout is mostly optimistic and humorous. She is a happy person and often analytically funny, even when she gets overly preachy. There are many comedic episodes, particularly when language barriers pop up after the family comes to America. Maria has certainly overcome language problems by the time she sets off to write the book. Her description of New York City captures what most foreigners must feel when first arriving. Her Manhattan experience captures the impact America has on a newcomer. Sections where she describes four lane highways and Wall Street at rush hour can produce tears. She has a strong descriptive talent, which keeps one reading.

Maria does attempt to hammer the Gospel into the reader. In many ways, she speaks as if she is still wearing a habit and teaching a religion class. For all the wisdom the author attempts to impart, a certain unworldliness comes through, which is not to say that sophistication is necessary for wisdom. However, in writing an autobiography meant



for a vast array of readers, it cannot be assumed everyone is Catholic or Christian. This is a problem for a modern-day reader of the book, because Maria seems to be out to save the world through the use of New Testament parables. This style captures a pre-World War II mentality that does not look at the bigger world picture. The time the book is written does not yet consider the diversity of readers who might pick it up. Her phrasing tone is not politically correct to African Americans, American Indians, Asians, Jews, Hispanics, or any group that would not have been as readily embraced as blue-eyed Europeans were. Difficult as her life was, had Maria been of different ethnicity, she would not have found it so easy to homogenize into American culture. She may not have gotten the breaks that other races who also pray to the same god under different names, do not enjoy. These innocent failings must be forgiven, because her good intention does come across. For all her humility, she does touch upon the irony of seeing the Statue of Liberty through prison bars in Ellis Island.

Structure

The book is divided into two parts. Part one follows Maria and the family of which she becomes a part before they come to America. The second part describes life after they become refugees. In both parts, although her writing is strong and colorful, she often overdoes it. Much of the telling is unnecessary and trivial. One trudges through anecdotal Communion and Easter celebrations or what Little Johannes did and said.

This aspect of her writing often doesn't succeed in making any point other than a moral one. Doing this takes the book away from the biographical into the Biblical. Her constant inclusion of triviality does little to move the story forward. Much of this minutiae would've best been included in a personal diary. A modern publisher would have eliminated most of it from the final printing. It is clear that she believes that the public is curious of not just every moment of her life, but every opinion. At one time she sidetracks to moralize about birth control. These points of view could have been better worked into the narration as perhaps a conversation with her husband, since her opinion on the matter is so strongly based.

Perhaps it is the aspect that she was a nun, or maybe the fact that a priest lived with the family, that contributes to the homilies at the beginning, end, or middle of most chapters. Maria does not consider that her very life is in itself an inspirational and exemplary parable—one which inspired an Academy Award winning film and was considered one of the most beautiful stories ever conveyed thusly, although it departs from Maria Trapp's original telling.



Quotes

"Well yes. The Children came to me this morning and said they had a council among themselves, and the only way to keep you with us would be that I marry you. I said to them that I would love to, but I didn't think you liked me. They ran over to you and came back in a flash, crying that you had said 'yes I do.' Aren't we engaged now?" p. 58

"I have just found out that we are not really rich, we just happened to have a lot of money. That's why we can never be poor. I am so happy to know that we don't belong to those for whom it is so hard to enter the Kingdom of God." p. 100

"If one hadn't been so deeply impressed by the fact that this man held the fate of many millions in his fingers, one wouldn't have looked a second time at him. He seemed to be very ordinary, a little vulgar not too well educated—no resemblance to the hero in silver armor on the wall. What a precious opportunity, though, to watch him so closely at the moment when he seemed to be perfectly at ease. One couldn't stand it too long, however. Knowing who he was, it became too depressing." p. 122

"In looking back over the years we can discover how a red thread goes through the pattern of our life: the Will of God." p. 103

"This was only the first lie in an endless chain. From now on we led a double life. Whatever we had lived through during the day, we listened to in an altogether different description in the evening over the air—until you wanted to take an axe and smash the radio; and that is about all you could do." p. 114

"I was confronted with a staircase which moved by itself. First I stared at it, thinking this in itself was an exhibiting piece; when I saw people step on it and be moved upwards in front of my very eyes, I got an uncomfortable feeling, as though I were witnessing witchcraft." p. 134

"Applause! A whole book can be written about it." p. 142

"Oh, Reverend Mother, please keep your shirt on." p. 144

"It would have been easy for God to show us the plan for this period, as He had it all fixed up, how these would be enough concerts, enough money, extension of our stay, helpful people, generous invitation, new friends, and new love. But then we again would not have learned that most valuable lesson, so He left us in the dark. . ." p. 165

"The yard was closed in by a very tall wire fence, and what should we see greeting us through the bars from a very short distance, but the Statue of Liberty!" p. 168

"Then he pointed up to the last sunny slope and said with emphasis: 'A place like this; that's where I'd be happy.'" p. 212



"What that word 'drawing card' meant, we should discover in a painful way during the next weeks." p. 172

"Instead of paying me in cash, pay me in music." p. 177

"You will never be a hit in America. Go back to Europe. You will be a great success there." p. 178

"No we are not poor. We just don't have any money." p. 189

"We don't consider this a concert; but we rather feel as if we had taken out one wall of our big living room at home, and you are all our guests at a musical party." p. 202

Topics for Discussion

What do you think of Maria's allusions to the Will of God?

Using just the memoir to form your opinion, not the movie, do you believe Maria was in love with the Captain before he proposed? Do you think she was infatuated or indifferent? Give examples you feel support your position.

Captain Baron von Trapp was once a decorated World War I hero who commanded a submarine. After marrying Maria, was his role as head of the family in title only?

The von Trapp family escapes the Nazis under the guise of going mountain climbing. Why do you think they were granted government permission to go anywhere during such a volatile time? Do you think the average Austrian would have been granted permission?

To what do you ascribe the Drinkers' unbounded generosity to the Trapp family?

What do you think of their manager's honesty?

Do you agree with Maria's use of the lengthy letter in which she describes her husband's final days? Could she have handled the telling differently?