

The Silver Star Study Guide

The Silver Star by Jeannette Walls

(c)2016 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

The Silver Star Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1-3.....	5
Chapters 4-6.....	9
Chapters 7-10.....	13
Chapters 11-13.....	16
Chapters 14-18.....	20
Chapters 19-24.....	23
Chapters 25-29.....	27
Chapters 30-33.....	31
Chapters 34-38.....	35
Chapters 39-44.....	38
Chapters 45-47.....	41
Chapters 48-53.....	45
Chapters 54-56.....	48
Characters.....	51
Symbols and Symbolism.....	59
Settings.....	61
Themes and Motifs.....	63
Styles.....	68
Quotes.....	70



Plot Summary

Twelve-year-old Jean “Bean” Holladay and her older sister Liz had to grow up fast when their mother left them to fend for themselves while she tried to find herself in the novel “The Silver Star” by Jeanette Walls. Knowing they didn’t want to get involved in child services, the sisters decided to travel cross country to live with their Uncle Tinsley in the small southern town of Byler, Virginia. The girls learned life was different in the South. It didn’t seem as bad to them as their mother had always told them until Liz was assaulted by Jerry Maddox. In court Maddox was found not guilty of charges against him but he was brought to justice in other ways as people in the town grew tired of his bullying ways.

Bean and Liz’s mother had left them alone for days at a time before, so they weren’t really worried when she walked out of their home in Lost Lake, California. Bean had angered her mother by realizing that her mother had been telling them she was dating a man who didn’t even exist. A few days into her disappearance she sent the girls a letter with enough money to buy food for a couple of months. When adults began asking questions and the girls saw the police poking around their house they decided to travel across the country to visit their uncle in Byler. On the bus ride there the girls outsmarted a man who was stalking them, a feat Bean thought was impressive for girls their age.

In Virginia the girls’ Uncle Tinsley did not welcome them as warmly as they’d hoped but he soon developed an affection for them. Because Liz and Bean worried they needed to help Uncle Tinsley with expenses they decided to get jobs even though Uncle Tinsley did not encourage them to do so. They wound up working for Jerry Maddox, the man who had caused Uncle Tinsley to be fired from Holladay Textiles, the mill that Uncle Tinsley’s father had built and operated for years. Bean noticed Maddox was a bully to his family, community members and the people at the mill. There was also an incident where Maddox put his finger into Bean’s underarm and commented that she was beginning to grow underarm hair. Bean believed his behavior was inappropriate but chose not to tell anyone what happened.

The trouble began when Liz tried to withdraw money from the savings account that Maddox had set up for her. She confronted him because he had taken the money from her account. Even though Uncle Tinsley advised Liz to forget the money she went to Maddox to try to get it from him. Instead of giving her the money he owed her Maddox hit Liz, leaving bruises on her face, and tried to sexually assault her.

Because Bean knew what had been done to her sister wasn’t right she encouraged her family to file charges against Maddox. At the trial Maddox’s lawyer made Liz out to be a habitual liar. Maddox was found not guilty. Bean was shocked by the injustice of the justice system, while Liz was devastated. Maddox got what he deserved later when he was fired from the mill for getting into a fist fight with another employee. Later, Uncle Clarence took matters into his own hands when Maddox came to his house demanding that he shoot Joe’s dog because it peed on his car tires. Uncle Clarence shot Maddox and told everyone he thought the man was a bear. This book deals with a variety of

themes including family relationships, integration, the inconsistent nature of right and wrong, and life in a small town.



Chapters 1-3

Summary

In Chapter 1, the narrator Jean “Bean” Holladay relates how her sister saved her life after their mother left Bean in her car seat on top of the car when she left her childhood home after a fight with her family. Bean’s mother had laughed when she later told about what happened but Liz, Bean’s sister, didn’t think what happened was funny. Because Liz took such good care of her, Bean wasn’t really worried when their mother had left them alone for four days. Their mother was supposed to be in Los Angeles auditioning for a job as a singer. Bean tells the reader her mother had no way to contact them because their phone was off.

While their mother was away they ate chicken potpies, which Bean loved. They were eating their pies and playing the Lying Game when their mother came in carrying a box of key lime pie. She told them she’d met a record producer named Mark Parker who told her she had star potential.

Bean describes how her sister Liz liked to play with words making up rhymes and anagrams for them. It was how Bean, whose real name was Jean, got the nickname Bean. She also tells the reader that they came to live in Lost Lake, California because her mother was looking for a job in the acting, singing and songwriting careers. They were living off the money from her mother’s inheritance. She was trying to write a musical about the way she’d left her Old South family and found her voice in music. She told Bean and Liz that they were a tribe of three and that her girls were all she needed.

In Chapter 2, Mom kept gushing about Mark Parker each time she came back from her trips to Los Angeles. She said he was helping her to finish up her musical. Although most of what Mom said about Mark was positive, she admitted he had a dark side and could be moody. When Bean asked when they were going to meet Mark her mother told her that he was jealous of Bean and Liz. She finally talked Mark into meeting her children but when Bean got home the day Mark was supposed to be there her mother told her that Mark had gotten mad at her because she tricked him into coming to the Lost Lake house by telling him the girls would be away for the night. When Bean saw and heard her mother’s reaction after she commented that she wished Mark liked them because he seemed too good to be true other than his jealousy of them Bean knew that her mother had fabricated the boyfriend. Bean’s mother screamed at Bean. Even when Bean tried to calm her, her mother just got more upset. She told Bean she shouldn’t have had kids and added that Bean was a mistake before grabbing her purse and running out of the house.

Bean knew her sister could help her figure out what was going on with their mother. Her sister was pretty and smart, even by adult standards. She loved to play with words, especially making anagrams and spoonerisms. Liz confided in her sister that their mother was a fibber. She shared that she’d seen their mother buy the red velvet jacket



she said was given to her by June Carter Cash at a church sale. They agreed that when their mother came back they would act like nothing had happened.

In Chapter 3 after their mother had been gone several days they got a letter from her telling them she needed some space and time to be the mother she needed to be and to finish writing her songs. Enclosed in the envelope was \$200 for potpies. The girls bought their chicken potpies at Spinelli's Grocery. They went to bed when they were supposed to and didn't skip school. After two weeks Bean was beginning to worry and to get tired of chicken potpies. When she went in the store Mr. Spinelli asked Bean where her mother was because he hadn't seen her in a while. Bean lied and said she'd broken her leg.

That night Mr. Spinelli knocked on their door with a bag of groceries. He asked how their mother was doing. Liz covered Bean's lie telling the man their mother had broken her leg in San Diego and would be home in a few days. The girls were worried Mr. Spinelli would tell the authorities, whom they called the bandersnatches from the book "Alice in Wonderland." Liz told Bean if things got bad they could always go to Virginia, where their mother had grown up. Their mother's brother Tinsley and his wife, Martha, lived in a big white house called Mayfield. Their mother had grown up there. Liz said they could take the bus there if they had to.

When Bean came home from school the next day there was a police officer at the house peeking in the windows. She met Liz at her school and told her the cops were at their house. They bought bus tickets. Back at home they packed their suitcases. Bean thought about how their mother would always give reasons why they were moving whenever they left a place a moved on to another. They'd lived in a variety of places sometimes only for a few months before they moved on because their mother decided she needed a fresh start.

Before they went to sleep, Bean asked Liz is she thought they'd like Byler. She pointed out that their mother hadn't liked it but Liz reminded her that their mother had found something wrong with every place they had lived. Before they left the following morning Liz left a letter for her mother, it was written using terms from "Alice in Wonderland" so that their mother would understand what it said but no one else would.

Analysis

This novel is told in past tense from the first person point of view of 12-year-old Jean "Bean" Holladay. The author grabs the reader's attention right away with Bean's claim that her sister saved her life when she was a baby. The opening sentence is not only attention getting but also sets up the relationship between Bean and her older sister, Liz. Bean depends on his sister to take care of her. She trusts her sister to care for her even more that she trusts her mother. The reader is given proof that Bean trusts her sister more than she trusts her mother when Bean describes how her mother joked and laughed about the incident in which she left her baby, Bean, in her carrier on top of her



car and drove away. Bean never remembers her sister laughing or making a joke about the incident.

Charlotte Holladay, who had run away from her family when Bean was a baby, did not have a good relationship with her family. She did not have good memories of Byler, Virginia, where she grew up. The reader can tell Charlotte did not like her family because she writes her life's story, a musical, about the way she escaped from her traditional Old South family. She tells her girls that she has nothing but bad memories of the house in which she grew up. The house was left to her brother, Tinsley. Charlotte has told the girls that if she ever inherits the house from her brother that she would sell it. Even though she appears to have no respect for her family, she and the girls are living off the proceeds of her inheritance. Charlotte calls herself and her girls a "tribe of three" (6). At the point they are in their lives at the beginning of the story Liz and Bean have never known what it is like to have extended family.

Charlotte Holladay, Bean and Liz's mother, seems to be a complicated person with a loose grasp of reality. Even though she is nearing 36 years old she continues to try to break into a career as a singer and actress. She leaves her children alone for days and sometimes weeks at a time. Liz, the oldest girl at 15, tells her younger sister that her mother had a habit of being a fibber. For instance, their mother often tells people that a red velvet jacket she owns was given to her by June Carter Cash. Liz knows this story is not true because she had seen her mother buy the jacket at a church sale. Bean catches her mother lying about a boyfriend. Her mother actually fabricates a boyfriend that doesn't exist. When Charlotte suspects that Bean realizes the boyfriend doesn't exist she becomes uncharacteristically angry with her daughter telling her she was a mistake and that she hadn't wanted any children.

An important symbol in this section is Charlotte's red velvet jacket. It is a symbol of Charlotte's habit of lying and making up stories. The jacket is also significant because Liz knows that her mother is lying about how she got the jacket. Even though Charlotte wants people to think she got the jacket from a famous country singer she actually got it from a church rummage sale.

Even though Liz and Bean seem very mature for their age, they are still young children. Liz is 15 and it is understood that she is the one in charge when their mother is away. Bean describes herself at 12 as not being "the kind of kid who needed to be babied" (2). She describes how they clean up after themselves, go to bed on time and go to school when their mother is not there. Even though they do take care of themselves in a mature way they also play silly games like "chew and spew" where one girl tries to make the other laugh while her mouth is full of food. Just like an ordinary 12 year old, Bean also wants a pet. Instead of the dog she wanted, her mother got her a turtle, whom Bean named Fido. Bean finds comfort in her turtle after her mother blows up at her and storms out of the house when Bean suggests Mark Parker is too good to be true, coming close to the truth that he doesn't really exist. Along with finding comfort in her turtle, Bean also feels responsible for him. Notice she insists that she be allowed to take the turtle to Virginia with her. She doesn't want to give her pet the impression she is



abandoning him, like her mother has given her the impression she has been abandoned.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Liz really saved Bean's life? How did this incident shape the relationship between the girls?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Charlotte's abilities as a mother.

Discussion Question 3

Do you think the girls make the best choice when they decide to go to Charlotte's childhood home in Virginia?

Vocabulary

uncouth, bizarre, aspiring, jettisoning, animated, collaboration, byronic, kooky, epically, prodigy, precocious, anagrams, spoonerisms, negligent, delinquent, depot, monogrammed, reminiscing, simultaneously, prudent



Chapters 4-6

Summary

In Chapter 4, Liz and Bean made up stories about the other people on the bus to entertain themselves. Bean was watching a man trying to decipher his story when the man looked at her and winked. When Liz went to the bathroom the man sat down beside Bean tried to get information about her until Liz came back and asked the man to get out of her seat. Liz chided Bean for giving the man information about them and moved them to new seats at the back of the bus.

The girls had two hours before catching a new bus in New Orleans so they caught a trolley for a ride through the city. They were surprised when the man from the bus, whom they called a perv, got on the trolley with them. The girls got off at the next stop and the perv followed them. Just before the trolley closed its doors to pull away Liz grabbed Bean and pulled her back onto the trolley before the Perv could follow. The passengers, who had done nothing when it was clear the man was following the girls and changing seats when they did, cheered because the girls had gotten away from him. Once they were on the bus and traveling away from the perv Liz and Bean congratulated themselves on outsmarting the man. Bean went to sleep against her sister's shoulder but woke up a short time later to hear her sister crying.

When they reached Byler a woman who introduced herself as Tammy Elbert drove Liz and Bean to Mayfield once she learned they were Charlotte's girls. She told them all the girls would have given their left arm to be Charlotte when she was growing up. When they reached Mayfield and Bean saw the house she told Liz is was the one she'd been dreaming about all of her life. As they got closer to the house they realized it was in bad repair. The man who came to the door ordered them off the property until Liz told him they were Charlotte's girls. Uncle Tinsley refused to let them in the house telling them is was a mess and he had research spread out all over the place. He offered instead to let them sleep in the barn.

As they walked to the barn Uncle Tinsley shook his head as he realized Charlotte, who he said was spoiled, was still causing problems. He took the girls to a room in the barn that had formerly been the groom's quarters. When Liz asked about Aunt Martha, Uncle Tinsley told her that Martha had been killed in a car wreck six years ago. Even though he believed Liz was too young to remember Martha, Liz described several memories she had of the lady. He left the girls in the barn but soon returned with food for them.

In Chapter 5, Bean was woken early the next morning by all the birds. She and Liz went to the house and Tinsley served them breakfast on the porch. The girls offered to do the dishes but Tinsley said it would be easier if he took care of them, so the girls went to explore the grounds of Mayfield instead. When they found a koi pond Bean wanted to let her pet turtle, Fido, live there. He'd come all the way from California with them. Bean explains that when she got his box, however, he was dead.



Uncle Tinsley told the girls they could bury the turtle in the family cemetery, where they buried their other pets, then got a shovel to help them. He dug a hole for Fido near his wife, Martha's, grave and said a eulogy declaring Fido to be a faithful turtle who had lived to make sure Bean had reached Mayfield safely.

Walking back from the graveyard Bean told Uncle Tinsley about her dreams about Mayfield. He said he guessed she'd better see inside just to make sure it was really the house she'd dreamed about. The house was messy and cluttered with papers and items from days gone by. As Uncle Tinsley showed them the ball room, parlor and dining room he said he knew where everything in the house was located. Upstairs he took them to the bird wing which he said would be their part of the house. It was the part of the house that had been Charlotte's. He pointed out to Bean the white cradle that her mother had put her in when she was a baby.

In Chapter 6, Uncle Tinsley talked to the girls about the individual significance of some of the things in the house after breakfast the next morning. Although he was hesitant he let the girls throw out some old newspapers and store some other things in the attic and basement. They also vacuumed, washed windows and cleaned until they had the house looking better by the end of their first week there.

On their way to get groceries the first time, Liz and Bean were captivated by two emus owned by Scruggs. When Uncle Tinsley said they were ugly, Liz defended the strange looking creatures. In the downtown area the lifestyle was so different from California that Bean asked what year it was. Uncle Tinsley said the people there were still living like it was the 60s. They were surprised when Uncle Tinsley waved at a man he didn't know.

He pointed out Holladay Textiles, a mill, and told them the Holladays had owned a cotton plantation. He defended their ancestors saying they treated their slaves well. When the Yankees burned the plantation during the Civil War the Holladays moved to Byler where they built a cotton mill. The Holladays were good employers who didn't pay much but helped provide the workers with homes with electricity and plumbing. They gave out free hams at Christmas and organized a city baseball team.

Ten years ago, Uncle Tinsley told the girls, he had sold the mill to Chicago investors because foreign mills had begun to undercut American prices. The Chicago owners tried to make the mill more productive by cutting out benefits and even monitoring employees bathroom breaks. When Bean asked Uncle Tinsley if he'd ever thought of leaving Byler Uncle Tinsley seemed surprised at her question. He told her it was where he belonged.

Analysis

Liz continues to serve in her role as protector of Bean when they are confronted by a man whom they identify as a pervert. Liz manages to outsmart the man even when he is determined to follow them through town. Notice that even though people who are riding



the trolley with Liz and Bean notice the man moving from seat to seat following the girls they do nothing to interfere with the situation. The actions of these people speak to a theme of right and wrong in the novel. Bean indicates that the people probably didn't say anything to the man because there was nothing wrong with a man switching seats. When Bean and Liz got back on the trolley just minutes before its doors closed outsmarting the pervert, the people on the trolley applauded them for getting away from the strange man. Because the people did applaud the girls they obviously knew something wasn't right with the situation. The reader has to wonder why the adults didn't stand up to the man and make him stop following them. Notice also in this section that her job as Bean's protector seems to be taking its toll on Liz because when Bean wakes up she discovers that her sister has been crying.

Once the girls arrive in Byler Bean feels so disoriented by the way people live that she asks her uncle what year it is there. He tells her that the town has never moved past the 60s and is proud of the way they are frozen in time. One of the aspects of their lifestyle which will be referred to later in the novel is their attitude toward black people. Notice that when Uncle Tinsley tells the girls their ancestors were kind to their slaves, Liz rolls her eyes. She doesn't believe him. He adds that the southerners weren't the only ones who owned slaves, even people in the North had black slaves.

Uncle Tinsley goes on to tell the girls how his father had built Holladay Textiles in Byler after the Civil War and had been good to the people who worked there. The entire town felt like one big family according to Tinsley. Remember Tammy Elbert's memories of balls and parties hosted by the Holladays at Mayfield.

Just like the mill has changed since the time Tinsley's father built and opened it, the home owned by his father has changed since it was built. There are hints of its former glory but the house is also in a state of disrepair and neglect. Uncle Tinsley brings the girls their supper the night they arrive on a silver tray. The dishes have gold curlicues around the edges but are chipped. The description of the inside of the house is a combination of once fine and expensive furnishings that have seen better days: "Oil paintings hung crooked on the walls and a few were falling out of their frames. The Persian carpets were worn and frayed, the silk curtains were faded and torn" (38). Uncle Tinsley, like the people in the town of Byler seems to be hanging onto what he considers the glorious past with all of his might. His house is stewn with family memorabilia and mementoes of the past of which Uncle Tinsley is able to describe the significance in detail.

Important symbols in this section include the emus, the strange birds that Bean and Liz see on their first trip into the town of Byler with their Uncle Tinsley. Notice that even though Uncle Tinsley says the birds are ugly, Liz defends them. She doesn't see them as being unattractive. Another important symbol introduced in this section of the novel is the cradle Charlotte used for Bean while they still lived at Mayfield. When Bean looks at this white wicker cradle she gets a feeling of safety. It is also proof that she was once at Mayfield even though she doesn't remember her short time there.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss Uncle Tinsley's opinion of his sister, Charlotte. Do you agree with his opinion? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think the adults who saw the man following Liz and Bean didn't do anything to stop him? What might you have done in this situation?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the author chooses to write the novel from Bean's point of view instead of Liz's?

Vocabulary

evasive, cotillions, knoll, debacles, resigned, mutilates, dilapidated, perimeter, eulogy, perilous, geological, curator, prosperous



Chapters 7-10

Summary

In Chapter 7, one day about two weeks after Liz and Bean had come to Mayfield, Bean was cleaning leaves out of koi pond while Uncle Tinsley mowed. After he finished he suggested they get some peaches for lunch and let her ride on the tractor with him. The peaches were so good that Bean went back to the orchard on her own to get more. When she arrived she saw a boy stealing peaches from their trees. She yelled at the boy and even threw a peach at him, but he got away.

Back at the house Bean told Uncle Tinsley what she'd seen. He told her the boy was her cousin, Joe Wyatt, and that it was okay for him to take some peaches. Bean knew her mother had married Liz's father, Shelton Stewart, in a big wedding but Shelton had walked out on her and Liz when he realized Charlotte's father wasn't going to support him. She didn't know much about her own father. Bean knew only that her father was a Byler boy and that he had been killed in a mill accident.

Uncle Tinsley told Bean her father was named Charlie Wyatt and that he had been one of the boys Charlotte had dated after her husband walked out on her. Charlie had wanted to marry her mother but Charlotte never took him seriously. Bean decided she needed to go apologize to Joe and talk to the Wyatts about her father. Sensing Uncle Tinsley might be uncomfortable taking her to the Wyatts' house, Bean said she'd walk. Uncle Tinsley had a better idea and went out to find Charlotte's old bicycle. When Bean went upstairs to tell Liz what she'd learned, Liz told her she'd go with her.

In Chapter 8, when Bean introduced herself to Al Wyatt the woman gathered her in a big hug. She called to Uncle Clarence who commented that he remembered Liz but that Charlotte had taken Bean away before he'd even gotten the chance to meet her. Bean noticed Uncle Clarence eyed her suspiciously. After Uncle Clarence had left the room Bean asked if her father had looked like him. Aunt Al brought her a picture of her father. She said Charlie was smart and could fix anything he set his mind to. He was also the life of the party but had a wild streak. Aunt Al credited this wild streak with getting Charlie killed.

She said Charlie had been killed by the brother of a man that he had killed. One night at a pool hall Ernie Mullens had made a comment about Charlotte's pregnancy indicating she was a loose woman and Charlie fought him when Ernie refused to apologize. In the course of the fight Ernie cracked his skull when he fell against a pool table. In a trial Charlie was exonerated of charges because Ernie's death was said to be self defense. Ernie's brother, Bucky, swore he would kill Charlie and shot him two weeks later. Uncle Clarence had sworn revenge on Bucky but the boy was sent to the penitentiary and then left the state when he was released. Before she left the Wyatt house Aunt Al gave Bean the picture of Charlie to keep.



In Chapter 9, when they got home Uncle Tinsley told Bean he had known how her father died but hadn't thought it was his place to tell her. He said everyone knew the story mostly because it involved Charlotte Holladay. The family was mortified because they thought their name was soiled by Charlotte's actions. Charlotte felt her family had turned on her and for that reason left town soon after Bean was born. Uncle Tinsley indicated it was one of the few times that Charlotte had shown good judgement.

That night Bean asked Liz if she wanted to try to get in touch with her father as well. Liz said no because her father had left and she never wanted anything to do with him. She changed the subject by playing with the word "lintheads," like Bean knew she did when she was upset about something.

In Chapter 10, the next day Joe Wyatt walked up the driveway at Mayfield asking Bean if she wanted to go with him to pick blackberries. He told Bean how he scavenged in other people's gardens, taking what he felt they didn't need. When Bean got home Liz came outside and told Bean their mother had called. She would be there in a few days.

Analysis

Notice the way that both Uncle Clarence and Uncle Tinsley respond to the information that Charlotte did not come to Byler with her daughters. They seem to have a similar opinion of Charlotte, that she is no good and needs to stay away from their town. Uncle Tinsley credits Charlotte for the shame that his family had to bear because Charlotte got pregnant out of wedlock with a young man who worked for their father. Uncle Clarence also doesn't seem to be surprised Charlotte isn't with the girls. He appears to be sarcastic when he says: "Decided not to come, did she? Now, why don't that surprise me?" (56). These rhetorical questions aren't meant to be answered, but are probably spoken in a sarcastic tone indicating his dislike for Bean's mother.

Remember in this section that Aunt Al tells Bean and Liz that Uncle Clarence had sworn to kill Bucky, the man who shot his brother, when Bucky got out of jail. Aunt Al has described her husband as a man who is sour on life. It appears he is also a vengeful man as well. This characteristic will be important later on in the novel.

Bean notices her sister is troubled in this section of the novel when Bean asks Liz if she wants to try to meet her father but doesn't seem to understand why Liz does not want to seek out her father. Because Bean is beginning to develop a relationship with her father's family and has even learned her father's name and the circumstances of his death, she asks Liz if she wants to meet her father. The reader senses a touch of jealousy on Liz's part when she tells Bean that Bean is lucky because her father died. Liz reasons that because her father left she and her mother that he is a bad person. She tells Bean she never wants to have any dealings with her father.

Because the Holladay family lived in such a small, backward town Charlotte's pregnancy and its aftermath was particularly hard on the family. Uncle Tinsley describes the family as one that was very proud of its good name and heritage. Charlotte's actions



marred the family's name and reputation. Her parents took Charlotte's pregnancy so badly that they began refusing to go out in public because they thought people were laughing at them. Charlotte left home because she felt her family wasn't being supportive of her even though she'd made bad choices — sleeping around and getting pregnant out of wedlock — that had negatively affected her family.

Notice also Uncle Tinsley's comment that he didn't believe it was his "place" (61) to tell Bean what had happened to her father. Instead he let Aunt Al, who was Charlie's sister-in-law, tell the girl what had happened to her father. When Bean got home Uncle Tinsley did fill in the Holladay viewpoint of what had happened.

An important symbol introduced in this section of the novel is the picture of Bean's father that Aunt Al gives to her. When Bean sees this picture it is the first time she has seen what her father looked like. Bean is surprised by the similarities between her and her father and is pleased that Aunt Al says the two have traits in common.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Tinsley believes that Charlotte's choice to leave town is the only good one she'd ever made? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Do you understand how Liz might feel jealous of Bean for getting to meet her father's family?

Discussion Question 3

Does hearing the story of what happened to Charlotte in Byler help the reader to understand why she acts as she does? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

lavish, wastrel, scandal, mortified, chortling, ambling, scavenging



Chapters 11-13

Summary

In Chapter 11, Bean and Liz were cleaning on Uncle Tinsley's house when they heard their mother's car in the driveway two days after she'd called to say she was coming. Uncle Tinsley asked her why she'd left her kids alone. Liz asked them not to fight. Inside the house Charlotte commented how her mother had been cold and distant while her father was inappropriate. Bean describes how Uncle Tinsley told her mother she was making things up that nothing inappropriate had ever happened there.

Over tea Uncle Tinsley asked Charlotte about her plans. She responded she didn't have plans but had several options. He suggested to her that they could stay with him for a while, but she responded that she didn't see that as an option. Uncle Tinsley asked her to give the girls some stability but she only attacked him for not knowing what was best for her children. She ordered Bean and Liz to get their things. When Bean and Liz were alone they both agreed they didn't really want to go anywhere.

In Chapter 12, Bean and Liz's mother complained about Tinsley as she drove as fast as she could out of town. The girls noticed how fast she was talking. Bean told her mother she'd learned the truth about her father. Charlotte told Bean her father had only made things worse by trying to defend her honor. She went on to tell them that she'd decided when she read Liz's letter that their future was in New York City. She indicated she decided on New York because it was the other side of the Looking Glass. Liz questioned if her mother was being realistic but Charlotte just brushed the comment aside. She told them she had a surprise for them when they got to Richmond. She stopped the car in front of the Hotel Madison, a place she said she'd stayed before with her mother. Liz and Bean asked if they could afford to stay there, especially when their mother asked for two rooms.

When they were alone the girls discussed how they'd never seen their mother in such a bad state before. They also weren't sure if they should believe what their mother said about Mayfield and her family either.

It was while they were shopping that Charlotte completely broke down. Bean and Liz kept asking if they could afford the clothes she was having them try on. She berated them for questioning her authority and then walked out of the store. The girls followed her back to the hotel and heard her in her room but she wouldn't open the door for them. They alerted the hotel staff who called a doctor. Bean explains the doctor gave their mother a sedative and took her to the hospital. Uncle Tinsley was called to pick the girls up and take them back to Mayfield.

In Chapter 13, Charlotte called a few days later and it was decided Liz and Bean would stay with Uncle Tinsley while she got settled in New York. The next morning Liz told Bean they needed to be thinking about the possibility they'd have to go to school in



Byler. In order to help with expenses, they decided they needed to get jobs. They presented the idea to Uncle Tinsley but he didn't approve. He also told them they didn't need money for clothes because he had everything they needed. Bean describes how he shows them a closet of old fashioned clothes. Liz asks if they are not allowed to get jobs but Uncle Tinsley does not answer specifically. He does tell them to get out of the house and make themselves useful "But don't forget, you're Holladays" (85).

The girls rode their bikes (Uncle Tinsley had fixed up his bike for Liz) into town. They'd forgotten it was the Fourth of July and stopped to watch the parade. Liz made a sarcastic comment when the veterans marched down the street but Bean wondered how those people could show such pride in the country if there was really nothing to be proud of like her mother said. Bean also noticed her Uncle Clarence among the veterans. Bean and Liz met up with the Wyatts after the parade was finished. When Liz commented she'd heard they were losing the war Aunt Al told her about the tradition of service in Byler. She explained even Bean's father had fought in Korea. He'd brought home a silver star because he'd run into enemy fire to save another soldier who was wounded.

After two days of knocking on doors looking for jobs Bean and Liz were getting discouraged. Bean went to see Aunt Al. She encouraged Bean not to give up and gave her Charlie's Silver Star. She explained Charlie had never worn the medal or even told anyone he had it. Uncle Clarence had kept it as a reminder of his brother but had decided that Charlie would want his daughter to have it. She told Bean about how Clarence and Charlie had been orphaned when they were young children. Clarence willingly took on a good deal of work to ensure the two of them stayed together. Bean thanked Uncle Clarence for the medal. He shared his sorrow for Bean's mother having her spell but added meeting her was the worst thing that had happened to Charlie.

Analysis

Note in this section the reaction that Charlotte has when she first goes into the house in Byler. Her memories of the house and her childhood are different from Tinsley's. She calls the atmosphere of the house "dark" (68) and indicates she felt "the old chill" (69). She goes on to remember that her mother cared only about "appearances and being proper" (69). Considering that Charlotte embarrassed the family by getting pregnant out of wedlock with a worker from her father's mill, it is reasonable to believe that Charlotte might remember her family and home in this way. One of the odd statements she made was that her father "loved me for the wrong reasons" (69). She describes what happened as being "inappropriate" (69) but Tinsley argues with her that the house was always warm and full of love. He accuses her of exaggerating everything and having her little dramas. When they consider the way their mother and her brother act with one another Liz and Bean see the two as being very immature. Liz wonders why they can't at least be polite while Bean is surprised that they aren't acting like grown ups.

Liz and Bean's mother has what appears to be a manic episode when she returns to Mayfield to get them. She blames the stress of her return to Mayfield for her breakdown.



She tells her girls she has started smoking because she had to return to Mayfield. Notice how she acts as she drives away from the town. Bean describes her driving using the simile “as if we were fleeing the scene of a crime” (72). She notes her mother even runs a stoplight in her hurry to get away from Byler.

Charlotte may be having a break down caused by her return to Byler because she takes Liz and Bean to the Hotel Madison, apparently a very lush hotel, where she claims they will stay the night. When they pull up in front of the hotel Bean notes how out of place the old car is with its orange and white trailer. She also realizes how underdressed they are for the fancy hotel. Her mother, however, doesn't seem to notice how the doorman greets her with uncertainty. She tells the girls that she and her mother had often stayed at that hotel when they came to Richmond to shop. For this reason is it reasonable to think the Charlotte may be trying to relive her childhood by taking her children to the same place her mother took her as a child. Instead of being the wife of a wealthy cotton mill owner, however, Charlotte is a very poor aspiring actress and singer who had no job. She can't afford the hotel and the clothes she takes to have her girls try on. When Liz and Bean confront their mother with the fact they can't afford what she'd trying to buy she gets angry again and acts as if her children have offended her. Just as she did when Bean confronted her about Mark Parker, she runs away.

Consider this situation from Bean and Liz's viewpoint. They'd just been snatched away from a place they felt relatively safe and were shoved immediately back into their mother's craziness. They had shared with one another that they wished they could stay in Byler but didn't push to be allowed to stay there. They knew the decision was up to their mother even though she was acting off kilter. Once their mother went completely off base by locking herself in her hotel room Liz went to get help and asserted herself just like an adult would. She pushed to the front of line at the hotel desk because even though she is still only a child she recognized her mother was in need of immediate assistance.

Bean continues to learn about her father and his family in this section of the novel. She learns that her father was a war hero and that his family has a history of military service. Another highly important symbol, the Silver Star that was awarded to Bean's father, is introduced in this section of the novel. This Silver Star represents bravery, the central personality trait that Bean comes to associate with her father. She decides to be brave in her life because she believes that he was brave, a characteristic that earned him the medal.

A major issue in the plot is initiated when Liz decides that she and Bean need to get jobs in order to help Uncle Tinsley out with expenses. They realize that although the Holladay family was once well off that is no longer the case. It is a mature consideration on their part that they need to do something to help Tinsley with food and expenses associated with their care. Tinsley, however, discouraged them from getting jobs. Liz decides to interpret Tinsley's request that they not get jobs in her own way. This can be credited to the inconstant nature of a person's version of a story. Liz chooses to interpret Tinsley's statement that he doesn't mind Liz and Bean having jobs, he just doesn't want to know about them.



Remember also Tinsley's mention of "coloreds" (83) as he gives Bean and Liz reasons why they shouldn't get jobs. He believes that only black people would go around town begging for work and that that sort of behavior is not proper for people from the Holladay family even though the family's situation has changed. Even though Liz passes Tinsley's attitude off as being old fashioned, the reader will soon notice that the town of Byler as a whole has an old fashioned idea of the relationship between blacks and whites.

Discussion Question 1

How is the relationship between Uncle Clarence and Charlie similar to that between Liz and Bean?

Discussion Question 2

What is your opinion of Liz and Bean's decision to get jobs? Do you think they should have gone ahead with their plan even though Tinsley discouraged it?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the interaction between Tinsley and Charlotte at Mayfield. Which sibling do you think is remembering their life at Mayfield most clearly?

Vocabulary

stability, hermit, appalled, recluse, dubiously, cavernous, contradicting, dapper, ingrates



Chapters 14-18

Summary

In Chapter 14, during their job search Liz and Bean passed a house where a man was working on his car. The man, Jerry Maddox, seemed really interested in the girls when he learned they were the nieces of Tinsley Holladay. After demonstrating their ability to take orders by helping him with his car, Jerry paid each of the girls \$5 and told them to come back Saturday after lunch. On their way home the girls walked past the emus' field. The animals were next to the fence by the road instead of being out of sight. Bean told Liz she thought they were weird because they were too big to be birds and couldn't fly because their wings were so small. Liz told Bean it was their uniqueness that made them beautiful.

In Chapter 15, on Saturday Maddox took Liz and Bean into his office. He told them it was his habit to question his employees about their background to make sure they were qualified to work for him. He asked them a series of questions not only about their work experience but also about their home life and their mother. He had a way of making them feel comfortable about answering his questions even if the answers revealed private information. Bean felt so comfortable she told him the whole story about their mother leaving them alone in Lost Lake, their decision to take the bus to Virginia and the pervert they'd outsmarted.

In Chapter 16, Bean worked mostly for Doris while Liz was Maddox's personal assistant. Bean describes Maddox as being obsessed with gadgets and the law. He'd been hired at the mill to increase efficiency, and bragged about how he had kicked butt to make the mill more efficient. Maddox gave the girls a bonus in the form of clothes, light blue dresses that Bean thought looked like a uniform. She tried to argue with him she would rather have had a cash bonus but he rebutted saying the dress was worth more than a cash bonus. Bean ends the chapter by commenting that it was hard to argue with Maddox.

In Chapter 17, Bean notes that the Maddoxes had a germ phobia and for that reason rarely left the house. Cindy was homeschooled. She liked Liz to read out loud to her especially because Liz changed the endings of stories that Cindy found upsetting. One day while Bean was helping Cindy read a book she heard Maddox and Doris fighting. Mr. Maddox brought a box to Bean that he told her to put in his car. Doris followed him wearing only her nightgown. She said her clothes were in the box Maddox made a big deal of pointing out that everything she had was his and he could do with it what he liked. Bean felt she was being pulled into an argument but did as Mr. Maddox asked. Later he told Bean that he was taking his wife's clothes away from her for her own good. If she began going out again he was afraid she'd begin falling into her old, bad ways.

In Chapter 18, Aunt Al warned Bean how hard Maddox was to work for when she learned that Liz and Bean had gotten jobs with him. When Aunt Al asked Bean admitted



that Uncle Tinsley didn't know they were working for Maddox. Aunt Al told Bean the history between Maddox and Tinsley. When Maddox was hired to make the mill more efficient he and Tinsley had butted heads right away. Tinsley thought Maddox's habits of timing bathroom breaks and threatening to fire the slowest workers had a derogatory effect on the morale of the workers. Maddox had also cut out the Christmas hams as well as the mill softball team. Workers began breaking their machines intentionally just so they could get a break. Even though Uncle Tinsley had talked to the new owners of the mill about his concerns, they sided with Maddox and forced Uncle Tinsley out of his job. After hearing the story Bean felt bad about not having told her uncle they were working for Maddox. She thought she should probably do so.

That night Bean shared with Liz what she had learned from Aunt Al. She felt they were lying to their uncle by not telling him what they were doing. Liz argued it wasn't really lying if they were just choosing to keep something to themselves. The next day at work Liz asked Maddox about the story Aunt Al had told Bean. Maddox said he wasn't surprised someone was badmouthing him and offered to tell the girls the whole story. Liz thought they should listen to his side.

Analysis

Without intending to, Liz and Bean find they have put themselves into a sticky situation. They have taken jobs with the man who is responsible for Uncle Tinsley being let go from the mill his family had built and operated for years. According to Aunt Al, Tinsley had tried to stand up for the people who had worked for him for years by telling the new owners at the mill that the way they were treating their employees was not right. He believed the employees were retaliating against the cruel standards put on them by breaking machinery and putting out a product that was poor quality. Despite his attempt to see that his former workers were treated fairly Uncle Tinsley was fired.

Maddox, the man who Liz and Bean work for, is the man who was primarily responsible for getting Tinsley fired according to Aunt Al. He is the one who put the unattainable standards on the workers and threatened them with being fired if they didn't maintain those standards.

Just in the short time they've been working for Maddox Liz and Bean have already seen the way he chooses to deal with his own family as if he were a dictator. When Maddox decides to take his wife's clothes away from her he tells her: "They're not your clothes," Maddox told her. "They're Jerry Maddox's clothes. Who bought them? Jerry Maddox. Who worked his butt off to pay for them? Jerry Maddox. So who do they belong to?" (104).

For those who live in a small town one of the positive aspects of that small town life is that everyone knows everyone. One of the negative aspects is also that everyone knows everyone. This is the case with Jerry Maddox. When Liz and Bean tell him that they are Charlotte's daughters he says he's heard of her. Remember, of course, that Maddox came into Byler after Charlotte had already left town but since he works at the



mill that the Holladay family once owned it is plausible to consider that he had heard at least one version of Charlotte's story. In the same way, everyone except Liz and Bean, who have lived in Byler only a couple of months, knows the background between Maddox and their Uncle Tinsley. They have no idea that they are trying to get jobs from a man whose dream would be to embarrass Tinsley even more than he already has. Liz and Bean only learn the background between Maddox and Tinsley when Bean's Aunt Al, who works at the mill, tells Bean what had happened.

Notice how Liz seems suspicious of Uncle Tinsley, almost as if she is afraid that he might not tell her the truth. She's already commented to Bean that she believes Uncle Tinsley's mindset is old-fashioned and that they don't really need to do exactly as he says. Even though she has heard the story about Uncle Tinsley and Maddox through Bean's Aunt Al it appears the Liz believes she will get the true story from Maddox.

Another important symbol is introduced in this section of the novel. The emus that Bean and Liz see in the pasture on their way home from Maddox's house will become a symbol of Liz.

Discussion Question 1

What is the first impression that you get of Jerry Maddox?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the story that Aunt Al tells Bean about the background between Maddox and Uncle Tinsley. Do you think this story is true?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the people of the town avoided Tinsley after he was let go at the mill?

Vocabulary

diligence, savvy, evasive, odious, infatuated, hypnotic, contamination, sabotoge, debutane



Chapters 19-24

Summary

In Chapter 19, the next day that Liz and Bean went to work for Maddox they found him shredding papers in his office. He warned them never to throw anything out because their enemies could find it and use it against them. Before he would tell them the story of what happened between him and Uncle Tinsley he made Liz and Bean admit that Tinsley didn't know they were working for him. Maddox told Liz and Bean that he'd been hired to cut production costs at the factory by 30% so the mill wouldn't have to be sold and the jobs sent to Asia. He believed Tinsley's concerns about the softball team and quality were not important. Maddox seemed as if Tinsley being fired had amused him.

In Chapter 20, Bean was relieved when her mom finally called and said that she and Liz should plan on going to school in Byler that year. She liked Aunt Al and admired her for how hard she worked. Despite her hard work however, Aunt Al never complained and always spoke highly of her kids. She told them Ruth, who had been away helping Aunt Al's sister who had meningitis, would be coming home soon. Truman had also sent her another letter. He had fallen in love with a Vietnamese girl and wanted his mother's advice on what he should do. Even though she wasn't sure Byler was ready for a mixed race marriage, she told her son that if that was what he wanted to do she would welcome the girl with open arms.

When Aunt Al learned that Liz and Bean would be going to school in Byler that year she told Bean the school year was likely to be a challenge because the schools would be forced to integrate beginning that year. Uncle Clarence came in and said he thought it was American to let students attend whichever school they wanted to, not to force them to attend the same school. He also was angry with the way the war was going with Harvard scholars spitting on and abusing them for fighting.

In Chapter 21, Liz and Bean met Ruth a few days later. They talked about the integration which Ruth thought might be a good thing. She said the addition of the big black guys to the football team might take the team to state. Because some of the white football players would have to be cut from the team to make room for the blacks, the cheerleaders who were dating the football players who would be cut were threatening to quit the cheer squad. No girl from the hill had ever made the cheerleading squad but it was thought one might this year because some others were quitting. Ruth invited Liz and Bean both to try out for the cheerleading squad. Bean went along willingly but Liz didn't seem like she was that interested.

Later, they discussed work. Ruth said she had no intention of working at the mill when she graduated high school. Liz mentioned she had been doing some work for Maddox. Ruth warned Liz to be careful around Maddox. Bean wondered if Liz would ask Ruth about Maddox claim that he'd had to fire Ruth but instead Liz changed the subject and asked Ruth how they needed to wear their hair for the tryouts. After they practiced with



the other girls Bean said she might try out but Liz thought the cheering was excruciating.

In Chapter 22, the next time Liz and Bean went to work Maddox gave them savings account passbooks. He explained he would deposit the money they made into the joint account instead of giving them cash. Liz liked the idea because she'd be earning interest. Bean decided she wanted to get cash instead. Maddox criticized her for choosing the loser's way.

In Chapter 23, Bean didn't make the cheerleading squad. There were three slots open on the squad. Ruth made the squad as well as two black girls. The white students were angry because two black students had made the squad, while the black students were angry that three blacks hadn't made the squad. Uncle Clarence, however, was in an unusually good mood because Ruth had made the squad. He came home carrying a bottle in a brown bag. He even danced and played the guitar. Aunt Al explained that when Uncle Clarence drank he got happy and danced.

In Chapter 24, Maddox had Bean go with him and Doris to a prenatal checkup. Bean described Maddox's driving as being like a demon. On the way to the hospital Maddox stopped at a store and said he was going to get everyone chips and sodas. He asked both Doris and Bean what they wanted but then got Bean what he wanted her to have instead for what she'd asked for. Bean tried to argue with Maddox that what she'd wanted had good qualities but Maddox shut her down. When Maddox began getting angry with Bean, Doris told her she shouldn't try to argue with Maddox, just be glad he'd gotten her anything. Later when Bean talked to Liz about the disagreement Liz told her she was getting too worked up over something that really wasn't important. Liz advised Bean to choose her battles.

Analysis

Notice in this section of the novel that Liz seems to be becoming more distant and withdrawn even as Bean tries to find her spot in Byler. Bean agrees to try out for the cheerleading squad but Liz doesn't seem to be excited about the idea from the beginning. She doesn't want to be like all the other girls by wearing her hair in a ponytail and comments that she isn't sure if she likes herself with her hair pulled back. As the practice continues Liz is less and less enthusiastic. She finally tells Bean she doesn't plan on trying out for the cheer squad because she thinks it is "excruciating" (p. 123).

Even though Liz takes her stand against cheerleading, she will not take a stand against Maddox. One day when Bean is infuriated because Maddox bought her an RC Cola and Pringles when she asked for an orange soda and Cheetos, and then told her why his choice was superior to hers, Liz advises Bean she should learn to pick her battles. Bean believes her opinion should have just as much value as Maddox's opinion, especially when it comes to snack food. In this section Maddox also criticizes Bean's choice when she decides to get her pay in cash instead of having Maddox deposit it into a saving account. In this means of receiving her pay Bean does show good sense because it is



easy to assume that Maddox isn't trustworthy. The fact that Liz does allow Maddox to put her money into the bank for her, particularly since it is put into a joint account, will precipitate a new problem later in the novel.

In this section of the novel notice that Aunt Al indicates that she believes Byler might be more accepting of a mixed race marriage than the people might have been in the past. She makes this comment because her son, Truman, who is serving in the Vietnam War has fallen in love with a Vietnamese woman. He has written his mother asking her opinion of his idea of marrying the girl and bringing her home. In her usual loving way Aunt Al tells him that she will welcome the girl with open arms.

Notice also in this section of the novel that Byler High School is about to go through forced integration. Aunt Al fears racial tension associated with this integration will make the school year an interesting one. Uncle Clarence believes the blacks should be allowed to go to school at their own school while the whites go to a different school, just like it has always been done. He thinks it is natural for people with different skin tones to be separated and believes the people would prefer to be around people who are like themselves any way. Even though he complains so much about the integration, he doesn't complain when his daughter makes the cheerleading squad because some of the cheerleaders dropped out because they didn't want to cheer for black boys.

Finally, in this section of the novel, the reader learns more about Maddox and his personality. First, he is very paranoid. He lectures Bean and Liz about shredding all their paperwork because an enemy could get hold of even the most innocent document and turn it against them. This is basically what Maddox will do to the girls later in the novel. Maddox is also very controlling, a personality trait shown not only by his decision to put the girls' pay into savings accounts without telling them but also because those savings accounts are joint accounts. Because Maddox's name is on the account he can withdraw money as well as depositing it. Maddox also demonstrates his controlling personality when he buys Bean the snacks he wants her to have instead of what she asks for.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the differences in Liz and Bean that are beginning to develop in this section of the novel.

Discussion Question 2

What impact has forced integration already had on the high school at Byler?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Liz's advice to Bean that she needs to choose her fights. What do you think she means by this?

Vocabulary

distort, eke, curmudgeon, aerograms, integrating, forlorn, excruciating, accumulating, squandering, virtues, bodes, incompetent



Chapters 25-29

Summary

In Chapter 25, Liz and Bean each bought one brightly colored outfit that would stand out among the clothes that they bought to go to school. On the first day of school they wore these outfits and discovered they fit in better with the black kids who wore bright colors than the white kids who wore jeans and t-shirts. Because of her lime green outfit Bean earned the nickname Day-Glo Girl.

In Chapter 26, Bean describes the riled up atmosphere at Byler High. She felt kids were waiting for a fight. Other than that Bean was surprised how easy her classes were. She was frustrated with home economics where she was taught how to properly set a table and told why she should wear a girdle, things Bean didn't believe were even practical.

Bean began volunteering on the pep squad once she learned she could get out of home ec one class a week. Bean encouraged Liz to join the pep squad because she was able to help her come up with good slogans for posters but Liz refused saying the group was too "tribal" (137). A black girl on the pep squad, Vanessa Johnson, got offended when the leader asked her to help Bean with a banner. Later, when the girl got miffed at Bean for making a suggestion about the banner, Bean told the girl she wasn't being fair. The girl shot back that it wasn't fair that their school was closed and they had to go to the white school. Vanessa told Bean how much pride the kids and families had in Nelson High School and they'd had to give all that up. She was on the pep squad because she intended to support her cousin, who had made the cheerleading squad, and the football players who came from Nelson. She also didn't plan to give up but would try out for cheerleading again the following year. Bean suggested they get "cracking" (139) on the banner, a word play that Vanessa smiled at because she'd just called Bean a cracker.

In Chapter 27, Maddox approached Bean while she was folding clothes in the basement. He boxed her into a corner and put his finger in her underarm, feeling that she was beginning to grow underarm hair. Bean jerked away, feeling uncomfortable but Maddox told her what he was doing to her and discussing with her was just part of what being an adult was about. He pretended to kid with her, asking if she was mad at him and if she wanted to hit him. Before he left, he handed her \$20. Bean took it but felt like she was being paid off for something she had done wrong. Bean told Liz that night she didn't like Maddox. When Liz replied that Bean needed to learn how to handle him Bean decided not to tell her about the underarm incident.

In Chapter 28, when their mother called, usually once a week, she told them that living in Byler would help them understand why she turned out the way she did. Liz agreed with their mother's opinion that Byler was quaint and uneducated while Bean had tried to fit in. Liz was even wearing some of her mother's old clothes making her stand out even more from the other kids. Liz also refused to show school spirit on game days like



the other students did. She said she wanted to be a nonconformist, especially since she had to wear what Maddox instructed her to wear at work.

At the game the blacks and whites sat separately. The white fans cheered for the white players while the black fans cheered only for the black players. The away team, the Owls, had always been a weak team in the past and the Byler Bulldogs didn't think they'd have a problem beating them. By the second quarter Byler was down two touchdowns because the white players on the Bulldogs team wouldn't throw to the black players and vice versa. Soon the Bulldog fans were booing their own team. When the Owls scored another touchdown Bean saw a white man throw a hamburger at Leticia, the black girl who had made the Bulldog cheer squad. Leticia ignored it and continued to smile and cheer. When another man threw a cup of drink at her she kept cheering even though she had stopped smiling. A black man retaliated by throwing a drink at Ruth. Joe couldn't stand it and charged the man. A full fledged fight broke out in the stands. The police had to break the fight up.

In Chapter 29, on the next school day the kids were worked up either about the fight or the loss. The principal made an announcement on the PA asking for students to have mutual respect for one another. Miss Jarvis was the only one of Bean's teachers who chose to address the problem directly. She asked her students for input on the problem that caused the stress between blacks and whites. After she'd gotten some input she assigned her students to read "To Kill a Mockingbird."

Many of the students in Bean's class had problems with the book because they believed the black and white roles were too stereotypical for the book to be taken seriously. Whites were either good and respectable or they were poor white trash. Blacks were pictured as being helpless while "good" blacks were described as knowing their place. The teacher went a step further and asked the students to write an essay about race relations. Uncle Tinsley was happy to give Bean input when he learned about her assignment. He described how segregation had started in the North and not the South. He added blacks and whites in the South had actually gotten along better after the Civil War than those in the North did. Jim Crow laws were used to turn poor whites in the South against the blacks, a condition that C. Vann Woodward called negrophobia, according to Uncle Tinsley. When Bean finished reading her essay in class the next day one student asked what negrophobia was. Vanessa said it was a big word to describe people who didn't like black people. She also called Bean "one crazy-ass white girl" (153).

Analysis

On their first day of school Bean and Liz make a fashion faux pas that gets them attention for all the wrong reasons. Remember that when their mother painted their bungalow in Lost Lake bright colors she told them that she didn't want them to even pretend they were trying to fit in. Liz may be following this advice when she decides that she and Bean should buy brightly colored outfits for their first day of school. Instead of



standing out from everyone, however, they arrive at school to discover they are dressed like the black kids.

Meanwhile, the school year doesn't get off to a very good start with the white kids angry the black kids are there and the black kids angry that they've been forced to attend a school to which they'll never feel like they belong. In this section, however, there are many snapshots of bravery presented as the students try to adjust to a new school.

One of these brave students is Leticia. Leticia is the black cheerleader who has food thrown at her during the first football game of the season. Even though the thrower intends his act to be degrading and humiliating, Leticia continues to cheer. At first Leticia even manages to keep a smile on her face as she cheers even though food is being thrown at her.

Also brave is Vanessa. Even though she shares with Bean her belief that Byler will never be her school, she still joins the pep squad. She's still willing to fight for her place as she tells Bean she plans to try out for the cheerleading squad again the following year. She is one of the black girls who tried out but didn't make the squad. She doesn't believe in giving up. She is brave because she plans to keep fighting even though she knows she's fighting a hard battle.

Meanwhile, Bean's relationship with Maddox becomes troubling when he touches her inappropriately one day while she is working for him. He seems to be testing the waters, seeing how far she might let him get. When he senses that she knows what he is doing is wrong he tries to change the tone and pretends to be kidding with her. Before he leaves her Maddox pays Bean \$20. Notice that Bean indicates she doesn't plan to give the money back because she needs it but at the same time feels as if she is "letting him buy me off" (142). The reader has to wonder if Maddox has been inappropriate with Liz as well.

Bean again makes a name for herself in an unusual way when she has Uncle Tinsley help her with her essay about race relations. The essay is assigned by an English teacher trying to get the students to openly discuss what can be done to help blacks and whites get along better. The outcome of Bean's essay, where her uncle directed her to use the word "negrophobia" is that the black and white kids unite on the idea that Bean is crazy.

In this section of the novel Charlotte still calls Bean and Liz once a week. She indicates to them that living in Byler for a short while might help them to understand why she has become the way she is. This is a statement that will fulfill itself later in the novel. Charlotte also hopes that being in Byler will help her daughters be "grateful that she'd taken pains to raise us among open-minded nonconformists instead of people who treated you like a pariah if you didn't do everything exactly the way they did" (143).

Notice that as the novel progresses that Liz becomes more and more one of these nonconformists except for the time she spends working for Maddox. She refuses to even attend the football game and won't join the pep squad when Bean asks her to do



so. She calls the squad “tribal” (137). Liz is happy when her mother degrades cheerleaders when she speaks to them on the phone one day. Remember, however, that back in her time Charlotte was a cheerleader. Regardless, her words encourage Liz’s eccentric behavior. Bean notes that the other kids at school think Liz is weird because she continues to wear her strange clothes, she even makes outfits from some of the clothes that she finds in the attic at Mayfield.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss bravery as it is presented in this section of the novel.

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Charlotte believes her children might appreciate her more if they spend some time in the town where she grew up?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Maddox’s behavior with Bean. Does this behavior change your opinion of him? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

gussied, disembowel, tribal, nonconformists, pariah, quaint, indentured, lynched, segregation, hypocritical, dictating



Chapters 30-33

Summary

In Chapter 30, Liz and Bean found an old guitar in the attic at Mayfield. Uncle Tinsley said it was their mother's. Liz began teaching herself to play it. Finally she decided she wanted an instrument that was in better shape so she went to withdraw some money from her savings account to buy it. It was late before she returned with the news that Maddox had taken her money out of the bank and invested it in T-bills, which had a higher interest rate. He'd criticized her when she said she wanted her money for a guitar. Uncle Tinsley overheard Liz complaining to Bean that the money she'd earned was her's and Maddox shouldn't be able to tell her what she could do with it. Uncle Tinsley was upset when he learned his Holladay nieces had been working for Maddox but asked to be told the whole story. After he'd listened he said he wasn't surprised by the way Maddox had treated her. He told her not to have anything to do with Maddox again and to just forget about the money.

In Chapter 31, Liz told Bean that night that she was going to get her money even though Uncle Tinsley had told her to forget about it. She went to see Maddox after school on Tuesday. When Liz wasn't home at dinner time Bean told Uncle Tinsley that Liz had some things to do. Uncle Tinsley realized Bean was lying and inferred Liz had gone to try and get her money.

While Bean and Uncle Tinsley were cleaning up after dinner a man who identified himself as Wayne Clemmons brought Liz home. She'd been crying and had bruises on her face. He told Uncle Tinsley what happened wasn't right. Maddox had asked Wayne to drive him and Liz, whom Maddox described to Wayne as a hooker, around. Wayne heard Liz asking Maddox for her money and then heard a struggle in the backseat. At a red light the girl had gotten out of the car and run. Maddox followed her and Liz ran back to the car got in and locked the doors telling Wayne to drive. He realized she wasn't a hooker when she told him she was Tinsley Holladay's niece and she wanted him to take her to Mayfield. When Uncle Tinsley thanked Wayne for bringing Liz home Wayne said he'd testify that what Maddox had done wasn't right.

After Wayne left Bean thought that Uncle Tinsley would want to go to the police but he said they should just get Liz cleaned up and into bed. Bean was surprised and asked if he was going to press charges. Uncle Tinsley said what had happened couldn't be undone by pressing charges. He thought going to the police would only make things worse.

In Chapter 32, Liz wanted a hot bath so Bean ran one for her even though she felt she might be destroying evidence. Liz told Bean that Maddox had tried to rape her but wasn't successful before she stopped talking. Once Liz was in bed Bean went back downstairs to tell Uncle Tinsley they should go to the police. He believed a trial would only make things worse, but Bean didn't want Maddox to get away with what he had



done. Uncle Tinsley tried to explain to Bean how much Maddox enjoyed a fight, especially in court. He commonly sued people over minor things. Maddox liked to learn the law so he could find ways to bend and break it. Bean also narrates that her uncle told her how Maddox liked to fight dirty. Back in her room Bean wondered if her mother was right when she said all her family wanted to do was pretend things didn't happen. She looked at her father's picture and Silver Star and thought that he wouldn't have just pretended nothing had happened.

In Chapter 33, the next morning Uncle Tinsley said nothing about what had happened to Liz. Bean had already decided she and Liz needed to go see a lawyer. She knew that Uncle Tinsley probably knew plenty of lawyers, but since he wasn't talking about what had happened Bean decided not to bring it up. She took Liz to see the lawyer William Corbin. When the lawyer heard about what had happened he asked Bean if they wanted to file charges. She told him she really wanted Uncle Tinsley to kill Maddox but since that wasn't going to happen she wanted to find out what they could do legally. He told the girls they had two options: they could either file charges or they could blame it on bad judgement on the part of both Liz and Maddox and forget about it.

Bean told the lawyer they couldn't just forget about it because Maddox could do the same thing to someone else. Mr. Corbin told Liz and Bean they couldn't do anything without their uncle's permission. He called Uncle Tinsley and explained what Liz and Bean wanted to do. Uncle Tinsley wasn't happy but agreed to meet the girls at the sheriff's department. At the sheriff's department Liz was taken to the back to give her statement. Uncle Tinsley arrived and sat with Bean. He ruffled her hair after they'd sat for several minutes without speaking. The police took some pictures of Liz and asked some questions. When she came out she asked to go home.

Analysis

The plot of the novel reaches a climax as Maddox tries to sexually assault Liz when she goes to ask him for the money she is due from her work. Although her Uncle Tinsley has told Liz to forget about the money she decides to confront Maddox anyway and makes some bad decisions. One of the bad decisions that she makes is her decision to go alone to Maddox to ask for her money. The second is her willingness to get in the car with Maddox when he asks her to do so.

Once the attack is over the family has two choices: they can either file charges and risk a legal battle with Maddox or they can pretend it didn't happen. It is Bean who insists that what happened to Liz can't just be ignored. She not only doesn't want Maddox to think he got away with what he did to her sister, she also doesn't want him to do the same thing to another girl. Remember in the previous section that Charlotte told her girls that she hoped that by living in Byler her daughters would begin to understand why she has become the person she is. When things got tough for her in Byler she ran away. Now her daughters are facing a similar decision. Should they figuratively "run away" from the problem by ignoring it or should they stay and fight it?



Even though Bean does the mature thing by going to a lawyer to discuss her sister's case notice that she makes her choice the way only a 12 year old would do. She goes to a lawyer that she knows is the father of one of her classmates. The author continues to drop in information like this to remind the reader that even though Bean acts very mature, she is still just a child who has had to grow up very quickly. Notice that when Bean tries to lie to her Uncle Tinsley to cover up for her sister, she does a very bad job of it. Her failure at lying to her uncle is another sign that Bean is just a child trying to deal with an adult world.

When Bean chooses to lead the family to stand up against Maddox, a man who is nothing but a bully, she shows bravery. After Wayne brings Liz home Bean asks Uncle Tinsley at that point if they were going to file charges. He discourages the idea. "You can't undo it by pressing charges. It'll only create more trouble — and more scandal" (163) Uncle Tinsley tells Bean. He seems to believe the best line of action is to leave Maddox alone and just pretend like nothing happened. Remember Charlotte's accusal when she returned to Mayfield that the family was great at pretending nothing happened. May be there is more truth to what she said than she is given credit for, as Bean notes on Page 166.

It appears that for years people have been pretending nothing has happened when it comes to Maddox. He has bullied people at the mill and in the town into a place where they believe he is in charge and they have to do as he says. Even though she is a child Bean realizes something has to happen to stop Maddox. When the lawyer asks her why she wants to press charges against Maddox she replies: "'Because what Maddox did was wrong,' I said, 'and because then he'll be walking around laughing about how he got away with it.' At that point, something occurred to me. 'And he might do it again.'" (171). Bean realizes not only that not pressing charges will give Maddox more power over them but will also give him the opportunity to hurt someone else.

Notice in this section of the novel the Charlie Wyatt's Silver Star plays an important role. It is when Bean looks at this medal that she realizes she and her family need to fight against Maddox. She infers from the stories she's heard of her father that he would not pretend nothing had happened. Bean makes the decision that she wants to be brave like her father.

Discussion Question 1

What course of action do you think Bean and the family should have taken against Maddox? Do you think it is best to file charges or should they have taken Uncle Tinsley's advice and pretended nothing happened?

Discussion Question 2

How does the author build up suspense prior to the reader learning that Liz has been attacked by Maddox?



Discussion Question 3

How does the Silver Star won by her father measure into Bean's decision that she doesn't want to pretend nothing had happened to her sister?

Vocabulary

liquidated, vile, aura, voracious, etched, sordid



Chapters 34-38

Summary

Chapter 34, Doris Maddox came to Mayfield later that afternoon. Because Doris had sometimes talked badly about her husband Bean thought at first that she'd come to try to smooth things over and apologize. Instead, she cursed them and warned them they'd decided to pick a fight with the wrong man. Doris called Bean and Liz sluts and skanks and accused them of stealing from her. She said even though there was a witness they still wouldn't win the case. After she left, Bean narrates that Uncle Tinsley cursed for the first time saying the trial would be a "shit storm" (176).

Chapter 35, Liz refused to go to school the next day. As soon as she arrived at school Bean knew everyone was talking about the charges. Even though Bean thought it was a big story there was only a small nugget about the assault on the back page of the paper. The kids made fun of Bean in the hallway. Vanessa told Bean that going to the law was a "white" (178) thing to do. She said if it was her she never would have gotten into a car with Maddox. Things were even worse at school the next day, a Friday. People had even thrown trash at Bean when she went out on the gym floor with the pep squad. Bean tried to ignore the booing and the trash but she finally gave up and left. Terri Pruitt agreed with her when she said she thought it would be best if she quit the pep squad.

Later Bean noticed a teacher look away when some boys picked on her as she was boarding her bus. Joe, however, walked up to Bean. The boys backed off when they learned Bean was his cousin. Joe said they could talk about what happened or they could talk about chestnuts. Bean suggested they talk about chestnuts.

In Chapter 36, Liz was doubting her own decisions, even her decision for them to move to Mayfield in the first place. She said she couldn't control the voices in her head. Bean kept trying to call her mother but had no luck getting in touch with her. She forced Liz to go with her to gather chestnuts with Joe and Aunt Al. Aunt Al told Liz she believed her. She said a lot of people in town believed her as well but were afraid they'd lose their jobs if they went up against Maddox. Liz countered she was just crazy when Aunt Al said what she was doing was gutsy. Aunt Al even joined Joe, Bean and Liz in going to gather chestnuts.

Chapter 37, Bean and Uncle Tinsley made Liz go to school on Monday. The students either avoided Liz or mimicked her during school that day. The taunting became worse each day. On Friday Lisa Saunders passed out a questionnaire for people to fill out if they wanted to be her friend. One of the questions was about Liz asking what a boy should take on a date with Liz for protection. Bean attacked Lisa. The vice principal deemed the fight unladylike and wouldn't even listen to Bean's explanation of what started the fight. Bean accused the teachers of deserving no respect because they chose to ignore what was happening to Liz. She got even angrier when the teacher said the fight had nothing to do with Maddox. In the end, Bean was suspended because of



the way she talked to the principal. Lisa Saunders was not punished for her role in the fight.

Chapter 38, Uncle Tinsley was mortified when he learned that Bean had gotten suspended. Even though he was afraid the people in the community would have a lower opinion of the family Bean noticed that the girls at school did stop teasing her and Liz. Bean got the feeling the kids thought Liz was a tattletale for filing charges but Bean was to be respected for throwing punches. A trial date was set for March. Piles of garbage that were obviously from the Maddox home began appearing in the Holladay's front yard. Maddox began trying to run down Liz and Bean with his car. Bean started carrying rocks in her pocket to throw at the car but never considered telling Uncle Tinsley or filing a report with the police. Liz was becoming more and more paranoid because of the way Maddox was stalking them. She finally got so bad that Bean decided she needed to kill Maddox.

Analysis

Tension builds as the Holladay family begins to feel retribution almost immediately after filing charges against Maddox. Although Doris has also been abused by her husband and often complained to Bean about the way he treated her, Doris is the first one to attack the Holladays. She seems to be brainwashed by her husband because she calls Liz and Bean skanks and lying sluts. Doris believes that Liz set Maddox up in an attempt to get revenge on him for Uncle Tinsley being fired from the mill years prior.

At school Bean endures students talking about her and laughing. Vanessa tells Bean that going to the law was "such a white thing to do" (178). Vanessa blames Liz for asking for the attack when she tells Bean that Liz shouldn't have gotten into the backseat of the car with Maddox in the first place. "You climb in the backseat with the boss man, you got to expect something's going to happen. That's just the way it is" (178) Vanessa told Bean.

Bean tries to keep up her brave face but it finally crumbles during that week's Friday pep rally. When she and Vanessa begin cheering the students boo them and then begin throwing trash. Bean remembers Leticia at the football game who kept smiling and cheering even though food was being thrown at her. She also tries to follow Vanessa's example as the black girl keeps smiling and cheering but when the students begin throwing things at them and it appears they won't stop, Bean walks off the floor. She realizes it doesn't make any sense for her to keep on cheering as the students are intent on ridiculing her.

Notice in this section Bean's outburst against adults who do not do their jobs. She has become fed up with abuse she is receiving at school and failure of the teachers to stop any of the bullying. Not only is she humiliated at a pep rally without a teacher stepping in to put a stop to the bullying of the students, but she is also confronted by a group of boys at the bus stop. No teacher steps in to help her there either. It is only because her cousin, Joe Wyatt, steps up that the boys leave her alone. When Bean is taken to the



principal's office after she is caught fighting with a girl, Bean is infuriated because all the vice principal can talk about is how the girls were being unladylike. Bean believes she should address the cause of the fight; that the girl Bean hit was making fun of her sister. In a case of reverse justice Bean gets suspended while the other girl is not punished at all.

Bean takes away from her fight an important lesson about life. She notes that after she attacked Lisa when the girl made fun of Liz students stopped picking on her. Bean realizes that while people believe filing charges is like "being a tattletale" (191), throwing physical punches earns one respect. She notices that after she returns to school from her suspension the students treat her differently.

While Bean is feeling better about her position, Liz is become slowly more and more disturbed by what has happened. She second guesses her own decisions and wonders if what happened might be her fault because she got in the car with Maddox. She tells Bean she hears voices in her head suggesting different options for her to take in handling the matter. She can't decide to which one she should listen. To make matters worse Maddox has taken to following the girls around town and running them off the road with his car every time he gets the opportunity. It appears he is just trying to scare the girls into dropping the charges but the stress has a negative effect on Liz making her even more nervous than ever.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Bean is right to give up her position on the pep squad because she was booed by the students?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Bean's decision to kill Maddox. How serious do you think she is? Would killing him solve anything?

Discussion Question 3

What impression does it make on children when adults don't stand up for what is right? How might the vice principal have handled the fight between Bean and Lisa more appropriately?

Vocabulary

amends, concoct, dawdling, repulsive, unseemly



Chapters 39-44

Summary

In Chapter 39, Bean considered rolling a rock down the ridge near Maddox's house that she imagined would smash him. She even enlisted Joe to help her but at the time they were looking for Maddox to come out of the house Doris came instead. Both Bean and Joe decided their plan wasn't such a good idea. Joe suggested they do something to the Le Mans that would really hurt Maddox.

In Chapter 40, Joe and Bean decided to slash the tires of the car. They did it one night with Joe getting two of the tires cut before Bean hooted like an owl, the signal someone was coming. On their way home the two got stopped by the police. Joe was taken to jail because he had a knife in his pocket even though he said he hadn't cut the tires.

In Chapter 41, Bean felt bad because she had gotten Joe into trouble. She didn't tell Uncle Tinsley or Liz what had happened but went to visit Joe first thing the next morning. The cops had taken his knife but since they didn't have any evidence he'd slashed the tires Joe had been let go. After breakfast there was a knock at the door. It was Maddox. Maddox accused Joe of being the one who cut his tires even though Joe continued to deny the act. Uncle Clarence asked what was happening and Maddox told him that Joe had cut his tires. He threatened Uncle Clarence and Aunt Al by telling them that since they took the mill's money they had to do as he told them to do. He ordered that Uncle Clarence give Joe a beating. Uncle Clarence came back with a belt and did as Maddox requested. Joe never said a word during the beating and walked away once it was finished.

In Chapter 42 Uncle Clarence didn't take Maddox up on his offer to go have a beer. Instead, he went to the veteran's hall. When everyone was gone Aunt Al asked Bean what they thought they were doing. Bean explained how Maddox was tormenting them but Aunt Al warned Bean all she was doing was adding fuel to Maddox's fire. Ruth came home while they were still talking. She told them that she stopped working for Maddox because he had tried to seduce her. Ruth hadn't told Aunt Al because she hadn't wanted anyone to know.

In Chapter 43 Bean realized her mother had disappeared again when four weeks passed with Bean being unable to get in touch with her. When she finally called she said she'd been at a spiritual retreat in the Catskills. She was talking about how balance she felt when Bean told her that Liz was in trouble and there was going to be a trial. Their mother was at Mayfield by the time Liz and Bean got home from school the next day. Uncle Tinsley had already told her what had happened between Liz and Maddox. When Bean talked about how the other girls were teasing Liz their mother decided to homeschool her. Since her mother seemed to be rising to the occasion, really paying attention to Liz and avoiding arguments with Uncle Tinsley, Bean got over the anger she felt when she first saw her mother again. Her mother even seemed to be helping Liz to



deal with the voices she heard, telling her not to ignore them. She advised Liz that if she could look into the darkness of what happened to her she could perhaps find a jewel there.

Even though they'd never really done anything for Christmas in past years Uncle Tinsley told them they needed to do something to acknowledge the holiday in Chapter 44. He and Bean cut down a spruce tree and they decorated it with antique ornaments. They put on performances for each other instead of giving gifts on Christmas Day. After Bean recited her negrophobia speech the family started talking about Confederate memorabilia all around the town. Uncle Tinsley said the memorabilia wasn't about racism but pride and tradition. He refused to play the piano for them but said he did plan to cook a traditional meal.

Liz and her mother did a good deal of reading during their homeschooling. Liz loved Edgar Allen Poe so their mother made an entire course of his writing. Uncle Tinsley was also helping with the schooling. He gave lectures on calculus, geology and the Civil War. Even though Maddox kept trying to hit Bean with his car it didn't upset her as badly because Liz wasn't with her. She joined the yearbook staff and found she enjoyed it more than the pep squad. The blacks and whites at the school seemed to be getting along better. Even though the football team had a bad season, the basketball team was doing better.

Joe had become more withdrawn since his father beat him but Aunt Al talked Uncle Clarence into letting Joe get a dog. Joe named the mutt Dog. He told Bean they could share the dog. Despite the Maddox issue, Bean enjoyed her time in Byler.

Analysis

After the tire slashing incident in this section of chapters things seem to calm down somewhat for the Holladay family. Bean, Liz, Charlotte and Uncle Tinsley enjoy a family Christmas together at Mayfield with no fighting. Bean admits at this point that she enjoys living in Byler.

It is in this section of chapters that takes place months after Maddox attacked Liz that Bean finally gets in touch with her mother to let her know what happened. When Charlotte comes to Mayfield Bean wonders at first if she has done the right thing by calling her mother. When she notices her mother is crying she hopes that she will not have to spend her time bracing up both her mother and Liz. Even though she has shown signs of being a lousy mother in the past, Charlotte rises to the occasion and becomes a great source of support for Liz. She pulls Liz out school and teaches her at home, getting Liz out of the stressful situation there. She encourages Liz to listen to the voices in her head and tells her that she isn't crazy because she hears voices.

Significant is that the family does pull together to help Liz. Even though Charlotte thinks Mayfield is unbearable she manages to stay there to support her daughter. Despite their differences, she and Uncle Tinsley get along enough to avoid fighting.



A significant scene in this section of the novel is the one where Uncle Clarence whips Joe because Maddox tells him to do so. The whipping is a defining moment in the relationship between Joe and his father. Joe deserves the whipping. He did slash Maddox's tires and lie about it. The problem is that Uncle Clarence whips Joe because Maddox orders him to whip him. Joe must feel like he has been betrayed by his father and that his father considers Maddox to be the ruler of the family simply because he has power at the mill. Notice that Bean describes Joe as being quiet and withdrawn after the whipping. Uncle Clarence's decision to blindly follow Maddox's order doesn't seem like something he normally would do. Perhaps he is thinking that if he doesn't humor Maddox that Maddox will make life difficult for Aunt Al, who does work at the mill. He may also be thinking of the children he has at home that he has to support and believes he can't afford to make trouble with Maddox because he'd have no way to feed his family if Aunt Al lost her job and his disability was taken away.

Remember in this section that Ruth finally admits to her mother that she decided to stop working for Maddox because he tried to make a move on her. This is significant because it lends verification to Liz's story. Liz is not the only girl who has been assaulted by Maddox. If he made moves on Liz, Bean and Ruth there have probably been more girls who have had similar experiences with him.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Bean and Joe's plan to kill Maddox would have worked? Why or why not? Why did Bean ultimately not go through with her plan? What does her decision say about her character?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Uncle Clarence goes along with Maddox's order to whip Joe?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Charlotte's act of rising to the occasion during this section of the novel. Do you think her behavior is a fluke or do you think she is really changing?

Vocabulary

strategize, lichen, nixed, suss, justifiable, nonchalant, confiscated, wanton, oblige, transcendence, muse, pagan, bountiful, candid, pelt



Chapters 45-47

Summary

In Chapter 45 Bean admits in her narration that she felt good about the trial. Dickey Bryson, the prosecuting attorney, felt the trial would be easy. The deputy who took Liz's statement, Bean, Uncle Tinsley, Wayne and Liz would all testify. Even though Bean felt they had a strong case with Wayne's promise to testify to what he'd seen, Liz got more and more nervous as the day of the trial got closer. The day of the trial Liz had dry heaves. Bean and Liz wore the only dressy clothes they had while their mother wore her red velvet jacket. They tried to encourage Liz as they drove to the courthouse. Bean thought it was a good sign when she saw the Tammy Elbert was on the jury. The witnesses were asked to step outside when the trial actually started.

In Chapter 46, Bean was questioned first by Bryson. She explained how she and Liz had come to be working for Maddox as well as what she knew of the night Liz was assaulted. During his cross examination Leland Hayes' questioned Bean why she and Liz needed jobs. He asked how Bean's father died, a question to which Bryson objected but it reminded the jury of the scandal involving Charlotte. In his questioning Hayes also made Charlotte appear unable to take care of her own children. Hayes questioned Bean about her mother's habit of making things up and asked if Bean would ever lie to make her uncle happy or to hurt Maddox. He also asked Bean if she stole food or money from the Maddoxes. She did admit that Joe slashed Maddox's tires because the man was trying to kill her and Liz by running them over with his car. Bean was surprised by all the information she allowed the lawyer to get out of her while she was on the stand.

When Wayne testified he told the jury he'd only heard Maddox and Liz arguing about money but didn't really see what had happened. Bryson was startled and asked Wayne about the statement he'd given to the police. Wayne made excuses saying he was drinking that night and didn't have a good memory since the war so he sometimes forgot things that did happen and thought things happened that didn't. Bean yelled that Wayne was lying. The judge had the bailiff escort Bean outside. She saw Wayne and asked him why he lied. He just shook his head and walked away. Bean watched as the bailiff walked with Liz into the courtroom.

When Liz, Uncle Tinsley and her mother finally came out of the courtroom Bean learned the lawyer had been hard on Liz. Maddox had also called them thieves and liars. Bean was upset when Maddox ate at the same diner to which they went for lunch. Uncle Tinsley warned her not to talk to Maddox or she would cause a mistrial. Back at the courthouse the jury took less than an hour for its deliberations. The jurors found Maddox not guilty on all the charges. Bean felt confused as she heard the innocent declared guilty and the guilty declared innocent. She wondered how she was supposed to live in a world like that. Bryson told them he-said-she-said cases were hard to prove, especially since their witness fell through.



In Chapter 47, Charlotte complained about the way the defense lawyer had painted both her and Liz during the trial. He said Liz had a habit of making things up and blamed Tinsley for causing the bruises. Charlotte also complained about the small-mindedness of the people in Byler and complained about the way the Holladay family was put on trial instead of Maddox. When Uncle Tinsley told his sister to shut up she complained everyone in the family had been told just to shut up, Bean was the only one with the courage to stand up for her sister and say that the testimony she was hearing was lies. Liz commented nothing had happened, and then began playing with the words “pack of lies” (231). Her voice was a monotone. When Bean asked her to stop Liz said she couldn’t.

Back at home Liz went upstairs for a nap. Bean chopped wood for Uncle Tinsley to build a fire. Once the fire was going Charlotte suggested Bean go up to see if Liz wanted to come downstairs. Liz was laying on her bed, still wearing her clothes. Bean heard her make a gurgling noise that scared her. She tried to talk to her sister but her words were slurred. She ran for Uncle Tinsley and her mother. Uncle Tinsley found out Liz had taken some of her mother’s sleeping pills. He made her drink water and then forced her to throw up. Afterward, he put her in the shower and turned the water on cold. Bean thought they should call an ambulance but both Uncle Tinsley and her mother refused to do so. After the drugs seemed to be out of Liz’s system they dried her off and helped her downstairs to sit by the fire. She said she’d just wanted to go to sleep. Bean was angry and accused Liz of trying to kill herself, of doing what Maddox had been trying to do to her. Liz asked them to leave her alone but Charlotte told Liz that Bean was right. Liz didn’t need to give Maddox any satisfaction by hurting herself.

Analysis

A good deal happens in this section of chapters. The main lesson that Bean learns here is that even a judge and jury can be led to make an incorrect decision in a legal case when information is twisted and witnesses don’t tell the truth. The way the lawyers twist the words of the witnesses adds to the theme of the inconsistent nature of right and wrong. The lawyer makes it appear Bean was in the wrong for making herself a sandwich when she fixed food for the Maddox children. He labels her actions as “stealing” even though Bean didn’t realize she was expected to ask permission. He also makes it appear that the games Liz and Bean played, the Lying Game and their habit of making up stories about people to entertain themselves, proved that they were liars.

Wayne’s choice to lie on the witness stand is also an example of how right and wrong can be inconsistent. Wayne swears to Uncle Tinsley and Liz that what he saw Maddox do to Liz wasn’t right and the he intends to testify against Maddox. Something, probably Maddox, changes Wayne’s mind between the time he promised to testify and the time that he lies on the stand.

Notice that although Bean showed her maturity when she encouraged her sister to file charges against Maddox she shows her age when she engages Maddox in a staring contest inside the courthouse. She also shouts out during the trial that Wayne is lying



during his testimony. While Bean's mother later said Bean's actions were brave the judge decides to have the child removed from the courtroom for being disruptive.

The author uses simile to describe the atmosphere in the courtroom. "The benches and wooden jury chairs looked hard, as if they were designed to make sure no one got too comfortable" (217) Bean says of the inside of the courtroom. In the witness chair Bean indicates: "The jurors in the jury box were studying me like I was some sort of curiosity" (220).

It can be said that the outcome of Liz's trial is determined by the fact that the crime took place in a small town where the person she accused is a person of power. "It's one of the joys of small-town life," (229) Charlotte tells Bean when they discover that Maddox and the other people from the trial are eating at the same diner they choose for lunch. Other aspects of living in a small town also appear to figure into the trial. For instance even though it had been so many years ago everyone remembered Charlotte Holladay and how she'd come to be pregnant with Bean when the lawyer asked Bean about her father. The lawyer's line of questioning reminds the jury of the scandal caused by Charlotte when she was living in Byler. The jury can not help but wonder if Liz has the same wild ways as her mother. Notice that when interviewing the jury the judge really doesn't do a proper job of getting a jury together. Because it is such a small town all of the people on the jury know Maddox and Liz. They say they can be impartial but one has to wonder if their prior knowledge of the Maddox and Holladay families might not cloud their judgement.

One aspect of this book that can be difficult for readers is that the author does attempt to cover so much ground in it. In this section alone Bean is trying to deal with a trial that goes wrong because the witness lied on the stand. She's trying to get the idea that a guilty man can be declared innocent even though everyone in the town knows - or at least suspects - that Liz is telling the truth. The reader also has to deal with Liz's suicide attempt, Charlotte's response to the trial and Uncle Tinsley's response to Charlotte. There are so many things going on in the novel it is often hard for the reader to decide what is really important.

Notice that Liz and Bean's mother chooses to wear her red velvet jacket to the trial. Although the others in the courtroom may not recognize the jacket it is the one that symbolizes to Charlotte's daughters how easy lies come to Charlotte. She is basically wearing a symbol of her dishonorable nature.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the trial and the outcome of the trial.

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Liz really intended to kill herself when she took her mother's pills? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Wayne did not testify truthfully at the trial even though he promised Liz, Bean and Uncle Tinsley that he would?

Vocabulary

biased, impartial, platitudes, arraigned, whet, proffer, emphatically, terminate, vendetta, alleged, duration, prejudiced, verdict, monotone, synthesize, demise, scrutinize, primal



Chapters 48-53

Summary

In Chapter 48, the next morning Bean's mother approached Bean with a guide book saying that she had a great idea for a road trip. Bean argued with her, telling her that they couldn't just leave. She told her mother they should stay and try to work out their problem for once. Uncle Tinsley agreed. When her mother pointed out to Bean that she'd tried to work things out by filing charges against Maddox, seeming to make things worse, Bean got angry and told her mother they wouldn't have been in that situation if her mother had acted like an adult to start with. Her mother cried saying there was no way she was staying in Byler. Uncle Tinsley comforted Charlotte telling her she wasn't a bad person. Bean thought about apologizing but decided it was best her mother faced the truth. She went upstairs to check on Liz.

Upstairs she told Liz that her mother didn't want to stay in Byler. She said they needed to decide what they wanted to do. Bean suggested they at least finish the school year in Byler. Liz didn't want to think about the future, she just wanted to sleep. Back downstairs Bean did apologize to her mother but her mother said the statements wouldn't have hurt so badly if they weren't true. Her mother instructed Bean not to apologize for herself and told her that her willingness to speak up could work in her favor.

In Chapter 49 Bean and Uncle Tinsley were cleaning the gutters when they saw Scruggs' emus walk up into their yard. Bean went to get Liz who got dressed. Uncle Tinsley called Scruggs who said that the birds weren't actually his but were Tater's. Uncle Tinsley agreed to keep the emus until Tater returned. Liz, Bean and Uncle Tinsley managed to get the animals into the pasture. Liz found the emus fascinating and spent the afternoon watching them. She gave the emus names, Eugene and Eunice, and looked information about emus up in the encyclopedia. Bean thought that Liz was like the emus, which Liz described as being both weird and beautiful.

In Chapter 50, two days after the trial, Bean went back to school. Liz was still obsessed with the emus and was even writing emu poetry. Their mother still wanted to move away. When Tater came to get the emus they refused to load into the cattle trailer he had brought. Tater was so frustrated he said he hated the emus. Liz defended the birds telling him that she loved them. Since she loved them so much Tater said she could have them. Uncle Tinsley said they could keep the birds as long as Liz would go back to school. Their mother packed and went back to New York. She made promises about how she wanted to find a publisher for Liz's poetry and how she would get an apartment so they could all be together. As they watched their mother's car drive out of the driveway Liz commented to Bean that their mother was gone.

In Chapter 51, Liz handled the teasing at school by pretending like no one else existed. Because Liz didn't want to show anyone her poetry Bean gave some of the poems to



Miss Jarvis who told Liz she had talent. Liz began spending her lunch period in Miss Jarvis' classroom along with some other misfits.

In Chapter 52, Bean and Liz came home from school one day to find Uncle Tinsley and Aunt Al sitting on the front porch together. She told the girls that Maddox had been fired from the mill. Aunt Al said Maddox had gotten completely out of control after the trial. Workers began retaliating because Maddox was being so cruel. Maddox had gotten into a fight with Julius Johnson because Maddox said Julius had taken a bathroom break that was too long. Aunt Al had heard that Maddox had hit on Leticia, the black cheerleader, and thought that might have been on Julius' mind when Maddox began to push him around. Both men had been fired for fighting but Julius had already been offered a new job. Aunt Al told Liz she also figured that Julius Johnson had thought if white girl was willing to stand up to Maddox he should do the same.

In Chapter 53 the emus began running to the fence when they saw Liz and Bean coming with their food. Liz had worked with them enough that Eugene would let her pet him. A couple of weeks later a power crew left the gate to the pasture open and the emus escaped. They found them in a hay field owned by Mr. Munchie a mile from Mayfield. The man agreed to let them stay in his field for the time being. Uncle Tinsley got Bud Hawkins to bring his horse to try to rope the emus. Some kids from school even came to help try to catch the birds. They were not successful and even though Liz and Bean were upset, Bean noticed how the others were enjoying themselves and bragging on the way they worked together as a team.

Analysis

In this section of the novel Bean stands up to her mother when Charlotte suggests they leave Byler and go on a road trip. Bean wants to stay in Byler. She reasons that her mother has never able to solve her problems by running away, just as they have always done all of their lives. Her mother counters, blaming Bean for causing more problems when she encouraged Liz to file charges against Maddox. When Bean asks if they should have run away and accuses her mother of being good at running away her mother is angry saying Bean should act respectful toward her because she is her mother. This is just like Bean's encounter with the vice principal at her school. She resents that lady's inference that she deserves respect just because she holds a title and is an adult. Just like Bean told her vice principal she doesn't respect adults who don't do their jobs, Bean tells her mother she doesn't respect her for running away from everything, even them. "Then act like one for a change. We wouldn't be in this whole mess if you had been acting like a mom all along" (236) Bean says to her mother. Although it is agreed the children will stay with Uncle Tinsley until Charlotte gets settled in New York Liz's statement "she's gone" (245) indicates to the reader that Liz does not expect their mother will ever be back for them.

An oddity in this section of the novel is that the emus show up at Mayfield and turn Liz's life around. She promises Uncle Tinsley if he lets her keep them she will take care of them herself and even go back to school. While these birds had been mentioned in a



couple of earlier sections of the novel and it is even noted that Liz is attracted to the birds, there is nothing up to this point that indicates the birds will be such a strong motivating factor for her. Even Liz's mother is surprised that Liz has such a strong attachment to the birds. "You're telling me you want to stay in Byler because you fell in love with a couple of big, disgusting birds that happened to walk up the driveway?" (244-245) her mother asks her.

Justice begins to be served against Maddox a few days after the trial when he is fired from Holladay Textiles for getting into a fistfight with another worker. Because he has been fired, Maddox no longer has the power in the town he once had. Aunt Al even goes to visit Uncle Tinsley in person to tell him about the incident. She notes that Bean's bravery might have played a role in Maddox being fired as she points out that Julius must have thought he should follow in Bean's lead and stand up to Maddox.

Notice also the strange picture of team work that appears after the group of Byler residents try to catch the emus. This could be a follow up to contrast with the way the football team doesn't play as a team when the schools are first integrated. The idea that this group of citizens that includes some outsiders from the school, some white boys and some black athletes can work together as a team is a picture of the progress the community has made in pulling together regardless of race or personality. It does seem strange that the group develops such a sense of camaraderie even though they are unable to catch the emus. Bean notices the members of the group act like they have been successful in their goal of capturing the birds.

Discussion Question 1

How does Charlotte respond to the news that neither Bean nor Liz wants to leave Mayfield?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the image presented by the group of people who try to help the Holladays capture the emus. Why do you think the author includes this scene in the novel?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that Maddox gets fired from Holladay Textiles? What does this mean to the community?

Vocabulary

imposition, captivating, peruse, ruse, auras, acquitting, doted, lariat



Chapters 54-56

Summary

In Chapter 54, Mr. Munchie had agreed the emus could stay in his pasture and Liz started trying to befriend them both. At Aunt Al's Bean learned that Truman wanted to know if he married Kim-An, his Vietnamese girlfriend, if her parents could come as well. Aunt Al had told Truman she'd do whatever it took to get them to America. She believed family was that important. After breakfast Bean and Joe went to the dump. Joe said he was still enlisting even though the war was going badly. He said they couldn't stop fighting just because they were losing. He also said he would welcome Truman's girlfriend.

On their way back from the dump Dog peed on one of the tires of Maddox's car when they passed it in a parking lot. Maddox saw what happened and came running. He grabbed the dog and put it in his truck. He ordered Bean and Joe to get in the car. They didn't want to do so but Maddox had Joe's dog. Bean was surprised Maddox was still so angry with them even after he had won the trial. At the Wyatts' house Maddox pulled a gun out of his glove box and the dog out of the trunk. He walked into the house without knocking and ordered Aunt Al to get Uncle Clarence. Maddox told Uncle Clarence to get his gun because they needed to kill the dog. Uncle Clarence told Maddox he wasn't the boss anymore but got his gun and went outside as Maddox had asked. He told everyone to stay in the house. They heard a shot then Dog started barking. Maddox was lying dead in Uncle Clarence's garden. Uncle Clarence told his family he'd shot the man because he thought he was a bear.

In Chapter 55, when the police came to talk to Uncle Clarence, he told them the same thing, he thought Maddox was a bear. Aunt Al called Uncle Tinsley to come get Bean. She told him the story Uncle Clarence had made up. On the way home Tinsley indicated he realized Uncle Clarence's story was a lie. Bean wasn't upset about Maddox's death but she wasn't happy either. At home they told Liz what had happened. Liz said she was sick and went upstairs. Bean followed her and told her what had really happened. Liz cried as she thought about Doris and the kids. Bean argued they were better off without their dad, but Liz said she believed their problems were caused because they didn't have a father. She became hysterical saying that she had killed Maddox. She began playing with words like she did when she was upset. Bean held her sister and told her it was not her fault until she went to sleep.

In Chapter 56, Bean worried that the nightmare with Maddox was not really finished. The next morning Uncle Tinsley went to town to see what the tone there was. Liz seemed better when she woke up. Bean thought her sister deserved a medal for what she had gone through. With this in mind she got her father's Silver Star. She thought of all the people in town whose actions deserved a medal. Bean gave the medal to her sister but she wouldn't take it because it belonged to Bean's father. She said she'd always remember that Bean had wanted her to have the medal.



When Uncle Tinsley returned he said everyone was talking about the shooting. Doris was demanding an investigation. No one in the hill area, who all hated Maddox, had heard or seen anything, except for the gunshot. People were speculating that Maddox had been up to no good. They wondered why Maddox had been at the Wyatts' house and why he had a gun on him. Because Uncle Clarence had the right to protect himself, he hadn't even been arrested by the police. Because Maddox had been such a trouble maker the police weren't too worried about the case and were happy to shrug it off. With that, Tinsley said he believed he'd play the piano. She and Liz listened for a while but then Liz told Bean they needed to get the emus. Liz had worked with them to the point she could pet and touch each of them. They put ropes around their necks and led them back home. Sometimes a car would pass and kids would wave at Liz, Bean and their strange birds.

Analysis

This book ultimately ends in a murder. Uncle Clarence kills Maddox in cold blood, just like Bucky Mullens killed Charlie. The difference is that no one seems to care that Maddox is dead. Even those who suspect that Uncle Clarence is lying about how Maddox came to be dead don't push for the truth. Bean, Joe and Aunt Al are the only ones who know about Dog peeing on the tires of Maddox's car and Maddox bringing the dog to Uncle Clarence asking for the dog to be shot. It would be interesting to know what is going on in Uncle Clarence's mind when he decides to shoot Maddox. Does he just crack? Has he just had enough of the bullying, or is it just because Maddox no longer holds any power over his Uncle Clarence's financial status? Did Aunt Al tell him that Maddox had tried to make moves on Ruth? Is Uncle Clarence getting revenge for her?

Unfortunately, because the novel is written from Bean's point of view, the reader has to make up his own mind about Uncle Clarence's motives for shooting Maddox. Notice that when Uncle Tinsley comes to pick Bean up from Aunt Al's that night he asks her about what happened. When Bean's answer indicates the story about the bear isn't really how things happened, Uncle replies that he thinks that the bear story is one with which the community can live. He seems very blasé about Maddox being killed.

The only character in the novel who seems to get terribly upset about Maddox's death is Liz. She seems to believe it is her fault that Uncle Clarence shoots Maddox, and her fault that Maddox's children will grow up without a father. Bean tries to calm Liz down, but Liz works herself up into hysteria. She quiets only when she wears herself out from her emotional outburst.

The next significant scene in the novel is the one where Bean thinks how her sister deserves a medal for what she has been through. When Bean looks at the Silver Star that was awarded to her father she thinks about all the people who are brave in their own ways. Among the people Bean thinks are deserving of a medal are Uncle Clarence, Aunt Al, Uncle Tinsley, Liz and their mother.



In this final section of the novel the author returns to the topic of racial relations when she brings Truman's Vietnamese girlfriend back into the story line. Aunt Al receives another letter from Truman. This time he asks if his mother thinks Kim-An's parents will be welcome in Byler. Although Aunt Al has nothing against the family coming to America she says that Uncle Clarence doesn't like the idea. Joe later tells Bean he doesn't mind if his brother marries an Oriental woman. It seems the reader can interpret this cap to the race theme by inferring that even though race relations have improved, the are still residents of Byler who don't welcome people of other races with open arms.

The final image of the novel is of Liz and Bean leading the birds, who have finally become tamed, back to Mayfield. It appears the author is using the image of the girls leading the birds and waving at people they don't really know to show how well they've integrated into the lifestyle of Byler. Liz decides it is time to go get the birds after Uncle Tinsley decides to play the piano for the first time since his wife, Martha, died. It is strange that Maddox's death has made such a change in the tone of the town. It appears that getting rid of Maddox was what the people needed to feel comfortable - but was killing him really the right answer?

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that Uncle Tinsley decides to play the piano in this section of the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Uncle Clarence decides to shoot Maddox? Do you think Uncle Clarence is justified in what he did?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Liz's response when she learns that Maddox is dead. What does her reaction say about her?

Vocabulary

salvageable, delinquents, menace, ambush, trowel



Characters

Liz Holladay

At 15, Liz Holladay is the older daughter of Charlotte Holladay. Her father is Shelton Stewart a man who left Liz and her mother when Liz was only a small baby. Liz credits herself with saving her sister's life when she was just a baby. Their mother, Charlotte, had left Bean in her carrier on top the car while she drove away. It was Liz's screams that reminded Charlotte the baby was on top of the car.

Bean describes Liz as being beautiful and smart. She loves to play with words making anagrams and rhyming phrases out of the words she hears. When she is nervous or upset Liz compulsively plays these word games as if she is trying to take her mind off what is troubling her. She is most like her mother because she begins trying to avoid conformity and wearing odd clothing, behavior for which her mother prided herself. Liz also agrees with her mother that Byler is a backward town.

As the older sister it is understood that Liz is in charge when her mother is away. In fact, it is Liz who decides that she and Bean need to move to Byler after their mother sends them a letter indicating she doesn't know when she will be back home for them. Liz is serious about protecting her younger sister. When they are followed by a man they refer to as a pervert it is Liz's quick thinking that gets them safely away from him. Later that day Bean sees her sister crying. The reader has to wonder if it is because Liz realizes how dangerous the situation really was for both of them and how easily one of them could have gotten hurt.

In Byler it is Liz who gets hurt when her employer, Jerry Maddox, tries to sexually assault her. Liz goes to Maddox in an attempt to get money she has earned by working for him. Instead of giving her the money, however, he attempts to rape her. Liz agrees to file charges because her sister tells her they can't just let Maddox get away with what he has done. The trial goes poorly and the jury declares Maddox innocent. The outcome is almost too much for Liz to take. At home she overdoses on sleeping pills but her suicide attempt is caught in time to save her life.

What seems to bring Liz, who has withdrawn more and more into herself after the attack and trial, back to herself is a pair of emus. These birds escape from a neighbor's farm and come to Mayfield a few days after the trial. Liz has been fascinated by these birds and believes they are beautiful even though everyone else believes they are ugly and useless. The emus, which are so odd Bean doesn't even think they should exist, believes they are symbols of her sister who is beautiful and unique.

Charlotte Anne Holladay

Charlotte Anne Holladay is Bean and Liz's mother. She is the daughter of the Byler Holladays who built and operated the cotton mill in that town for many years. She is the



sister of Tinsley. She left Byler shortly after Bean was born because she didn't think her family was as supportive of her as they should have been.

Charlotte had Liz when she was married to Shelton Stewart. He left her soon after she had Liz and Charlotte began sleeping around. She slept with Charlie Wynn and got pregnant. When Charlie killed a man, Ernie, defending Charlotte's honor, Ernie's brother killed Charlie. Charlotte and her family became the laughingstock of the town. She left Byler soon after Bean was born.

Since that time Charlotte has spent her life living off her inheritance and moving from town to town seeking a career in acting, singing or songwriting. She and her girls are living in Lost Lake California when the book opens. After a spell where she tells her daughters she is dating a man named Mark Parker she suddenly leaves them alone when Bean realizes the boyfriend doesn't really exist. She sends them a letter telling them she needs to find herself along with enough money for a couple of months worth of potpies.

Charlotte goes to pick Liz and Bean up from Mayfield a few weeks after they arrived. She has decided she should try her luck in New York City. Charlotte and Uncle Tinsley, her brother, argue over what is best for the girls. Charlotte demands they leave and stops in Richmond, Virginia at a hotel the girls know she can't afford. When Liz and Bean confront their mother about their inability to afford the hotel and the clothes she wants to buy she snaps again and has to be hospitalized.

The girls next see their mother when she finally resurfaces after Liz's attack. Bean had been trying to get in touch with her but had been unable to do so because Charlotte was at a spiritual retreat. Charlotte comes and supports Liz through the trial. Soon after the trial is over Charlotte decides she can't stay in Byler any longer. She leaves with promises to come back and get her children soon. As they watch her pull out of the driveway Liz comments to Bean that their mother has "gone" (245) indicating that Liz believes she will never return for them.

Jerry Maddox

Jerry Maddox is the man who is brought to Byler to work as foreman at Holladay mill. He is ordered to increase production at the mill regardless of what he had to do. It is because of the changes that Maddox makes in working conditions at the mill that he locks horns with Tinsley. Because Tinsley complains about the way that Maddox treats the workers, he is fired. Maddox is pleased when Liz and Bean come to him looking for work because it puts him in a position where he is in control of the two girls.

Maddox is cruel not only to the people who work at the mill but also to his family members. In one instance he takes his wife's clothes away from her so that she cannot leave the house. He tells her she has no say because the clothes aren't really her's. He says he is the one who owns them because he has worked to buy them.



Maddox has sexually attacked several girls in Byler in addition to his attack on Liz. Ruth says Maddox has made moves on her in the past, which caused her to quit. Bean personally knows that Maddox has touched her in a way that made her uncomfortable. There is also a rumor that Leticia, the black cheerleader, has been approached by Maddox in a sexual manner. With Bean's encouragement Liz is the only one who goes up against Maddox in court or even registers a complaint against him.

Maddox wins in court against Liz but the win seems to go to his head. He gets even more cruel at work and is fired after he gets in a fist fight with one of the workers. Maddox later sees Joe's dog pee on his car tire and gets so irate he puts the dog in his car trunk. At the Wyatts' house Maddox demands that Uncle Curtis shoot the dog. Instead of shooting the dog, however, Uncle Charlie shoots Maddox.

Jean "Bean" Holladay

Twelve-year-old Jean "Bean" Holladay is the narrator of this novel. She is the younger sister of Liz and daughter of Charlotte. She does not remember Mayfield because she was only a small baby when her mother took her away from the house. When Bean sees Mayfield for the first time, however, she tells Liz she recognizes the house as the one about which she has had recurring dreams.

Bean enjoys the stability of Byler and the family that she meets there. She finally learns the true story of her father's death from her Aunt Al and Uncle Clarence who give her a picture of her father as well as the Silver Star that he was awarded for his bravery in the war. Bean uses the Silver Star as an incentive to be brave, just like her father had been.

Bean likes school in Byler and tries to fit in. She joins the pep squad. Due to Liz's insistence that it's necessary, Bean also gets a job with Maddox. Bean notices how mean Maddox is to his wife. Bean also dislikes the way that he insists that Bean agree with his opinions. After Maddox touches Bean inappropriately she stops working for him as much.

When Bean learns what Maddox did to her sister she is angry and insists that the family file charges. She tells them they can't let Maddox get away with what he has done since he might hurt someone else. Bean is shocked, however, when the jury finds Maddox not guilty of the charges against him. She feels as if the justice system has failed her family. This is only one of the lessons that Bean learns during the course of her coming of age story.

Uncle Clarence

Uncle Clarence is Charlie's older brother. When the boys' parents died in a farming accident Uncle Clarence agreed to do the work of two men so that he and his brother could stay together. Aunt Al believes the work that Uncle Clarence did hardened him. Uncle Clarence also fought in the war and is a decorated veteran. He receives disability from the mill because he developed white lung from working there.



Uncle Clarence does not like Bean's mother and tells Bean that meeting Charlotte was the worst thing that ever happened to Charlie. When Buck Mullens was released from jail Uncle Clarence had said he would kill the boy in retaliation but never got a chance because Bucky left the state without anyone knowing where he went. Because Uncle Clarence is so outspoken in his opinions of people, it is strange that he goes along with whipping Joe after Maddox orders him to do so. Even stranger is that the next time Maddox comes to the Wyatts' house Uncle Clarence kills him.

Uncle Clarence makes the rest of the family stay inside while he goes outside with Maddox and Joe's dog. Maddox has demanded that Uncle Clarence shoot the dog because it peed on his tires. Instead of shooting the dog, however, Uncle Clarence shoots Maddox. He claims to the police he heard a noise in the garden and thought it was a bear. He is not charged with murder or put in jail because the police see the murder legally as a case of self defense. In reality it appears that Uncle Clarence was just fed up with Maddox's behavior. Many people in the town realized Uncle Clarence's story about the bear is just a story, but no one really questions it because they are all glad to see Maddox gone.

Uncle Tinsley

Uncle Tinsley is Charlotte's brother. He lives alone at Mayfield and isn't exactly welcoming when Liz and Bean first appear at his front door looking for a place to stay. The first night he makes the girls sleep in the groom's quarters in the barn but brings them food before they go to bed. They next day, after he helps Bean bury her turtle, he tells Bean and Liz that they will stay from then on in the bird wing of the house, the wing where their mother lived.

Uncle Tinsley is obsessed with genealogy and geography. He spends his days studying his family's ancestors and conducting tests on jars of soil and rocks. When the girls first move into the house with him he doesn't want them to clean anything but soon allows them to begin dusting, vacuuming and storing things in the attic.

It is Uncle Tinsley who directs Bean to the Wyatts for information about her father. He also advises Liz and Bean not to get jobs, but they ignore his advice. When he learns that they have gotten jobs with Maddox and Maddox has cheated Liz out of her pay he advises Liz to forget about that money. Liz again ignores his advice. After Liz is attacked he wants to pretend nothing has happened because he fears that pressing charges will cause a big scandal. Bean pursues the issue and contacts a lawyer, and Tinsley ultimately supports the girls once he sees they are intent on filing charges.

Joe Wyatt

Joe Wyatt is the son of Al and Clarence Wyatt. He is about Bean's age. When Bean first sees her cousin he is stealing peaches from the trees in the orchard at Mayfield. It is only after she has yelled and thrown a peach at the boy that she learns from Tinsley that he is her cousin. The two spent their time picking berries or gathering nuts together. Joe



goes with Bean when she decides to slit Jerry Maddox's tires to get revenge on him for trying to run her and Liz over with his car.

Maddox suspects Joe is the one who slit his tires and goes to Uncle Clarence telling him that he needs to give Joe a whipping. Clarence does as Maddox asks him to. The whipping seems to change Joe's personality, making him quieter and more withdrawn. Aunt Al talks Uncle Clarence into letting Joe get a dog, a move that seems to help Joe open up again.

Even though Joe knows the American forces are losing the Vietnam War he plans to enlist after he graduates from high school. When Bean asks him why he wants to enlist to fight a losing battle Joe says they can't stop fighting just because they weren't winning.

Shelton Stewart

Shelton Stewart is Liz's father. He and Charlotte met one another when they were in college in Richmond. Charlotte soon got pregnant with Liz. Soon after they married Charlotte's father realized even though Shelton was from an old family their money was gone. Shelton had expected Charlotte's family to support him. When Shelton learned that Charlotte's father wasn't going to let that happen, he left Charlotte and Liz while she was still just a baby.

Mr. Spinelli

Mr. Spinelli is the man who owns the grocery store from which Bean buys her potpies. After he doesn't see Bean's mother for several days he asks Bean about her. Bean lies and said her mother has broken her leg. Mr. Spinelli comes to their house to check on the girls' mother and discovers Bean's lie. The girls suspect Mr. Spinelli is the one who tells the police they are home alone.

Charlie Wyatt

Charlie Wyatt is Bean's father. He was killed before Bean was born. Charlie accidentally killed a man who talked bad about Charlotte, who was pregnant by Charlie even though they were not married. In retaliation that man's brother killed Charlie in cold blood. Bean believes her father was brave not only for standing up for her mother but also because he was awarded a Silver Star for saving another soldier in the war.

Ruth

Ruth is the teenaged daughter of Aunt Al and Uncle Clarence. She is the first girl who lives in the mill hill area to make the cheerleading squad. After Liz's trial Ruth admits to Bean and her mother that she quit working for Maddox because he tried to rape her as



well. She didn't tell anyone at the time it happened because she didn't want them to know.

Tammy Elbert

Tammy Elbert is the woman who had attended high school with Charlotte and remembered how the other girls were jealous of her. Tammy gives Liz and Bean a ride from the bus depot to Mayfield when they first arrive in Byler. Tammy is also on the jury panel at Maddox's trial.

Aunt Al

Aunt Al is the wife of Uncle Clarence. She becomes a mother figure to Bean. Bean often visits the house to eat breakfast and talk about the word around town. It is Aunt Al who gives Bean the picture of her father and tells her about his murder. Aunt Al also tells Bean about the cause of the bad blood between Maddox and Uncle Tinsley.

Mark Parker

Mark Parker is the boyfriend that Charlotte fabricates. She tells her girls stories about Mark but says he doesn't want to meet them because he is jealous of them. When Bean realizes Mark doesn't really exist her mother gets uncharacteristically angry and leaves the house. She never returns prompting Liz and Bean to go to Virginia.

Doris Maddox

Doris Maddox is the wife of Jerry Maddox. He abuses Doris and sometimes even takes away her clothes in order to make her stay at home. Despite the abuse, when her husband is arrested for Liz's assault, Doris goes to Mayfield to threaten Liz. After her husband is killed, it is Doris who insists on a full investigation.

Wayne Clemmons

Wayne Clemmons is the man who witnesses Maddox hitting Liz and trying to rape her. When he brings Liz home after the incident and tells Tinsley that what had happened wasn't right, he indicates that he would testify. Even though he gives the police an honest statement the night of the assault, he lies on the witness stand during the trial.

Dog

Dog is a dog, the pet that Aunt Al got for Joe after Maddox made Uncle Clarence beat the boy for slashing his tires. It is because Dog pees on Maddox's tires that he comes to



be at the Wyatts' house the day he dies. Maddox orders Uncle Clarence to kill Dog but Uncle Clarence refuses and shoots Maddox instead.

Julius Johnson

Julius Johnson is the man who gets into a fight with Maddox when Maddox accuses Julius of taking a bathroom break that is too long. Julius is fired but is very quickly offered another job at the Morton Brothers Funeral Home. Maddox is also fired for his part in the fight.

Ernie Mullens

Ernie Mullens is the man whom Charlie Wyatt accidentally killed when Ernie fell and cracked his skull on the pool table at Gibson's pool hall after Charlie hit him with a pool cue. Charlie had started the fight with Ernie after Ernie said something dishonorable about Charlotte then refused to apologize.

Mercer Holladay

Mercer Holladay is the father of Charlotte and Tinsley Holladay. He was the one who built the cotton mill in Byler where many of the people that town were employed. It was not until after Mercer died that Tinsley sold the mill.

Bucky Mullens

Bucky Mullens is the brother of Ernie Mullens, the boy killed by Charlie Wyatt. After Charlie was not prosecuted for Ernie's death because the judge ruled his actions as self defense Bucky swore he would kill Charlie. Two weeks later he shot Charlie.

Leland Hayes

Leland Hayes is Maddox's attorney. He turns around the things that Liz and Bean had told Maddox during their employment interview and uses those things against them. He accuses Liz of being a habitual liar.

Miss Jarvis

Miss Jarvis is the teacher at Byler High School who tries to get her students talking about race relations at their school. It is also Miss Jarvis who encourages Liz to keep writing her poetry and tells her that she has talent.



Lisa Saunders

Lisa Saunders is the ex-cheerleader who includes a question about Liz in a survey she gives to people who want to be friends with her. Bean is suspended when she gets into a fight with Lisa after seeing the question.

Bud Hawkins

Bud Hawkins is the man who brings his rodeo horse to try to lasso the emus when they escape from the Holladay's pasture.

Dickey Bryson

Dickey Bryson is the state's prosecutor. He believes the trial will go well until the witness, Wayne, lies on the stand.

William Corbin

William Corbin is the name of the lawyer to which Liz and Bean go for advice after Liz's assault by Maddox.

Eugene and Eunice

Eugene and Eunice are the names that Liz gives to the two emus.



Symbols and Symbolism

Chicken Potpies

Chicken potpies are symbolic of the way that Liz and Bean live when their mother is gone. These pies are cheap, relatively nutritious and easy to fix.

A Red Velvet Jacket

This red velvet jacket is a symbol of Bean and Liz's mother's habit of lying. Even though Charlotte tells everyone that she received the jacket as a gift from June Carter Cash, Liz knows that her mother had bought it at a church sale.

White Wicker Cradle

The white wicker cradle is a symbol of comfort and security to Bean. It is proof to her that she was actually at Mayfield at one point even though she doesn't remember being there. Uncle Tinsley tells Bean her mother put her in the cradle when she was living at Mayfield. Bean later uses it to store things of importance to her like her money, her father's picture and his Silver Star.

The Hotel Madison

The Hotel Madison is a symbol of the memories that Charlotte has of her mother taking her to the city when she was young. Charlotte tries to take her daughters to stay at this hotel but instead has a breakdown when they confront her because they know she can't afford to pay for their rooms.

The Emus

The emus are a symbol of Liz. Bean thinks that they are like Liz because they are both beautiful and strange.

A Picture of Bean's Father

This picture of Bean's father symbolizes the man she never knew. When Bean sees the picture she realizes that she looks like her father.



Charlie Wyatt's Silver Star

The Silver Star earned by Charlie Wyatt, Bean's father, is a symbol of bravery. It was earned when Charlie saved another soldier.

A Container of Pringles

Maddox believes this container of chips represents perfection.

The Book "To Kill a Mockingbird"

The book "To Kill a Mockingbird" is symbolic of the situation at Byler High School as the black and white students try to integrate.

Le Mans

The black Pontiac Le Mans represents Maddox. He is the one who owns and drives the car. After Maddox repeatedly tries to run over Bean and Liz with his car, Joe and Bean decide to vandalize Maddox's car because they know that is what will upset him the most.



Settings

Lost Lake

Lost Lake, California is the place where Charlotte and her girls live at the beginning of the story.

Mayfield

Mayfield is the name of the plantation where Charlotte grew up. After their mother disappeared Liz and Bean go to Mayfield to live.

The Bird Wing

The bird wing is the name of the wing of Mayfield in which Charlotte had lived. It is the wing in which Tinsley allows Liz and Bean to live after he lets them stay in the house.

Spinelli's Grocery

Spinelli's Grocery is the place where Bean buys her potpies.

Byler, Virginia

Byler, Virginia is the southern town in which Mayfield is located. It is to this town where Liz and Bean go when their mother abandons them.

The Mill Hill

Mill Hill is the part of Byler where the Wyatts live.

New York City

New York City is where Liz and Bean's mother goes to try to pursue her acting career.

Hotel Madison

When Charlotte takes Liz and Bean to Richmond they stay in the Hotel Madison because it is the hotel where she always stayed with her mother when they visited Richmond.

Byler High School

Byler High School is the school that Liz and Bean attend while they stay at Mayfield.

The Courthouse

It is in the town's courthouse that the trial against Jerry Maddox is heard.



Themes and Motifs

Faulty Family Relationships

Even if the relationship between family members is not the best, these relationships are still important sources of support the reader learns in the novel “The Silver Star.” Some relationships that merit inspection to determine how they are supportive even though they may not be completely healthy include those between Charlotte and her daughters, Charlotte and Tinsley, Maddox and Doris, and Aunt Al and Uncle Clarence. These relationships and the people in them are not perfect but they still prove that having family relationships is an important part of life.

The reader can find many problems in the relationship between Charlotte and her daughters. Charlotte is impulsive and irresponsible. She even appears to have some emotional and mental issues that need to be addressed but she is present for her daughter, Liz, when tragedy strikes. When Bean and Liz’s mother first comes to Mayfield after she learns Liz has been attacked, Bean is afraid her mother will need as much comfort and consolation as Liz. She fears this when she realizes that her mother is crying and wiping her tears on Bean under the cover of hugging her. Despite Bean’s fear, Charlotte shows her maturity and ability by caring for Liz through the course of the trial. Bean is surprised how much support her mother gives Liz during the time that Liz needed her most. In fact, Charlotte is one of the people whom Bean later believes deserved a medal for bravery for the way she came to Mayfield even though she doesn’t like the place and took care of Liz.

The relationship between Charlotte and Tinsley is another relationship that is deeply flawed but one in which the siblings are willing to support one another when they need support. The most significant time the siblings work together is after Liz is assaulted by Maddox. Even though Tinsley doesn’t approve of Charlotte’s style of parenting and Charlotte doesn’t approve of Tinsley’s reclusiveness they put aside their differences to provide a solid support for Liz. Notice also that after the trial is finished and Charlotte decides she wants to take the girls off on a road trip Tinsley comforts Charlotte when Bean criticizes her parenting even though he agrees with Bean.

Of all the characters in the novel Maddox and Doris definitely have a faulty relationship. Maddox is abusive to Doris and bullies her just like he bullies the workers at the mill, yet Doris still stands up for him when she feels he has been done wrong. Doris confronts Uncle Tinsley and Bean when Maddox is first arrested for assaulting Liz. Later, when others in the town are content to not question the circumstances of Maddox’s death, Doris asks for an investigation. Doris’ devotion to Maddox despite how cruel he is to her shows that family ties can be strong enough that even an abused family member will show support for their abuser.

A final relationship of interest is that between Aunt Al and Uncle Clarence. Because Uncle Clarence and his brother, Charlie, were orphaned as young children, they had no



family to support them. Uncle Clarence took on the work of two men even as a young boy so that he and his brother could stay together. Aunt Al believes this work with no support caused Uncle Clarence to grow up to be a man who seems opinionated and hateful to some. Aunt Al tells Bean she is able to see the hurt boy behind the crotchety man. Notice that even though Aunt Al doesn't always agree with her husband, she does support him. For instance she keeps his secret about his act of shooting Maddox. She also doesn't stand in his way when he whips Joe as Maddox asks him to.

Positive/Negative Aspects of Living in a Small Town

Living in a small town like Byler is both good and bad for characters in the novel *The Silver Star*. One of the good things about living in a small town is the support system available in these small places as well as the family atmosphere. Some of the bad things about living in a small town include the quick spread of gossip as well as lack of anonymity. Additionally, it can be both bad and good that everyone knows everyone in a small town as proven during Liz's trial.

Living in a small town like Byler is good because everyone knows everyone. Wayne recognizes when Liz tells him that she is the niece of Tinsley Holladay - not a hooker. He realizes just by hearing her uncle's name that she has been assaulted and needs help. On the other hand, however, living in a small town can be bad because everyone knows everyone. For instance, Maddox recognizes Liz and Bean as the nieces of Tinsley Holladay and uses this information to their disadvantage. He hires the girls to work for him because he knows it will be a further blow to Uncle Tinsley's self worth.

Byler was once like a big family, Bean is told by Aunt Al. While the Holladay family still owned the mill and treated their employees right the people of the town banded together. It was only after Maddox began pitting the employees against each other that they began resenting one another. Even though the feeling of community is gone from the town's main work place, Bean notes that this community is present in the way the townspeople support their athletic teams. She notes that everyone in town shows up for the football games. Similarly, Vanessa describes to Bean how even the parents in the black community donate their time cleaning and keeping up the school.

Just like the people in a small town support one another they also talk about one another. In this case it is the scandal involving Charlotte and Charlie that won't die. Even when Charlotte returns to Mayfield as an adult her indiscretion is remembered and brought up during her daughter's trial. Charlotte tells her daughters she can't bear the idea of returning to Mayfield. It is easy to understand why she doesn't want to live there again since the only thing people seem to remember about her are the mistakes she made.

The gossip and small town atmosphere seems to worsen Liz's ordeal and trial. Just like her mother's indiscretion was known and talked about by everyone, Liz's assault is known about and talked about by the entire town. Even the students at Bean's school gossip about Liz and use Bean as a scapegoat for their opinions of Liz. Because



Maddox is so well known around town as a bully who can get the people who go against him fired from their jobs, few people are willing to stand up to him. Even though they may feel they have heard the trial fairly, the jury may still be influenced by Maddox's power. Additionally, Maddox is able to threaten Wayne, the one witness to the assault, so that he refuses to testify truthfully.

Inconsistent Nature of Right and Wrong

In Liz's trial, as well as other instances in this novel, it is clear that the decision whether an action is right or wrong is open to individual opinion. Just like the lawyer twists truths about Liz and Bean to make them appear as vindictive liars so the entire town accepts the news of Maddox's death as if it his death was not suspicious. At one point in the novel even Bean asks if there is a point at which people on both sides of an argument can be right.

People hold different opinions about all sorts of topics from war to the integration of schools. When Bean realizes how many different idea there are about the same things she wonders if there is a right and wrong side of every argument. In the case of patriotism, for instance, Bean realizes both those who support the Vietnam War and those who are against it hold equally strong views. She wonders if it is possible for both sides to be right.

Bean and her family is hurt by others' interpretation of the truth when the jury finds Maddox not guilty of assaulting Liz. The lawyer twists innocent games played by the girls where they made up stories about people they met to indicate that they were habitual liars. What he's said about the girls isn't a lie, it isn't wrong, they do make up stories about people but they don't make these stories up in order to be vindictive. Ultimately, when the jury weighs the truth as they know it they believe that Maddox didn't do anything wrong.

Later in the novel Uncle Clarence also twists circumstances to keep from being found guilty of Maddox's murder. Even though Clarence technically killed Maddox in cold blood, he tells the police he thought the man was a bear. In some ways, Maddox is a bear. He is a threat to the people and the community. No one is really sorry that he is gone, not even the police, but it seems cold that the entire community is willing to overlook a murder.

Race Relations

Bean learns in the novel *The Silver Star* that the friction between the races has been a problem since before the Civil War and will continue to be as long as there are people of different races in the world. Her Uncle Tinsley talks to her about the relations between races before the Civil War. Bean herself witnesses the pains of integration. Truman's relationship with his Vietnamese girlfriend represents coming racial tension.



Racial tension began before the Civil War and was not just limited to the South, Uncle Tinsley tells Bean when she is preparing an essay about race relations. Uncle Tinsley tells Bean that even though some whites want people to believe blacks were only used as slaves in the South he tells Bean that blacks were used as slaves in the North as well. Contrary to the idea that black/white relations have always been bad in the South, Uncle Tinsley argues that black and whites in the South actually got along better together after the Civil War than blacks and whites in the North did. Uncle Tinsley also argues that the idea of “negrophobia” was created to encourage animosity between blacks and whites.

Bean sees first hand how difficult integration can be when blacks and whites are integrated at the school she attends. She learns from a black friend that the blacks don't like the idea of attending Byler because they know it will never be their school. They'll never belong to it like they belonged at Nelson High School. The whites are angry that the black kids are being brought into their school because white athletes are having to give up their positions on the sports teams so black players can be on the teams. When the whites and blacks are thrown together they refuse to play as a team.

The possibility of interracial marriage is another source of racial tension that Byler may soon face. Truman writes his mother often telling her about a Vietnamese girl with whom he has fallen in love. Aunt Al assures her son that she will welcome the girl with open arms if he does decide to marry her. Aunt Al, however, knows that even though Byler has made strides in accepting people from other races there are still people who won't accept an interracial marriage.

Coming of Age

In the novel *The Silver Star* Bean learns how unjust the world can be through her experiences in Byler. This novel is largely a coming of age story to show how Bean matures and develops through her life experiences. Most significant in Bean's life is the jury trial in which Maddox is found not guilty of assaulting Bean's sister. Although she's a child, her age doesn't keep Bean from speaking out against the injustice she sees in life.

After Liz's trial Bean thinks about the number of people she has met in Byler whose bravery should earn them a Silver Star like the one her father got for his bravery in the military. Liz, who goes through the torture of a trial and survives, is one of those people. Liz lives through being called an habitual liar while her attacker is declared innocent by the jury. The world turns upside down for Bean when she realizes that an innocent girl can be found guilty of a crime while a man everyone knows to be guilty gets to go free. She believes this is the ultimate injustice.

Bean also realizes that the blacks who are forced to attend Byler High School are being treated unjustly. She watches as Leticia smiles and cheers during a football game even though fans are throwing food and drinks at her. Vanessa tells Bean how she and the other black students feel they will never really be part of Byler the way they were part of



Nelson High School. Regardless, Vanessa tells Bean that she intends to continue to try to fit into the school and fight to be accepted.

Although she is only a young child Bean speaks out against the adults who allow injustice to happen and don't do anything about it. Bean is suspended when she tells her vice principal that she doesn't respect adults who don't do their jobs. Bean reacted to a situation in which she had gotten into a fight with another girl because that girl made fun Bean's sister. Bean was angry because the woman did not address the root of the problem. She only criticized the girls for not acting in a ladylike manner.

In the same way Bean also reprimands her mother for not acting like an adult. When Charlotte criticizes Bean for encouraging Liz to file charges against Maddox, resulting in Maddox being found not guilty and both Liz and Charlotte embarrassed, Bean tells her mother that if she had acted like a mother all along, they wouldn't have been in that situation to start with.



Styles

Point of View

This story is told from the first person point of view of 12-year-old Bean. She knows her own thoughts, emotions and experiences but the only information she has about other characters in the novel comes from what they tell her or what she infers. The first person point of view is important because this is a coming of age story. Bean learns from the jumble of events she encounters in the course of the novel a good many truths about life. Her process of learning these truths, particularly when it comes to the injustice of her sister's trial, would not be as compelling if it were told from any other point of view.

Language and Meaning

There are two things of note in reference to the language and meaning in this novel. First, the author uses a good deal of legal language and patterns of speech associated with courts during the chapters that describe the trial against Maddox. Words like "alleged" and "vendetta" are used in the course of Bean's questioning words it is surprising that a 12-year-old would be familiar with but they don't seem to throw Bean.

Second aspect of interest in terms of language is Liz's habit of playing with words. The reader learns through this novel what an anagram is and what spoonerisms are. In several places in the novel Liz makes up rhyming phrases when she is upset about something. After the funeral Liz builds on her mother's comment that everything said during the trial was a "pack of lies" (231). Liz responds: "'Pack of lies. Lack of pies. Plaque of eyes, arranged by size. Or black-eyed lies?' Liz is speaking in a distant monotone, almost to herself. "Plucked-out eyes. Lucked-out lies. Synthesize. Between my thighs"' (231).

Structure

This 292-page book is divided into 56 chapters. Chapters average five pages in length. The story is told in the past tense and begins when Bean and Liz are living with their mother in Lost Lake, California. The story covers just about a year's time during which the sisters move to Byler, Virginia after their mother leaves them alone indefinitely. The story ends with Liz finding peace with herself after a sexual attack by befriendng two emus.

A difficult aspect about this novel is that there are several different issues happening all at once. There are a variety of different plots or storylines that make it hard for the reader to focus on a main plot. The main plot is arguably the issue in which Maddox assaults Liz but is found not guilty of his crime. Other storylines in the novel include the relationship between Charlotte and her daughters, the old scandal in Byler involving



Charlotte that keeps her from wanting to go home, the forced integration of black and white students at Byler, the changing personality of Liz, her obsession with the emus, and Bean learning about her family and her father. Near the end of the novel there is a significant scene where Bean thinks of all the people in her life who deserve a Silver Star for the bravery they have shown in their individual lives and situations. This idea of bravery, however, is not clearly lined through the novel even though there are several instances in which characters act bravely.



Quotes

My sister saved my life when I was just a baby.”

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 1)

Importance: This opening sentence not only gets the reader's attention and pulls him into the story right away. It also sets up the structure of the relationship between the girls.

Except for the fact that he didn't want to meet me and Liz, Mark Parker was everything Mom had ever wanted in a man. 'I wish he liked us,' I said, 'because other than that, he's too good to be true.'”

-- Bean (Chapter 2 paragraph 20)

Importance: Bean doesn't realize that she has hit so close to the truth about Mark Parker when she tells her mother that he sounds too good to be true.

Oh my gosh,' I told Liz. 'It's the house I've been dreaming about all my life.'”

-- Bean (Chapter 4 paragraph 42)

Importance: When Bean first sees the house at Mayfield she realizes she's been seeing the house in her dreams.

Two weeks later, Bucky Mullens shot Charlie Wyatt down on Holladay Avenue in broad daylight.”

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 8 paragraph 56)

Importance: Bean's Aunt Al tells her that her father was murdered in cold blood, not killed in an accident as her mother had always told her.

By the time Bucky Mullens came to stand trial, Charlotte was showing, and everyone knew she was carrying the child of the pool-hall-brawling linthead Bucky had killed. It was quite the scandal, and Mother and Father were mortified.”

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph 8)

Importance: Aunt Al tells Bean what a scandal Charlotte had made in the town after she got pregnant with Charlie's baby, a man to whom she was not married and was a commoner.

I feel the old chill. Mother was always so cold and distant. She never truly loved me. All she cared about were appearances and being proper. And Father loved me for the wrong reasons. It was all very inappropriate.”

-- Charlotte (Chapter 11 paragraph 17)

Importance: Charlotte's memories of her home life and growing up years are different



from those of others who lived with her. Liz and Bean wonder if their mother is making up her horrible childhood or if there is any truth in her stories.

Who was right? They both had their points. Were they both right? Was there such a thing as completely right and completely wrong?"

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 13 paragraph 34)

Importance: When Bean watches the Fourth of July parade in Byler and sees the people who are proud of their country she wonders if they are right or if the war protestors are right. She wonders if there is ever a case where both parties are right in their own way.

The mill had never been an easy place, Aunt Al said, but for the most part, all the workers got along. They felt they were in the same boat. But after Mr. Maddox showed up and started firing people, former friends turned on one another, even selling out or ratting on their coworkers so they could keep their jobs and feed their families."

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 18 paragraph 16)

Importance: Aunt Al explains to Bean how bad working conditions have become at the mill since Maddox took over.

You don't need to tell people everything. Keeping something to yourself is not the same as lying."

-- Liz (Chapter 18 paragraph 29)

Importance: Liz suggests to Bean they are not lying to their Uncle Tinsley if they just don't tell him about the jobs they have taken with Maddox.

And that there's the silver lining in the whole integration thing. So I'm planning to try out for the cheerleading squad. I don't have any problem cheering for the colored boys."

-- Ruth (Chapter 21 paragraph 12)

Importance: Because some of the popular cheerleaders are dropping off the cheer squad since there will be black boys on the team Ruth believes she will finally have a chance to make the squad.

Your choice. But it's the loser's choice. Typical Holladay."

-- Maddox (Chapter 22 paragraph 15)

Importance: Maddox criticizes Bean when she says that she prefers to get her money in cash instead of having him deposit it into a savings account for her.

I didn't want to get all stupid and blow it out of proportion. Even though Mr. Maddox sticking his thumb in my armpit felt completely wrong, I couldn't disagree with a single thing he said."

-- Narrator (Chapter 27 paragraph 13)



Importance: Bean felt uncomfortable when Jerry Maddox cornered her and then examined her underarm for hair. Bean didn't think what he was doing was right but couldn't find any point on which she could argue with him. She also felt she'd been paid off when Maddox gave her more money than she'd ever been paid in one day.

Mr. Maddox has got to be pretty pissed with me, but I don't care. I'm pretty pissed with him. What he did was wrong. It was wrong — and I'll testify to that.”

-- Wayne (Chapter 31 paragraph 36)

Importance: Wayne promises Uncle Tinsley that he will testify against Maddox if Liz's assault comes to trial. However, when the case is actually in court later, Wayne does not tell what he knows, as he has been threatened by Maddox.

While most people saw the court as a place to seek justice, Maddox saw it as a place to take down anyone who happened to stand in his way or get on his wrong side.”

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 32 paragraph 25)

Importance: Uncle Tinsley tries to warn Bean away from encouraging Liz to file charges against Maddox by explaining to her that Maddox is good at getting what he wants out of the court system.

Well,' I said, 'if we don't want to pretend it never happened and we don't want to leave town and go into hiding, we have no choice. We have to file charges.’”

-- Bean (Chapter 33 paragraph 56)

Importance: Bean believes that the family has no choice but to file charges against Maddox. She believes that pretending the assault never happened is not a choice and she also doesn't believe the family should run away or go into hiding. Bean also reasons that if charges aren't brought against Maddox he might try to hurt someone else.

I wouldn't be getting into no car with Mr. Maddox in the first place,' she said. 'You climb in the backseat with the boss man, you got to expect something's going to happen. That's just the way it is.’”

-- Vanessa (Chapter 35 paragraph 9)

Importance: It is indicated in this quote that Vanessa and others believe that Liz was asking for something to happen when she got into Maddox's car with him.

I respect people who do their jobs,' I said. 'Respecting people just because they're older is a bunch of malarkey. Maddox is older. Am I supposed to respect him?’”

-- Bean (Chapter 37 paragraph 17)

Importance: Bean shows her maturity when she tells her teacher she doesn't think she should have to respect people who don't do their jobs, such as the teachers who turned their heads when Bean and her sister are bullied, or that she should have to respect people just because they are adults.



People who work for the mill and take the mill's money do what I say. And I say that boy needs a beating."

-- Maddox (Chapter 41 paragraph 22)

Importance: After Maddox gives Uncle Clarence a veiled threat that they could lose any money they earn from the mill, Uncle Clarence beats Joe as Maddox asks him to do.

He declared that Liz was essentially a habitual liar with an overactive imagination and an obsession with the idea of perverts — and that in itself, he told the jurors, was more than a little perverted."

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 47 paragraph 1)

Importance: During the trial Maddox's lawyer paints Liz as a habitual liar who is obsessed with perverts.

Every time we run into a problem, we just leave,' I said. 'But we always run into a new problem in the new place, and then we have to leave there, too. We're always just leaving. Can't we for once just stay somewhere and solve the problem?'"

-- Bean (Chapter 48 paragraph 12)

Importance: Bean realizes that every time they and their mother run away from their problems, they only run into more problems. She suggests they should try staying and solving the problem.

Maybe that was why she'd had flying dreams ever since she was a little girl — at heart, she was an emu."

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 49 paragraph 12)

Importance: Earlier in the novel Bean and Liz described the emus as beautifully weird. Even though they are technically birds, emus can't fly with their tiny wings. Bean wonders if Liz has dreamed of flying, the way she suspects emus must, because she is an emu at heart. This extended metaphor compares Liz to the birds she loves so much.

The sun had set, but in the fading light, we could see Uncle Clarence standing there with the rifle in his hands. Maddox was lying faceup in Uncle Clarence's freshly planted vegetable garden. His leg was twisted awkwardly to the side, and I could tell he was dead."

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 54 paragraph 42)

Importance: When Maddox stopped by the Owens' house telling Uncle Clarence he needs to shoot Joe's dog Clarence instead shoots Maddox. He claims he thought Maddox was a bear when he shot him.

I felt you had to earn the right to do that. Liz certainly had, not just for everything she'd gone through but for protecting her kid sister from their mother's wackiness until I was old enough to handle it. So had Uncle Clarence, not just for shooting Maddox but for taking on the work of a man when he was only a boy so that my dad would have a



home. So had Aunt Al, for breathing in lint every night at the mill and then going home to care for her sick husband and her special little Earl. So had Uncle Tinsley, for taking in his two wayward nieces, and Mom, for coming back to a place she hated, to be there for Liz. All I'd done was get into a fight with Lisa Saunders and backtalk Miss Clay.”

-- Bean as Narrator (Chapter 56 paragraph 4)

Importance: When Bean thinks about who she can give her father's Silver Star, she realizes there are many people around her who are brave in everyday ways.