

The Story of B Study Guide

The Story of B by Daniel Quinn

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Plot Summary

The Story of B by Daniel Quinn is a novel written in the epistolary style which challenges some of the fundamental constructs of the religions in the modern world, as well as the culture that exists worldwide. Jared Osborne, a priest of the Laurentian order, is sent to investigate the claim that Charles Atterley, otherwise known as B, may be the Antichrist. During his assignment, Jared becomes converted to B's way of thinking, causing many problems for himself as he loses faith and quits the priesthood. The Story of B is a fascinating and intriguing story that causes one to deeply reconsider the culture of the modern world.

Jared Osborne, a priest of the Laurentian Order, is sent to Germany on an assignment by Fr. Lulfre, his superior, to investigate the claims that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist. In Munich, Herr Reichmann directs him to inquire about Charles Atterley at Der Bau, where Jared first hears one of B's lectures. Jared becomes acquainted with B during his investigation, attending B's lectures and becoming a disciple of sorts. At first, Jared sees this as a part of his assignment, but he is eventually converted to B's beliefs. Jared faxes transcripts of B's lectures to Lulfre as he continues his studies with Charles Atterley. After a lecture at the university in Stuttgart, Charles Atterley is assassinated on the train returning to Radenau.

After Atterley's death, Shirin, his assistant, becomes B and continues Jared's training. Using a bricolage, she explains to Jared about animism, the Law of Life and the Community of Life. Jared looks forward to her first appearance as B the next night at Schauspielhaus Wahnfried; however, he awakes several days later to find that he has been hospitalized with amnesia after an explosion at the theater. Jared is sent back to America to the Company Farm, a recuperation facility for seminaries. Realizing the potential disaster that is in store for him, Jared escapes from the Company Farm and seeks Lulfre.

When Jared confronts Lulfre, Lulfre admits to ordering Charles Atterley's assassination, as well as the explosion at the theater, which was designed to exterminate the remainder of B's inner circle. Jared tells Lulfre that he has failed because he is now B. Jared leaves the priesthood and returns to Radenau to search for Shirin and Michael. After much futile effort, Jared is able to remove the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting and produce an insight reminiscent of B. He finally locates Shirin and Michael at Michael's chalet twenty kilometers west of Radenau. Jared leaves the manuscript of his journal with Michael when he and Shirin flee to hide from Lulfre and his assassins. Jared tells the reader that now they are B, and there is no going back from how they have been changed by reading his journal. The final third of the book provides Jared's transcripts of B's lectures: The Great Forgetting, The Boiling Frog, The Collapse of Values, Population: A Systems Approach, and The Great Remembering.



Section 1: Friday, May 10; Tuesday, May 14; Thursday, May 16 & Friday, May 17

Section 1: Friday, May 10; Tuesday, May 14; Thursday, May 16 & Friday, May 17 Summary

The Story of B by Daniel Quinn is a novel written in the epistolary style which challenges some of the fundamental constructs of the religions in the modern world, as well as the culture that exists worldwide. Jared Osborne, a priest of the Laurentian order, is sent to investigate the claim that Charles Atterley, otherwise known as B, may be the Antichrist. During his assignment, Jared becomes converted to B's way of thinking, causing many problems for himself as he loses faith and quits the priesthood. The Story of B is a fascinating and intriguing story which causes one to deeply reconsider the culture of the modern world.

Jared Osborne is a priest, though not a very good one, who attends St. Jerome's University before being loaned to the Laurentian diocese for work in the parochial trenches and eventually winding up at St. Edward's. When he begins his diary on May 10, he states that he was intrigued six days earlier when he was summoned to the office of Fr. Bernard Lulfre. Lulfre reminds Jared of the sacred mandate of their order, to suppress or destroy the Antichrist. A potential candidate has appeared in Europe in the form of Charles Atterley, and Jared is sent to investigate these claims. Jared arrives in Salzburg on May 14, but no one there has heard of Charles, and they suggest that he may be in Munich. On May 16, Jared compulsively searches Munich for Atterley. He encounters Herr Reichmann, an European gentleman, who tells him that he may find a contact to advise him of Atterley at the Der Bau that evening. Jared goes to the Der Bau and prepares to listen to a lecture from the man and woman who take the stage. When the screen displays the Great Forgetting, Jared realizes this man must be Atterley and is confused as to why he was misled. As he takes notes during the lecture, he is upset because of the truths spoken that he had never before noticed. Atterley's message is obvious but still new, and Jared detests him for showing his stupidity. After the lecture, Jared goes out for a drink.

On May 17, Jared realizes he messed up and must get back on Atterley's trail. After a futile search for Herr Reichmann, Jared returns to Der Bau to ask for Atterley and is told that he goes by B. The guard refuses to give him any more information but suggests he return later in case someone can provide him with what he is seeking. In his hotel room, Jared receives an anonymous phone call, during which he is accused of incompetence. He is also informed that the woman with Atterley is dying of scleroderma; therefore, they spend much time in Radenau where a research facility is located. Jared maps out the cities surrounding Radenau since it is evident that Charles Atterley must be headed in that direction.



Section 1: Friday, May 10; Tuesday, May 14; Thursday, May 16 & Friday, May 17 Analysis

Jared Osborne, the narrator and a priest, is introduced in the first chapter of this novel. The novel is written as a journal, and each chapter is titled to reflect the date of its entry. The dilemma of the story is presented when Fr. Bernard Lulfre summons Jared to remind him of the special mandate of their order, to suppress or destroy the Antichrist. This topic is broached because Jared has been chosen to investigate claims that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist. Jared travels to Germany where he searches for Atterley who no one has heard of, foreshadowing Atterley's alias as B. Jared's encounter with Herr Reichmann, who directs him to Atterley, foreshadows Reichmann's involvement in the story. This is furthered by Jared's inability to locate Reichmann the next day and by the anonymous phone call that Jared receives regarding Charles Atterley. Jared sees Charles Atterley for the first time at Der Bau and is upset by B's message because he recognizes the obvious truths in the lecture which he has never realized on his own. The knowledge that B spends much of his time in Radenau foreshadows Jared's journey to Radenau the next day.



Section 2: Saturday, May 18, Saturday; May 18 cont. & Saturday, May 18 cont.

Section 2: Saturday, May 18, Saturday; May 18 cont. & Saturday, May 18 cont. Summary

On Saturday, May 18, Jared reaches Hamburg by mid-afternoon and continues to Radenau where he rents a hotel room and faxes a copy of the Great Forgetting lecture to Fr. Lulfre. After dinner, he takes a walk and finds the site of B's next appearance, where people picket about B being a blasphemer. B's lecture is held in a small theater where B is alone onstage. As Jared takes an empty seat near the front, B's eyes light up with recognition while talking about the boiling of a frog, and Jared recognizes some of the lecture information from the previous lecture in Munich. Jared transcribes the lecture, closing his eyes to aid his concentration. When he opens his eyes, B gestures with his hand, but no one else seems to notice, so Jared assumes the gesture is meant for him. At the end of his lecture, B gives an indifferent nod and disappears into the wings. Jared waits for B on the street and follows him through the crowd to a small, nondescript building marked "Little Bohemia".

B sits in the back and summons Jared to him, asking what Jared thought of the lecture and noting that he saw him at Der Bau, though not before. Furthermore, B states that Jared has luckily begun at the beginning of his cycle by chance or intentionally. When Jared asks why Charles Atterley is called B, B assumes that it is a reference to the sin of blasphemy, but he no longer uses his real name. Jared wonders why B motioned for him, and B alludes to "Monkey", an ancient Chinese novel in which a man lives a carefree life until he searches for a teacher because he realizes that he knows nothing. He is reprimanded when he refuses the offered wisdoms, but he recognizes a signal from the master who agrees to teach him privately since he is not satisfied with the common wisdoms. B explains that the master has two sets of teachings: one that is easy to disclose and a second set that is more difficult to disclose, causing the teacher to have a hard time giving them away since a novice can rarely understand and accept these teachings. When Jared asks again why B invited him here, B hopes to share secrets that he cannot get at on a podium. He explains that Jesus preached to the Jews who had a common foundation of knowledge, but B's audience does not so he has to lay down the foundation each time and is never able to get to the end of his secrets; this is where Jared comes in since he has the foundation of knowledge necessary for B's secret teachings. The woman from the first lecture, Shirin, appears and signs to B, who smiles as he acknowledges that Jared is a priest. Jared realizes that B invited him to the tavern so that his assistant could search the hotel room. B asks if Jared is a spy or an assassin, but Shirin disclaims the notion that Jared is an assassin.

Shirin drives Jared to his hotel, where a message from Lulfre directs him to phone immediately. Jared calls to update Lulfre, explaining that he has attended two lectures



and spent an hour talking to B who seems bright, sincere and harmless enough. He faxes notes on the lectures to Lulfre before getting a drink and returning to his room. Jared updates his journal because it will be useless otherwise. As Jared eats lunch, he feels like his life is falling apart. He is reluctant to reread B's lectures because they are the reason. Jared believes B is harmless, despite the fact that he is questioning the entire foundation of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, because he has been taught that no question is dangerous to them because they have all the answers; however, since Lulfre doubts that B can be harmless, Jared wonders if that means some questions are dangerous after all. Jared is disturbed by that question because he should not be. He was chosen as a loyal soldier and is not sure where he really stands with B. He does not seem brilliant, but he does not believe that he comes off as scum either.

Section 2: Saturday, May 18, Saturday; May 18 cont. & Saturday, May 18 cont. Analysis

The foreshadowing from the previous chapter is fulfilled when Jared travels to Radenau on May 18. He fulfills his duties to Lulfre and the Laurentian order by faxing a transcription of B's lecture to Lulfre. When Jared finds the site of B's next appearance, he sees people picketing about B being a blasphemer, suggesting that this is what "B" stands for. This is further emphasized when B later admits that he assumes that this is the reason his followers began calling him B. The fact that B recognizes Jared indicates that the two men will develop a significant relationship in this novel. During his lecture, B gestures with his hand, and assuming the gesture was directed at him, after the lecture Jared follows B through the streets, to Little Bohemia. At Little Bohemia, this gesture becomes more significant through B's allusion to "Monkey" in which a man recognizes a signal from the master that no other novice notices, indicating his readiness to learn the master's secret teachings. This draws a parallel between the novice in the old Chinese story and Jared, especially when B states that he hopes to share his secret teachings with Jared since Jared has the foundation of knowledge necessary for B's secret teachings. When Shirin joins them in the tavern, Jared realizes that she was searching his room while B lured him here. After returning to his hotel, Jared again reports to Lulfre, and he always gives his opinion that B is harmless enough despite the fact that B is questioning the entire foundation of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. B's teachings have already caused Jared to doubt his religious training, and he has only heard two public lectures so far.



Section 3: Sunday, May 19; Sunday, May 19 cont. & Sunday, May 19 cont.

Section 3: Sunday, May 19; Sunday, May 19 cont. & Sunday, May 19 cont. Summary

On Jared's second night in Radenau, Sunday, May 19, he sits in the back to avoid being recognized from the stage. He takes notes on B's lecture and waits outside for B after the talk. Realizing that B will not come to him again, he goes inside where he finds B with Shirin and Bonnie, a teenage girl. B explains that Jared is a priest, but Jared states he is there to listen, not talk. B introduces Michael, who objects to B's desire to save the world, but B explains that he means Mankind rather than the biosphere; if the world is to be saved, it will be saved by people with new visions and changed minds, not old visions and new programs. B wants to change the direction of the river's flow, and this is why people denounce him as the Antichrist. When Shirin asks why Jared is here, Jared explains that he has come to understand B for the Laurentian Order and disprove claims that B is the Antichrist. Frau Doktor Frauman, an older woman, claims that she does not trust Christians because their loyalty is always subject to change as their allegiance is to God first. Jared explains to Shirin that he faxes notes of B's lectures to his superior because it is his job, as a religious leader, to assure people that the world has not changed since Christ died. B's followers object to the notion that B is the Antichrist, but B simply asks who Jared's superior is. B recognizes Lulfre's name as an archaeologist and laughingly claims that Lulfre will undoubtedly react in a very subtle way.

After the Teitels bring coffee and pastries to the group, they resume their discussion, and B says he will alter his plans for the next few weeks to focus his attention on Jared. Jared explains the concept of the Antichrist to Heinz and Monika Teitel, since they were not raised in religious households. Albrecht, a young Englishman, suggests that B allow him to get rid of Jared, but B refuses because suspicion would fall on him if Jared disappears. Hindering Jared will gain B nothing. Telling Jared to return the next evening around 6 or 7, B has Shirin escort Jared back to his hotel. On the drive, Shirin tells Jared that Radenau is their home base because of a medical facility which treats scleroderma and lupus, diseases that afflict her. Shirin asks what Lulfre will do if he decides B is the Antichrist, but Jared says that is unthinkable, explaining that he was sent to disprove the idea more than to prove it. Someone has to investigate just in case because there is always a remote possibility. Again, Shirin asks how Lulfre will react, and Jared says that Lulfre will tell his superiors to prepare for a new era in human history. Shirin hopes that Jared is telling her the truth.



Section 3: Sunday, May 19; Sunday, May 19 cont. & Sunday, May 19 cont. Analysis

During B's third lecture, Jared sits in the back to avoid recognition. After the lecture, he again seeks B privately, joining B and his closest followers. B also states his goal to save the world, explaining that this is the reason that people denounce him as the Antichrist. B wants to change the direction of the river's flow, but he says that if the world is to be saved, it will be saved by people with new visions and changed minds, not old visions and new programs. When Shirin asks why Jared has come, Jared answers honestly that he has come on behalf of the Laurentian Order to ascertain whether B is the Antichrist. Although B's followers want to simply get rid of Jared, B refuses to take this method because suspicion would fall on him and hindering Jared will gain B nothing. As she drives Jared back to his hotel, Shirin asks what Lulfre will do if he decides B is the Antichrist, and Jared says that Lulfre will tell his superiors to prepare for a new era in human history; though Jared assures Shirin that he is telling her the truth, he admits in his journal that there is something about Lulfre's reaction that he did not tell Shirin.



Section 4: Monday, May 20 & Monday, May 20 cont.

Section 4: Monday, May 20 & Monday, May 20 cont. Summary

On Monday, May 20, Jared is nervous as Lulfre receives his daily fax in continued silence. Jared finds B alone in the theater's greenroom, and B explains sadly that what he has to teach Jared cannot be drawn from Jared's own head. B will not teach in a pyramidal curriculum, but rather through a mosaic, where the pieces can be added in any order. B's followers only know what he teaches them and must refer to him any questions outside that scope. It is necessary to change minds in order to change the world, and Jared is with B to have his mind changed. Currently, Jared is Christ's message, but Lulfre sent him to become B's message. B begins his lesson. Mesopotamia is erased as a horizon because the events that formerly seemed huge take their place in a deeper landscape and lose some of their prominence. Man's Agricultural Revolution signals a mind change, not the beginning of human history. Every culture's lunacy seems like sanity to the members of that culture as they speak with the voice of undoubted faith. The foundation thinkers of the modern culture believed Man was meant to live as a totalitarian agriculturalist, but they forget that Man was not born such. B directs Jared to the streets, saying that now Jared can see why it is impossible for him to carry mass audiences in this direction. The Cultural Revolution was a fluke, not destiny. They stop at a building, "Meyer-Uberbleibsel", which seems to contain museum cast-offs. B buys Jared an ammonite fossil and directs him to keep it with him because B is unsure when they will get around to it. During dinner, B states that the human race originated in Africa approximately 100,000 years before the Agricultural Revolution. After living in the same place for many years, people simply began to live a new way, and these people represent changed minds. The revolution was about power. The founders of this new culture, the Tak, were believed to have eaten at the gods' tree of wisdom by their neighbors, and B suggests that the Christian story of the Fall refers to a new mindset for Adam that was believed would lead to his death.

Section 4: Monday, May 20 & Monday, May 20 cont. Analysis

Lulfre receives his daily fax from Jared in continued silence, and this makes Jared nervous, foreshadowing Lulfre's reaction to B's lectures. B explains his teaching method to Jared, including his intention to change Jared's mind and reinvent him from Christ's message into B's message. B begins Jared's private lessons with information about Mesopotamia and Man's Agricultural Revolution. He claims that this event signals a change in the collective mind of Man, but it is not the beginning of human history.



Furthermore, he states that there were many cultures before the modern culture of totalitarian agriculture. B deviates from the belief that Man was destined to become what he is. B buys an ammonite fossil for Jared, which becomes a symbol of Jared's education with B. With a Biblical allusion, B explains to Jared that he believes the Agricultural Revolution is what the Bible records as the Fall of Adam and Eve. By translating his conversation with B into a style similar to the gospels before faxing it to Lulfre, it seems that Jared is attempting to placate Lulfre by giving B's lesson a decidedly Christian appeal.



Section 5: Tuesday, May 21; Wednesday, May 22 & Thursday, May 23

Section 5: Tuesday, May 21; Wednesday, May 22 & Thursday, May 23 Summary

On Tuesday, May 21, Shirin phones at 9 am to invite Jared to B's speaking engagement in Stuttgart later in the day. Jared writes that there is one degree of having faith and fifty degrees of losing it; he is around the thirty-fourth degree now. Jared, B, Shirin and Michael travel to Stuttgart by train, and B explains that his talk today will be about his views on population and will be held at the university. On the ride, Shirin tells Jared the story of the Imperial Chill at B's suggestion. The emperor has always been cold, and many try to solve his problem. When the Prime Minister suggests the emperor is cold because he is naked, his listeners are outraged at the simplicity of such an idea. At the university, Jared transcribes B's lecture and begins to see the point of the story as B concludes with the epilogue to the Imperial Chill: the people reject the Prime Minister's idea, he is dismissed for incompetence, and the emperor continues shivering into old age. On the train ride back to Radenau, B continues his discussion about the Fall. It is difficult to understand what happened before this culture because one cannot understand people's minds before trade, commerce and kingdoms. The train passes Herr Reichman, and Jared considers introducing him to B as B begins his tale about the weavers. Next, a weaver, weaves magic into his cloth, and soon everyone weaves only with this magic, forgetting all others. In time, the magic does not last as long, and paleontologists discover that there used to be other types of magic, but their boss does not understand why this is important. B relates this to the Agricultural Revolution. Ancestors lived like humans, but humanity was not destined to evolve into the modern culture, and this culture does not represent the final stage of human development.

B decides to take a walk on the train. After he has been gone for some time, Jared searches for him and finds his dead body with a bullet in his left temple. Jared pulls the emergency brake. At first, he is thought to be the murderer, but Shirin and Michael convince the police that is improbable. When they return to Radenau, Jared faxes Lulfre and calls the police when he recalls seeing Herr Reichmann. On Thursday, May 23, Lulfre calls Jared at 8 am and asks when he is coming home. Jared goes to Gustl Meyer's shop to inquire if anything has been discovered about B's murder. He goes to the theater where he learns that B's followers believe B would still be alive if Jared had not come. Bonnie believes that Lulfre ordered B's death, but Jared disagrees. A group arrives, looking for B, and when Jared says B is not here, Shirin silences him and states, "I am B" (p.116).



Section 5: Tuesday, May 21; Wednesday, May 22 & Thursday, May 23 Analysis

Shirin calls Jared to invite him to B's speaking engagement in Stuttgart later in the day. Jared writes about the various degrees of losing faith, stating that he is around the thirty-fourth degree now; this also foreshadows Jared losing his faith completely. On the way to Stuttgart, Shirin tells Jared the story of the Imperial Chill. This story parallels B's teachings in that he points out something obvious only to be scorned and mocked. B continues this mode of lessons on the return train ride to Radenau in his story of the weavers. He reiterates the idea that humans were not destined to become the modern culture and that this culture does not represent the final stage of human development. This proves to be Charles Atterley's final lesson as Jared finds him dead on the train. The fact that Jared had seen Herr Reichmann shortly beforehand foreshadows the revelation that Reichmann is working for the Laurentian Order. At the end of this section, Shirin claims that she is B, implying that B is an idea more than an actual person.



Section 6: Friday, May 24 (2 am)

Section 6: Friday, May 24 (2 am) Summary

On Friday, May 24, at 2 am, they decide that B will speak again publicly the next night. Jared thinks of how to stall his return to America for a few days. B asks everyone to leave so she can talk to Jared alone, but her silence makes it obvious that she does not want to talk to him. She claims that he is one of the stupidest men she has ever known because he has so much mental equipment but puts it to such little use. Shirin cries when Jared, after learning that her relationship with B was simply a very close friendship, expresses the rarity of such a friendship. She will continue with his education from where Charles left off. Since they have little time for Jared's education, they must begin at a more elemental level. She does not have patience to wait for Jared to leap across the gap himself, so she will start with the conclusion. She asks why Jesus came, and Jared answers that he came to save souls. B was called the Antichrist because he came to save the world instead of to save souls. Shirin realizes that she is still trying to goad Jared across a gap, so she suggests a walk to break out of Charles' method of teaching. At a park, B says that borders are tricky, intriguing things, and she must focus Jared's attention on the border that the people of the Fertile Crescent crossed 10,000 years ago to become the current culture. This border represents a spiritual and mental crossing where the fundamental delusion is that humanity was designed to become what it now is. Mankind began a long time before Mesopotamia. B practices the art of bricolage, the craft of building with whatever comes to hand. She collects rubbish as they walk to a path in the woods. Jared adds his ammonite fossil, which B uses to represent the Community of Life, the piece to which all other pieces in the work must cling. B states that an empty film canister is animism, an empty container as far as Jared is concerned. B claims that the number of the gods is written nowhere in the universe, but this is not added to the bricolage; rather, it is something to be discussed and dismissed. The God of Taker religions speaks but fails to make himself understood. The real gods write in the universe rather than words. B says the pen is the Law of Life as she nestles it between the Community of Life and animism. Revealed religions are perceived to be at odds with science, but animism is perfectly at home with science since it looks for truth in the universe. The cartridge fuse which represents science is placed in the bricolage. Animism is flanked by science and the Law of Life, and all three face the Community of Life. B draws a circle around the bricolage to indicate the border of when humans came to humanity as religious beings. She explains that the Law of Life is like a hologram in that every fragment of it is imprinted with the whole law which fosters life.

Section 6: Friday, May 24 (2 am) Analysis

Only two days after Atterley's assassination, Shirin plans to speak as B. In the meantime, she speaks to Jared. After belittling him as one of the stupidest men she has ever known, due to putting his mental equipment to such little use rather than having no



mental equipment, Shirin states that she will continue training Jared. She explains that Charles was called the Antichrist because, unlike Jesus who came to save souls, he came to save the world. Jared cannot see the logic in this as he believes that saving the world is a good goal. To break out of Charles's teaching methods, Shirin takes Jared to a park where she constructs a bricolage in order to continue Jared's training. During this lesson, she explains the connection between animism, the Community of Life, the Law of Life, science and the gods. While revealed religions of the modern culture are at odds with some of these concepts, animism coordinates with them perfectly, implying that it is a more natural belief system.



Section 7: Friday, May 24 (10 pm)

Section 7: Friday, May 24 (10 pm) Summary

On Friday, May 24, at 10 pm, B and Jared take the Mercedes to the park where B explains that when St. Paul brought Christianity to the Roman world, fundamental ideas were already in place. B wants to unseat these fundamental ideas and replace them with others Jared has never heard of. Vision is a flowing river, the culture's revealed religions are the highest expression of that vision, and the river flows toward the catastrophic. B's objective is to change the direction of the flow by revealing another vision that is healthy for the world and was embraced by many cultures for many years. Man lived in accordance with the Law of Life from the beginning, though they did not necessarily understand the law which was not imprinted by divine action. Takers see the world as made for Man to conquer and rule which came from the Taker experience of the world, and the vision grew out of the lifestyle. People see God as remote and untouchable, but animists see the gods as the strange force that animates a place. "Every strand of the web is a path to all the other strands", and the past, present and future are joined in the center of the web where the human mind was born. Man crossed that line when they became hunters. People began to read the world as a collection of stories, and the urge to know the future also came to Man through hunting. When the mental process crossed the border and became human thought, thought itself began to resound with the harmonic that corresponds to religion or awareness of the sacred, and animism resonates with the Community of Life which is the same resonance. The concept of Nature sprang from the Great Forgetting as an attempt to alienate Man from Nature, which is impossible since Man is a part of Nature. The perception of Man's kindredness with the rest of the Community of Life is fundamental to the animist vision. B wants Jared to be able to articulate the animist vision as easily as culture's vision, though she understands the difficulty for someone with his intellectual and cultural indoctrination. Marking the beetles' track, Shirin shows that "every track begins and ends in the hand of god", and each track is one strand of the web endlessly woven in the hand of god. The animist vision is that the world is a sacred place and process which Man is part of. When Jared asks what Charles had in mind with the ammonite fossil, B tells him that he must smash it to see how the past, present and future are woven together, but he refuses.

Section 7: Friday, May 24 (10 pm) Analysis

Shirin's goal in training Jared is to unseat his fundamental Christian ideas and replace them with new ideas that he has never heard of. She claims that vision is a flowing river, the culture's revealed religions are the highest expression of that vision, and the river flows toward the catastrophic. By wanting to change the direction of the river's flow, B attempts to destroy religion. Though that is not her goal, it will be an effect of achieving her goal. She explains the difference between the modern culture view of the world and the way Man viewed the world before the Agricultural Revolution. Shirin also explains

the differences between the Christian God and the animist gods. She teaches Jared how Man has changed since the Agricultural Revolution, such as by creating the concept of Nature in order to separate Man from something that he is a part of. Jared excitedly anticipates Shirin's first appearance as B, which is scheduled for the next night.



Section 8: Date Unknown; May 31; Saturday, June 1; Monday, June 3, Tuesday; June 4 & Wednesday, June 5

Section 8: Date Unknown; May 31; Saturday, June 1; Monday, June 3, Tuesday; June 4 & Wednesday, June 5 Summary

The third part of the book begins with an undated entry because Jared is in the hospital for three days due to an explosion at the theater. The reason is unknown, and the police claim no one was inside. Jared cannot recall the explosion due to a concussion. His long-term memory is lost, but it is probably just a temporary condition. On May 31, Jared sleeps a lot and reaches for his notebook when he wakes because he remembers it contains the answers, though he does not remember what is in it. He is back in America at the "Company Farm", a vacation spot for seminaries to recuperate a week after the explosion which occurred on the day Shirin was scheduled to appear as B. He cannot make outside calls without the doctor's permission. On Saturday, June 1, Dr. Emerson tells Jared that Lulfre is supposed to visit him that night. Dr. Emerson contacts the Teitels for Jared, but they tell him everyone was killed in the explosion. That afternoon, Jared reaches and passes the fiftieth degree of losing his faith. When Jared tells Tim, the receptionist, to expect Lulfre for dinner, Tim rejects the idea. Jared listens to his tape of Shirin's lecture at the theater on May 25 when she finally put it all together in what can only be called the Great Remembering, and Jared finally understands why B is called the Antichrist. He transcribes the copy, and Lulfre never comes.

At 3 am, Jared cannot sleep because he realizes his situation is potentially disastrous. He decides to leave immediately, but he first must convince Tim to return at least one of his credit cards. Jared flees the Company Farm and visits Lulfre, who admits to ordering Herr Reichmann to kill Charles and bomb the theater, which Jared tried to stop. Jared explains that none of this matters because now he is B's message. Lulfre does not think Jared is charismatic enough but would kill him just in case if he had a gun. As Jared leaves Lulfre, he states his intention to find a safe place for his recordings of B's lectures. Tuesday, June 4 finds Jared back in Radenau, attempting to find Shirin and Michael. He contacts Frau Doktor Hartmann, who condemns him as their murderer. On Wednesday, June 5, Jared finds that his credit card has been cancelled, so he cashes in his return ticket to America and is forced to use half of those funds to pay his hotel bill.



Section 8: Date Unknown; May 31; Saturday, June 1; Monday, June 3, Tuesday; June 4 & Wednesday, June 5 Analysis

These entries begin the third part of the novel. The first few entries are undated as Jared suffers from a concussion which results from an explosion at the theater. After spending several days in a German hospital, Jared is returned to America where he is sent to the Company Farm, a vacation spot for seminaries to recuperate. After Dr. Emerson allows him to contact the Teitels, who confirm that Shirin and Michael are dead, Jared fulfills the earlier foreshadowing by losing his faith completely. After listening to the tape of Shirin's lecture, Jared realizes why B is called the Antichrist. Also realizing the potential danger he is in, Jared flees the Company Farm. First, he confronts Lulfre, who confirms his suspicions of ordering Atterley's assassination as well as the explosion. Lulfre also reveals that Herr Reichmann was the one who killed Atterley and bombed the theater. Jared returns to Radenau to search for Shirin and Michael because he refuses to accept their deaths. Almost immediately after he confronts Lulfre, the Laurentian Order strikes out against Jared by cancelling his credit card, indicating that Jared will now be sought as well.



Section 9: Saturday, June 8

Section 9: Saturday, June 8 Summary

On Saturday, June 8, Jared writes again. He found himself homeless Thursday morning and visits the site of theater, which he did not find to be inspirational. He searches for Michael to no avail, and when walking in a general way, he finds himself at Little Bohemia, which feels like home. Jared sits in the back and orders a drink when Albrecht approaches and sneeringly asks if Jared is now B. Jared explains that he has left the priesthood, but he does not know if he is ready to begin where Shirin left off. Albrecht asks if Jared can do what B did; he took in Charles and Shirin's insights, but that means nothing if he has none of his own. Jared has not had the chance to prove himself one way or the other. Albrecht asks about the less praiseworthy accomplishment that the people of the modern culture takes credit for, and Jared answers war. Albrecht mocks Jared, because war has been around forever. Before leaving Jared in solitude, Albrecht tells Jared to take off the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting.

Jared considers the fact that the tribal lifestyle survived to the present moment because it works. He realizes that the closest thing to warfare in the nonhuman community is within species, not between species. B's task is to ask what is working and why a system is still successful after thousands of years. Evidently, cultural diversity works so tribal warfare worked well for tribal peoples because it safeguarded cultural diversity. By taking off the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting, Jared is able to make out a dim path where before was an impenetrable thicket, though he has not explored the path to its full extent by any means. This is what B does; he opens a path for exploration. Albrecht agrees that Jared's insight has the mark of B on it. When Albrecht asks about the ammonite fossil, Jared claims it is a test he has not passed yet, as Shirin wanted him to smash it to pieces. Someone suggests that there is a message inside from B, and a fossil-smashing party forms around Jared, who resists at first but eventually yields to the pressure and smashes the fossil into dust. Bonnie approaches Jared and chides him for not even looking at the smashed fossil yet. When Jared looks at the fossil, he realizes its future was to become dust whether he smashed it or if it happened naturally at some distant time in the future. Jared realizes he is looking for Shirin, but she is no longer here. Mixed in the rubble of the fossil is a note in Charles' handwriting, which states "Shirin will live- not forever, of course, but long enough for you" (p. 225).

Jared heads to the park where Shirin took him and realizes that the theater must have had an escape route, he must have warned Shirin, and she must have escaped. He still does not know where she is to be found, but it gives him a new place to start. Jared goes to the government building where he is interested in the securely barricaded bomb shelter. He tries to open it with a crow bar, but a security guard detains him, which allows him the time to see the name and phone number neatly engraved in the wood on the top beam of the barricade. When the police arrive, Jared manages to convince them that he is just a harmless lunatic who will never return.



Jared nearly does not recognize Shirin when she exits Michael's chalet in the woods twenty kilometers west of Radenua. The reunion is awkward. On the drive to the chalet, Michael tells Jared that he had managed to shout a warning at the theater. According to Michael, Shirin had wanted to return to the theater to search for Jared, but Shirin claims it was Michael who wanted to search for Jared; however, the others dissuaded either of them from that "folly". Everyone agrees that it is time to run for cover and lie low. B's followers are sharply divided by news of Jared's survival with half seeing it as evidence of his guilt and the others seeing his injuries as evidence of his innocence. Michael's household is governed by a strange rule to never discuss what is next. It is too early to tell if Shirin and Jared will move toward something more than they currently have. Only time will tell, and Jared is in no hurry.

Section 9: Saturday, June 8 Analysis

Due to the Laurentian Order cancelling his credit card, Jared quickly finds himself homeless. He searches for Michael and Shirin throughout Radenau, contacting everyone he knows and exhausting every angle that he can think of. When he finds himself in Little Bohemia, Jared encounters Albrecht, who mocks him about becoming B. When Albrecht challenges him, Jared manages to remove the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting and realizes that tribal warfare worked well for tribal peoples because it safeguarded cultural diversity, which is what works. Additionally, he realizes that this is what B does; he opens a path for exploration. Albrecht is forced to admit that Jared's insight is worthy of B. When Jared is convinced by the patrons in the tavern to smash his ammonite fossil, he finds a note inside from Atterley, which indicates that Shirin will live long enough for Jared, and this convinces Jared that Shirin must still be alive. Since Jared is now convinced that Shirin is alive, he realizes that the theater must have had an escape route. He also thinks of a new place to start his search for Shirin, so he goes to the government building. After attempting to open the bomb shelter, he is restrained by a guard, and this allows him to notice a name and phone number engraved in the wood on the top beam of the barricade. This is Michael's number, and Jared contacts Michael, who transports him to his chalet twenty kilometers west of Radenau where Shirin and Michael have been hiding since the bombing. The household lives in a strange stasis of not considering the future, but Jared is in no hurry to learn what the future holds.



Section 10: Epilogue, Undated

Section 10: Epilogue, Undated Summary

In the undated Epilogue, Jared addresses the reader directly. He had entrusted the tape of B's lectures to a friend, but the friend's apartment was ransacked and the tape stolen. His friend was supposed to have copied the tape and stored a copy elsewhere, but he had not yet gotten around to it. Jared blames himself for still being too trusting. Jared writes his journal with the hope and possibility of being read by others. He does not end here because B's teachings are complete; that is a laughable idea. If the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting which causes the intellectual growth to be stunted and warped are removed, it will be done by a whole new generation of authors and teachers, including the reader who must teach others that the "vision is the river, and we who have been changed are the flood" and "the world will not be saved by old minds with new programs. If the world is saved, it will be saved by new minds- with no programs" (p. 234). Charles Atterley, Shirin and Jared are B, which is what makes them targets. Jared has lost the tape and can only replace it with readers. He rushes because Shirin is packed and Michael is taking them to the airport in Hamburg. Jared must leave the manuscript with Michael, who will be safe once Shirin and Jared are gone, since Lulfre believes they are B. They are B because they cannot be put back to what they once were; they are fundamentally and permanently changed. Jared has written the words, and somehow, they make their way to the reader. Even if the reader hates these words or Lulfre finds and kills Jared and Shirin, it is too late because "the contagion has been spread. You are B" (p. 235).

Section 10: Epilogue, Undated Analysis

Jared addresses the reader directly in the undated Epilogue. He explains that his tape of B's lectures was stolen so he no longer has that as insurance against the Laurentians. Jared admits that he has always written his journal with the intent of it being read. He explains the necessity of a whole new generation of authors and teachers if the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting are to be removed, listing the reader as someone who must now pick up the torch carried by B and teach others about the ability to save the world by new minds with no programs. Jared additionally explains that he, Shirin and Michael, and now the reader, are B because they are fundamentally and permanently changed, and they cannot be put back to what they once were. He claims that it does not matter what happens to him and Shirin because the contagion has been spread and now the reader is B.



Section 11: The Great Forgetting

Section 11: The Great Forgetting Summary

In *Der Bau*, Munich on May 16, B lectures on the Great Forgetting. It is strange that the educational and character-shaping structures of culture exposes people only once to the masters but continually to religion. It is necessary for B to repeat himself many times. Anywhere in the world, one can offer to show someone how to be saved and be understood because the ritual is delivered by divine means and transmittable by normal means. There is a complex and profound worldview implicit in this statement: that Man is born unsaved and without this ritual will lose the chance for eternal happiness with God. Man understands this because it is inherent in modern culture. The difficulty in explaining this to someone from a culture with no notion that Man is born in an unsaved state is the difficulty B encounters when addressing an audience. Man forgets that there was a time before the Agricultural Revolution. "The Great Forgetting was woven into the fabric of our intellectual life from its very beginning" (p. 244), and it occurred because people lived in a profoundly different way before the Agricultural Revolution. A large part of cultural mythology claims a profound gulf between Eastern and Western cultures, but they are both built exclusively on totalitarian agriculture as their base. When the existence of a pre-agricultural man became undeniable in the nineteenth century, the thinkers of the culture decide that Man may not have been born an agriculturalist and civilization-builder, but he was destined to become such. The Great Forgetting caused a very profound split in humanity. The law of limited competition states "you may compete to the full extent of your capabilities, but you may not hunt down your competitors or destroy their food or deny them access to food. In other words, you may compete but you may not wage war on your competitors" (p. 252). During the Great Forgetting, the modern culture rejected this law. Leavers follow the law, leaving the rule of the world in the hands of the gods, but the Takers reject the law and take the rule of the world into their own hands, which breaks the cultural continuity. They suppress their outlaw status by forgetting there ever was a law. B is condemned because he brings good news: Man is not the scourge of the world; the modern culture is. Therefore, it is not necessary to change Mankind to survive, only to change a single culture. The task is not easy, but it is also not impossible. What religionists call the Fall is actually the birth of this culture as Man lived at peace with the world before the Agriculture Revolution. Agriculture was not developed as a response to famine because it promotes famine as it makes it possible to outstrip a homeland's resources, causing starvation.

Section 11: The Great Forgetting Analysis

This chapter begins the final section of the novel, *The Public Teachings*. This first lecture occurs in *Der Bau*, Munich on May 16, and this is the first time that Jared listened to one of B's lectures. This lecture is about the Great Forgetting. In this lecture, B explains the ritual of salvation and the fact that it is a part of the fundamental knowledge of the modern culture. Since people forget that there was a time before the



Agricultural Revolution, he is faced with great difficulty in trying to explain this time. He explains the error in claiming that people have always acted the way that they do. He also draws a parallel between Eastern and Western cultures since they are both built exclusively on totalitarian agriculture as their base. When the foundation thinkers of culture could no longer deny the existence of a pre-agricultural Man, they simply decided that Man was destined to become an agriculturalist and civilization-builder. B refutes this theory and claims that modern culture is the scourge of the world, but Man is not. This is very good news because it is not necessary to change Mankind for the world to survive; it is only necessary to change one culture.



Section 12: The Boiling Frog

Section 12: The Boiling Frog Summary

On May 18, B lectures on The Boiling Frog at Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau. He explains that if one puts a frog in boiling water, it will try to escape; however, if one puts it in warm water and gradually increases the temperature, the frog, stuck in a stupor, will allow itself to be boiled to death. For Man, the Agricultural Revolution is the warm water, and signs of distress do not appear until much later when the water is boiling. Mankind begins to overrun the earth because agriculture increases the food supply, causing the water to heat up and signs of distress to appear. From 5000 to 3000 B.C.E., the world becomes more crowded, and the age of war begins which continues through the present. Crime emerges as a problem between 3000 and 1400 B.C.E. The years 3000 through 0 B.C.E. see political and military adventurism, as well as civil revolt, assassination, counterfeiting, slavery and inflation. People begin to suspect that something is fundamentally wrong, causing the advent of Judaism, Brahmanism, Hinduism, Shintoism and Buddhism. In the next 1,200 years, the previous signs of distress continue, but now people have Salvationist religions to show them how to "understand and deal with the inevitable discomfort of being alive" (p. 268). From 1200 to 1700, Man is faced with the bubonic plague, Mongol Hordes and the Inquisition. The first madhouse and debtor's prison are also created. Christianity becomes the first global Salvationist religion. All of these are reactions to overcrowding in the world. Between 1700 and 1900, diseases emerge, and Man faces economic instability. The Industrial Revolution takes place, and animals are exterminated in vast quantities. The next sixty years offer the first global economic collapse, two world wars and nuclear warfare. The water is boiling. From 1960 to 1996, the other signs of distress continue, the frog is now dead, and this can only lead to cultural collapse.

Section 12: The Boiling Frog Analysis

In B's second lecture at Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau on May 18, B draws a parallel between a frog and Man as he provides a metaphor of a frog allowing itself to be boiled to death if one puts the frog in warm water and gradually increases the temperature. B describes how Man was placed into warm water during the Agricultural Revolution, and during the next 10,000 years, Man demonstrated signs of distress in the form of war, crime, civil revolt, slavery, the advent of revealed religions, the advent of Salvationist religions, the bubonic plague, the Inquisition, diseases, world wars and economic collapse. He claims that these are all reactions to overcrowding in the world. Finally, B ends this lecture by stating that at the present time, the frog is already dead, and the only thing that remains is cultural collapse.



Section 13: The Collapse of Values

Section 13: The Collapse of Values Summary

B lectures on the Collapse of Values at Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau on May 19. A chorus of distress assembles for over 10,000 years before the modern era. Every culture has a defining place in the scheme of things, but this place can be shattered like the modern culture's place has been. According to everyone in the 1950s, the things that got Man to this place were good things because the earth was designed for Man to exploit; however, this is the modern culture's vision, not Mankind's. At one time, the manifesto that "the world was made for Man, and Man was made to conquer and rule it" (p. 280) was universally accepted, but it is now doubted everywhere. The new era of the collapse of values began in 1962 with Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring", which shattered a complex of fundamental articles of the cultural faith for all time. Figuring out what has gone wrong has become a global preoccupation, and many theories have been presented, but B offers a new one: a cultural collapse is occurring. The good news is that this culture is not humanity. All the intellectual and spiritual foundations of the modern culture were laid by people who believed that this culture is humanity itself, but it is good that it is not because if this culture was humanity, then all the bad things that are said about humanity would be true. Yet, this culture is not humanity, so Mankind only needs to change one culture which is very good news.

Section 13: The Collapse of Values Analysis

B's third lecture is on the Collapse of Values at Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau on May 19. He explains that the modern culture's place in the scheme of things has been shattered. The modern culture's vision includes the idea that the earth was designed to exploit, but this idea is now widely doubted, due in large part to Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" which was published in 1962 and shattered a complex of fundamental articles of the cultural faith for all time. B's theory on what is wrong with the world is that a cultural collapse is occurring, but luckily, this culture is not humanity itself, so Man only needs to change one culture rather than all of Mankind, and this is very good news, according to B.



Section 14: Population: A Systems Approach

Section 14: Population: A Systems Approach Summary

In "Population: A Systems Approach", B lectures at the university in Stuttgart on May 21. B has learned to cautiously approach these ideas since they prove unsettling for many people. Homo sapiens appear on this planet 200,000 years ago, and there are approximately 10,000 of them. Over the next 190,000 years, they increased in numbers to around 10 million and migrated to every continent. The population doubled ten times in 190,000 years before the Agricultural Revolution, approximately every 19,000 years. The next doubling occurred in only 5000 years, then 2000, 1600, 1400, 1200, 500, 200, and finally in only 60 years. The world has a population problem, but its angle of attack is ineffective. B will present a more promising angle of attack. He reads "Blessing: A Fable About Population" in which a drug is produced to cure pain, but it also increases fertility. Dr. Spry suggests that many did not know they had pain until Blessing was invented, and the population influx would cease if Blessing was not distributed unnecessarily. People become enraged with B, like with Dr. Spry, because he claims that what culture perceives as a blessing is merely a pain reliever. By increasing the population, it is necessary to increase food production, which inevitably results in an increased population. The Agricultural Revolution is the origin of the world's population explosion. An increase in food availability results in increased population and vice versa, creating a never-ending cycle; however, the idea of decreasing food production is seen as ridiculous because it would cause civilization to crash. Population growth must be supported by increased food production, so to maintain the same level of food availability would lead to a stable population with the old dying as the next generation is born. B is always surprised by how challenging people find these ideas. History contradicts the idea that it is possible to increase food production and end population growth through birth control. Likewise, it is impossible for population to continue to increase if food production is maintained at a stable level. In regards to the millions who are starving, the increase in food production does not feed them; it fuels the world's population explosion. To control effects, the world must first control the causes. The control of food production is a strategy aimed at causes. B warns against the continued success of totalitarian agriculture. The increase population is created from food, but if the world does nothing about its growing population, the system will take care of itself—by collapsing.

Section 14: Population: A Systems Approach Analysis

B lectures on May 21 at the university in Stuttgart on Population: A Systems Approach. He begins his lecture by explaining the length of time that it has taken the world's population to double throughout history. He demonstrates that the amount of time has



been reduced significantly since the Agricultural Revolution. Through his fable about Blessing, B suggests that there is an oversupply of food. After this fable, he states this suggestion explicitly. He claims that a stable availability of food will create a stable population as children will be born at a rate equivalent to the aged dying. He proves that history supports his claims. B ends his lecture with a question and answer session where he disproves his audience's suggestions logically. This is the lecture where his audience questions him in German as a sign of disrespect. Also, this is Charles Atterley's last appearance as B since he is assassinated on the train returning to Radenau after this lecture.



Section 15: The Great Remembering

Section 15: The Great Remembering Summary

B lectures on "The Great Remembering" on May 25 at the Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau. The modern culture has its own form of PCP, the narcotic, which blinds Man to his biological limitations and vulnerability: the Great Forgetting. Many think that it is too late for Mankind to save itself, but there is still time to begin the Great Remembering. The Great Forgetting fostered the delusion that the world was empty of humans until the beginning of the modern culture, the Agricultural Revolution. Once Man realizes that cultures existed before this one, they begin to see this as the single culture that God intended for all of humanity. If people remove the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting, they can see that the founders of the modern culture were tribal people surrounded by other tribal peoples. The founders of the modern culture were the Tak, agriculturalists who founded the new totalitarian style of agriculture. By several groups adopting a common culture, they lost some of the solidity that once defined them, and eventually, the other tribes lost their tribal identities. The modern culture was born in a world absolutely full of law, but the culture then inadvertently proceeded to obliterate that law. It becomes obvious that some new form of law is needed, so laws are invented, which is a new idea. Tribal laws are received, not invented. Using adultery as an example, if a man and his cousin's wife love each other and give into that passion, they must then choose to allow the village's anger to subside or run away together forever. The price is paid of their own choice, not as punishment. Tribal law works well for all concerned, as opposed to invented laws which simply spell out crimes and punishments. Detribalization was the price to be paid for becoming part of the Taker revolution. The tribal lifestyle is precious because it worked for three million years. Tribalism has been largely destroyed, but it still works, though that does not necessarily mean that other things cannot work as well. The trouble with this culture's particular something is that it is not working. To Takers, it does not matter if it works; if it does not, people will just have to suffer. In tribal life, no one suffers unless everyone suffers. The Agricultural Revolution eliminated what made tribal life a success: social, economic and political egalitarianism. The Great Forgetting is complete, and everything thinks that this is the nature of the world and Man. The suffering masses realize they are suffering, and since they need something, Salvationist religions are developed. B tells her followers how to answer accusations that B is the Antichrist. The Antichrist is an anti-savior, known for his wickedness. B does mean to steal people's hearts away from religion so that the world may live because Man is only one species in this world. B's followers are straying from the path of salvation, not for sin and corruption, but because they remember that Man once belonged to the world and was content; they are straying for love of the world. John the evangelist warned of the final hour when the Antichrist came, and he was right to warn his followers against those who love the world. It is the final hour of his culture, and the day for B's followers now begins.



Section 15: The Great Remembering Analysis

On May 25, B lectures on The Great Remembering at Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau. This is Shirin's first appearance as B after Charles Atterley is assassinated and before the theater is bombed. She explains the causes and the effects of the Great Forgetting, but she also offers a solution in the form of the Great Remembering. She claims that the modern culture was not what God intended for all of humanity, and she teaches a lesson in history about the Tak and the way that the Agricultural Revolution demolished tribal identities. She explains that Man was born in a world full of law, but the modern culture obliterated that law so a new form of law was needed, and they began to invent laws. B explains the difference between tribal law and invented law; invented law simply defines crimes and metes out punishments while tribal law works well for all concerned. Becoming part of the Taker revolution involved paying the price of detribalization. After the Great Forgetting is complete, Salvationist religions are developed because the suffering masses realize they are suffering and that they need something to prevent this suffering. B ends her lecture by telling her followers that if someone claims she is the Antichrist, they should agree. She is the Antichrist because she means to steal the people's hearts away from religion in order to save the world. She warns that it is the final hour of the modern culture, and it is now the day for animism to return.



Characters

Jared Osborne

Jared Osborne is a priest of the Laurentian Order who is sent to Germany by Fr. Bernard Lulfre to investigate claims that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist. After being directed to the Der Bau, Jared listens to B speak for the first time and is struck with his own stupidity. He follows B to Radenau and, after B's second lecture, to Little Bohemia where Jared and B discuss B's message and his need to find someone with whom to share his secret teachings. Jared continues to attend B's lectures, reporting back to Fr. Lulfre afterwards, but he also meets privately with B and becomes a sort of disciple.

After Charles Atterley is murdered on the train returning from his lecture in Stuttgart, Shirin becomes B and resumes Jared's training. When the theatre is bombed on the night of Shirin's first appearance as B, Jared manages to warn her, though he is injured and hospitalized. He is sent to the Company Farm, but he escapes and visits Fr. Lulfre, stating that he is B. Jared returns to Germany and searches for Shirin and Michael. After encounters with some of B's followers and some self-education, Jared finally finds them, and he writes the manuscript of the book which he leaves with Michael while he and Shirin attempt to hide from the Laurentians. He tells the reader that now they are B because, having read the message, they can never go back to what they once were.

B

B is an idea. It notates someone who cannot be put back to what they once were. They are fundamentally and permanently changed. Charles Atterley is the first B, but Shirin takes on the role of B after Atterley is assassinated. When Jared thinks that Shirin is dead, he also becomes B. The readers of his journal are B because he shares B's message with them.

B lectures on the Great Forgetting, the Boiling Frog, the Collapse of Values, Population: A Systems Approach and the Great Remembering. Fr. Lulfre sends Jared Osborne to Germany to discover whether B is the Antichrist. Atterley believes that he is called B to stand for Blasphemy. As B, Atterley and Shirin teach and convert Jared, transforming him into B as well. Jared claims that the Laurentians cannot destroy B because the message has been shared and cannot be unshared. As B, Shirin claims that B is the Antichrist because B promotes an end to the modern culture in favor of a salvation of the world rather than souls.

Charles Atterley

Charles Atterley is the first B. He has piercing eyes, a beaky nose, broad cheek bones and a wide mouth. He is a man in his early to mid forties and begins Jared's training. Jared is sent to investigate claims that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist. Atterley is



assassinated by Herr Reichmann on the train returning to Radenau from a lecture at the university in Stuttgart.

Shirin

Shirin is a woman who signs for Atterley during his lectures. She is sphinx-like and inscrutable with a strangely marked face due to her diseases. She has intense eyes and is tall and athletically built. Shirin is in her early thirties and becomes B after Charles Atterley is assassinated. She trains Jared in the park with the use of a bricolage. Jared believes Shirin was killed in the bombing of the Schauspielhaus Wahnfried, but she managed to escape and hide at Michael's chalet twenty kilometers west of Radenau.

Fr. Bernard Lulfre

Fr. Bernard Lulfre is Jared's superior who sends him to Europe to investigate claims that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist. Jared sends transcriptions of B's lecture to Lulfre who uses them to justify his decision to order B's assassination. Since Jared and Shirin assume B's identity after Charles Atterley is murdered, Lulfre likely tries to hunt them down.

Michael Dershinsky

Michael Dershinsky is one of B's followers. He is tall, clumsy and slight funny looking with big, fleshy ears, a long face, sleepy eyes and rubbery, humorous lips. He appears highly intelligent and naturally modest at the same time. Jared instinctively likes Michael when they first meet. After the explosion at the theater, Jared searches for Michael and Shirin, finally locating them at Michael's chalet twenty kilometers west of Radenau. Jared leaves the manuscript of his journal with Michael who publishes it after driving Jared and Shirin to the airport in Hamburg because he will be safe without them since Lulfre does not understand that Michael is also B.

Albrecht

Albrecht is a twenty-year-old follower of B who looks like he is itching to crush Jared like an insect with his giant intellect when they first meet. Jared encounters Albrecht in Little Bohemia after the theater is bombed and helps Jared take off the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting, grudgingly admitting the truth in Jared's insight.

Bonnie

Bonnie is one of B's followers. She is a young girl and the daughter of an American businessman. She appears overtly suspicious and hostile toward Jared when they first



meet. After Schauspielhaus, Wahnfried is bombed, she helps Jared in his training at Little Bohemia.

Herr Reichmann

Herr Reichmann introduces himself to Jared in Munich and directs Jared to Der Bau when Jared asks about Charles Atterley. Shortly before Charles is murdered, Jared sees Herr Reichmann on the platform outside the train. Jared learns that Herr Reichmann is the Laurentians' man in Europe and the one who assassinated Charles Atterley and also bombed Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in an attempt to kill the rest of B's inner circle.

Monika and Heinz Teitel

Monika and Heinz Teitel are a young working-class couple who follow B. They seem nervous and slightly alarmed when they first meet Jared. After the theater is bombed, they lie to Jared about Shirin and Michael being alive because they are convinced of his guilt in the matter.

Tim

Tim is the receptionist at the Company Farm who Jared convinces to return one of his credit cards for funding when he escapes from the Company Farm.

Frau Doktor Hartmann

Frau Doktor Hartmann is a short, crafty-looking woman in her fifties. Jared pegs her as a school principal. She has a natural distrust of Christians and blames Jared for Charles and Shirin's deaths.

Doctor Emerson

Doctor Emerson is Jared's physician at the Company Farm. He allows Jared to call Germany to inquire about Shirin after the Schauspielhaus Wahnfried is bombed.

Antichrist

The Laurentian Order has a special mandate to watch for the Antichrist, the antithesis to Jesus Christ who will usher in the end of days. There are rumors suggesting that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist which is why Jared Osborne is sent to Germany to investigate these claims. This is why he is eventually assassinated. Shirin, as B, claims

that she is the Antichrist because it means to end the totalitarian agricultural culture in an effort to save the world from Man's destruction.

Gustl Meyer

Gustl Meyer is the owner of "Meyer-Uberbleibselen", the shop where B purchases the ammonite fossil for Jared. After B's murder and the bombing at the theater, Jared visits Gustl Meyer for information.



Objects/Places

Laurentian Order

The Laurentian Order is the Christian denomination that Jared Osborne belongs to as a priest.

Ammonite Fossil

Charles Atterley gives Jared an ammonite fossil which he says he will eventually explain in his lessons, but his murder prevents this. When Shirin takes over Jared's training, she tells him that the fossil will teach him about the future and to crush it, but Jared refuses. After the theater is bombed, Jared is convinced by a mob of B's followers to crush the fossil at Little Bohemia. Inside, he finds a note from B stating that Shirin will live long enough for him.

Radenau

Radenau is a city in Germany which B uses as a home base since it is near the medical facility that specializes in Shirin's disease.

Schauspielhaus Wahnfried

Schauspielhaus Wahnfried is the theater in Radenau where B holds many of his lectures. After murdering Charles, Herr Reichmann bombs the theater, injuring Jared who warns Shirin, allowing her to escape.

Little Bohemia

Little Bohemia is a tavern in Radenau that Charles frequents. This is where Charles begins teaching Jared and also where Jared returns when he believes Shirin is dead. While at Little Bohemia, Jared removes the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting and realizes Shirin is still alive after finding a note from Charles inside the shattered ammonite fossil.

Hamburg

Hamburg is a city near Radenau where the airport is located.



St. Edward's

St. Edward's is the church where Jared serves as a priest before being sent to Germany to investigate claims that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist.

Park

Shirin takes Jared to the park to continue his training after Charles is murdered. This is where she constructs the bricolage.

B's Lectures

B's lectures about the Great Forgetting and animism are controversial and cause people to suggest that he is the Antichrist. Jared tapes and transcribes them for Fr. Lulfre, who claims that the lectures condemned Charles to be assassinated.

Bricolage

After Charles is assassinated, Shirin resumes Jared's training in the park through the construction of a bricolage. Using a film canister to represent animism, the ammonite fossil as the community of life, a cartridge fuse as science and a pen as the Law of Life, Shirin shows Jared that animism is flanked by science and the Law of Life with all three facing the community of life.

The Company Farm

The Company Farm is a recuperation hospital for priests. Jared is sent here after the bombing, but he escapes and returns to Germany in order to search for Shirin.

Train

Charles Atterley is assassinated on the train returning to Radenua from Stuttgart after his lecture on population at the university.

Great Forgetting

The Great Forgetting is the worldwide forgetting of the time before the Agricultural Revolution, resulting in the current culture which leads to a population explosion.



Great Remembering

The Great Remembering is the worldwide recollection of the time before the Agricultural Revolution. According to B's teachings, it is necessary in order to save the world.

Stuttgart

Stuttgart is the city where Charles Atterley gives his last lecture at the university before being assassinated on the return train to Radenau.

Agricultural Revolution

The Agricultural Revolution occurred approximately 10,000 years ago and marks the beginning of totalitarian agriculture, which lead to the current culture in the world. Many of B's lectures focus on the existence of many cultures that were exterminated during the Agricultural Revolution.

Salzburg

Jared first arrives in Salzburg when he travels to Europe to investigate claims that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist.

Munich

In Munich, Jared meets Herr Reichmann, who responds to Jared's inquiries about Charles by directing him to Der Bau.

Der Bau

Directed by Herr Reichmann, Jared first hears one of B's lectures at Der Bau.

Michael's Chalet

Michael's chalet is located about twenty kilometers west of Radenau. After the theater is bombed, Michael and Shirin hide here, and this is where Jared finds them.



Themes

B's Teachings

One of the most important themes in this novel are B's teachings. These are best exemplified by his public teachings at the end of the novel, though his private teachings are also important. In Der Bau, Munich, on May 16, B lectures on the Great Forgetting. It is strange that the educational and character-shaping structures of culture exposes people only once to the masters but continually to religion. It is necessary for B to repeat himself many times. Anywhere in the world, one can offer to show someone how to be saved and be understood because the ritual is delivered by divine means and transmittable by normal means. There is a complex and profound worldview implicit in this statement: that Man is born unsaved and without this ritual will lose the chance for eternal happiness with God. Man understands this because it is inherent in modern culture. The difficulty in explaining this to someone from a culture with no notion that Man is born in an unsaved state is the difficulty B encounters when addressing an audience. Man forgets that there was a time before the Agricultural Revolution. "The Great Forgetting was woven into the fabric of our intellectual life from its very beginning" (p. 244), and it occurred because people lived in a profoundly different way before the Agricultural Revolution. When historians realize this, they decide that the millions of years before the Agricultural Revolution deserve to be forgotten and title it prehistory, discarding 99.7 percent of human history as a mere prelude. The idea of the Agricultural Revolution learned in school limits what Man understands about himself and what happened on this planet. It is profoundly misleading to claim that people abandoned a foraging life in favor of agriculture 10,000 years ago. The foundation thinkers of culture imagined that what they did was what people everywhere have done since the beginning of time. A large part of cultural mythology claims a profound gulf between Eastern and Western cultures, but they are both built exclusively on totalitarian agriculture as their base. When the existence of a pre-agricultural man became undeniable in the nineteenth century, the thinkers of the culture decide that Man may not have been born an agriculturalist and civilization-builder, but he was destined to become such. The Great Forgetting caused a very profound split in humanity. The law of limited competition states "you may compete to the full extent of your capabilities, but you may not hunt down your competitors or destroy their food or deny them access to food. In other words, you may compete but you may not wage war on your competitors" (p. 252). During the Great Forgetting, the modern culture rejected this law. Leavers follow the law, leaving the rule of the world in the hands of the gods, but the Takers reject the law and take the rule of the world into their own hands, which breaks the cultural continuity. They suppress their outlaw status by forgetting there ever was a law. B is condemned because he brings good news: Man is not the scourge of the world; the modern culture is. Therefore, it is not necessary to change Mankind to survive, only to change a single culture. The task is not easy, but it is also not impossible. What religionists call the Fall is actually the birth of this culture, as Man lived at peace with the world before the Agriculture Revolution. Agriculture was not developed as a response to



famine, because it promotes famine as it makes it possible to outstrip a homeland's resources, causing starvation.

On May 18, B lectures on The Boiling Frog at Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau. He explains that if one puts a frog in boiling water, it will try to escape; however, if one puts it in warm water and gradually increases the temperature, the frog, stuck in a stupor, will allow itself to be boiled to death. For Man, the Agricultural Revolution is the warm water, and signs of distress do not appear until much later when the water is boiling. Mankind begins to overrun the earth because agriculture increases the food supply, causing the water to heat up and signs of distress to appear. From 5000 to 3000 B.C.E., the world becomes more crowded, and the age of war begins which continues through the present. Crime emerges as a problem between 3000 and 1400 B.C.E. The years 3000 through 0 B.C.E. see political and military adventurism, as well as civil revolt, assassination, counterfeiting, slavery and inflation. People begin to suspect that something is fundamentally wrong, causing the advent of Judaism, Brahmanism, Hinduism, Shintoism and Buddhism. In the next 1,200 years, the previous signs of distress continue, but now people have Salvationist religions to show them how to "understand and deal with the inevitable discomfort of being alive" (p. 268). From 1200 to 1700, Man is faced with the bubonic plague, Mongol Hordes and the Inquisition. The first madhouse and debtor's prison are also created. Christianity becomes the first global Salvationist religion. All of these are reactions to overcrowding in the world. Between 1700 and 1900, diseases emerge, and Man faces economic instability. The Industrial Revolution takes place, and animals are exterminated in vast quantities. The next sixty years offer the first global economic collapse, two world wars and nuclear warfare. The water is boiling. From 1960 to 1996, the other signs of distress continue, the frog is now dead, and this can only lead to cultural collapse.

B lectures on the Collapse of Values at Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau on May 19. A chorus of distress assembles for over 10,000 years before the modern era. Every culture has a defining place in the scheme of things, but this place can be shattered like the modern culture's place has been. According to everyone in the 1950s, the things that got Man to this place were good things because the earth was designed for Man to exploit; however, this is the modern culture's vision, not Mankind's. At one time, the manifesto that "the world was made for Man, and Man was made to conquer and rule it" (p. 280) was universally accepted, but it is now doubted everywhere. The new era of the collapse of values began in 1962 with Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring", which shattered a complex of fundamental articles of the cultural faith for all time. Figuring out what has gone wrong has become a global preoccupation, and many theories have been presented, but B offers a new one: a cultural collapse is occurring. The good news is that this culture is not humanity. All the intellectual and spiritual foundations of the modern culture were laid by people who believed that this culture is humanity itself, but it is good that it is not because if this culture was humanity, then all the bad things that are said about humanity would be true. Yet, this culture is not humanity, so Mankind only needs to change one culture which is very good news.

In "Population: A Systems Approach", B lectures at the university in Stuttgart on May 21. B has learned to cautiously approach these ideas since they prove unsettling for many



people. Homo sapiens appear on this planet 200,000 years ago, and there are approximately 10,000 of them. Over the next 190,000 years, they increased in numbers to around 10 million and migrated to every continent. The population doubled ten times in 190,000 years before the Agricultural Revolution, approximately every 19,000 years. The next doubling occurred in only 5,000 years, then 2,000, 1,600, 1,400, 1,200, 500, 200, and finally in only 60 years. The world has a population problem, but its angle of attack is ineffective. B will present a more promising angle of attack. He reads "Blessing: A Fable About Population", in which a drug is produced to cure pain, but it also increases fertility. Dr. Spry suggests that many did not know they had pain until Blessing was invented, and the population influx would cease if Blessing was not distributed unnecessarily. People become enraged with B, like with Dr. Spry, because he claims that what culture perceives as a blessing is merely a pain reliever. By increasing the population, it is necessary to increase food production, which inevitably results in an increased population. The Agricultural Revolution is the origin of the world's population explosion. An increase in food availability results in increased population and vice versa, creating a never-ending cycle; however, the idea of decreasing food production is seen as ridiculous because it would cause civilization to crash. Population growth must be supported by increased food production, so to maintain the same level of food availability would lead to a stable population with the old dying as the next generation is born. B is always surprised by how challenging people find these ideas. History contradicts the idea that it is possible to increase food production and end population growth through birth control. Likewise, it is impossible for population to continue to increase if food production is maintained at a stable level. In regards to the millions who are starving, the increase in food production does not feed them; it fuels the world's population explosion. To control effects, the world must first control the causes. The control of food production is a strategy aimed at causes. B warns against the continued success of totalitarian agriculture. The increased population is created from food, but if the world does nothing about its growing population, the system will take care of itself- by collapsing.

B lectures on "The Great Remembering" on May 25 at the Schauspielhaus Wahnfried in Radenau. The modern culture has its own form of PCP, the narcotic, which blinds Man to his biological limitations and vulnerability: the Great Forgetting. Many think that it is too late for Mankind to save itself, but there is still time to begin the Great Remembering. The Great Forgetting fostered the delusion that the world was empty of humans until the beginning of the modern culture, the Agricultural Revolution. Once Man realizes that cultures existed before this one, they begin to see this as the single culture that God intended for all of humanity. If people remove the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting, they can see that the founders of the modern culture were tribal people surrounded by other tribal peoples. The founders of the modern culture were the Tak, agriculturalists who founded the new totalitarian style of agriculture. By several groups adopting a common culture, they lost some of the solidity that once defined them, and eventually, the other tribes lost their tribal identities. The modern culture was born in a world absolutely full of law, but the culture then inadvertently proceeded to obliterate that law. It becomes obvious that some new form of law is needed, so laws are invented which is a new idea. Tribal laws are received, not invented. Using adultery as an example, if a man and his cousin's wife love each other and give into that



passion, they must then choose to allow the village's anger to subside or run away together forever. The price is paid of their own choice, not as punishment. Tribal law works well for all concerned, as opposed to invented laws which simply spell out crimes and punishments. Detribalization was the price to be paid for becoming part of the Taker revolution. The tribal lifestyle is precious because it worked for three million years. Tribalism has been largely destroyed, but it still works, though that does not necessarily mean that other things cannot work as well. The trouble with this culture's particular something is that it is not working. To Takers, it does not matter if it works; if it does not, people will just have to suffer. In tribal life, no one suffers unless everyone suffers. The Agricultural Revolution eliminated what made tribal life a success: social, economic and political egalitarianism. The Great Forgetting is complete, and everything thinks that this is the nature of the world and Man. The suffering masses realize they are suffering, and since they need something, Salvationist religions are developed. B tells her followers how to answer accusations that B is the Antichrist. The Antichrist is an anti-savior, known for his wickedness. B does mean to steal people's hearts away from religion so that the world may live because Man is only one species in this world. B's followers are straying from the path of salvation, not for sin and corruption, but because they remember that Man once belonged to the world and was content; they are straying for love of the world. John the evangelist warned of the final hour when the Antichrist came, and he was right to warn his followers against those who love the world. It is the final hour of his culture, and the day for B's followers now begins.

In his private teachings, B explains that vision is a flowing river, the culture's revealed religions are the highest expression of that vision, and the river flows toward the catastrophic. B's objective is to change the direction of the flow by revealing another vision that is healthy for the world and was embraced by many cultures for many years. Man lived in accordance with the Law of Life from the beginning, though they did not necessarily understand the law which was not imprinted by divine action. Takers see the world as made for Man to conquer and rule which came from the Taker experience of the world, and the vision grew out of the lifestyle. People see God as remote and untouchable, but animists see the gods as the strange force that animates a place. "Every strand of the web is a path to all the other strands", and the past, present and future are joined in the center of the web where the human mind was born. Man crossed that line when they became hunters. People began to read the world as a collection of stories, and the urge to know the future also came to Man through hunting. When the mental process crossed the border and became human thought, thought itself began to resound with the harmonic that corresponds to religion or awareness of the sacred, and animism resonates with the Community of Life which is the same resonance. The concept of Nature sprang from the Great Forgetting as an attempt to alienate Man from Nature, which is impossible since Man is a part of Nature. The perception of Man's kindredness with the rest of the Community of Life is fundamental to the animist vision. B wants Jared to be able to articulate the animist vision as easily as culture's vision, though she understands the difficulty for someone with his intellectual and cultural indoctrination. Marking the beetles' track, Shirin shows that every track begins and ends in the hand of god, and each track is one strand of the web endlessly woven in the hand of god. The animist vision is that the world is a sacred place and process which Man is part of.



Modern Culture

One of the key elements in B's teachings is that of culture and the deficits of the culture prevalent in modern society. As he takes notes during the first of B's lectures that he attends, Jared is upset because of the truths spoken that he had never before noticed. At the theater, B introduces Jared to Michael, who objects to B's desire to save the world, but B explains that he means Mankind rather than the biosphere; if the world is to be saved, it will be saved by people with new visions and changed minds, not old visions and new programs. B wants to change the direction of the river's flow, and this is why people denounce him as the Antichrist. According to B, Mesopotamia is erased as a horizon because the events that formerly seemed huge take their place in a deeper landscape and lose some of their prominence. Man's Agricultural Revolution signals a mind change, not the beginning of human history. Every culture's lunacy seems like sanity to the members of that culture as they speak with the voice of undoubted faith. The foundation thinkers of the modern culture believed Man was meant to live as a totalitarian agriculturalist, but they forget that Man was not born such. The Cultural Revolution was a fluke, not destiny. During dinner, B states that the human race originated in Africa approximately 100,000 years before the Agricultural Revolution. After living in the same place for many years, people simply began to live a new way, and these people represent changed minds. The revolution was about power. The founders of this new culture, the Tak, were believed to have eaten at the gods' tree of wisdom by their neighbors, and B suggests that the Christian story of the Fall refers to a new mindset for Adam that was believed would lead to his death.

B begins his tale about the weavers. Nixt, a weaver, weaves magic into his cloth, and soon everyone weaves only with this magic, forgetting all others. In time, the magic does not last as long, and paleontologists discover that there used to be other types of magic, but their boss does not understand why this is important. B relates this to the Agricultural Revolution. Ancestors lived like humans, but humanity was not destined to evolve into the modern culture, and this culture does not represent the final stage of human development. At a park, B says that borders are tricky, intriguing things, and she must focus Jared's attention on the border that the people of the Fertile Crescent crossed 10,000 years ago to become the current culture. This border represents a spiritual and mental crossing where the fundamental delusion is that humanity was designed to become what it now is. Mankind began a long time before Mesopotamia. B practices the art of bricolage, the craft of building with whatever comes to hand. She collects rubbish as they walk to a path in the woods. Jared adds his ammonite fossil, which B uses to represent the Community of Life, the piece to which all other pieces in the work must cling. B states that an empty film canister is animism, an empty container as far as Jared is concerned. B claims that the number of the gods is written nowhere in the universe, but this is not added to the bricolage; rather, it is something to be discussed and dismissed. The God of Taker religions speaks but fails to make himself understood. The real gods write in the universe rather than words. B says the pen is the Law of Life as she nestles it between the Community of Life and animism. Revealed religions are perceived to be at odds with science, but animism is perfectly at home with science, since it looks for truth in the universe. The cartridge fuse which represents



science is placed in the bricolage. Animism is flanked by science and the Law of Life, and all three face the Community of Life. B draws a circle around the bricolage to indicate the border of when humans came to humanity as religious beings. She explains that the Law of Life is like a hologram in that every fragment of it is imprinted with the whole law which fosters life. B shows Jared a dead mouse being buried by beetles, claiming this is an embodiment of the Law of Life.

Vision is a flowing river, the culture's revealed religions are the highest expression of that vision, and the river flows toward the catastrophic. B's objective is to change the direction of the flow by revealing another vision that is healthy for the world and was embraced by many cultures for many years. Man lived in accordance with the Law of Life from the beginning, though they did not necessarily understand the law which was not imprinted by divine action. Takers see the world as made for Man to conquer and rule which came from the Taker experience of the world, and the vision grew out of the lifestyle. People see God as remote and untouchable, but animists see the gods as the strange force that animates a place. "Every strand of the web is a path to all the other strands", and the past, present and future are joined in the center of the web where the human mind was born. Man crossed that line when they became hunters. People began to read the world as a collection of stories, and the urge to know the future also came to Man through hunting. When the mental process crossed the border and became human thought, thought itself began to resound with the harmonic that corresponds to religion or awareness of the sacred, and animism resonates with the Community of Life, which is the same resonance. The concept of Nature sprang from the Great Forgetting as an attempt to alienate Man from Nature, which is impossible since Man is a part of Nature. The perception of Man's kindredness with the rest of the Community of Life is fundamental to the animist vision. B wants Jared to be able to articulate the animist vision as easily as culture's vision, though she understands the difficulty for someone with his intellectual and cultural indoctrination. Marking the beetles' track, Shirin shows that every track begins and ends in the hand of god, and each track is one strand of the web endlessly woven in the hand of god. The animist vision is that the world is a sacred place and process which Man is part of.

Religion

One of the most important themes in "he Story of B is that of religion, as this initiates the novel's action and is the cause of many events within the story. Besides directing the events that instigate the novel's action, religion also frequently appears in B's lectures. Jared Osborne is a priest, though not a very good one, who attends St. Jerome's University before being loaned to the Laurentian diocese for work in the parochial trenches and eventually winding up at St. Edward's. When he begins his diary on May 10, he states that he was intrigued six days earlier when he was summoned to the office of Fr. Bernard Lulfre. Lulfre reminds Jared of the sacred mandate of their order, to suppress or destroy the Antichrist. A potential candidate has appeared in Europe in the form of Charles Atterley, and Jared is sent to investigate these claims. On Saturday, May 18, Jared finds the site of B's next appearance, where people picket about B being a blasphemer. When Jared asks why Charles Atterley is called B, B assumes that it is a



reference to the sin of blasphemy, but he no longer uses his real name. B explains that Jesus preached to the Jews who had a common foundation of knowledge, but B's audience does not, so he has to lay down the foundation each time and is never able to get to the end of his secrets. Jared believes B is harmless, despite the fact that he is questioning the entire foundation of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, because he has been taught that no question is dangerous to them because they have all the answers; however, since Lulfre doubts that B can be harmless, Jared wonders if that means some questions are dangerous after all. When Shirin asks why Jared is here, Jared explains that he has come to understand B for the Laurentian Order and disprove claims that B is the Antichrist. Frau Doktor Frauman, an older woman, claims that she does not trust Christians because their loyalty is always subject to change as their allegiance is to God first. Jared explains to Shirin that he faxes notes of B's lectures to his superior because it is his job, as a religious leader, to assure people that the world has not changed since Christ died. B's followers object to the notion that B is the Antichrist, but B simply asks who Jared's superior is.

It is necessary to change minds in order to change the world, and Jared is with B to have his mind changed. Currently, Jared is Christ's message, but Lulfre sent him to become B's message. B suggests that the Christian story of the Fall refers to a new mindset for Adam that was believed would lead to his death. B claims that the number of the gods is written nowhere in the universe, but this is not added to the bricolage; rather, it is something to be discussed and dismissed. The God of Taker religions speaks but fails to make himself understood. The real gods write in the universe rather than words. B draws a circle around the bricolage to indicate the border of when humans came to humanity as religious beings. Vision is a flowing river, the culture's revealed religions are the highest expression of that vision, and the river flows toward the catastrophic. B's objective is to change the direction of the flow by revealing another vision that is healthy for the world and was embraced by many cultures for many years. Jared reaches and passes the fiftieth degree of losing his faith; therefore, he must quit his profession as a priest.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of the majority of this novel is first person and limited, as it is written in an epistolary style. This is proven, furthermore, by the fact that Jared can only convey what he witnesses and his own thoughts and feelings. It appears to be reliable, though this is questionable since Jared admits near the end of his journal that he writes with the hope of being read. The final portion of the novel, *The Public Teachings*, provides a transcription of B's public lectures. These are also written in first person, in the form of a monologue, and appear to be reliable.

The point of view is important to the novel as it provides a firsthand account of Jared's conversion to B's mode of thinking, which is increased in significance due to the fact that Jared is a priest until his newfound beliefs force him to leave his profession. The novel contains a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue with the exception of *The Public Teachings*, which are written completely as a monologue. The dialogue in the novel is used to convey B's lessons while the exposition serves to describe the situations in the novel, as well as Jared's thoughts and feelings about B's teachings. The viewpoint in the first two-thirds of the novel is that of Jared Osborne, a priest who becomes B's protégé which forces him to renounce his profession. *The Public Teachings* are told from B's viewpoint, with Jared transcribing the lectures of Charles Atterley and Shirin.

Setting

The Story of B is set in the real world in America and Europe and is specifically set in Germany. The characters are mostly Americans, though many of them now live in Europe. At Stuttgart, the students question B in German as a sign of their disrespect for his ideas. Jared's occupation as a priest is significant as he is sent to investigate claims that Charles Atterley is the Antichrist and becomes converted during his investigation.

The novel begins in America but quickly moves to Germany when Jared Osborne is sent to investigate claims that B is the Antichrist. Jared first arrives in Salzburg, but he is directed to Munich as no one knows who Atterley is. In Munich, Jared meets Herr Reichmann, who directs him to Der Bau, where Jared first hears B lecture on the Great Forgetting. Jared seeks B out at Radenau, specifically, at the Schauspielhaus Wahnfried, a theater that serves as B's home base. He hears several more lectures here, and after the first, he follows B to Little Bohemia, a tavern, where they discuss B's lectures. Jared also spends much time at his hotel from where he faxes transcriptions of B's lectures to Fr. Lulfre, his superior. Jared travels to Stuttgart with B, Michael and Shirin to hear B's lecture on population at the university. On the train back to Radenau, Charles Atterley is assassinated. When Shirin takes over as B, she begins training Jared at a park in Radenua, using a bricolage to explain the concepts of animism, the



Law of Life and the Community of Life. After the theater is bombed, Jared is temporarily hospitalized in Radenau before being sent to the Company Farm. He escapes and returns to Germany to search for Shirin and Michael, who he eventually finds in Michael's chalet twenty kilometers west of Radenau.

Language and Meaning

The language in *The Story of B* is fairly casual and informal, which is useful in aiding reader comprehension, as much of the novel is focused on explaining difficult concepts in extensive detail. The sentences are constructed properly, which also contributes to minimizing confusion for readers. The language is used to aid readers' comprehension of complex subjects. The use of informal language allows readers to understand the complex ideas presented in the novel, while the examples and demonstrations described allow readers to visualize the concepts within these ideas.

The language characterizes the characters in the novel, as well as their beliefs. B, Lulfre and Jared are easily distinguished by their language, as B's followers demonstrate their anger at Jared through their language. The novel is divided fairly equal between exposition and dialogue, with *The Public Teachings* being written completely as monologue. The language and writing style emphasizes the simplicity of B's lessons, which aids reader comprehension due to the complexity of the ideas, though they are only viewed as complex because they contradict modern culture and society. Overall, the language makes the novel easy to read, aiding comprehension as it fully explains the concepts the B presents in his lessons.

Structure

The book contains three parts, an epilogue and *The Public Teachings*. It consists of thirty chapters and 325 pages. The first part of the novel contains fifteen chapters, there are two chapters in the second part, and seven chapters in the third part. The epilogue consists of one chapter, and *The Public Teachings* contains five chapters. The chapters average ten to twenty pages in length. The chapters are dated, rather than titled, since the novel is written in the epistolary style. Each portion of B's lectures is subtitled to refer to the specific topic being addressed. The chapters are fairly short but very detailed. Most of the chapters describe a day in Jared's life, but some days are skipped and some are undated. Each chapter in *The Public Teachings* occurs over the course of a couple hours since they are Jared's transcriptions of B's lectures.

The novel is written in the epistolary style that challenges some of the fundamental constructs of the religions in the modern world, as well as the culture that exists worldwide. Jared Osborne, a priest of the Laurentian order, is sent to investigate the claim that Charles Atterley, otherwise known as B, may be the Antichrist. During his assignment, Jared becomes converted to B's way of thinking, causing many problems for himself as he loses faith and quits the priesthood. "The Story of B is a fascinating

and intriguing story that causes one to deeply reconsider the culture of the modern world.

The pace of the novel is mostly quick, though some lessons are slower paced due to extensive explanations. The novel is easy to read since the complex ideas are presented in a way that makes them much easier to understand. The action of the novel is linear, with the exception of The Public Teachings which are transcriptions of B's lectures which are added to the end of Jared's journal.



Quotes

"The way things are going nowadays, you'll be considered a bloody treasure if you don't turn out to be a child molester or a public drunk."

Friday, May 10, p. 5

"Atterley was talking about matters close to my life and even closer to my work—and I didn't like what I heard. This wasn't because it wasn't true but for exactly the opposite reason: because it was true and I'd missed it. He was making acute observations about phenomena I'd witnessed a thousand times and never thought to notice."

Thursday, May 16, p. 18

"When he arrived, the sage commended Monkey for insisting on a wisdom beyond what others would accept and made a magical revelation so powerful that Monkey received Illumination on the spot... Why did the sage have two sets of teachings? I'd say it was because he wouldn't be much of a sage if he didn't. The public teachings are the ones that everyone hears, because those are the ones that can be articulated. The secret teachings are the ones that cannot be articulated at all."

Saturday, May 18, pp. 33-34

"Pious souls often imagine that being a priest automatically puts you miles ahead of everyone on the wisdom track. Listening to B, I realized that I'm not an inch ahead of anyone on that track. I'm in the dark. I'm at the beginning. For all intents and purposes, I'm still nineteen. At one point, my hand wavered, and I said to myself, 'I don't need to take this down. All I have to do is listen.' But I was sufficiently doubtful that I kept going."

Sunday, May 19, p. 45

"I would assume that a point of view remains even if the capacity is left behind."

Sunday, May 19, p. 48

"It's a sign of our cultural collapse that supporting our vision has come to be seen as wicked, while undermining that vision has come to be seen as noble."

Sunday, May 19, p. 50

"Really smart wolves know that the most suspicious-looking wolf in the pack is the one disguised as a sheep... Really smart wolves disguise themselves as friendly wolves."

Sunday, May 19 (cont.), p. 55



"Rather than a pyramid, I'm constructing a mosaic. The pieces can be added in any order. In the early stages, there's nothing like an image, but as pieces are added, an image begins to emerge. As still more pieces are added, the image becomes more distinct, more definite, so that eventually you feel sure that the basic picture is before you. From this point on, the picture can only gain in sharpness and detail as pieces continue to be added. At last it seems that there are no 'missing pieces' at all, and only the cracks between contiguous pieces remain to be filled—with ever tinier pieces. As the cracks between pieces are filled, the picture begins to look more and more like a painting—a continuous whole rather than an assembly of fragments—and in the end it no longer resembles a mosaic at all."

Monday, May 20, p. 71

"'For me, Mesopotamia is erased as a horizon. How do you think one manages such a thing?' "' suppose one manages it by climbing a ladder, which is to say by seeing things from a higher vantage point.' 'That's right. When you do that, events that formerly seemed huge (because they're close) take their place in a deeper landscape and no longer stand out with the same prominence as before.'"

Monday, May 20, p. 76

"'I think you're telling me that every culture's lunacy seems like sanity to the members of that culture.'"

Monday, May 20, p. 81

"There is only one degree of having faith, but there are fifty degrees of losing it. I feel I should carry this weighty observation on a separate piece of paper so I can whip it out for study whenever I feel the need: Only one degree of having faith, but fifty of losing it... I figure I'm at something like the thirty-fourth degree. When I was fifteen, I was at the one degree that means faith. When I entered the seminary, I was at the third degree of losing faith. At my ordination, I was at the twelfth degree. When I walked into Fr. Lulfre's office three weeks ago, I was at the twenty-fifth. The fact that I'm at the thirty-fourth now probably sounds pretty bad, but actually it isn't. I was afraid (when I sat down here to do this soul-searching) that I was going to turn out to be at some really scary degree like forty-seven. I mean, when you're at forty-seven, you're really at the precipice. Three more degrees, and over you go!"

Tuesday, May 21, pp. 99-100

"Right now I know it seems to you that all this—all this beauty and catastrophe of ours—was bound to happen. It was somehow in the very fabric of humanity to become what we've become, in the way that it's in the very fabric of the caterpillar to become a butterfly."

Tuesday, May 21, p. 110

"Animism is flanked by the Law of Life on one side and by science on the other. All three face the community of life."

Friday, May 24 (2 am), p. 137



"Whereas, working with someone like me, you have to struggle to unseat these fundamental ideas and to replace them with others I've never heard of."
Friday, May 24 (10 pm), p. 145

"Vision is the flowing river. The revealed religions of our culture are the highest expression of that vision, and the flow of the river is toward catastrophe."
Friday, May 24 (10 pm), pp. 145-146

"They would never think of looking elsewhere to find the gods. The gods are to be found among them—living where they live. The god is what animates their place. That's what a god is. A god is that strange force that makes every place a place—a place like no other in the world. A god is the fire that burns in this place and no other—and no place in which the fire burns is devoid of god. All of this should explain to you why I don't reject the name that was given to us by an outsider. Even though it was bestowed with a false understanding of our vision, the name animism captures a glimmer of it."
Friday, May 24 (10 pm), p. 160

"So at least that much has been settled. I've reached and passed the fiftieth degree of losing my faith."
Saturday, June 1, p. 199

"You took in their insights, but do you have any of your own? Are you a thinker and a teacher or just a reciter of Holy Writ? If all you can do is chant the scriptures, then you're no more B than I am. You're just an altar boy who has all the responses down pat."
Saturday, June 8, p. 213

"By taking off the obscuring lenses of the Great Forgetting, I was able to make out a dim path where before there seemed to be only an impenetrable thicket; I haven't explored the path to its full extent by any means. This, I think, is what B does. B opens a path for exploration."
Saturday, June 8, p. 220

"I end as I began, wondering if there was ever a diarist who wasn't in face writing for posterity, who didn't secretly hope that his or her (oh-so-carefully hidden) words would one day be found and cherished. In any case, if there are such self-effacing paragons, I'm not one of them. From the beginning, I knew I was writing with the possibility of being read by others- by you, in fact."
Epilogue, Undated, p. 233

"The world will not be saved by old minds with new programs. If the world is saved, it will be saved by new minds- with no programs."
Epilogue, Undated, p. 234

"I've written the words, and they've found their way to you—I don't know how, exactly. Michael says he has connections who know how to handle that part of it. I won't worry about that. The words have found their way to you even if, having read them, you hate them—even if you hide them from your children's eyes and consign them to the flames. They've found their way to you, so it's already too late. Even if, in the meantime, Fr.



Lulfre tracks us down and sends his assassins to us, he'll be too late—because of what you've read here. The contagion has been spread. You are B."

Epilogue, Undated, p. 235

"But all this barely scratches the surface of what is meant when someone says, 'Let me show you how to be saved.' A complex and profound worldview is implicit in such a statement. According to this worldview, the human condition is such that everyone is born in an unsaved state and remains unsaved until the requisite ritual or inner action is performed, and all who die in this state either lose their chance for eternal happiness with God or fail to escape the weary cycle of death and rebirth."

The Great Forgetting, p. 241

"The blinding we suffered in the Great Forgetting has abated, so we no longer imagine that Man was ill-made. We no longer imagine that the gods botched their work when it came to us. We no longer think they know how to make every single thing in the whole vast universe except a human being. The blinding we suffered in the Great Forgetting has passed, so we can no longer live as though nothing matters but us. We can no longer believe that suffering is the lot the gods had in mind for us. We can no longer believe that death is sweet release to our true destiny. We no longer yearn for the nothingness of nirvana. We no longer dream of wearing crowns of gold in the royal court of heaven....We're straying from the path of salvation for love of the world, as you never once dreamed in a thousand years of dreaming."

The Great Remembering, pp. 324-325

Topics for Discussion

Why is Jared Osborne sent to Europe, what is he expected to do, and how does his assignment affect him?

Who is B, and why is he seen as a potential candidate for the Antichrist?

What is the significance of religion, and what role does it play in this novel?

Compare and contrast the teaching styles of Charles, Shirin and Jared.

How do B's followers view Jared, and why?

How is Jared affected by his interactions with B?

Why is it significant that Shirin names herself as B after Charles is murdered?

Why are B's teachings considered so controversial? How do they challenge commonly accepted beliefs about the nature of mankind and society?