

The Story of Lucy Gault Study Guide

The Story of Lucy Gault by William Trevor

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Contents

The Story of Lucy Gault Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Part 1, Chapter 1.....	6
Part 1, Chapter 2.....	8
Part 1, Chapter 3.....	9
Part 1, Chapter 4.....	10
Part 1, Chapter 5.....	11
Part 1, Chapter 6.....	12
Part 1, Chapter 7.....	13
Part 1, Chapter 8.....	14
Part 1, Chapter 9.....	15
Part 2, Chapter 1.....	16
Part 2, Chapter 2.....	17
Part 2, Chapter 3.....	18
Part 2, Chapter 4.....	19
Part 2, Chapter 5.....	20
Part 2, Chapter 6.....	21
Part 2, Chapter 7.....	22
Part 2, Chapter 8.....	23
Part 3, Chapter 1.....	24
Part 3, Chapter 2.....	25
Part 3, Chapter 3.....	26
Part 3, Chapter 4.....	27
Part 3, Chapter 5.....	28



[Part 4, Chapter 1..... 29](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 2..... 30](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 3..... 31](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 4..... 32](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 5..... 33](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 6..... 34](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 7..... 35](#)

[Part 4, Chapter 8..... 36](#)

[Part 5, Chapter 1..... 37](#)

[Part 5, Chapter 2..... 38](#)

[Part 5, Chapter 3..... 39](#)

[Part 6, Chapter 1..... 40](#)

[Characters..... 41](#)

[Objects/Places..... 43](#)

[Themes..... 45](#)

[Style..... 46](#)

[Quotes..... 48](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 50](#)



Plot Summary

The Story of Lucy Gault starts on June 21, 1921. Ireland is in the midst of civil unrest and anti-English violence. On that night, there is an intrusion in Lahardane, the home of the well-to-do Gault family, when three boys attempt to burn the family home down. Captain Everand Gault shoots his rifle to scare them away but unintentionally wounds one of the boys, Horahan. He asks the town priest, Father Morrissey, to pass on his regrets concerning the incident, but his apology goes unacknowledged. A letter that Everand writes to them also fails to generate a response. The result of a personal visit to the boy's home is the same. These interactions lead Heloise Gault, Captain Gault's wife, to fear that another attempt to burn their house is inevitable. She feels that because she is English, her presence is drawing attention to the house, and the only possible course of action is for them to abandon Lahardane and move back to England.

Lucy, the 8-year-old daughter of Heloise and Everand, has had, heretofore, a pleasant childhood. She basks in her parents' adoration and wanders around the family estate, free of any cares. This summer, she befriends a stray dog, and her only complaint is that her parents do not share the same feeling of affection for this dog. Her world is turned upside down when she is told of the plan to move back to England. She does not understand that it is a solution that is as hard for her parents as it is for her. She hatches a plot to change their mind. On the night before their planned departure, she runs away. Her idea is that they will find her quickly, but the scare will be enough for her parents to take her resistance seriously.

A series of mistaken assumptions and an injury that leaves Lucy unable to return home mislead her parents into believing that Lucy has thrown herself into the ocean where sharks have eaten her. They eventually abandon their search and leave Lahardane devastated. They do not, however, go to England as they've told their Mr. Sullivan, their lawyer, and Henry and Bridget, long-time servants to whom they've entrusted the care of Lahardane. They wander Europe aimlessly until they reach Montemarmona, where they lead lives of self-imposed exile. Everand is not completely in accord with this plan, but out of his deep love for his grieving wife, he acquiesces.

In the meantime, Lucy is discovered by Henry on the brink of death. She gets well, but the ankle she has broken does not heal perfectly, leaving her with a permanent limp. When telegrams to Heloise and Everand bring no response, Mr. Sullivan starts a search for them in Europe to no avail.

Time passes, Lucy grows up, and still her parents remain out of touch and ignorant about her survival. Lucy does not lose faith that they will one day return, she will be forgiven, and all will be in order again. After she is graduated from school, she continues to live with Bridget and Henry, leading a quiet life of reading and bee-keeping. Her guilt has turned her into a reclusive young woman, with only Mr. Sullivan and Canon Crosbie as her only visitors.



One day, this changes when Ralph, a tutor for the Ryalls boys in town accidentally stumbles into Lahardane. Lucy and Ralph fall in love, but Lucy cannot accept Ralph's entreaties to marry him for she does not feel she deserves to be loved until her parents forgive her. Ralph perseveres for many years, but when World War II breaks out, he enlists. When, upon his return, Lucy still does not relent, he is forced to accept that Lucy will never marry him.

When the war starts, Heloise and Everand move to the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland where Heloise contracts influenza and dies. Everand buries her there, and after the war continues his wanderings, but he finally returns to Lahardane, not with plans to stay, but just to visit. Upon his arrival, he discovers that Lucy has been alive all along.

The reunion of Lucy and her father happens a year after Ralph marries someone else. This predicament causes some torment for Ralph, but he knows that if he sees Lucy, he will leave his wife, so he does not. Lucy continues to love only Ralph and resigns herself to loving a married man. Her relationship with her father is awkward after all the intervening years. She finds herself rejecting him, and he finds himself wanting too much. But over many years, they learn to accept love each other again. One night, Everand goes to sleep, and does not wake up. Lucy takes care of Henry and Bridget as they get older, and they, too, eventually pass away.

After her father's death, she starts to visit Horahan, the boy her father had wounded so many years ago. After being tormented by guilt and the delusion that he killed Lucy as a child, Horahan has been committed to a mental asylum where he lives for 17 years. Upon his death, Lucy marches in his funeral procession. Witnessing this, two nuns visit Lucy, enthralled by her amazing peace. The book aptly ends with the description of the scenery she sees from her window, "The avenue has gone shadowy, the outline of its trees stark against the sky. The rooks come down to scrabble in the grass as every evening at this time they do, her companions while she watches the fading of the day."



Part 1, Chapter 1

Part 1, Chapter 1 Summary

On June 21, 1921, Captain Everard Gault shoots at three boys who have come to set Lahardane, the Gault's family estate, on fire. He does not mean to hit anyone, but one of the boys takes the bullet in his shoulder before they all escape. The boys had been there once before but were scared off by the sheepdogs. Within a week, the sheepdogs were found poisoned, and then the boys had come again on this night. Attempts on Captain Gault's part to apologize to the boy's family about the injury are met with stony unresponsiveness. Usually a stoic woman, Heloise Gault feels strongly that there will be future attempts to burn the house down, and that sooner or later, they will succeed. For the sake of Lucy, their 8-year-old daughter, she proposes to move back to England, where she comes from. Everard eventually agrees to this plan. Lucy is adamant that she does not want to go.

This summer she has befriended a dog that belongs to their neighbor, and she does not want to leave him or the home that she loves. She has taken to sneaking off and swimming by herself, and the dog always comes with her and plays on the beach. Sometimes, he takes the clothes she has taken off at the beach and hoards them somewhere. On several occasions Lucy was unable to find a single article of clothing, but the adults, too busy with moving plans, did not notice. Meanwhile, plans for the move are solidified. Henry and Bridget, the servants who have worked for the Gault family for generations, are going to stay on the land and be given the cows so that they can continue to make a living. Kitty Teresa, the upstairs maid, is sent home. Hannah, the laundry woman, is let go.

When Lucy's pleas seem to elicit no response, she formulates an elaborate plan to run away. She plans to walk to Dungarvan, where Kitty Teresa is. She knows she will be sent home, but by then her parents would be so remorseful that they will finally listen to her and change their minds. On the day before their planned departure, she takes off. But she trips, hurts her ankle, and is unable to get up. Meanwhile, at the house, when her absence is noticed, panic sets in.

Part 1, Chapter 1 Analysis

The author uses this paragraph first to establish the setting. It is provincial Ireland in the early 1920's, and there is civil unrest. This explains why the family chooses to leave. At the same time, the Gault family's history is disclosed, and through this, the reader senses that the house is not just a house. All three members of the family, as well as Henry and Bridget, are deeply attached to this land, including Heloise, who belongs nowhere else. This is important to establish because the whole book revolves around the dynamic that exists between this home and the characters. The relationships that exist among the characters who live at Lahardane are also explored. They are all very



close to each other, and the marriage between Everand and Heloise is obviously a very happy one. This is important so that the reader can understand the decisions that are made in the future. This is a very long chapter since the story actually begins when Lucy runs away, but the setting must be well established before she does.



Part 1, Chapter 2

Part 1, Chapter 2 Summary

This scene opens after Everand discovers Lucy's clothes on the beach--clothes that had been hidden by the dog. Everand mistakenly believes these to be the clothes she was wearing the day she ran away. He assumes that she had gone swimming and been taken by the tide. The fishermen of the town report that they did not see anything at sea, and they believe that she has been eaten by sharks and will never be seen again. Lucy's parents are devastated, and, unable to stay in the house that has so many memories, they decide to leave as planned. Instead of taking the rented flat in England, however, Heloise tells Everand that she wants to keep going. Everand, whose only concern is his wife's well-being, acquiesces. The address he left both Henry and his solicitor, Mr. Sullivan, was the one in England, but when he sent Mr. Sullivan a telegram concerning their change of plans, he wrote only, "we have traveled on." He did not give another address.

Part 1, Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter introduces the pivotal misunderstanding that will influence the lives of all the characters involved. This chapter also talks about the first example of lack of communication that is caused by pain. Everand does not see any reason to inform Mr. Sullivan or anyone in Lahardane where they will be instead of the planned address. He sees no point, for they want to be lost to the world, just as Lucy is lost to them.



Part 1, Chapter 3

Part 1, Chapter 3 Summary

Henry finds Lucy, quite by accident, as he is looking for stones to mend a fence. He finds her in the ruins of Paddy Lindon's cottage. Lucy had befriended Paddy, a social derelict of the town when he was still alive, and it was his directions on how to get to the road that she follows. She had never been able to find the ruins of his cottage before, but when she falls and injures her ankle, she manages to crawl to the cottage. She lives on the bits of food she had hoarded for her trip and the apples and berries she picks. She is near death when Henry finds her. When the doctor sees her, he diagnoses a badly broken ankle that will not mend properly. He tells Henry and Bridget that Lucy will always limp. Henry sends a telegram to the address Everand had left, informing them that Lucy has been found.

Part 1, Chapter 3 Analysis

This chapter explains where Lucy was the entire time her parents were looking for her. Henry and Bridget are bewildered, but at this point, they still think that as soon as the parents know, everything will be fine.

Part 1, Chapter 4

Part 1, Chapter 4 Summary

Everand and Heloise go to Basel after withdrawing Heloise's inheritance. It is enough for them to survive on for the life they plan to lead. Everand realizes that while he is less sure that he never wants to see Lahardane, Heloise's feelings are now stronger. He sees that Heloise wants exile. Even though his feelings are not in agreement with hers, his first priority is to look after her, so they move on to Lugano after the business they planned to do in Basel was complete.

Part 1, Chapter 4 Analysis

In this chapter there is disconnection of two kinds. Heloise and Everand have become completely disconnected from Lahardane such that they are moving farther south even as their daughter is being found. Also, they are less at one with each other than they previously were, but instead of talking about it, Everand decides to protect his frail-looking wife and keeps it to himself. This is the second example of communication withheld. If he could have been able to convince his wife to at least let him inform someone in Ireland of their whereabouts, things would have turned out much differently.



Part 1, Chapter 5

Part 1, Chapter 5 Summary

Aloysius Sullivan, the solicitor, who is a close friend of the family, as well as the one who is in charge of matters of the estate, is contacted. He breaks the news to Bridget about the telegram he has received. He questions Lucy to see whether she remembers any conversations that might help them find her parents. Lucy does not respond. Later she tells Henry that she thinks Mr. Sullivan hates her. He starts a search for the couple by contacting anybody they knew, but to no avail. He hires an investigator to go to Switzerland where Heloise had written her bank to withdraw the money. The investigation comes up dry.

Part 1, Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter introduces Aloysius Sullivan, who has been mentioned previously, but who has never made an appearance. He is a grave, but kind and conscientious man. He is frustrated and overwhelmed with the burden that is placed upon him with the disappearance of the Gaults, but he is determined to do his best. While Aloysius is neither impressed nor empathetic of what Lucy did, he cares about her and her well-being, as evident in his silent pleas for her to smile again. However, Lucy cannot see this, and can only feel that he hates her for the betrayal she has committed that has brought about such disastrous consequences. The guilt she feels colors the world she lives in.



Part 1, Chapter 6

Part 1, Chapter 6 Summary

Everand and Heloise live in Montemarmoreo, Italy. They spend their days walking a little, talking about Heloise's childhood, learning a strange language, and opening a bottle of Amarone in the evening. They avoid talking about Lahardane with each other, but there is hope that perhaps in this strange country, they will have another child. They eventually became an ordinary part of the town.

Part 1, Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter shows how Everand and Heloise have started to settle into their life of exile. They are starting to think that here there is a chance that they might find a kind of peace, perhaps even a little joy. It is also evident that their avoidance of Lahardane leaves no hope of their finding out that their child is not dead.



Part 1, Chapter 7

Part 1, Chapter 7 Summary

Heloise's aunt is contacted, but the reply comes from a Miss Chambre, for the aunt is now an invalid. The letter states that there has been no new communication from the niece, and Miss Chambre advises that Lucy be placed in a correctional institution. Henry and Bridget move into the big house with Lucy. The money that had been left to Aloysius's care by Everard for emergency expenses has run out. Aloysius tells Bridget that he himself will pay for the expenses of the child's upkeep until the return of her parents. He shakes Bridget's hand for the first and last time ever. He promises to continue visiting the house. He perseveres in his search and does not mention to anyone about the frustrations he encounters in his inquiries.

Lucy is back in Mr. Aylward's schoolroom. Some of the children will not play with her and stare at her. The dog she befriended in the summer is gone. When school lets out for the summer, Bridget sends Lucy off with Henry and the creamery churns on nice days. They stop by at Mrs. McBride's to pick-up groceries that Bridget needs. Even though Mrs. McBride gives her a cookie, Lucy feels that Mrs. McBride hates her, just like everybody else except Henry and Bridget.

Part 1, Chapter 7 Analysis

Everybody at Lahardane is trying to accommodate the reality that Lucy's parents will not be found easily or quickly. Aloysius' sense of authority as a lawyer is affected by the helplessness he feels in the search. He, too, becomes united in this situation by a sense of guilt. Everyone feels a certain sense of discomfort with relations that used to be natural like the conversation between Henry and Lucy in the cart where carefree topics of the past no longer seem suitable or a trip to the grocery store that is fraught with tension for Lucy. The time before Lucy ran away is evoked in her memory, and she feels a sense of lost innocence. Lucy's feeling of isolation caused by her guilt is intensified by the children at school and by her own self-consciousness. Henry's sensitivity and gentleness towards Lucy is revealed in this chapter. The last sentence reads, "Already the first of his summer freckles had come." The freckles are a physical manifestation of his humanity.



Part 1, Chapter 8

Part 1, Chapter 8 Summary

Heloise is watching the clockwork magician Everand bought her to keep her amused while she is assigned to bed rest because of her pregnancy. They are now living in Montemarmoreo. Everand buys her books in English that he finds at a bookseller close by, cooks her meals, brushes her hair, does the laundry, listens to her talk about her childhood, and buys nice china wear to use. Unfortunately, though, Heloise loses the baby. The doctor orders that there be no more attempts at pregnancy when he learns about her past miscarriages. In wanting to prevent her from slipping into depression, Everand suggests a trip to great cities. Heloise agrees and does not say that she is perfectly content just to be in Montemarmoreo.

Part 1, Chapter 8 Analysis

Everand's dedication is described. The couple's attempt at having another child, a possible source of joy, is thwarted. Heloise has attained a peace, though, and it is enough that she can live with it.

Part 1, Chapter 9

Part 1, Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

Aloysius Sullivan's visits continue. Canon Crosbie also comes by to see how Lucy is doing. Heloise's aunt learns of her niece's disappearance and places an advertisement in several English newspapers. At Lahardane, everybody is still bewildered by the senselessness of the situation, as is Aloysius. But outside, the story is told and retold with exaggeration and details until the story made sense. It is Christmas time, and Mr. Aylward's class has a party. On her way back home alone, Lucy remembers how Edie Hosford said again, "Don't come near me."

Part 2, Chapter 1

Part 2, Chapter 1 Summary

The boy who was shot the night of June 21, 1921, has become a porter at the railway station. One night, he dreams about that night and about the days that followed when he was hailed as a hero. He couldn't discern what really happened and what is a dream anymore. The two other boys are out of the country, and his father is dead. In his dream, blazing curtains are blowing out the window, and there is a dead child. He becomes quieter, and the dreams continue night after night. Within a year, he changes his profession to housepainter, hoping that he will be busier and have less time to be tormented, but he is wrong. He becomes less and less able to remember the facts, and he cannot erase the image of the dead body of a child from his dreams.

Part 2, Chapter 1 Analysis

Guilt is apparent here, too. The boy who was part of what started the chain of events that leads to the separation of the family is tormented by his own conscience. His memory becomes fragmented, and his feelings of loneliness increase.



Part 2, Chapter 2

Part 2, Chapter 2 Summary

Lucy is done with Mr. Aylward's school. She spends her days reading the old books that line the drawing room bookcases, Henry and Bridget continue being her companions, but Mr. Sullivan and Canon Crosbie are concerned about her solitary life. Bridget explains to Canon Crosbie that, as unusual as it is, this is the way things are. She also explains that Lucy is waiting for her parents' return. Canon Crosbie is appeased only when he finds out that Lucy is learning how to keep the bees. He feels that at least she is doing something. Mr. Sullivan finds himself still dwelling on how he might have handled everything better or that, at least, he shouldn't have promised that everything would be all right. Lucy, meanwhile, accepts what has happened and just waits. She does not feel lonely or unhappy.

Part 2, Chapter 2 Analysis

Life at Lahardane has attained a certain kind of peace with the passing of time. While an outsider like Canon Crosbie frets over Lucy's lifestyle, those at Lahardane understand that this is what it is. They are waiting, and in waiting, there is meaning.



Part 2, Chapter 3

Part 2, Chapter 3 Summary

Everand and Heloise are visiting an Italian church, looking at the image of *Sacra Conversazione*. They continue to talk about their youth, she about her mother's and her aunt's house and Everand about being a soldier. They always avoid mention of Lahardane. Everand, however, has secretly been writing to Lahardane. But he does not send the letters. He is afraid that it will lead to a correspondence, which would be a betrayal in his marriage. So he writes, stamps, and hides it away. That night, Heloise lies next to her husband, euphoric after a full day, and she resolves to tell him that this life is not enough and explain to him why she always wants to forget. She promises to herself that she will talk about all that she doesn't want to talk about, but in the morning, she wakes up and knows that she can't.

Part 2, Chapter 3 Analysis

In this chapter, there are two cases of communication withheld. First, Everand does not tell his wife that he is writing letters to Lahardane. Afraid to betray her, he keeps his own desires a secret. Second, Heloise, despite her resolve to reach beyond her grief and bare her soul, loses courage and does not.



Part 2, Chapter 4

Part 2, Chapter 4 Summary

A strange car pulls up to the Lahardane by accident. It is Ralph, the summer tutor for the Ryalls boy. Being a stranger, he did not realize that there was a house at the end of the road. Lucy invites him to tea. He finds her to be very attractive. When Ralph runs into Canon Crosbie, who has heard about his chance encounter, he is urged emphatically to visit again. But Ralph is too shy. Finally, he receives a formal invitation from Lucy. He is ecstatic.

Part 2, Chapter 4 Analysis

Ralph is immediately taken with Lucy's beauty, which is described here. Lucy has inherited her mother's looks. This chapter sets the stage for a romance between the shy Ralph and the reclusive Lucy.

Part 2, Chapter 5

Part 2, Chapter 5 Summary

The day Ralph receives the letter from Lucy, the boy whom Everand shot in the shoulder enlists in the army. His name is Horahan. He joins the army because he hopes that the military discipline and communal life will finally keep his nightmares at bay. After he enlists, he goes to the chapel and prays to the Virgin Mary that in return for serving his country, he be set free from the tormenting dreams. He remembers the asylum that he painted not long ago and fears that one day he will be inside with the others.

Part 2, Chapter 5 Analysis

Horahan's mental state is obviously deteriorating.



Part 2, Chapter 6

Part 2, Chapter 6 Summary

Ralph visits Lucy on a Wednesday afternoon, for that is his afternoon off. They walk, have tea, and walk again. Lucy asks him to visit again the following Wednesday.

Part 2, Chapter 6 Analysis

They both are self-conscious, but the attraction is mutual.



Part 2, Chapter 7

Part 2, Chapter 7 Summary

Everand and Heloise are in a piazza in Citta Alta. Heloise is having a hard day, and Everand knows that even though he loves her completely, on days like this, he cannot help her. The fact that Italy may not be a haven forever is brought up. In the last sentence of the chapter, she begs that he not ask her to go back.

Part 2, Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter reinforces the same image of Everand as loyal and yet conflicted. Heloise is depressed. The casual comments about having to leave Italy foreshadow their departure.



Part 2, Chapter 8

Part 2, Chapter 8 Summary

Ralph visits Lucy twice and is invited by Lucy to stay at Lahardane after he finishes with the boys and before he has to return home. He accepts, and they spend their days languidly. Lucy shows him everything, including Paddy Lindon's ruined cottage. One day, Ralph finally kisses her and tells her he loves her. She tells him that it is no good to love her, that she is not someone to love. Ralph protests, but she will not hear of it. Ralph asks her to marry her, but Lucy cannot be convinced. He should have nothing to do with her. She does, however, admit that she loves him, too. In the end, Ralph leaves. Henry takes him to the station. Lucy does not accompany them.

Part 2, Chapter 8 Analysis

Lucy believes that she is unworthy of love. She believes that Ralph does love her, and she knows that she loves Ralph, but she is unshakable in her belief that she will make Ralph unhappy.

Part 3, Chapter 1

Part 3, Chapter 1 Summary

Horahan is a good soldier, always the first to volunteer when a volunteer is needed. His hopes of banishing his demons in the army, however, are disappointed. His nightmares continue. He is reassured, time and time again, that the house was never set on fire. It does him no good. He continues to be tormented and continues to pray to the Virgin, asking her for a sign.

Part 3, Chapter 1 Analysis

Horahan's mental state is deteriorating further.



Part 3, Chapter 2

Part 3, Chapter 2 Summary

Everand and Heloise leave Italy for Switzerland because Mussolini has declared himself for war.

Part 3, Chapter 2 Analysis

Everand and Heloise are displaced again. They must leave the country that has become their home to them for these many years.



Part 3, Chapter 3

Part 3, Chapter 3 Summary

Ralph and Lucy are corresponding by letters, but Ralph has not been back to Lahardane again. Ralph's letters always proclaim his love, and Lucy's always insist that he live his life. Ralph enlists in the army, and Lucy is haunted by thoughts of his death, relieved only briefly by the letters that come from him. She resolves that if Ralph comes home safely, she will go to him.

Part 3, Chapter 3 Analysis

The fear of losing Ralph gives Lucy the courage to pursue her love.



Part 3, Chapter 4

Part 3, Chapter 4 Summary

Everand and Heloise move to the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. Heloise contracts influenza and dies. She is buried in Switzerland. Everand writes to Heloise's aunt, but the aunt herself is already dead, and the letter is torn-up by Miss Chambre.

Part 3, Chapter 4 Analysis

Heloise's death comes unexpectedly and without much ceremony. With her death, the possibility of her ever knowing that her daughter is alive or of her ever seeing her again, is gone. This, however, sets the stage for Everand to choose a different direction with his life.



Part 3, Chapter 5

Part 3, Chapter 5 Summary

Ralph returns safely and with much fervor asks Lucy to marry him. Lucy's resolve diminishes. She thinks that perhaps her parents too, will return. She rejects Ralph once again. Henry and Bridget are disappointed, for they too, had harbored hopes that when Ralph came home, Lucy would finally marry him. Ralph writes his final letter, accepting the inevitable. In the summer, she started petit-point embroidery and discovered she had a gift for it. She did not follow what the patterns dictated but made her own designs. She is looking more and more like her mother. On Thursday, March 10, 1949, she reads in the paper that Ralph is getting married.

Part 3, Chapter 5 Analysis

Despite the love she feels for Ralph, she is ultimately unable to go to him. She feels it is a betrayal for her to lead her own life before her parents' return home. She is, however, torn, and she knows that it is another betrayal for her not to tell Ralph how she truly feels. Here again, the damage that is done by words that are unsaid is apparent. Ralph is so loyal that if she would only tell him the depth of her feelings and the source of her conflict, things could be different. This is not the case, however, and Ralph accepts that he must move on with his life. The embroidery is a detail that will be important in the future.



Part 4, Chapter 1

Part 4, Chapter 1 Summary

Everand wanders around Europe after the death of his wife. He meets a couple of women with whom he has superficial conversations, but no one with whom he can share his bereavement. He visits France and passes through towns and villages that he had visited as a soldier long ago, and it occurs to him that even if he was not the greatest of soldiers, he was at least a survivor. He writes a long letter to his brother, but then finds out that his brother was killed in action years ago.

Part 4, Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter delves into Everand's loneliness after his wife's death. The idea of being a survivor and the value in that is important to note because it is echoed later in the book in reference to Lucy's life. Also, with nothing left, and finding nothing else, the inevitability of his return to Lahardane is spelled out.

Part 4, Chapter 2

Part 4, Chapter 2 Summary

One day, Lucy is outside reading and daydreaming about Ralph's wife. She comes home to find that Everand has returned. Lucy does not immediately recognize him. He refrains from embracing her, sensing that she did not want him to. The words, "Why now?" slip out of Lucy's mouth.

Part 4, Chapter 2 Analysis

Like Heloise's death, Everand's return is not very dramatic. Lucy's reaction to her father's return is complicated by her loss of Ralph. She had chosen to be faithful to her parents and loses Ralph. Now, so soon after she loses Ralph, her father returns.



Part 4, Chapter 3

Part 4, Chapter 3 Summary

Ralph finds out about Everand's return and is in turmoil. He loves his wife and new-born daughter no less than he loved Lucy, but he knows that if he sees her again, he will leave everything he has. Meanwhile, Everand finds out about Ralph through Mr. Sullivan and notes how typical it is for their family that the return comes too late.

Part 4, Chapter 3 Analysis

In this chapter we see Ralph's life, and we see what Lucy's life could have been. We also see that the passion that he felt for Lucy had in no way diminished. He had only accepted what wasn't meant to be. With the return of Everand, however, he is forced to consider what might have been if he had not given up faith.



Part 4, Chapter 4

Part 4, Chapter 4 Summary

Horahan finds out about Everand's return and falls on his knees in rapture. He has no doubt that this was the Virgin's sign, and he would be free of the torment at last.

Part 4, Chapter 4 Analysis

Horahan's mental state is deteriorating further.



Part 4, Chapter 5

Part 4, Chapter 5 Summary

Ralph finds himself unable to focus because his thoughts keep wandering to Lucy. He feels that this is a form of betrayal toward his wife, but he does not know what to do. At Lahardane, Everand tries to draw Lucy out. Conversation is still strained, but he buys a car and teaches Lucy to drive in an attempt to save her from her isolation.

Part 4, Chapter 5 Analysis

Ralph's turmoil is described further. Everand's characteristic thoughtfulness is apparent in his consideration for Lucy, but Lucy's hesitation regarding her father is also apparent.



Part 4, Chapter 6

Part 4, Chapter 6 Summary

Lucy and Everand are having dinner, and Everand is rambling on about her clothes, and the clothes her mother wears. Lucy responds now and again as she plays with her food, and she thinks how foolish it was that she had waited all these years for this. Everand asks Lucy to go to the caves at Mitchelstown. Lucy acquiesces. On the day they go to the caves, Everand confesses to her about the letters he wrote but did not post, her mother's desire never to hear news from Ireland, and his desire to protect her. She has an epiphany about how mistakes should be put to right when there is still a chance. Lucy writes Ralph to come and visit Lahardane. Ralph reads this letter and cannot stop thinking of visiting her. He cannot escape his vision of her. The chapter ends with his praying for strength.

Part 4, Chapter 6 Analysis

Lucy regrets the choices she has made and the life of waiting she has led. She also sees the consequences of the mistakes her parents made. This leads her to write the letter to Ralph. Ralph is torn because he knows that once he visits Lahardane, he will not be able to leave. This chapter illustrates the tension created by choices characters have made throughout the story and their consequences. The question that Lucy expresses is, "Can things that are done be undone?"



Part 4, Chapter 7

Part 4, Chapter 7 Summary

A visitor comes to Lahardane, and is talking to Everand in the drawing-room. When Lucy finds out, she is sure that it is Ralph. She changes her dress, brushes her hair, and prepares the tea to bring in. But it is not Ralph. It is Horahan. Lucy, in her disappointment, runs out. Everand is polite to Horahan and explains that everything is in the past, but that it would have been better if he had not come at all. Horahan confesses about everything that led up to that June night and all the torments of his soul. Lucy, meanwhile, is consumed by the fact that Ralph did not come, but she returns to the drawing room to tell Horahan about all the tragedies that have happened in her life because of what he did. In the end, she is unable to, however. Eventually, Everand politely leads Horahan out of the house. After Horahan leaves, Lucy cries in Everand's arms, and he comforts her.

Part 4, Chapter 7 Analysis

Lucy's anticipation stems from the letter she wrote to Ralph, but she is disappointed. It seems a cruel irony that instead of the man she loves, the man who is the root cause of her heartbreak should come to the drawingroom. Upon seeing Horahan, all the anger and disappointment that she had stored up rises to the surface. Even though she does not say the words to him, it allows her to cry in her father's arms. As she lets her father comfort her, the healing in their relationship begins. It would have done no good for Lucy to have told Horahan about how he destroyed their lives anyway, for Horahan is now clearly deranged. He is hallucinating and can no longer discern the difference between his hallucinations and reality.



Part 4, Chapter 8

Part 4, Chapter 8 Summary

The creamery has declared the milk from Lahardane's cows to be infected. They are forced to slaughter all but eight of their herd. Even these eight, however, are too much for the now aged Henry and Everand to tend. Upon Henry's suggestion, they decide to keep only three, effectively ending Henry's career. Ralph writes Lucy, explaining that it is no one's fault that things have turned out as they did. Lucy does not write back. Lucy is remorseful of how she treated her father when he first came back, and now she attentively asks him about the time he lived with Heloise in Montemarmoreo. One day in November, Everand and Lucy decide to tend the family graves. Everand notes that once they are gone, there will be no one to do it anymore. They talk more about the time they were separated. Everand asks Lucy to visit her mother's cemetery in Switzerland one day and also Motemarmoreo. They talk about how they might visit together one day. That evening, Lucy finds herself thinking about Horahan. Everand dies in his sleep.

Part 4, Chapter 8 Analysis

Time passes, and everybody grows older. Lucy, too, is growing older and is now able to accept that she will always love Ralph, but her passion has remained in the past. Lucy and Everand's relationship has developed, different from the one they had before the separation, but full of love, nonetheless. The renting out of the land and the cleaning of the family grave evokes the end of the Gault family. It is not sad, however, just a fact of life. Everything is impermanent. In the same fashion, Everand's death is peaceful; his last thought is one of satisfaction at having tended the graves that day. That Lucy thinks of Horahan on the night of her father's death foreshadows his eventual presence in her life.



Part 5, Chapter 1

Part 5, Chapter 1 Summary

It is now a year after Everand's funeral. Henry and Bridget are still active, but are getting older, and Lucy is the one taking care of them. She is the one who drives them places, and she is the one who listens to them talk about their youth, a time before Lucy. In March, Lucy fulfills her promise and visits her mother's grave in Switzerland. She then continues to Montemarmoreo. In the winter of that same year, after she returns from her trip, she reads all of Ralph's letters again. She still feels the same feelings, but she realizes that she is no longer the same person as the person in the letter, and neither is Ralph, just as her parents had also become different people than those of her childhood memory. She wraps up the letters in an unfinished embroidery and ties it up.

Part 5, Chapter 1 Analysis

The tables have turned as Lucy takes care of the people who have taken care of her. Of all the people in her life, it is only Henry and Bridget who have been there for all of it, so it is fitting that she takes care of them in their old age. Lucy now accepts the things that have happened and accepts the love that was there, whether it was her parents' or Ralph's, but she doesn't long for it any more. The act of tying up Ralph's letters is symbolic of her putting the past to rest just the same as visiting her mother's grave.



Part 5, Chapter 2

Part 5, Chapter 2 Summary

Lucy seeks Horahan out in the asylum. She does not find him but gives the keeper a present to pass on to him. It is a framed piece of embroidery. It depicts poppies on an ochre ground. She asks for permission to visit him. As her regular visits to Horahan continue, Henry and Bridget express concern between themselves but do not say anything to Lucy. Apparently, Lucy and Horahan play snakes and ladders.

Part 5, Chapter 2 Analysis

Lucy's seeking out Horahan with a gift shows that she has developed as a human being and understands that just as she suffered from that night he was shot, he did also. She is finally able to feel compassion for this man. She sees that she will not feel peace with herself if she does not feel peace toward this man. The fact that they play a child's game symbolizes that he still sees her as the child he killed, and perhaps it comforts him to know that this child is not dead. It might also symbolize innocence in their relationship. There is no discussion or judgment of the past. Their relationship is incomprehensible to the outside world, even to Henry and Bridget. This is because Lucy does not do it for anyone's approval, just for her own peace of mind.



Part 5, Chapter 3

Part 5, Chapter 3 Summary

The keeper at the asylum, Mr. Quirke, talks to Horahan. He is talking about Lucy, and what a great friend she is. He is letting Horahan help him sharpen the knives, which is a great honor, for no one in the asylum is allowed to touch the knives. Mr. Quirke shows Horahan how to make a bird box that he suggests Horahan give to Lucy the next time she wins at snakes and ladders as a surprise.

Part 5, Chapter 3 Analysis

Mr. Quirke is a kind keeper, and it is evident that the friendship between Lucy and Horahan is fostered here. It is also evident that Horahan is a gentle inmate and is attended to well at this institution.



Part 6, Chapter 1

Part 6, Chapter 1 Summary

Quite a bit of time has passed, and Lucy is now living alone. She spends her days quietly. She remembers how she visited Horahan, which she did for 17 years, every fortnight until he died. She had walked in his funeral procession. She remembers Ralph and how he liked colors. She'd reminisce and doze. This day, two nuns visit her. They were moved by her loyal friendship to the man she might have condemned and have been her faithful visitors since then. They talk about everyday things. Lucy mentions that Lahardane might be turned into a hotel once she's gone. The nuns do not like to hear this, but the idea does not bother Lucy. At the end of the morning, they leave. In the afternoon, Lucy muses, and thinks of what she does not tell the nuns. She does not tell them that she should have died in Paddy Lindon's field, because she knows that this would upset them. But for her, it is an uplifting thought. Despite all that she didn't get, she sees only all that she did get. She realizes that she might have not had anything at all. The last paragraph has her sitting by the window, watching the evening roll in.

Part 6, Chapter 1 Analysis

Lucy has acquired a peace that fascinates the nuns. They try to find an explanation for it, turning to the ideas of their faith. Lucy smiles at all this because she knows that there is too much that happens in a lifetime that can be explained in tidy packages. In her realization that she should have died long ago, we hear the echo of her father's identification of himself as a survivor. The image of her sitting quietly by the window appreciating the companionship of the rooks that come out to scabble is an apt ending for this book, for it shows the peace that can be acquired over a long lifetime.



Characters

Lucy Gault

Lucy is the only child of Everand and Heloise Gault. She lives in Lahardane, the Gault family estate with her parents and the servants Henry, Bridget, Kitty Teresa, and Hannah. She is much adored and happy in this home, and during the summer of her eighth year there is also a neighbor's dog that she has befriended. Her parents' announcement that they are moving to England after three boys tried to burn the house down distresses her. She runs away the night before the move and, mistakenly taken for dead, ends up being abandoned by her parents. Henry and Bridget raise her in Lahardane as they wait for her parents' return. Her mother dies before she is reunited with them, but her father comes home during her adult life. His return is a little too late. She has already turned down a marriage proposal from a man she loves. She felt she couldn't abandon the house until her parents came home. Her life until then is a vigil for her parents' return, and her life after that is finding peace with the life she has created. In time, she finds peace that is envied, even by the nuns.

Everand Gault

Everand Gault is the only remaining Gault from his line, except for Lucy, who is his daughter. For him, Lahardane is where his family has lived for generations, and he knows no other home. He is reluctant to leave, but feeling that his wife's premonition of a repeat attempt at arson is correct, he agrees to her entreaties to move. When Lucy is thought to be dead, and his wife wants to go as far away from Ireland as possible, he acquiesces, seeing the torment in her face. She does not want any contact with anyone they know. He does not want this, but his love for his wife, and his need to take care of her, comes first. He is a loyal and loving husband to the end when Heloise dies of influenza. After her death, he goes back to Lahardane. At first Lucy rejects him, but he is patient until she finally learns to love him again.

Heloise Gault

Heloise is English and is convinced that the arson attempt was directed at her because of the anti-English sentiment in Ireland at that time. She is an orphan, and because of that, Lahardane is her home just as much as it is Everand's. However, she fears for the safety of her family at Lahardane and convinces Everand to move. After she hears of Lucy's apparent death at sea, she cannot bear to remember anything about Lahardane, or Ireland, or anything that reminds her of Lucy. She is grateful to Everand for his kindness and love toward her, but her resolve to stay away from Lahardane strengthens each day.



Bridget

Bridget's family has served as servants for the Gault family for generations. After the Gaults leave, Bridget and Henry are left as caretakers of Lahardane. When Lucy is found, she takes care of Lucy and remains a lifelong companion for her.

Henry

Henry married Bridget. Although he comes from a fisherman's family, he has been working the land since his marriage. He is a man of few words and rarely shows any expression. He cares for Lucy as if she were his daughter, and he feels protective of her in the same way.

Aloysius Sullivan

Aloysius is the solicitor for the Gault family. He is a bachelor. When the Gaults disappear, it becomes his responsibility to find them. When he can't, he is plagued by much guilt, but he is the type to not share his feelings with anyone. He also comes to care and worry about Lucy's well-being throughout her life. He remains a loyal friend.

Ralph

Ralph is the tutor for the Ryalls boys in town. He stumbles onto Lahardane one day and falls in love with Lucy. Lucy also falls in love with him. He asks her to marry him, but she is convinced that she will make him unhappy, and won't hear of it. He is loyal, however, and they continue to correspond after he returns home. He goes to war and comes back, but Lucy still has not changed her mind. He gives up and marries someone else. Although he loves his wife dearly, he continues to love Lucy and is torn when he finds out that Everand is back.

Horahan

Horahan is one of the three boys who had attempted to burn down Lahardane. He is the only one who remains in the country. In his adult life, he comes to be tormented by guilt and loses his mind. Eventually, he is committed to a mental asylum. After Everand's death, Lucy starts to visit him regularly until his death. She visits him every fortnight for 17 years.



Objects/Places

Lahardane

For generations the Gaults have lived at Lahardane, and it is more than a house for the three Gaults of this story.

Montemarmoreo

Everand and Heloise eventually settle down in this Italian town. They spend the majority of their exiled lives here until World War II forces them to move to Switzerland.

Petrol Cans

On the night Everand shoots Horahan in the shoulder, he finds two petrol cans on the premises. This becomes proof of their intention to burn the house down.

The Vest

Lucy takes off her clothes to bathe in the sea, and the dog sometimes takes them and hoards them. She is unable to find a particular vest, but she does not tell her parents. When she runs away, her father finds the vest, and this becomes the basis of their belief that she had been drowned at sea.

The Coat

Lucy stole a warm coat of her mother's on the night that she ran away. Henry would find this coat and underneath it, Lucy, days after they thought her to be dead.

Renault Car

This is the car that Ralph uses to visit Lucy. It belongs to Mr. Ryall.

Letters From Ralph

These are the letters Ralph writes to Lucy, and she treasures them for the rest of her life.



Woodbine Cigarettes

Henry always smokes Woodbines.

Bicycle

Horahan rode a big old-fashioned bicycle, which is always seen before he is.

The Framed Embroidery

Lucy brings this as a gift to Horahan the first time she goes to visit him.



Themes

Guilt

Guilt is the central theme of this story and more than that, the destructive nature of guilt. Lucy, in her inability to forgive herself for attempting to betray her parents to get what she wanted, spends the rest of her life in self-imposed exile. Even when Ralph stumbles onto Lahardane, and they fall in love, she cannot allow herself to be happy. She tells Ralph that she cannot make him happy and that he must not think of a life with her. She waits to be forgiven by her parents. When that day comes, it comes too late for her marriage to Ralph.

Heloise is also plagued by guilt. She feels that she is responsible for driving her daughter to commit suicide. In her desire to escape from this, she also chooses to live in exile.

Horahan's guilt drives him to insanity, as he feels guilt for something he only might have done but never did.

Peace

Even while living in exile, the Gaults have a way of finding peace, but this is not a complete peace since they each continue to yearn for something they do not have and continue to be haunted by guilt. Heloise dies before she attains true peace, but Everand seems to find it because his last thoughts before death are of contentment. The last part, however, describes Lucy's amazing peace where she comes to appreciate all that she did have in her life instead of mourning what she might have had.

Failure to Communicate

Throughout the book, time and time again, opportunities to right the situation are missed as people fail to communicate and share what they need to share. This is not done out of guile or intention to mislead. On the contrary, it is often done out of love or kindness. The consequences are the same, however. Ironically, the only one who had the courage to communicate what he needed to was Horahan, the madman. Because he did, however, he was rewarded years later with the friendship of Lucy. If he had not visited Lahardane when Everand came back, Lucy would not have known to find him later. If Lucy had visited him sooner, things would have been more different still. Lucy, too, eventually realizes the folly of not acknowledging true feelings and does finally tell Ralph to visit him. However, for her, it was too late.



Style

Point of View

The Story of Lucy Gault is told from multiple third-person points of view. This is necessary in a story like this because even though it is primarily Lucy's story, it is necessary to view Lucy through the eyes of someone else. When Lucy's parents do not return, it is necessary for us to feel what they are experiencing. Also, because Lucy cannot know what is going on with her parents when they are gone, she cannot be the one to tell it. In fact, because the story is based on the fact that nobody can know what is really going on, it is necessary to be able to change points of view.

Setting

The initial setting for *The Story of Lucy Gault* is provincial Ireland in the early 1920's and while the setting remains mainly in Ireland, the time frame progresses to the present. Civil unrest and anti-English sentiments caused much violence and chaos. Heloise is English, so she feels that she is the cause of the violent intrusion of their home. The assumption and her belief that the attackers would come back is not supported or negated. Lahardane is the Gaults' family estate, and it is evident that the home is more than the house. Both Lucy and Everard show great intimacy with the details of the land. As the story continues, the location stays at Lahardane, but the time changes. World War II comes, and goes. Nothing much changes at Lahardane, though. The characters grow older and certain logistics of how the land is used change, but other than that, Lahardane stays the same. This is part of its charm.

Language and Meaning

The language used in *The Story of Lucy Gault* is not difficult. It is very fluid and poetic. There are parts, however, that are a little confusing because images and thoughts that seem unrelated collapse into each other. It is part of the poetry of the book because it is not always linear. For example, the images of *Sacra Conversazione* at an Italian church and the memories of Heloise's mother receiving the death notice of her husband in England blend together in one paragraph.

Structure

The Story of Lucy is separated in six parts. The first part contains nine chapters; the second, eight; the third, five; the fourth, eight; the fifth, three; and the last, just one. The chapters range from half a page to 26 pages. The first chapter is the longest at 26 pages. This is because all the main characters, their relationships to each other and Lahardane, and the situation that governs their decisions needed to be established. The six parts are separated into six time frames. The first part is Lucy's childhood. The



second is Lucy's early adulthood when Ralph appears. The third is after Ralph left until she found out he was getting married. The fourth is when Everand comes back to Lahardane until he dies. The fifth is about Lucy's relationship with Horahan. The sixth and last is one chapter, and it describes the peace Lucy has attained in her old age.

Quotes

"All this - the house and the remnants of the pasture land, the seashore below the pale cliffs, the walk along it to the fishing village of Kilaوران, the avenue over which the high branches of the chestnut tree now met - was as much part of Everand Gault as the features of his face were, the family traits that quite resembled a few of those in the drawing -room portrait, the smooth dark hair." Part 1, Chapter 1, pg.5

"She wished she hadn't gone to Enniseala with him, she wished she hadn't asked him about his faenulum and what was written over the shops. All the time they were pretending." Part 1, Chapter1, pg. 17

"Yet when he searched his feelings there was nothing there to guide him, only confusion and contradiction." Part1, Chapter1, pg27

"There was something white in his hand, a shaft of lamplight from the open hall door spilling over." Part 1, Chapter 1, pg 29

"At the sink she scrubbed the surface of a pan, its enamel chipped in a way that had been familiar to her for years." Part 1, Chapter 3, pg 39

"They were a nuisance to no one in Montemarmoreo." Part 1, Chapter 6, pg.57

"He would not cease to nag, but his helplessness, he knew, would continue to infect his solicitor's authority. His shame in this respect drew him closer to what had happened, as guilt had drawn Bridget and Henry closer when they had suspected Lucy of bathing but hadn't said." Part 1, Chapter 6, pg.60

"It was apparent to him also that bewilderment possessed the household at Lahardane as unproductively as did the agitation that disturbed his thoughts when he dwelt for too long on what had come about." Part 1, Chapter 9, pg 69

"Unable to verify on his own what he remembered, he was aware, that morning, of a sense of solitude." Part 2, Chapter 1, pg.75

"She waited, she would have said, and in doing so kept faith." Part 2, Chapter 2, pg. 81

"Lucy Gault was beautiful all that summer." Part 2, Chapter 4, pg.88

"A new generation of summer visitors in Kilaوران glimpsed from time to time a solitary woman on the strand or among the rocks, and heard with pity the story that still was told." Part 3, Chapter 5, pg. 138

"There was too much, the Captain considered now, they had not said. Because love nourished instinct, and instinct's short cuts and economies, too much had been too carelessly left." Part 4, Chapter 1, pg. 144



"He nodded this into place, feeling it to be true, and being a survivor was something at least, more than it seemed." Part 4, Chapter1, pg. 144

"How like the rest of our domestic tragedy it is that I have come too late!" Part 4, Chapter3, pg. 160

"And novels were a reflection of reality, of all the world's desperation and of its happiness, as much of one as of the other. Why mistakes and foolishness - in reality too - not be put right while still they might be?" Part 4, Chapter6, pg. 175

"They stirred the love that still affected her, but the people of the letters were other people now, as her mother and her father were." Part 5, Chapter1, pg.205

"She should have died a child; she knows that but has never said it to the nuns, has never included in the story of herself the days that felt like years when she lay among the fallen stones. It would have lowered their spirits, although it lifts her own because instead of nothing there is what there is." Part 6, Chapter 1, pg.227

Topics for Discussion

Do you think that Heloise's fears of another attack were correct?

Write a journal entry as if you were Aloysius Sullivan after Lucy's rescue.

Do you agree with Lucy that novels are a reflection of reality?

How would Lucy's life have been different if Horahan had come to visit when he first had his nightmares?

In this book, people's lives are acutely affected by words that are intended, but never spoken. Find three examples.

What do you imagine Lucy said at her mother's grave?

How do you imagine Ralph's life to be after he made the decision to decline Lucy's invitation to visit?