

The Thirteenth Tale Study Guide

The Thirteenth Tale by Diane Setterfield

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Plot Summary

The Thirteenth Tale is a novel in the tradition of the Bronte sisters by new writer Diane Setterfield. The main character, Margaret Lea, is invited to write the life story of bestselling author, Vida Winter, who has spent her entire career making up her past. Margaret is hesitant, convinced that the master storyteller will lie to her just like she lied to all the others. However, lured by Miss Winter's Victorian style of writing, Margaret takes the contract and quickly realizes that by learning Miss Winter's secret she will be forced to confront a secret of her own. *The Thirteenth Tale* is a story that has all the elements of classic English literature and all the mystery of a modern day blockbuster.

Margaret receives a letter from a modern writer she has heard of but is unfamiliar with. The writer, Miss Vida Winter, would like Margaret to write her life story. While Margaret has written several essays on famous people, she is not a biographer and has never taken on a living subject. Margaret's tastes, both in her work and her leisure reading, lie in the past. However, after reading Miss Winter's novels, Margaret decides to take on the contract.

Miss Winter is a stern, quiet woman who does not appear to be overly friendly when Margaret first meets her. Miss Winter sets down a few ground rules that include telling her story from beginning to end without interruption or questions that will interrupt this flow of story telling. Margaret agrees and begins to listen to the story. Miss Winter begins before her own birth with the birth of Isabelle, the daughter of a wealthy but eccentric man. Isabelle is a spoiled child who becomes the obsession of her father to the exclusion of everything else, including her older brother. As an adult, however, Isabelle forges a relationship with her brother that takes on elements of incest. When Isabelle runs away to marry, her father is so devastated that he dies an untimely death.

Isabelle returns to the house some months later with her two infant children, twin girls. Charlie, her brother, welcomes Isabelle home and the two become so wrapped up in each other that the twins are put aside and forgotten. The housekeeper, the Missus, takes over the care of the babies, doing the best she can. However, the housekeeper is old and can only control their behavior so much. The twins become unruly, terrorizing the house and the neighboring village, constantly getting into trouble. This trouble becomes so worrisome for the local doctor that he decides to send his wife to speak to Isabelle and Charlie about controlling the girls. While in the house, the wife is hit over the head with a violin and she points the finger at Isabelle. Isabelle is promptly sent to an asylum, leaving Charlie in a homicidal depression and the girls once again without proper supervision.

In order to make sure Miss Winter is telling the truth about her past, Margaret returns home for a short time to check a few of the facts. Margaret quickly ascertains that the Angelfields, the family Miss Winter claims to be a member of, did exist. Not only this, but Margaret visits the house where the bulk of Miss Winter's story took place and finds it in ruins but still in existence. During a tour of the house, Margaret meets Aurelius, a sixty-something caterer who lives in the area. Margaret instantly makes friends with Aurelius,



and drawn in by his story of abandonment feels a connection. Margaret once had a twin, but her parents kept this information secret from her until she learned the truth by accident as a child. It is this that causes Margaret to feel a connection not only with Aurelius, but Miss Winter as well.

Miss Winter continues her story, telling Margaret about the governess the doctor arranged to bring to Angelfield House to care for the twins in their mother's absence. The governess is an intelligent woman, more intelligent than her station in life allows. The governess observes the twins and sees that they have each taken on elements of a personality that the other does not have, as if they are two halves of one whole. The governess thinks if they separate the twins they might be able to create two whole people. However, the experiment backfires when the twins sink into a catatonic state and when the governess falls in love with her partner, the doctor.

After the governess leaves, the house sinks into disrepair worse than before. Charlie, who has hidden himself in the old nursery since his sister's departure, disappears shortly after learning about the death of his sister. Miss Winter reveals to Margaret that she found his body in a hovel in the woods, but chose not to tell anyone because she did not see what good it would do. John-the-dig, the gardener at Angelfield House, decided it would be best not to tell anyone about Charlie's disappearance either, since they depended on money from Charlie's solicitor to survive. The odd group in Angelfield House continued on as they always had, even after the Missus died, surviving on as little as possible until the day John-the-dig died. At that point, one of the girls was forced to go to the solicitor and confess Charlie's absence as well as John's death.

At this point, Margaret had discovered that Emmeline, one of the twins, lived in the house with Miss Winter. Margaret had been told and assumed on her own that Miss Winter was Adeline, the other twin. However, upon reading a diary written by the governess and by putting things together based on Miss Winter's narrative, Margaret came to realize that there was a third girl living at Angelfield House. When confronted, Miss Winter admitted that there was. A child had been abandoned in the gardens of the old house and, once he was cleaned up, John-the-dig recognized the connection between this child and Charlie, knowing he must be her father. John kept the child at the house, feeling she had as much right to be there as any of them, but keeping her existence secret to protect her. Miss Winter is this child.

Margaret returns to the Angelfield House ruins to see Aurelius. When she arrives, Margaret discovers that the construction crew that is demolishing the ruins has found bones in the library. Margaret returns to Miss Winter's to confront her about these bones, assuming them to be those of the governess. There Miss Winter reveals the truth about the unnamed child and the baby Emmeline gave birth to in the months after John-the-dig's death. Adeline was insanely jealous of the baby and constantly attempted to kill him. One night, the unnamed girl caught Adeline attempting to burn the baby in the fireplace. The girl saved the baby and hid him away, returning to the house just in time to watch it go up in flames. The girl went into the house to rescue Emmeline, pulling her from the flames just before the fire grew out of control. The girl then took the

baby to the home of a kind woman who lived in the woods, a baby who Margaret now knows to be Aurelius, before returning to the house where she is mistaken for Adeline.



Part One, Beginnings: The Letter, Margaret's Story, and Thirteen Tales

Part One, Beginnings: The Letter, Margaret's Story, and Thirteen Tales Summary

The Thirteenth Tale is a novel in the tradition of the Bronte sisters by new writer Diane Setterfield. The main character, Margaret Lea, is invited to write the life story of bestselling author, Vida Winter, who has spent her entire career making up her past. Margaret is hesitant, convinced that the master storyteller will lie to her just like she lied to all the others. However, lured by Miss Winter's Victorian style of writing, Margaret takes the contract and quickly realizes that by learning Miss Winter's secret she will be forced to confront a secret of her own. *The Thirteenth Tale* is a story that has all the elements of classic English literature and all the mystery of a modern day blockbuster.

Margaret Lea returns home to her father's antique bookstore and finds a letter waiting for her. This is a big occasion because Margaret does not get many letters. The letter is from a writer, Vida Winter, who has read a few of the essays Margaret has published on historic figures and wants Margaret to write her life story. Margaret is surprised by this and inclined to turn the offer down because she does not write about modern subjects and she only writes when the subject fascinates her. Nothing about modern writers fascinates Margaret. Margaret prefers old novels and writers who are long dead.

Margaret sees in the letter that Miss Winter admits to making up her past every time she was asked through the course of her career. This admission makes Margaret think of a lie in her own past. Margaret learned when she was ten that she once had a twin who died shortly after death. Margaret's parents never told her about this twin, but her mother has suffered greatly from depression all her life, obviously due to this loss. Margaret resents her mother's decision to keep this truth from her and it has caused them to have a strained relationship. However, Margaret's relationship with her father is a good one. Margaret works with her father in his bookstore and shares a love of reading with him. Margaret's father is her closest friend and confidant.

Distracted by Miss Winter's letter and her own dark thoughts, Margaret cannot concentrate on her favorite pastime, reading in bed. Out of curiosity, Margaret goes down to the shop and takes a copy of one of Miss Winter's books out of her father's special books case. The book is titled *Thirteen Tales*, but as Margaret reaches the end of the book, she finds it only includes twelve titles. The next morning Margaret learns that this book is a recalled version of Miss Winter's first book that was wrongly titled. This trivia does not matter to Margaret. Margaret is hooked to Miss Winter's writing, drawn in by her unique style that is reminiscent of the Victorian novels Margaret loves. Margaret decides that she will take the contract Miss Winter has offered if only to meet the woman who can write with such classic style. Margaret spends the next few days reading all of Miss Winter's books she can find as well as doing some research on the



writer. Margaret learns that Miss Winter's name is possibly an alias and that she did in fact tell many versions of her life story throughout her career, as Miss Winter has already confessed in her letter. Margaret is reassured by this proof, but is still concerned that Miss Winter will continue to lie to Margaret herself.

Part One, Beginnings: The Letter, Margaret's Story, and Thirteen Tales Analysis

These first few chapters introduce Margaret, the main character of the novel, as well as the premise for the story. Margaret is an amateur writer who specializes in writing essays about historic figures, an occupation that appears to be more of a hobby than anything else. Margaret goes on to describe her father's business, a bookseller who specializes in rare and antique books rather than sales based on the more common books that populate his bookstore. Margaret has spent her entire life in this bookstore, reading everything in sight, especially Victorian novels such as ones written by Bronte and Austen. Despite this background in literature, Margaret is surprised to get a letter from a modern writer who wants Margaret to tell her story.

The letter introduces the premise of the story. Although Margaret is reluctant to take the job initially, the reader knows that she will take the job because that is the main point of the plot development. Before Margaret can decide what she wants to do, however, she further introduces herself to the reader by talking about a twin she learned she once had. Margaret was born a conjoined twin and her sister died when the doctor's separated them. As a result, Margaret's mother has sunk into a terrible depression that has lasted her entire life and made the decision not to tell Margaret the truth. Margaret learned about her sister by accident when she was ten. As a result, Margaret has become resentful toward her mother, causing their relationship to be strained. Not only this, but Margaret feels guilt for the loss of her sister and longs to see her again, allowing her loss to overwhelm her often, especially around the time of her birthday. This touches on the theme of twins and how being a twin affects Margaret.

Lost in her thoughts about her sister, Margaret is not able to concentrate on her nightly ritual of reading into the dark hours of the night. Margaret decides to read one of Miss Winter's novels out of curiosity. This novel turns out to be a rare copy of Miss Winter's earliest novel. Margaret is drawn in from the first words, finding Miss Winter's writing to be similar to those of the Victorian age that she so admires. After reading the novel, Margaret decides she must take the contract Miss Winter has offered if only to meet the woman who could write in such a classic style. Margaret spends the next few days researching Miss Winter and reading her other novels, more drawn in with each story she reads. However, Margaret is concerned that Miss Winter is setting her up to tell more lies. Margaret's concern suggests to the reader some skepticism on Margaret's part that will color the next few chapters.



Part One, Beginnings: Arrival and Meeting Miss Winter

Part One, Beginnings: Arrival and Meeting Miss Winter Summary

Margaret travels to Yorkshire, where Miss Winter lives, by train. Margaret is fascinated by the landscape since many of her favorite novels were set in this area. Miss Winter's house is equally impressive, a large mansion stuffed with antiques and rugs that muffle the very sound of Margaret's footsteps. The housekeeper, Judith, shows Margaret to her suite of rooms before leaving her to unpack. When Judith returns with Margaret's dinner, she announces that Miss Winter will meet with her in the library at eight.

Margaret finds her way to the library in advance of the meeting time, curious to see what kind of books someone like Miss Winter might collect. Margaret is impressed to see that Miss Winter collects the same books that Margaret herself counts among her favorites. Miss Winter enters the room as Margaret peruses the stacks and they take a moment to examine one another.

Margaret begins the conversation by asking Miss Winter about her previous lies regarding her life story and suggests that the only way she, Margaret, will take the contract is if Miss Winter will provide her with three details that can be verified in order to ascertain the truth of her story. Miss Winter is not happy with this idea, but agrees when Margaret threatens to leave. First, however, Miss Winter makes Margaret promise that she will never again ask questions that will reveal parts of the story out of order. Miss Winter answers Margaret's questions, supplying the name of Adeline March when pressed for her real name, the name of the hospital where Adeline March was born, and telling Margaret of a fire at Angelfield House where she once lived. To prove this final fact, Miss Winter shows Margaret a burn scar on her right hand. Satisfied, Margaret leaves Miss Winter and prepares her study for work, thinking about her twin and Miss Winter's suggestion that her story would include one of twins.

Part One, Beginnings: Arrival and Meeting Miss Winter Analysis

Margaret arrives in Yorkshire and is immediately captured by the landscape. Margaret has read many novels set in this area but has never traveled beyond the confines of her father's bookstore. The house where Miss Winter lives only adds to the romance of the locale as Margaret finds the house to be mysterious and romantic in its own right. Margaret is shown to her rooms by the housekeeper, but is not met by Miss Winter until an appointed time later. This is interesting to the reader who must be curious as to why Miss Winter did not greet Margaret herself.



When Margaret does meet Miss Winter, it is in the library. This first meeting is almost confrontational with both women trying to take the upper hand. Miss Winter seems to feel she is in control of the situation, but Margaret quickly asserts her strength by insisting that Miss Winter prove who she is and that the story she is about to tell is truthful. Here the reader must make note of Miss Winter's reluctance to give Margaret the name she used before having her name legally changed to Vida Winter. Also important is the language Miss Winter uses when she tells Margaret about the birth of this other persona, speaking almost as if it was not her birth but someone else's. Miss Winter's distance in this conversation suggests a reluctance to accept this prior identity and the reader will be interested to recall this later in the novel.

Miss Winter also speaks of a fire that destroyed her childhood home, showing Margaret burns on her right hand that resulted in the fire. Miss Winter's scars are important because this fire suggests a tragic end to the story Miss Winter will begin telling in the next chapter, lending some classic Victorian tragedy to this novel. Also important in this chapter is Miss Winter's insistence on telling her story in a classic form, something that the author has incorporated in her own organization of the novel by naming each part of the book for an elemental section of a classic novel.



Part One, Beginnings: And So We Began... and Gardens

Part One, Beginnings: And So We Began... and Gardens Summary

The next morning Miss Winter begins her story. Miss Winter begins with the story of Isabelle and Charlie Angelfield, the occupants of Angelfield House where Miss Winter lived as a child. Isabelle was born during a rainstorm. The doctor was unable to get to the house in a timely manner and Isabelle's mother died while giving birth. Isabelle's father, George, was so distraught over the loss of his wife that he locked himself in his study. The housekeeper, Mrs. Dunne, or the Missus, took the baby to him, convinced it would make him come out of his depression. It worked. George became so enamored with his child that she became like an obsession to him to the exclusion of all else, including his older son, Charles.

Charlie was thrilled with the death of his mother and the distraction of his father because it left him free to behave however he liked. Charlie was a cruel child, always playing tricks on the servants. Between Charlie's cruel behavior and Isabelle's spoiled unruliness, the servants began leaving the house, and finding replacements became a problem. Before long, the house was left with only the Missus and John-the-dig, the gardener. Left without servants to torture, Charlie turned his attentions on his little sister. However, Isabelle proved to be a kindred spirit and the two became co-conspirators in cruelty.

When Charlie and Isabelle became adults, the local villagers began to take notice of them in hopes of making a marriage with their own children. One such family sent an invitation to Angelfield for a picnic. Bored, Isabelle decided to go to the picnic. There she met Roland March and soon she was spending a great deal of time with Roland, causing Charlie to fill with rage and jealousy. While Isabelle spent time with Roland, Charlie made victims of the poor young ladies in the area. At the end of the summer, Isabelle went to her father and told him she was leaving Angelfield House. George was so distressed by this news he attacked his daughter, beating her severely. Isabelle left anyway and George was so saddened, he locked himself in his study and starved to death. Charlie too was depressed by Isabelle's absence but continued to live in the belief that one day Isabelle would return to him. Isabelle did return some months later. Isabelle had married Roland, but was widowed when he died of the pneumonia. With her, Isabelle brought home her twin daughters, Emmeline and Adeline. Isabelle showed little interest in the babies, however, leaving their care to the Missus.

Margaret spends the evening transcribing Miss Winter's story, writing it word for word and making notes in the margins. The next morning she wakes early and goes for a walk in Miss Winter's elaborate gardens. Later, Margaret returns to the house to meet with Miss Winter and receive the next installment of her story.



The Missus had every intention of raising two normal little girls, but it proved to be a difficult task. The girls were unruly from the beginning, refusing to take meals at regular times and fighting with each other violently. The girls seemed unaware of the world around them, of anything or anyone other than each other. They even spoke in a language that was all their own, rarely speaking in clear English. The Missus blamed herself, thinking she was too old to successfully take on two charges, but there was nothing she could have done—it was in their blood.

The only ally the Missus had was John-the-dig, the gardener. John-the-dig, whose true name was John Digence, had lived at Angelfield House since he was a small child, apprenticing in the topiary garden his father and grandfather had cared for before him. John-the-dig did not leave the house when all the other servants did because it was his home; the topiary garden was as much his as Charlie Angelfield's. It is for this reason that Charlie became so brutally depressed when one afternoon he discovered the twins had destroyed the garden, tearing at the beautiful shapes with John-the-dig's own tools. The Missus scolded the girls when she put them to bed that night and Emmeline expressed an understanding of John-the-dig's sadness. The Missus took this as a sign that the girls might actually understand something beyond her own twin world, giving her hope.

Part One, Beginnings: And So We Began... and Gardens Analysis

Miss Winter's story begins in these chapters. Miss Winter begins the story by telling the story of Isabelle and Charlie Angelfield, the mother and uncle of the twins that will be a focus point of Miss Winter's story. One of these twins is named Adeline March, the name Miss Winter gave when Margaret asked her real name, giving the impression that this twin is Miss Winter, which makes Isabelle her mother. However, Miss Winter never uses the pronoun *I* as she tells the story.

Miss Winter's story introduces Isabelle and Charlie, a cruel pair who have lived their childhoods with little discipline and grown into adults who feel they can behave in any fashion they so choose. This leaves Charlie to be cruel to the servants and later to young, innocent women living in the nearby village. Isabelle, too, seems to be a self-centered young lady who decides to leave home despite the hurt and depression this causes her father. The old man dies when his daughter leaves him, suggesting an unnatural attachment between the two as well as illustrating Isabelle's lack of concern for her father's well-being. When Isabelle returns to the family home she brings with her twin babies, but quickly loses interest in the children, leaving them to be raised by the housekeeper.

The housekeeper, the Missus, is an old woman by this time and is not equipped to raise two babies. This is why the Missus blames herself when the twins grow to be more unruly than their mother. However, it is subtly suggested throughout the chapter that the fault does not lay with the Missus, but the nature of the twins. The author never really comes out and says it, but it is suggested that perhaps Roland March is not the father of

the twins, but his marriage to Isabelle was a calculated move to hide something a little darker. Either way, the poor behavior of the twins should warn the reader of trouble ahead not only for the twins but for anyone who should cross their paths. This section also introduces the theme of twins in relation to Angelfield. Twins is an important theme in this novel because of Emmeline and Adeline, because of their unique connection to each other, and because of how this connection affects their behavior.



Part One, Beginnings: Merrily and the Perambulator and Dr. and Mrs. Maudsley

Part One, Beginnings: Merrily and the Perambulator and Dr. and Mrs. Maudsley Summary

Miss Winter returns to her story, beginning when the girls are a little older. The girls had begun exploring the village around the house, causing trouble by stealing food and whatever else touched their fancy. The villagers were well aware of the girls and their mischievous ways, but were loath to do anything about it. No one wanted to upset Charlie Angelfield, but this all changed one afternoon. In the village lived a happy young woman named Mary who was always laughing, so the girls called her Merrily. Merrily had a baby that was the first grandchild on both sides of the family, so the grandparents got together and bought a perambulator for her. Merrily would often set the perambulator out in the yard while she did her laundry. One afternoon, Merrily left the baby in the yard while she went to collect the laundry. The girls, who had been fascinated with the perambulator since the first time they had seen it, decided to take it.

The girls stole the perambulator out of the yard and dragged it across a field until they came to a place where the field fell down a mild slope. Emmeline lifted the baby out of the perambulator and set her aside on the ground while Adeline climbed into the perambulator. Emmeline gave the perambulator a push and Adeline rode it down the hill until it turned over and crashed. Uninjured, Adeline climbed out of the perambulator and the girls went home, leaving the baby and the ruined perambulator where they lay.

When Miss Winter finishes her story for the day, Margaret tells her that she must return home for a few days. Miss Winter is upset and insists that Margaret stay, but Margaret explains that she must do some research on the information Miss Winter gave her on the day she arrived to verify that Miss Winter is telling her the truth. Miss Winter informs Margaret that she is dying and that it is very important that she finish her story before she dies. Margaret insists she understands, but she must still go. Miss Winter sends her doctor to speak to Margaret. The doctor explains Miss Winter's illness in detail, but Margaret continues to insist she must go. Before Margaret leaves, Miss Winter tells her about Dr. Maudsley and his wife.

The villagers were outraged at this event and went to the town doctor, insisting something be done. The doctor, Dr. Maudsley, went to his wife and suggested she visit Angelfield House to speak to Isabelle about the girls' behavior. Mrs. Maudsley agreed. On the day she arrived at the house, Mrs. Maudsley found it apparently abandoned. Mrs. Maudsley let herself into the house and was horrified to find it filthy and in complete disarray. While walking through the downstairs rooms, Mrs. Maudsley was suddenly hit over the head with a violin and knocked unconscious. Charlie found Mrs. Maudsley sometime later and called the doctor. Upon waking, Mrs. Maudsley insisted a woman had hit her on the head and when Isabelle entered the room, insisted she was



the perpetrator. One look at the disheveled, nearly catatonic Isabelle, Dr. Maudsley arranged for her to be moved to an asylum.

Part One, Beginnings: Merrily and the Perambulator and Dr. and Mrs. Maudsley Analysis

As predicted in the previous chapter, the girls' behavior is growing out of control. The twins have taken to stealing from the villagers, taking things that do not belong to them and apparently feeling no remorse for their actions. When they steal the baby carriage with the baby in it and then leave the baby to lie exposed in a field, their lack of remorse becomes something darker, almost homicidal. This is of great concern to the local villagers, who are most likely afraid of what else the girls will do if they can hurt an innocent baby. The villagers go to the only person of authority they can think of, the town doctor, who in turn goes to his wife. The wife makes a trip up to Angelfield House to speak to Charlie and Isabelle about the girls, but instead gets herself hurt for being in the house without permission. Isabelle apparently hit Mrs. Maudsley over the head with a violin. Dr. Maudsley sees Isabelle and finds her to be in such bad shape that he feels there is nothing else to be done but to take her to an asylum. This decision takes Isabelle out of the house and leaves the reader with the question of what will happen in the household without her presence when the story is taken up again.

Margaret has decided she needs to return home in order to investigate the information Miss Winter has given her thus far. Miss Winter is unhappy with this decision because she is ill and dying. Miss Winter is afraid she will die before she has a chance to finish her story. Miss Winter's concern shows the reader how important it is to her to finish her story before she dies. The only thing the reader does not know is why this is so important. It is, however, because Miss Winter even has her doctor talk to Margaret to stress this point to her, introducing another character to the story who will prove to be of importance later in the plot development.



Part One, Beginnings: Dickens's Study, The Almanacs, In the Archives of the Banbury Herald, Ruins, The Friendly Giant, and Graves,

Part One, Beginnings: Dickens's Study, The Almanacs, In the Archives of the Banbury Herald, Ruins, The Friendly Giant, and Graves, Summary

Margaret spends the evening transcribing the day's story, thinking about the twins and the other characters in the story, wondering what will happen now that Isabelle is gone. Margaret finds it interesting that Miss Winter never uses the pronoun *I* when telling her story and wonders why. While Margaret is thinking of this, Judith comes and tells her that Miss Winter would like to see her. Miss Winter talks to Margaret about a picture of Dickens in his study with all his works floating around his head and compares her creative talents to that picture. Miss Winter explains that her stories, her work, have kept her past at bay, but now she feels driven to tell the story of her past, of a particular young girl, because she no longer has work to distract her and feels it is time. Miss Winter tells Margaret this to stress how important it is to her that she tells her story before she dies. However, Margaret continues to insist she must leave.

Once home, Margaret searches through a set of almanacs her father keeps in the bookshop for a few of the names Miss Winter gave to her through the telling of her story. Margaret finds George Angelfield, confirming his death, and Roland March, confirming his marriage to Isabelle. However, when Margaret finds a picture of Roland, she can see no resemblance between him and Miss Winter, or presumably her twin. Then Margaret looks up Charlie Angelfield and discovers that he was declared legally dead some years ago, suggesting a disappearance and the inability to find his body or confirm his death. Margaret finds this interesting, curious what it would take to have someone declared legally dead.

The next day, Margaret goes to the offices of the *Banbury Herald* to look for news clippings on the fire at Angelfield and to find the article Miss Winter referenced in her letter in which a young man asked about her childhood. Margaret finds a small article on the fire that confirms that the twins were in the house at the time of the fire and that both survived. However, Margaret not only cannot find the book section article, she cannot find a book section. Margaret assumes this means that Miss Winter made up the young man and his plea that she tell him the truth. From there, Margaret goes to the ruins of Angelfield House. The house is scheduled for demolition in order to build a hotel on its site, but is still intact when Margaret arrives. Margaret makes her way to the main house and lets herself in through a window of the library. Margaret walks through the



downstairs rooms, trying to see the place as it was when Miss Winter was a child. Margaret takes a few pictures and then makes her way upstairs. There, Margaret becomes frightened when she sees herself in a mirror before realizing the reality of what it is. Still on edge, Margaret flees the upstairs hall when she sees a doorknob begin to turn on its own.

Margaret runs through the house until she falls at the bottom of the stairs. A very large man comes up behind her and begins to fuss over her injuries. The man suggests they have tea and takes Margaret out to the front of the house and sits her on a lion statue to have her tea. The man tells Margaret that his name is Aurelius and that he lives in the area. Aurelius is a caterer. Margaret finds herself befriending this giant, which is unlike her. Before leaving Angelfield House, Margaret visits the cemetery where she finds the graves of the servants, the Missus and John-the-dig, as well as that of Mrs. Love, the woman who raised Aurelius. In the church are plaques for the family members, George, Isabelle and Charlie.

Part One, Beginnings: Dickens's Study, The Almanacs, In the Archives of the Banbury Herald, Ruins, The Friendly Giant, and Graves, Analysis

Miss Winter again makes a plea to Margaret to make her understand how important her story is to tell. What is interesting about this chapter is that Miss Winter talks about this girl whose story she wants to tell as though she is a different person, not the child she once was. This is interesting to the reader because it suggests a distance between Miss Winter and this child, as though Miss Winter does not consider this child to be connected to her in any way. Margaret, despite Miss Winter's plea, decides to return home anyway. At her father's store, she finds an almanac that confirms the existence of the people in Miss Winter's story. Among the things she learns is that Charlie was declared legally dead, suggesting there was some inability to confirm his death. Also, Margaret finds a picture of the man who is supposed to be Miss Winter's father and cannot find any resemblance between them.

Margaret goes to the archives of the *Banbury Herald*, the newspaper that covers the area where Angelfield House is located. Margaret finds an article about the fire at Angelfield that confirms that both twins survived, but she cannot find an article in the book section that Miss Winter's referenced in her original letter because the paper does not have a book section. This disappoints Margaret because it appears to her that Miss Winter made up the story of the young reporter who asked her to tell him the truth. From there, Margaret goes to the ruins of Angelfield House. Margaret finds the house about to be demolished to make room for a hotel.

Margaret walks through the house, thinking about the ghost that Miss Winter suggested once lived there. With this on her mind, it is no surprise that Margaret becomes frightened when first she sees herself in an unexpected mirror and then sees a doorknob turn on its own. Margaret tries to run from the house but falls and hurts

herself. The ghost turns out to be a giant of a man who lives nearby. The man, Aurelius, befriends Margaret and she surprises herself by returning the sentiment. The visit to the cemetery reveals the graves of the people in Miss Winter's story, once more confirming for Margaret the veracity of Miss Winter's tale.



Part Two, Middles: Hester Arrives, The Box of Lives, and The Eye in the Yew,

Part Two, Middles: Hester Arrives, The Box of Lives, and The Eye in the Yew, Summary

Margaret returns to Yorkshire where Miss Winter resumes her story without asking Margaret what she has discovered. Miss Winter resumes her story by telling how the villagers felt that now that Isabelle was gone a governess should be arranged to care for the girls. The doctor took this task upon himself. The Missus was happy about the idea, believing the girls needed someone young to care for them since she was struggling to keep up with them now that her sight and hearing were beginning to fade. John-the-dig was not happy, though, uncomfortable with the idea of a stranger coming to live at Angelfield House. When the governess, Hester Barrow, arrived, the girls hid in the nursery, expecting Hester to come to them. However, Hester called to them but refused to come to their nursery. The girls stayed in the nursery all day, refusing to come out even for dinner. The girls thought they could steal their own dinner later when everyone was asleep, as they had done in the past. However, when they went downstairs they discovered that Hester had not only locked the pantry, but she had locked the windows, doors, and all the rooms on the top floor except the nursery.

The next day, Hester began her stay at Angelfield House by cleaning the rooms and giving the girls a bath, something they were not used to. Emmeline liked being clean, but Adeline did not. Emmeline appeared to be the gentler, kinder sister, while Adeline was filled with anger and violence. Emmeline flourished under Hester's care, Adeline did not. The Missus also did well with Hester in the house, even visiting a doctor to fix her vision and hearing problems. Charlie too benefited under Hester, allowed to hide out in the old nursery and grieve for Isabelle undisturbed. Margaret asks Miss Winter if she liked Hester and learns that she did, which she explains was a problem, but does not elaborate.

That night as Margaret transcribes the day's story, she begins to think about Hester. Margaret realizes there is a chance Hester is still alive and decides to try to find her. Margaret writes a letter to her father asking how she might go about finding someone like Hester. The next day, Miss Winter continues the story. Hester began to have trouble in the house when someone would unlock the doors she meant to keep locked. Hester assumed it was the Missus doing it and twice went to her, asking that she not unlock the doors. Hester also saw a young boy in the garden weeding and went to John-the-dig to suggest the child not be allowed to work when school was in session since school was so much more important. John-the-dig denied that there had been a child in the garden.

The doctor would often visit the house to make sure everything was going well for Hester. One day Hester walked with him in the garden and began to tell him about the twins. Hester felt that Emmeline was doing well under her care and that someday she



might be capable of getting married. However, Adeline was not improving. Hester felt that the girls, by the nature of being twins, had taken on personality traits opposite of each other, as if together they made one whole person. Hester was concerned about Adeline, but felt that there were occasions when she saw in her the possibility of intelligence. Hester had been reading about twins in scientific journals and suggested that perhaps if she did more research she might be able to figure out how to help Adeline. Hester also suggested that the doctor give Adeline a complete physical to see if there was something physically wrong with her. The doctor agreed to help Hester.

Part Two, Middles: Hester Arrives, The Box of Lives, and The Eye in the Yew, Analysis

Margaret returns to the house and Miss Winter jumps right back into her story. The town has decided the girls need a governess. Interesting about this situation is John-the-dig's reluctance to have a stranger living in the house. John-the-dig is a servant, a gardener, so his concern is curious and should be noted by the reader. The Missus is happy with this change, however, because it takes the pressure off of her to care for the twins. The Missus has grown so old that she is having trouble hearing and seeing. This makes it difficult for the Missus to care for the children. With Hester there, there is less for the Missus to worry about and now she has help with her other duties as well.

Hester turns the household upside down by refusing to allow the twins to continue with their old habits and by forcing cleanliness on the house and the children. Hester believes she can make the children into responsible members of society. However, the more Hester gets to know Adeline, she begins to see that there may not be a chance to change her. Adeline is full of anger and violence. There are moments, however, when Hester believes she sees intelligence in Adeline and she asks the doctor to help her figure out if she can help Adeline. The doctor agrees and a chain of events is set in motion that will play out in the next few installments of Miss Winter's story.

There are several other points that are important for the reader to note in these chapters as well. The first is the doors that keep getting unlocked after Hester has locked them. Hester believes it is the Missus doing it, but the Missus denies it and then it continues to happen. The second is the small boy that Hester sees in the garden. John-the-dig denies that there is a boy in the garden and suggests it is simply a boy from the village who has wandered into the gardens. This is important because this boy will be mentioned again later in the novel and proves to be an important clue to the ending of Miss Winter's tale.



Part Two, Middles: Five Notes, The Experiment, Do You Believe in Ghosts?, and After Hester,

Part Two, Middles: Five Notes, The Experiment, Do You Believe in Ghosts?, and After Hester, Summary

Margaret wakes in the middle of the night with five notes of some unfamiliar tune on her mind. Restless, Margaret takes a walk in the garden, looking for the source of the music. Margaret walks in circles and finds nothing but Miss Winter's cat, Shadow. The next morning after visiting with Miss Winter, Margaret retraces her steps of the previous night and finds nothing but the gardener attempting to repair a hole a fox dug.

Miss Winter's story picks up again on the day Dr. Maudsley performed his exam on Adeline. Dr. Maudsley could find nothing physically wrong with Adeline. Dr. Maudsley and Hester had built a close relationship as a result of their sharing research on twins, so when he told Hester of his conclusions, she suggested to him that they try an experiment. Hester felt that if the girls were separated, they would eventually take on the character traits each was missing and become two whole girls. Hester presented the idea in such a way that Dr. Maudsley could not help but agree to participate. Late at night, Hester took Emmeline from the nursery. Adeline collapsed into a catatonic state at the loss of her sister. The next day, Adeline was taken to Dr. Maudsley's house and Emmeline was returned to the nursery. Emmeline too fell into a catatonic state when she realized her sister was gone.

Miss Winter's health is clearly beginning to deteriorate. Several times during the telling of her story Margaret can see she is in deep pain and she has stopped putting on her makeup and doing her hair. However, Miss Winter continues with her story. Hester and Dr. Maudsley continued the experiment despite a lack of response from either twin, getting together frequently to compare notes. Nothing could make them end the experiment because they were enjoying their collaboration greatly. However, their hands were forced when one day Hester was walking to Dr. Maudsley's house and thought she saw Emmeline and Adeline playing in a field. Hester thought that Adeline had escaped the doctor's house without him being aware. Hester rushed to the house and demanded to know why he had let Adeline outside. When Hester saw that Adeline was in the room with the doctor, dressed in a different dress than the child Hester had seen, she became hysterical. To calm her, the doctor pulled Hester into his embrace and kissed her.

The doctor's wife, listening at the door, ended the embrace and banished Hester from her home. Hester rushed back to Angelfield House, packed her belongings, and disappeared. John-the-dig retrieved Adeline from the doctor's house and reunited the twins. Margaret interrupts the story to ask where Hester had gone. Miss Winter tells her that Hester is only a minor character and she should not care, but Margaret insists.



Finally Miss Winter tells Margaret to ask the solicitor, Mr. Lomax, for Hester's reference if she wants to know that badly. The next morning Margaret sends out a letter to Mr. Lomax. In the morning post, Margaret also got a letter from a legal professor in regards to Charlie Angelfield's legally declared death. The letter included some forms that were signed by Miss Winter with the notation that she was formally known as Adeline March, further proof to the veracity of Miss Winter's story.

Adeline and Emmeline were very happy to be back together. John-the-dig was happy Hester was gone, but the Missus was confused and unsure what to do next, her confusion compounded by the fact that her mind was beginning to fail her. The house began to fall apart as it had before, perhaps even worse. The roof, in disrepair, allowed a great deal of water into the house, causing a great deal of damage to the attic and the top floors of the house. Emmeline had changed, now capable of entertaining herself and ignoring her sister. One day Adeline called to Emmeline, but Emmeline was playing and did not immediately answer. When Adeline found her, she beat her terribly.

Part Two, Middles: Five Notes, The Experiment, Do You Believe in Ghosts?, and After Hester, Analysis

Margaret hears five notes of a song she cannot place. Margaret tries to find the source of the music, but is unable to do so. Margaret's search for these notes is important because they will continue to haunt her as the plot continues to develop. Also important in this chapter is the gardener's attempts to fix a hole dug by foxes. This seems incidental at this point, but it too will come up later in the novel to prove to be significant.

Hester and the doctor have become good friends while researching twins and decide to do a little experiment of their own. Hester needs the doctor's help because a woman of her station is not qualified to publish a scientific paper, but the reader suspects she has other, personal, reasons to want the doctor's help. The experiment begins and to the reader it seems to be futile from the very beginning. Both girls fall into a catatonic state and there is little anyone can do to bring them out of it. Yet Hester and the doctor refuse to end the experiment until they are forced by a scandal that the reader had seen coming. The doctor and Hester kiss, having fallen in love through the course of their work. This is quite scandalous and it causes Hester to be forced to leave the area. Margaret wants to know where Hester has gone, so the reader is assured that they will find out eventually where she went and if the doctor followed.

The house returns to its previous unkempt, chaotic self after Hester's disappearance. The house has a bad roof and is beginning to fall apart, cluing the reader in to some difficulties later in the novel. The Missus is also falling into some sort of decay, her mind becoming confused in her advanced age. This too suggests to the reader difficulties for the Angelfield household in the next installment of the story. John-the-dig is the only one who seems happy that Hester is gone. The twins do not seem to have noticed this change, too busy reuniting with each other. However, not all is perfect there either. Adeline cannot deal with the fact that Emmeline is no longer completely dependent on her and she reacts with violence. Adeline's violent behavior is another clue to the



direction of her relationship with Emmeline and leaves the reader wondering how this angry, violent little girl grew up to be quiet, strong Miss Winter.

One more important thing in this set of chapters is Hester's sighting of Adeline and Emmeline playing in a field together. Hester believes this to be both girls, but later finds that Adeline is at the doctor's and has never left his sight. The reader is left wondering who the girl is if not Adeline. Miss Winter suggests she is a ghost. Her description is not completely wrong, but the reader must wait to find out the true answer to this dilemma.



Part Two, Middles: Gone! and After Charlie,

Part Two, Middles: Gone! and After Charlie, Summary

A letter came to Angelfield House informing Charlie that Isabelle had died. The Missus gave this letter to Charlie by accident. A few days later, John-the-dig realized that Charlie was unusually quiet in the old nursery. John-the-dig broke open the door and investigated the rooms, discovering a great deal of filth and blood, but no Charlie. Charlie was gone.

Margaret returns to her room after this particular session with Miss Winter and realizes that Miss Winter used the pronoun *I* for the first time when telling her story. Margaret also discovered upon returning to her rooms that a letter has come from Mr. Lomax that includes all the information he had on Hester Barrow. Margaret immediately sends a letter to a genealogist her father has recommended with all the information on Hester and asks him to find her.

John-the-dig was deeply disturbed by Charlie's disappearance, mostly because it meant that their means of survival was gone. Charlie may have been a recluse, but he still signed the monthly checks that allowed them to buy groceries. John-the-dig cleaned the old nursery in order to have something to do while he considered their options. Finally, John-the-dig decided not to tell anyone of Charlie's disappearance. John-the-dig figured they could survive on the vegetables in the garden and the game in the woods. No one had any idea where Charlie could have gone or why, but Miss Winter's as a girl knew a place in the woods where he might have gone. When she had the first opportunity, Miss Winter's as a girl went to this place and found Charlie with a bullet wound in his head. Miss Winter was so upset by this that she went to a place that gave her solace, the cottage of a kindly woman she had seen on many occasions. The sight of this woman helped to soothe Miss Winter.

After their session that night, Judith informs Margaret that Miss Winter wants her to leave the house for a few days. The doctor has arrived and will take Margaret to the train. Margaret makes little attempt at conversation with the doctor because she is upset and does not understand why she is being sent away.

Part Two, Middles: Gone! and After Charlie, Analysis

Charlie is gone. This does not seem to be that big of a deal since he has been hidden in the old nursery for a very long time, an unimportant character to the overall plot. However, to John-the-dig, Charlie is his means of survival. Charlie is the only one who can sign the checks that will pay for the household's survival. John-the-dig is concerned about this because he does not want to be removed from his gardens and he does not



want strangers in the house. Why this is so important to John-the-dig is curious. The reader might believe it is because of the family connection he has to the garden and the fact that Angelfield House is the only home he has known. Perhaps John-the-dig's connection to the house is because of his affection for the Missus and maybe in a small way for the twins.

Margaret is still concerned with finding Hester and has received information that may be helpful in this regard. Margaret asks a genealogist to help her, leaving the reader with the impression that they will learn the truth eventually. How it will impact the plot, the reader is not clear of at this point. At the end of the last session with Miss Winter, Margaret learns she is being sent away for a short time. After Miss Winter's insistence she not leave the last time Margaret wanted to go home, the reader should be curious what the urgency is this time. Perhaps Miss Winter's health has worsened. However, the reader should think if this were the case, it would be more important for Margaret to stay. This situation touches on the theme of secrets, suggesting to the reader that Miss Winter has more secrets she had not told anyone and she is still keeping from Margaret.



Part Two, Middles: Angelfield Again, Mrs. Love Turns a Heel, The Inheritance, Jane Eyre and the Furnace, and Collapse,

Part Two, Middles: Angelfield Again, Mrs. Love Turns a Heel, The Inheritance, Jane Eyre and the Furnace, and Collapse, Summary

Margaret returns to the ruins at Angelfield to meet Aurelius. They walk in the garden in a mist and talk about Aurelius's past. Aurelius was abandoned as a baby on Mrs. Love's doorstep. Aurelius believes he is connected to Angelfield House because he was abandoned the night of the fire, but he cannot be sure. Aurelius does not even know when his birthday is and is excited for Margaret when she tells him hers, which is only a few days away. Margaret and Aurelius go into the church and Aurelius tells Margaret the story of the night he was found. Mrs. Love was knitting a sock and she turned the heel twice. Twice before Mrs. Love had done this, once on the day her lover was killed, and again on the night her sister died. When she did this a third time, Mrs. Love was convinced it was time for her death. However, instead she found a baby on her doorstep. As Aurelius tells this story, it is clear that he is saddened by what happened to him and by the idea that his mother abandoned him.

Aurelius takes Margaret to his house so he can show her what he calls his inheritance. This inheritance is an old leather bag in which he was found, two pieces of paper, one a page from *Jane Eyre* and one a piece of paper with a name on it, perhaps beginning with an a and ending with an s. There is also a feather in the bag. Aurelius has spent his entire life trying to figure out what all these clues mean but he cannot figure it out. Margaret looks at them, but she cannot figure it out either. After a while, Margaret returns to the ruin and sees the children of the local woman who takes care of the deer playing near the ruin. Margaret takes a picture of the boy.

Margaret returns to Yorkshire where she finds Miss Winter in more pain than before. They begin to adjust their timetable, meeting whenever Miss Winter feels up to it rather than at a specific time. One afternoon Margaret is in the library waiting and she finds a shelf that contains dozens of copies of *Jane Eyre*. When Miss Winter comes into the room, she asks Margaret how she would feel if *Jane Eyre* were on a conveyer belt about to fall into a furnace and be lost forever and the only way she could stop it from burning was by killing a man, would she do it? Margaret refuses to admit she would, but in her heart knows she would.

Another afternoon Margaret is distracted during a meeting with Miss Winter. Miss Winter asks to see the photos that Margaret has in her pocket and is unimpressed to find pictures of Angelfield House. However, when Miss Winter comes across the picture of



the boy, she pauses and stares at it for a long time, but refuses to acknowledge her interest to Margaret. Margaret finds these two events curious.

The roof in the attic collapsed because of the water damage from the holes in the roof. When Miss Winter went to check on the Missus the next morning in the aftermath of the destruction, she found her dead. John-the-dig was devastated despite having known this would happen eventually. Miss Winter, as a girl, took responsibility for the house.

Part Two, Middles: Angelfield Again, Mrs. Love Turns a Heel, The Inheritance, Jane Eyre and the Furnace, and Collapse, Analysis

Margaret returns to Angelfield in order to see Aurelius and she learns the truth about his childhood. Aurelius was abandoned, touching on the theme of abandonment. Aurelius believes he came from Angelfield House, but he cannot prove it beyond the coincidence that he was found the same night as the fire there. That is why he spends so much time there. Mrs. Love, the woman who raised him, told him often the story of how he was found, putting a supernatural twist on it by telling him how she turned a heel on the sock she was knitting twice rather than once and she had done this twice before, both times when someone she loved had died. This supernatural twist is probably meant to entertain the boy, but it also adds a ghostly touch to the novel that goes along with the idea of a ghost living in Angelfield and also fits in well with the Victorian feel of the novel.

Aurelius still has the bag he was found in and few scrapes of paper inside of it that were there when he was found. These papers include a page torn from *Jane Eyre*. By coincidence, Miss Winter is a fan of this novel. In fact, Margaret is also a fan and Miss Winter uses this information to play a game with Margaret, curious if Margaret would kill to save the story. Margaret refuses to admit she would, confused as to why Miss Winter would even suggest this scenario. Another thing that confuses Margaret is why Miss Winter is drawn to a photograph of a little boy she does not know. Margaret mentions this moment as a random moment of oddness. It should strike the reader as odd as well. In the next installment of the story, the Missus dies as a result of shock after the collapse of part of the roof. The Missus's death changes the dynamics of the house and leaves Miss Winter, as a child, responsible for the house. The reader sees the moment Miss Winter was forced to grow up, suggesting the direction of the plot where this child is concerned.



Part Two, Middles: The Silver Garden, Phonetic Alphabet, The Ladder, Eternal Twilight, and Fossilized Tears,

Part Two, Middles: The Silver Garden, Phonetic Alphabet, The Ladder, Eternal Twilight, and Fossilized Tears, Summary

Margaret wakes in the middle of the night mistakenly thinking it is daytime. Margaret decides to go for a walk in the garden. While she is walking, Margaret is joined by Shadow. Margaret follows Shadow into the depths of the garden where she stumbles upon who she thinks is Miss Winter until the woman turns around. The woman looks like Miss Winter digging in the flowerbeds, but she has terrible burn scars on her face. This must be Emmeline. The woman says something that sounds like the five notes Margaret heard a few days before. The woman then runs back into the house.

Margaret goes back into the house and begins to write down what she heard Emmeline say. Margaret taught herself the phonetic alphabet as a child out of curiosity and to have a secret language in which she could write her sister's name. Now Margaret believes that it is the phonetic alphabet that Emmeline spoke in. However, Margaret is not sure she wrote down the five notes properly.

Six months passed after the death of the Missus. John-the-dig provided for the household with meat from the woods and vegetables from the garden. John-the-dig also did the bulk of the housework and made house repairs. John-the-dig hired a boy to help in the garden despite Miss Winter's girlish protests, insisting that he needed the help. John-the-dig talked about the future and how things were bound to change someday. Miss Winter, as a child, took these warnings to heart and began to think about Emmeline's future. Miss Winter was concerned about Emmeline being hurt by some cruel man and tried to prepare her for the possibility of getting married and living without Miss Winter's help.

John-the-dig taught Miss Winter how to work in the topiary garden, teaching her how to use the safety latch on the ladder. A few weeks later, Miss Winter went to work in the garden and could not find the ladder. When she went in search of John-the-dig and the ladder, she found him dead. The ladder had collapsed because someone had damaged the safety latch. After the day's story, Margaret returns to her room and finds that a letter from the genealogist has arrived, giving Margaret some hope that he will be able to find Hester someday. Margaret then goes for a walk and finds a window that looks in on Emmeline's rooms.



Miss Winter sent the boy to fetch the doctor after finding John-the-dig. The doctor tells Miss Winter that John-the-dig is dead and asks about Charlie. Miss Winter is forced to tell the doctor that Charlie is gone, telling him that Charlie has gone on a trip and is due back. Dr. Maudsley agreed to arrange the funeral and then left the house, believing Miss Winter and her sister to be in the care of the boy's grandmother. However, there is no grandmother. The next day, Miss Winter went to visit the solicitor, arranging payment for the funeral and discussing the possibility that Charlie might not return from his trip. The solicitor promised Miss Winter that she and her sister would be taken care of. The funeral was a quiet affair. The doctor and the solicitor contemplated Miss Winter through the afternoon, wondering if she were Adeline or Emmeline. The doctor assumed her to be Adeline.

Later that afternoon while Margaret is in her room transcribing her notes, Judith comes and asks for her help. Miss Winter is in severe pain and the doctor is unable to come. Margaret goes to her and holds her in her arms, soothing her until the pain lessens. Margaret asks about John-the-dig, wondering who messed with the safety catch, wondering if it was Emmeline since Miss Winter seemed to love him so deeply and the boy had no reason to hurt his employer. Miss Winter denies that it could have been Emmeline but does not elaborate. Miss Winter slips into a restless sleep and Margaret leaves when the doctor arrives.

Part Two, Middles: The Silver Garden, Phonetic Alphabet, The Ladder, Eternal Twilight, and Fossilized Tears, Analysis

Margaret goes for a walk in the garden and finds Emmeline digging there. Margaret is shocked, but the reader should not be since it only makes sense that if Emmeline were still alive she would be living with Miss Winter. Perhaps Emmeline's existence, however, explains some of Miss Winter's behavior. Emmeline's appearance touches on the theme of secrets because clearly Miss Winter has been keeping Emmeline a secret from everyone, Margaret included. Margaret also believes that she knows what the five notes Emmeline continuously repeats are, but is unsure she can decipher their meaning, giving the reader some idea that she might figure it out as the plot continues to develop.

Miss Winter continues her story, telling Margaret how things continued at the house after the death of the Missus. John-the-dig has kept things going well, but it is a struggle keeping up with such a large house and the children living inside. That is why John-the-dig hires a boy to help him out, much to Miss Winter's dismay. Miss Winter is also concerned with Emmeline and the chances that she might be hurt by some man. Miss Winter's concern should be the reader's concern as well because the author most likely would have not included this information if it were not likely something bad would happen to Emmeline.

Something bad does happen, but it is to John-the-dig. John falls from his ladder when someone messes with the safety catch. However, when Margaret asks Miss Winter who



might have done this, she denies it was Emmeline even though that only leaves Miss Winter herself. This seems unlikely since Miss Winter is so terribly heartbroken over the man's death. Now Miss Winter is left in charge of her sister and the household completely, taking the role with the same strength she has shown Margaret over the past few weeks. This position creates a situation that leaves Miss Winter the only person capable of making decisions that will shape the rest of her story.

When Miss Winter is in terrible pain, Margaret goes to her side to soothe her. Miss Winter accepts Margaret's condolences and allows her to soothe her. Miss Winter eventually falls into a restless sleep and Margaret stays by her side, showing a change in the relationship between the two women. What was once a boss and employee relationship has become something close to friendship. This change in relationship will shape the rest of the plot development as well.



Part Two, Middles: Underwater Cryptography, Hair, Rain and Cake, and Reunion,

Part Two, Middles: Underwater Cryptography, Hair, Rain and Cake, and Reunion, Summary

Margaret returns to her rooms and thinks about what Miss Winter said. If Emmeline did not kill John-the-dig, that only leaves Adeline. Miss Winter seems so upset by John-the-dig's death. How could she have killed him? Still struggling with this, Margaret climbs into the bathtub, thinking as well about Miss Winter learning to shape the topiary even after she damaged it a few years before. Margaret is confused by these things. In her confusion, she begins to think about the five notes Emmeline spoke the night before and suddenly realizes what they are. The dead go underground. Margaret is sure these are the words, but she does not understand what they mean.

Miss Winter calls Margaret to her room for their next meeting. Margaret finds Miss Winter waiting with a sheet under her chair, hoping Margaret will give her a haircut. Margaret hesitantly agrees, cutting Miss Winter's hair very short while she tells the next part of her story. The boy continued to come to the house even after Miss Winter paid him what he was owed. After a time he began having tea with Miss Winter every day, but they rarely spoke. Miss Winter warned him to stay away from Emmeline, but the boy made it clear he wanted her, not Emmeline. Miss Winter brushed the boy off, making it clear she was not interested in his affections.

The next day is Margaret's birthday. Margaret feels guilt and grief for her twin rather than happiness for her day of birth. Margaret decides to go for a walk on the moor even though it is cold and raining. Margaret makes her way out of the garden and walks for a long time, thinking about her dead twin and how deeply she misses her. While walking, Margaret runs into Aurelius who has come to wish her a happy birthday. Aurelius takes her to his car and warms her up. Margaret, lost in her grief, begins to talk, telling Aurelius what she has suspected for some time. Emmeline is Aurelius's mother. Aurelius demands that Margaret take him to see his mother and Margaret agrees.

Margaret returns to the house and takes a nap before meeting Aurelius. Margaret does not feel well, so the meeting is something of a fog. However, Margaret does recall taking Aurelius into the house and to Emmeline's rooms. Margaret also remembers Emmeline's reaction to she and Aurelius. Emmeline falls to the floor and begins to scream. Aurelius disappears when Judith comes running, just moments before Margaret faints.



Part Two, Middles: Underwater Cryptography, Hair, Rain and Cake, and Reunion, Analysis

Margaret is beginning to see inconsistencies in Miss Winter's story: Why John-the-dig taught the child who ruined his topiary garden to shape it; why Miss Winter, who clearly loved John-the-dig, would kill him. Margaret does not understand these inconsistencies but there is nothing else to explain them. While considering these questions, Margaret finally figures out what she heard Emmeline saying, the dead go underground, and begins to wrestle with what this might mean. There are more questions the more Margaret learns about Miss Winter's past. It seems Miss Winter is full of secrets, a theme of the novel.

As Miss Winter tells the next part of the story, she asks Margaret to cut her hair. This is a curious request, suggesting Miss Winter is preparing herself for further illness or even death. The story at this point talks about the boy who has fallen in love with Miss Winter as a girl. However, Miss Winter makes it clear she is not interested in the boy or his affections, sending him away. This part of the story segues into Margaret's birthday, which she always takes hard. Margaret sees her birthday as just another reminder of his sister's death. In her grief, Margaret goes for a walk in the rain and runs into Aurelius, telling him in the fog of grief about her suspicions that Emmeline is his mother. Aurelius insists on seeing Emmeline, but the meeting causes Emmeline to have a fit. Margaret is hardly aware of this, however, because she is so ill she loses consciousness.



Part Two, Middles: Everybody Has a Story, December Days, Sisters, A Diary and a Train, Demolishing the Past, and Hester's Diary II,

Part Two, Middles: Everybody Has a Story, December Days, Sisters, A Diary and a Train, Demolishing the Past, and Hester's Diary II, Summary

Margaret wakes to find Miss Winter at her bedside. Miss Winter explains that Margaret had a high fever, but the doctor has said she will be fine. Miss Winter apologizes for not knowing it was Margaret's birthday and asks when Margaret will share her story. Margaret denies having a story. Later, filled with guilt, Margaret writes a note to Aurelius asking for forgiveness. Dr. Clifton comes to visit Margaret and tells her she is suffering from a romantic collapse and that she will be fine. Margaret spends several more days in bed before returning to her work. When Miss Winter asks to see her, it is to read to her, not to share her story. Miss Winter wants to know what happened the night Margaret collapsed and Margaret tells her everything, including bringing Aurelius to see Emmeline. Then Margaret tells Miss Winter about the statement she believes Emmeline has been saying, surprised when Miss Winter seems surprised to learn that Margaret has deciphered the twin language, as though she herself did not understand it.

Miss Winter invites Margaret to visit Emmeline in her rooms. Margaret arrives and finds Miss Winter sitting with Emmeline. Margaret learns that Emmeline is ill as well and is expected to die. In fact, Miss Winter tells Margaret that she sent her away weeks earlier because she thought Emmeline was going to die that day. Margaret is saddened to hear this news. Miss Winter gives Margaret a diary that she found among Emmeline's belongings and sends her away, telling her to go home for Christmas.

On the train, Margaret begins to read. The diary, Margaret is pleased to see, is Hester's. The diary is badly damaged and Margaret has a hard time deciphering it. However, she manages and finds that bulk of the diary is about Hester's time at Angelfield House. The diary tells the story that Miss Winter has already told except in Hester's own words. It begins with Hester's impressions of the house and the children. Hester talks about the boy she saw in the garden and her conversation with John-the-dig in which she got the impression he was lying to her. This is as far as Margaret gets before the train reaches her stop.

Instead of going straight home, Margaret goes to Angelfield in order to see Aurelius, intent on apologizing in person. However, when Margaret arrives she finds his house empty. However, there is activity at the demolition site. It appears the workers have



begun to demolish the library and have found something inside that requires the presence of the police. Margaret suspects they have found a body and that it might be Hester's. While watching the scene, Margaret runs into the two children she has seen before and their mother. The mother invites Margaret back to their house for cocoa. Once there, Margaret shows the mother the picture of her son she took and asks if Miss Winter might know the child. The woman denies it, but then shows Margaret a picture of her father who greatly resembles her son and suggests maybe Miss Winter knew her father. Margaret learns that the woman's father is Ambrose, the same young man who once worked at Angelfield House when Miss Winter was a child. This information causes Margaret to begin to think Ambrose may be Aurelius's father.

Margaret goes to the solicitor's office next to inform him of the discovery at Angelfield House and to ask that she be allowed to tell Miss Winter. The solicitor agrees. Margaret also asks the solicitor when he knew Miss Winter was Adeline March and if he ever told anyone. The solicitor tells her he once told Aurelius the truth when he was a young man. Margaret realizes with this information that Aurelius must have been the young man who interviewed Miss Winter all those years ago, claiming to be with the *Banbury Herald*. On the train as Margaret returns to Yorkshire, she finishes reading Hester's diary. Hester writes about her books being moved from her room to various places throughout the house, most often on the stairs. Hester talks about the doors being unlocked and the Missus denying doing it. Hester talks about the experiment and her growing affection for the doctor. Finally, Hester writes about her suspicions that someone is reading her diary without her permission and her decision to stop writing in it.

Part Two, Middles: Everybody Has a Story, December Days, Sisters, A Diary and a Train, Demolishing the Past, and Hester's Diary II, Analysis

Margaret becomes ill and the doctor assures her that her ailment is a romantic collapse that comes from reading too many Victorian era novels. Margaret recovers and is filled with guilt for taking Aurelius to see Emmeline. When Margaret learns that Emmeline is sick and dying, her guilt is increased. Miss Winter reassures her, however. Margaret then tells Miss Winter everything she knows about Aurelius and Emmeline, as well as the deciphering of the statement Emmeline repeatedly makes. Interesting to the reader is that Miss Winter does not seem to know what the statement was all this time. If Miss Winter is Adeline, she should have known because she also spoke in the special twin language.

Miss Winter gives Margaret a diary written by Hester. The diary is Hester's impressions of everything that took place in Angelfield House while she lived there. Interesting to the reader is Hester's impression that someone is sneaking around the house, moving things, unlocking doors, and causing general chaos. Hester also speaks about a boy she sees in the garden on several occasions, assuming it is someone from the village but unhappy with John-the-dig's denial of this child. The ghost moving things in the



house and the mystery boy seem to add up to something; something John-the-dig seems to know and is hiding, but what that might be is still unclear. However, if the reader puts this knowledge together with Miss Winter's lack of knowledge of the twin language and the reader might begin to put things together the same way Margaret will in the next chapter.

Margaret goes to Angelfield House and learns that the construction workers have discovered a body in the library. Margaret's first thought is that the body is Hester. Later, Margaret speaks to the woman who cares for the deer and learns that she is the child of the young man who worked at Angelfield House and was in love with Miss Winter. Margaret thinks that perhaps this young man might be Aurelius's father. However, this idea has yet to be verified. Margaret then goes to the solicitor and learns that Aurelius has known for many years that Miss Winter is Adeline March. This makes Margaret think that Aurelius might have approached Miss Winter looking for the truth under the guise of being a reporter. This reassures Margaret that Miss Winter did not lie to her.



Part Three, Endings: The Ghost in the Tale, Bones, Baby, and Fire,

Part Three, Endings: The Ghost in the Tale, Bones, Baby, and Fire, Summary

Margaret has a eureka moment at the end of Hester's train when she puts all the information together and realizes there was another child living in Angelfield House. Another child lived in the house that remained hidden from outsiders and perhaps from Isabelle and Charlie as well. Once at the house, Margaret goes straight to Emmeline's room and confronts Miss Winter with the news of the bones that had been found. However, before she can receive an answer, Margaret realizes that Emmeline has died. Margaret is overwrought by this idea and whispers a message to Emmeline for her sister. In her grief, Margaret tells Miss Winter about her sister. Then Margaret asks Miss Winter about the third child.

Miss Winter tells Margaret how a child was abandoned in the garden, left to fend for herself. John-the-dig became aware of the child first because of missing strawberries on the plants in the garden and then when he found evidence of a break-in to the garden shed. John-the-dig left a trap for the thief and discovered a child who was burning up with fever. John-the-dig took the child into the house and he and the Missus cleaned it up, discovering a redheaded little girl under all the dirt who was clearly the child of Charlie Angelfield, perhaps the product of a rape. John-the-dig decided that the child should be allowed to live in the house but that it would be in everyone's best interest if no one knew. Miss Winter stayed, an unnamed child who lived like a ghost.

Miss Winter resumes her story on the day she brushed Ambrose off for the last time. A few months later, she realized Emmeline was pregnant. Miss Winter fired Ambrose, but not before he insisted on showing her how to kill chickens so they could survive. Miss Winter kept Emmeline's pregnancy a secret, afraid what the villagers would do if they knew. They had little contact with the villagers and when they did, Miss Winter would occasionally pretend to be Adeline to avoid raising suspicion. However, the closer Emmeline's due date came, the more worried Miss Winter came over the idea of inviting the doctor into the house. Miss Winter was concerned she could not conceal her presence during Emmeline's labor and the doctor would learn her secret. However, Emmeline went into labor and gave birth without complication.

Miss Winter did not know what to do about the baby and finally decided it would be best to continue as they always had, hiding the baby from the village. However, Adeline became deeply jealous of the baby. Adeline had never been jealous of anyone else in Emmeline's life, but the depth of care the baby required of Emmeline aroused Adeline's darkest jealousy. Adeline began scheming ways to kill the baby. Miss Winter became aware of these intentions and began watching Adeline.



When Adeline began bringing gas cans into the house, Miss Winter had no idea what her intentions were. One night, however, it became clear when Adeline stole the baby out of his crib and took him into the library and lay him in the fireplace. Miss Winter was able to rescue the baby and take him from the house, but she was unable to stop Adeline from lighting a fire. When Miss Winter returned to the house, she found the house on fire and Adeline and Emmeline fighting in the library. Miss Winter ran into the house and rescued who she thought was Emmeline, but when they left the house and Miss Winter saw the burns on the girl's face, she realized she did not know who she was. Miss Winter ran to where she had hidden the baby and took him to Mrs. Love's doorstep before returning to the house just as the villagers were beginning to arrive. Miss Winter was mistaken, as Adeline and she never bothered to correct this mistake.

Part Three, Endings: The Ghost in the Tale, Bones, Baby, and Fire, Analysis

Margaret finally puts all the clues together and figures out there was a third girl living in Angelfield House, something the reader probably put together in the previous chapter. The mysterious movement of things in the house, the unlocked doors, and the girl Hester saw playing with Emmeline all add up to suggest the third girl. The only question was who she might be, but when Miss Winter tells her story and the reader thinks back to the beginning of the story and Miss Winter's implication that Charlie had a habit of raping the local girls, it all begins to make sense. John-the-dig's attitude with Hester also begins to make sense when Miss Winter reveals he was the one who found her and appointed himself her protector. Miss Winter was kept secret to avoid the dark implications of her birth, touching on the theme of secrets and explaining why Miss Winter kept her own identity a secret even from Margaret until this moment.

Miss Winter continues the story, telling how Ambrose made Emmeline pregnant and Miss Winter hid the pregnancy from the villagers for fear that they would learn about her and change the way things were at Angelfield House. Everything seemed to go well until Adeline became jealous of the baby. Miss Winter could see Adeline's homicidal tendencies and became afraid for the baby. Thanks to Miss Winter, the baby was rescued from a horrible death, but could not stop Adeline from burning down the house around her and Emmeline. Miss Winter managed to save who she thought was Emmeline, but when all was said and done, Miss Winter could not be sure the girl she saved was not Adeline. It is for this reason that Miss Winter took the baby and left her at Mrs. Love's doorstep, thus saving Aurelius's life, but leaving him with the sense of abandonment, a theme of the novel, that would bring him into Margaret's life.



Part Four, Beginnings: Snow, Happy Birthday, The Thirteenth Tale, and Postscriptum,

Part Four, Beginnings: Snow, Happy Birthday, The Thirteenth Tale, and Postscriptum, Summary

Miss Winter dies after finishing her story. A terrible snowstorm has hit Yorkshire and Margaret is snowed in with the two servants and the two dead bodies. They pass the time as best as they can until Margaret is able to make her way outside for a quiet walk and a few tears of grief. The doctor finds her here and consoles her. When the snow finally melts, Margaret attends three funerals, that of Miss Winter, Emmeline, and the cremation of the bones. Margaret takes the cremated ashes to Aurelius and tells him the story of his birth and his mother's death. Then Margaret tells Aurelius about his father and the sister whom he has already known. Aurelius is thrilled to finally know who he is and to have a real family. Best of all, Aurelius is happy to know the exact date of his birth.

Miss Winter has left for Margaret the thirteenth tale that was left out of her first book. The story is of a child who was the product of a rape: her own story. Margaret is saddened by the story and decides not to release it to the public. Margaret also decides to keep Miss Winter's life story that she has written private until Aurelius's niece and nephew can decide what to do with it. Margaret also reveals to the reader that her genealogist found Hester, who moved to America and eventually married the doctor, whose wife died of the flu, and had several children. The doctor who cared for Miss Winter comes to visit Margaret at the bookshop and asks her to vacation with him for a month, an offer she quickly accepts, hoping for a future with this man. Finally, Margaret makes peace with the death of her sister and considers attempting to have a relationship with her mother.

Part Four, Beginnings: Snow, Happy Birthday, The Thirteenth Tale, and Postscriptum, Analysis

This final section of the book wraps up all the loose ends. Now Aurelius knows the truth about his birth and abandonment and has met his sister and her children. Aurelius now has the family and the details he has always wanted thanks to Margaret. Margaret found Hester, who went on to live a full life, and has fallen in love with Miss Winter's doctor. It seems everything has turned out well for Margaret. Margaret no longer resents her mother for keeping secrets and is hoping to be able to develop a relationship with her. Margaret has also come to terms with the death of her sister. It seems that Miss

Winter's story has allowed Margaret to heal in ways she never thought possible, giving this novel a happy ending reminiscent of novels like *Jane Eyre*.



Characters

Margaret Lea

Margaret Lea is a writer of non-fiction, biographical works. She lives in a small apartment over her father's bookstore. Margaret has spent a great majority of her life in her father's bookstore, not only working there, but spending a great deal of time reading Victorian novels. Margaret feels at home among the books because she feels alien in the real world. Margaret discovered on accident when she was ten years old that she had a twin that died not long after their births. Margaret held this secret inside for a long time, growing resentful of her mother for having never told her she was a twin. This secret ruined Margaret's relationship with her mother.

Margaret receives a letter at the beginning of the novel to write the life story of a famous writer, Miss Vida Winter. Margaret does not want to write the story at first because this is not the type of writing she often does and it will take her out of her comfort zone of her father's shop. However, Margaret reads one of Miss Winter's books and so falls in love with the style of writing that she decides to take the contract anyway. Margaret travels to Miss Winter's home, which happens to be in a part of the country where many of her favorite novels are set. Margaret quickly falls in love with the home and the area, though she feels hostility from her hostess, Miss Winter. Slowly, as Miss Winter begins to tell her story, Margaret begins to get insight into Miss Winter and begins to feel affection for her.

Margaret identifies with Miss Winter's story from the beginning when she believes that Miss Winter is one half of a twin. However, as the story continues, Margaret begins to see through Miss Winter's story and realize that she is not one of the twins, but a separate girl who was abandoned. Margaret identifies even deeper with Miss Winter when she realizes this because Miss Winter has proven her strength by caring for a girl that is wild and uncaring, a girl who does not want to be alive and living with Miss Winter, but would rather be dead with her twin sister. Margaret begins to see through Miss Winter's story the mistakes she has made in her own life and begins to make them right while making amends with her own feelings of guilt for the lose of her twin sister.

Vida Winter

Vida Winter is a famous writer who has spent her entire career making up a past that does not exist. Miss Winter has never told the truth about her childhood, always telling reporters and anyone else who asks a different story. This is because Miss Winter had a rough childhood that was spent in secret and she has never been able to stop hiding in order to protect someone she loves. When the novel opens, Miss Winter is an old woman and she is dying. Miss Winter has decided it is time to tell someone the truth about her life and childhood. Miss Winter read an essay that Margaret wrote about a set



of twins and decides she deeply understands twins and therefore is the perfect person to write her own life story.

Miss Winter begins her story by telling Margaret about Isabelle and Charlie Angelfield, siblings who have a unique relationship. This story continues to include twin daughters that Isabelle brings into the Angelfield house, claiming her husband, a Mr. March, is the father. However, the reader quickly begins to suspect that Charlie is the father. Miss Winter's story appears to be autobiographical, but the reader soon realizes that she is not talking about herself, but about people she grew up with. It soon becomes clear that Miss Winter is not one of the twins but is actually a third child who was abandoned on the property and kept secret, only to take the identity of one of the twins after a devastating fire leaves one of them dead.

After this fire, Miss Winter changed her name and became a writer, spending her entire life alone with the surviving twin, caring for her the way the servants of Angelfield House cared for her. It is the impending death of this twin that makes Miss Winter feel comfortable telling her story to someone so the world will finally know she exists after all these years. However, Margaret elects to continue to keep Miss Winter's story quiet in order to protect her surviving family members.

Isabelle Angelfield

Isabelle Angelfield is the daughter of the wealthy patriarch of the Angelfield family. Isabelle's mother died the night she was born and her father fell into a deep depression that only lifted when the housekeeper brought Isabelle to him. Isabelle became the father's obsession, his only reason for living. The father coddled his daughter, giving her anything she wanted and allowing her to live without rules or discipline. When Isabelle became a young woman, her brother, who had been left out of the circle of devotion between father and daughter, discovered his sister to be a kindred spirit, and fell deeply in love with her. The two were inseparable until Isabelle began spending time with a local young man. Isabelle ran off with her young man. Isabelle's father fell into such a depression at his daughter's disappearance that he died. Charlie became depressed as well, but always believed his sister would come back.

When Isabelle did come back, she brought with her twin daughters, claiming her husband was the father. Isabelle and Charlie were so happy to be together again that they abandoned the babies and left them to be raised by the housekeeper. Many years passed and Isabelle and Charlie spent all of their time together, neglecting not only the children, but the house as well. One day, the doctor's wife came to visit and Isabelle hit her over the head with a violin. The doctor arranged for Isabelle to be sent to an asylum where she would die several years later.

Charles Angelfield

Charles Angelfield was the eldest son of a wealthy, eccentric man. Charlie's mother died in childbirth and his father was so devastated by this death that he neglected his son,



even after his affection for his daughter brought him out of his depression. Charlie was happy to be left without parental supervision because this left him alone to torture the staff with his many pranks and practical jokes. He hardly paid attention to his little sister until she became a young woman and he discovered in her a kindred spirit. Charlie quickly fell in love with his sister. However, Isabelle began spending time with a local boy and this left Charlie angry. Charlie took his anger out on local girls, abusing and violating them in his jealousy.

When Isabelle left Angelfield House to marry, Charlie was devastated. This left Charlie alone to deal with his father's death and with the house. Charlie allowed the house to fall into disrepair while he spent a great deal of his time grieving for Isabelle. When Isabelle came back with her twin daughters, Charlie took little notice of the girls because he was so happy to have Isabelle back home. Charlie and Isabelle spent the next few years spending all their time together. When Isabelle was sent to the asylum, Charlie again fell into a depression, locking himself into the old nursery to wait for Isabelle's return. When Charlie accidentally learned of Isabelle's death, he went to a place where he and Isabelle spent a great deal of time together and shot himself in the head. Many years later, Charlie was declared legally dead so that the surviving twins could inherit what was left of the family money.

Emmeline March

Emmeline March is the daughter of Isabelle Angelfield. Despite the fact that Isabelle married a local man named March, many people suspect that Charlie Angelfield is Emmeline's father. Emmeline grows up with little discipline and structure because her mother neglects her and leaves her care to the elderly housekeeper who finds it difficult to control the young girl. Emmeline has a twin with whom she spends the majority of her time, speaking to her in a special language only the two of them understand, never learning to speak properly until a governess is brought in to care for the two girls. This governess cleans up Emmeline and her sister Adeline and begins attempting to teach them. Emmeline takes to the teachings well, learning to speak with some properness and learning to eat at proper times instead of whenever she feels like it. However, all this progress is ruined when the governess decides to separate the twins in order to encourage growth in both girls. The girls fall into a deep depression that is only corrected when they are reunited.

Emmeline became pregnant as a young woman when she spent time with a young boy who worked in the garden. Emmeline gave birth to a boy and was a good mother to him. However, her sister becomes jealous and attempts to kill the baby. The baby is rescued, but a fire results and the house is destroyed, along with one twin. The other twin is rescued and will go on to live with Miss Winter until her death. However, no one will ever know for sure if this woman is Emmeline or her sister, Adeline.



Adeline March

Adeline March is the other daughter of Isabelle. Adeline is dark and violent where Emmeline is kindness and concern. Adeline often beats up her sister and tortures her, but Emmeline loves her anyway. When Hester came to live with the Angelfield family, she thinks she sees in Adeline a girl who is capable of kindness and sanity. However, what Hester might be seeing is the unnamed girl pretending to be Adeline, something she would do quite frequently later in the novel. When Hester separates the girls in order to see if she could create normal human beings out of them when separate, Adeline falls into a terrible depression and refuses to participate in the real world. When reunited, Adeline is jealous of Emmeline's ability to play on her own and to be her own person, reacting with more violence.

Adeline is never really jealous of Hester or the unnamed girl and their roles in Emmeline's life because Emmeline always came back to her. However, when Emmeline gives birth to her son, Adeline is darkly jealous of the baby because of the time Emmeline spends caring for him. Adeline attempts to kill the baby many times, finally lighting a fire meant to kill the baby that will burn down Angelfield House. It is in the aftermath of this fire that the unnamed girl takes on Adeline's name and becomes Adeline, never telling anyone that one of the twins perished in the fire. The unnamed girl does not know which twin died and which survived.

Aurelius

Aurelius is a giant of a man that Margaret meets by accident while visiting the ruins of Angelfield House. Margaret befriends Aurelius, learning that he was abandoned as a baby and believes that his origins are connected to Angelfield House in some way because the night he was abandoned was the same night of the fire that ruined the house. Aurelius becomes a close friend to Margaret, becoming the first person outside of her father that Margaret tells about her twin sister. Aurelius is a caterer, living alone in the cottage he grew up in with a kindly woman, Mrs. Love. As Margaret continues to learn more of Miss Winter's story, she comes to understand that Aurelius is indeed connected to the house. In fact, Margaret realizes that Aurelius is Emmeline's son, left on Mrs. Love's doorstep by the unnamed girl the night of the fire in an attempt to save the baby's life. When Margaret learns the truth about Aurelius's birth and abandonment, she tells him the story and introduces him to a woman who turns out to be his half-sister. Now, Aurelius, who once had no family at all, now has a sister and a niece and nephew.

The Missus

The Missus is the housekeeper of Angelfield House. At the beginning of Miss Winter's story, the Missus is a competent housekeeper who cares deeply for the family since they have been her employer since she was a young woman. The Missus is the one who drags the patriarch of the family out of his depression after his wife's death by



taking the baby Isabelle to him. It is also the Missus who takes on the care of young Charlie despite his violent outbursts that cause a large portion of the regular staff to run off. When the children are grown and Isabelle returns to the house with her twin daughters, the Missus is old and beginning to have trouble seeing and hearing. However, the Missus takes on the care of the babies, raising them the best that she can.

The Missus grows old and begins to have trouble taking up with the care of the house, not to mention keeping up with the twins. The twins are allowed to run wild throughout the house and the village, causing trouble everywhere they go. It is not until after Isabelle attacks the wife of the doctor, however, that a governess is brought in to attempt to settle the twins down. The Missus is grateful for this governess, seeing her as a gift who can do with the twins what the Missus could not do. However, by the time the governess leaves the house, the Missus has grown so old that her memory is no longer reliable and she confuses the twins with Isabelle. The Missus dies the night the roof caves in at one corner of the house.

John-the-dig

John-the-dig is the gardener at Angelfield House. John's father and grandfather were also gardeners at Angelfield House and John apprenticed there as a young child. John's specialty is in the topiary garden that had been begun by his grandfather and is devastated when the twins destroy it in a fit of boredom. John never considered leaving the house, however, because it is the only home he had ever known. Not only this, but John is in love with the Missus, even though it never would have occurred to either of them to have an intimate relationship or to marry. John takes care of the Missus and helps care for the house after all the other servants run off. When Charlie and the Missus both die, John takes on the burden of caring for the twins and the unnamed girl, whom he found in the garden years before. Unfortunately for the unnamed girl, John is killed one afternoon while attempting to fix the roof of the house because someone broke the safety latch on his ladder.

Hester Barrow

Hester Barrow is a governess who comes to care for the twins after Isabelle is placed in the asylum. Hester is an intelligent woman with knowledge beyond her station in life. When Hester begins to work with the twins, she begins to see in Emmeline the possibility of a normal life. However, in Adeline Hester sees only violence and hatred. On occasion, Adeline appears to show some intelligence and some interest in the world around her. Based on these rare occasions, Hester designs an experiment to separate the twins in order to see if separate they will take on the characteristics that they are missing and become young ladies capable of surviving in the real world. However, this experiment backfires in two ways. First, the girls are so depressed without each other that they fall into a catatonic state and will not respond to Hester's teachings. Second, the doctor with whom Hester is working on the experiment falls in love with her and this



affection causes a scandal that forces Hester to leave the house. Margaret later learns that Hester moved to America where she was joined by the doctor after the death of his wife and was married.



Objects/Places

Angelfield House

Angelfield House is the name of the mansion where the Angelfield family lives. The house fell into terrible disarray after the death of Isabelle and Charlie's father. Later, the house would burn down with Emmeline and Adeline inside, leaving them both scarred.

Topiary Garden

At Angelfield there is a topiary garden that John-the-dig and his father and grandfather before him have grown and cared for over many generations. The twins destroy the garden and cause John-the-dig to fall into a terrible depression.

Perambulator

The twins steal a perambulator from a villager in order to play with it, unconcerned that there is a baby inside.

Library

There is a large library in Angelfield House where Adeline sets the fire that destroys the house and changes the lives of the twins forever.

The Old Nursery

After Isabelle is sent to live in an asylum, Charlie locks himself inside the old nursery until he learns about the death of his sister.

The Gardener's Shed

The unnamed child lives inside the gardener's shed until John-the-dig catches her in the garden. The girl comes to live with John-the-dig and the Missus in Angelfield house, but no one is aware of her existence outside the twins and the servants.

The Hovel

There is an unused hovel in the woods behind Angelfield House where Isabelle and Charlie used to go to be alone. After Charlie disappears from Angelfield House, the unnamed girl finds him inside the hovel with a self-inflicted bullet wound to his head.



Mrs. Love's Cottage

The unnamed girl often spied on Mrs. Love in her cottage when she wandered the woods because the woman seemed kind and was like the fairy godmothers in her storybooks. This is where the unnamed girl takes the baby the night of the fire.

Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre is a favorite novel of both Miss Winter and the unnamed girl. The novel has many similarities to the real life story of the unnamed girl.

Miss Winter's Garden

Miss Winter has a large and elaborate garden at her house in Yorkshire. It is in the garden that Margaret first sees Emmeline.

The Bookshop

Margaret's father owns a bookshop where Margaret works. This is where Margaret spent most of her childhood and the only place she has found happiness before she meets Mrs. Winter.

Yorkshire

Yorkshire is in the countryside of England and is where many historical English novels are set. This is also where Miss Winter lives.



Themes

Twins

This novel is the story of two women, both of whom claim to be twins for a large portion of the novel. The first is Margaret Lea, the only child of a bookshop owner and his severely depressed wife. Margaret learns when she is still a child that she once had a twin who died shortly after birth. Margaret's parents never told her about this twin, but with the knowledge she realizes she has always known that a part of her was missing. Later in life, Margaret learns that she and her twin were conjoined and that during the separation procedure her sister was killed. Margaret feels a great deal of guilt for the death of her sister, but she also feels as though a part of her is missing, that she is not whole. The Missus suggests that the feeling is like that of an amputee and Margaret whole-heartedly agrees. Despite never knowing her and never hearing the complete story of her life and death, Margaret feels a connection to her twin that continues to haunt her into adulthood and during her stay at Miss Winter's home.

The other set of twins in this novel is Isabelle's daughters, Emmeline and Adeline. These girls are abandoned by their mother upon her return to Angelfield House and her brother Charlie. Isabelle only cares about Charlie and cannot focus her attention on her two daughters, so the Missus and John-the-dig take over the care of the children. The Missus is old and ill equipped to be raising children, therefore the girls are allowed to run wild for the majority of their childhood. The girls develop their own way of communicating with each other, speaking in an invented language that only they understand. The girls become so attached to one another that when a governess finally comes to the home to force some order on the girls and teach them how to behave in a civilized world, they rebel against this teacher. The teacher sees potential in one of the girls and decides to separate them, hoping that such action will make the one child capable of interacting in the real world. However, the experiment only causes the girls to fall into a profound depression that makes it impossible to teach either child.

The connection between the Angelfield twins is so profound that they make it impossible for anyone to get close to them. One of the girls is kind and gentle, the other mean and hateful. The unnamed girl becomes close to the kinder sister, Emmeline. However, when Emmeline gives birth to a baby boy, Adeline becomes enraged with jealousy and repeatedly tries to kill the baby. The unnamed girl has always been aware of the special connection between the sisters and is aware of the jealousy from the moment it begins to show itself. On the watch, the unknown girl catches Adeline's attempt to burn the baby in the fireplace and saves him, but is unable to stop Adeline from setting the entire house on fire. For the first time, Emmeline rebels against her sister and tries to save the house and her child, but the fire overwhelms both sisters. The unknown girl saves one of the girls from the house, unaware of which she has saved due to terrible burns on the girl's face, and protects her the rest of her life even as the girl continues to look for her sister. It is this unique connection between these sisters, Miss Winter's connection to



them, and Margaret's unique take on twins that make twins an important theme in this book.

Abandonment

Two key characters in this novel were abandoned as children. Aurelius was only an infant when the woman who raised him, Mrs. Love, found him on her doorstep. Aurelius has kept the bag that he was packaged in all his life, hoping it will one day tell him who he is. Aurelius puzzles over the small clues inside the bag: two pieces of paper and a feather. He thinks that if he could place them he would have a clue to who he is. However, they tell him nothing. The only clear clue Aurelius has is the fact that the night he was found was the same night Angelfield House burned down and there was a smell of smoke on his clothes. This makes Aurelius feel as though he was from Angelfield House. Margaret, after meeting Aurelius, begins to foresee his birth in Miss Winter's story. When Miss Winter tells Margaret about the child Emmeline gave birth to shortly before the fire and how she stole him away to a cottage in the woods, Margaret knows that child has to be Aurelius.

The unnamed child also has no idea who her mother is. The child was left at Angelfield House because Charlie Angelfield was her father and presumably the mother thought she would be better off with him. The unnamed child assumes Charlie Angelfield raped her mother and that is why it was so easy for her to leave her child. The child lives in the garden until John-the-dig catches her in the act of stealing water and takes her inside the house to be cleaned up. After the child is cleaned and cared for, it becomes obvious by the color of her hair and eyes who her father is. John-the-dig knows what has happened and decides there is no reason to tell anyone about her because Charlie will not care and it is clear that the mother does not care either. John-the-dig and the Missus keep the child in the house in secret, never telling anyone but the twins about her. The girl becomes friends with Emmeline, whom she grows the love as a sister. However, Adeline is difficult to become friends with and is terribly jealous of anyone who comes between her and her sister. That is why when Emmeline has a baby, the unnamed girl is forced to act as protector to keep Adeline from hurting the baby. When Adeline starts a fire to kill the baby and causes Angelfield House to burn down, the unnamed girl saves one of the twins from the house and takes on Adeline's identity out of convenience and to be allowed to care for the surviving twin.

Abandonment is an important theme to this book because it motivates two important characters within the novel. Aurelius is simply a subplot to the main story, but Margaret's meeting of him is instrumental in her discovering the truth about the unnamed girl. The unnamed girl is important because it is she who will grow up and become Miss Winter. Without Miss Winter, there would be no story and no reason for Margaret to become involved in the Angelfield story.



Secrets

There are many secrets within this book that motivate many of the characters to action. Aurelius is a living, breathing secret, the child of one of the Angelfield twins but unaware of which is his mother and why she abandoned him. Margaret suffers under the burden of the secret her mother chose to keep from her, the secret of her twin's birth and death. This secret has divided Margaret from her mother her entire childhood and caused their relationship to be non-existent. Isabelle has a secret that she keeps from her entire family: Her husband was not the father of her twins. Her brother Charlie was.

The biggest secret in this novel, however, is the story that Miss Winter has hired Margaret to hear. Miss Winter grew up in Angelfield House, but she is not one of the twins. Miss Winter is a child who resulted from rape, a child of Charlie Angelfield. Miss Winter was abandoned in the garden at Angelfield House and is not discovered by anyone for a long period of time. When she is finally found, John-the-dig decides not to tell anyone in order to protect her. John-the-dig feels she belongs at the house, but Charlie would not care to know about her and no one else has a right to know about her. This causes a situation in which the girl lives like a ghost, never able to present herself to people outside the house. When she grows older and John-the-dig dies, the unnamed girl is forced to take on the persona of one of the twins, most often Adeline. This actually aids the girl because after the fire the villagers assume her to be Adeline. The girl takes on Adeline's name long enough to secure Emmeline's future and then changes her name to Vida Winter, hiding her past behind this new name. This is the biggest secret of all and is the reason Miss Winter invites Margaret into her home, so that she can finally divulge the truth before her death. It is this desire on Miss Winter's part that makes secrets a major theme of the novel.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is first person. There are two narrators in the book. The first is Margaret Lea, a writer who has been hired to write Vida Winter's life story. The second is Vida Winter, who becomes the narrator when she tells the story about her family and her childhood. When Miss Winter tells her story, the narration appears to be that of a third person omniscient since Miss Winter never uses pronouns in the beginning of her story. However, as the story continues, it is clear that Miss Winter is speaking in the first person; she simply had not gotten to a point in which she, as a character, has a role in the story. Miss Winter is reciting her family history as it was told to her as a child. This is still first person, however, because Miss Winter is telling the story in her own voice, from her own point of view.

This point of view works because it is clear to the reader who the narrator is and there are no confusing switches between narrators. When the narration changes, it is in different chapters or with a large separation of paragraphs so there is little confusion as to who the speaker is or what the timeline is. This is important because the novel moves back and forth in time quite often since Miss Winter's story takes place more than sixty years before the current timeline, or Margaret's time. The point of view also keeps the reader close to the story and helps to develop an emotional connection to all the characters, Margaret and Miss Winter especially.

Setting

The novel begins in the bookstore that Margaret's father owns. The bookstore is a small, crowded store that is rarely visited by customers. Margaret grew up in the bookstore, reading as many turn-of-the-century novels she could get her hands on. As an adult, Margaret not only works in the store, but she also lives above it. The store is Margaret's life. When Margaret gets the offer to write Miss Winter's biography, she leaves the store, much to her chagrin, to stay with Miss Winter in her home in Yorkshire. Yorkshire is the setting of many of the turn of the century novels Margaret has loved since her childhood, so there is some excitement to coming to this part of the country and being so close to the moors that were romanticized in her favorite novels. The house itself is a large home, filled to the rafters with rugs and furniture until a person's very footsteps seem muffled. The house seems to reflect its owner, the character of the overstuffed rooms a great deal like the woman who seems to hide behind the layers of stories she has told throughout her lifetime.

The house also has a large set of maze-like gardens outside. These gardens are similar to gardens that existed at one point outside Angelfield House, connecting through symbolism the two settings as well as an important aspect of the story. Angelfield House is the home of the Angelfield family, an old, wealthy family in whose home Miss Winter



grew up. The house itself is a large mansion that is falling apart around the ears of those who live there. No one inside the house either cares or is capable of taking proper care of the house. The rooms are filthy and the ceiling is falling down. The state of the house is only rivaled by the disastrous condition of the family, creating yet more symbolism between the setting and the story.

Language and Meaning

The language in this novel is precise English with a few touches of English slang. The language is easy to read while it adds to the feel of the novel by supplying an old fashioned touch with the more precise language. There are many parallels between the story in this novel and the old novels that the main character admires, including *Jane Eyre*. By creating a setting and using a more formal language of a bygone era, the author gives the novel a Victorian feel like that of novels such as *Jane Eyre*.

The language of this novel works because it adds to the feel of the novel. The author wants the reader to connect her novel to Victorian novels of the past and to do this she uses a language that is more precise than common English, more formal in its feel and sound. The author also places her novel in similar settings to those of the Victorian novels, again giving the novel a feel that is of something out of the past. The author has carefully woven a story that fits with her language, using every aspect of the novel to produce a product that fits in with the novels she clearly admires and enjoys from the Victorian era.

Structure

The novel is divided into fifty-two chapters. These chapters are not titled by chapter name or number, but are simply set apart by short titles that either describes some action within the chapter or an aspect of the story being told within that chapter. The chapters are divided into four parts, each one given the title of a specific part of a novel's structure, such as the beginning, middle, or the end. This structure is further enhanced by the division within each chapter that keeps the stories, Margaret's and Miss Winter's, separated so that the reader does not get confused by the frequent changes between one timeline and another.

The novel itself is separated into two main story lines. The first is the story of Margaret, a lonely young woman who has been hired to write the life story of a famous fiction writer. The second is the story of this writer, who was once part of a wealthy, eccentric family. The two stories take place in very different timelines. One takes place in modern times while the other takes place sixty years in the past. The structure of the chapters helps keep these two timelines separate and avoids confusion on the part of the reader.



Quotes

"The hours between eight in the evening and one or two in the morning have always been my magic hours. Against the blue candlewick bedspread the white pages of my open book, illuminated by a circle of lamplight, were the gateway to another world."

Part One, Beginnings, Thirteen Tales, pg. 24

"I read *old* novels. The reason is simple: I prefer proper endings. Marriages and deaths, noble sacrifices and miraculous restorations, tragic separations and unhopd-for reunions, great falls and dreams fulfilled; these, in my view, constitute an ending worth the wait. They should come after adventures, perils, dangers and dilemmas, and wind everything up nice and neatly. Endings like this are to be found more commonly in old novels than new ones, so I read old novels."

Part One, Beginnings, Thirteen Tales, pg. 29

"Tragedy alters everything." Part One, Beginnings, Thirteen Tales, pg. 35

"As I started to sleepwrite my questions, the margin seemed to expand. The paper throbbed with light. Swelling, it engulfed me, until I realized with a mixture of trepidation and wonderment that I was enclosed in the grain of the paper, embedded in the white interior of the story itself. Weightless, I wondered all night long in Miss Winter's story, plotting its landscape, measuring its contours and, on tiptoe at its borders, peering at mysteries beyond its bounds."

Part One, Beginnings, And So We Began..., pg. 78

"Slowly I walked down the drive to the church, my mind full of the stranger I had just met—met and befriended. It was most unlike me. And as I passed through the lynch-gate, I reflected that perhaps *I* was the stranger. Was it just my imagination, or since meeting Miss Winter was I not quite myself?" Part One, Beginnings, The Friendly Giant, pg. 139

"Hester had triumphed. She might have looked like a potato, but there was nothing that girl couldn't do, once she put her mind to it." Part Two, Middles, Hester Arrives, pg. 156

"Miss Winter sat staring into space. Her famous copper tint had faded to a tender apricot. She had abandoned her hairspray and the solid coils and twists had given way to a soft, shapeless tangle. But her face was set hard and she held herself rigid, as though girding herself against a biting wind that only she could feel." Part Two, Middles, The Experiment, pg. 183

"But there was more. Did she know I had noticed? I had made no outward sign. But I *had* noticed. Today Miss Winter had said *I*." Part Two, Middles, Gone!, pg. 205

" 'You are suffering from an ailment that affects ladies of romantic imaginations. Symptoms include fainting, weariness, loss of appetite, low spirits. While on one level



the crisis can be ascribed to wandering about in freezing rain without the benefit of adequate waterproofing, the deeper cause is more likely to be found in some emotional trauma. However, unlike the heroines of your favorite novels, your constitution has not been weakened by the privations of life in earlier, harsher centuries. No tuberculosis, no childhood polio, no unhygienic living conditions. You'll survive.' " Part Two, Middles, Everybody has a Story, pg. 303

"I gazed at Emmeline's empty face. Nothing really had changed. Her scars were still angrily red; her lips had the same sideways slant; her eyes were still green. I touched her twisted patchwork hand, and her skin was warm. Was it true that she was gone? Absolutely, irrevocably gone? It seemed impossible that it should be so." Part Three, Endings, Bones, pg. 355

"He didn't know, of course. And yet that was what he said, and I was soothed to hear it. For I knew what he meant. We all have our sorrows, and although the exact delineations, weight and dimensions of grief are different for everyone, the color of grief is common to us all. 'I know,' he said, because he was human, and therefore, in a way, he did."

Part Four, Beginnings, Snow, pg. 389

"I was engaged to write the story of Miss Winter's life, and I have done it. There is really nothing more I need to do in order to fulfill the terms of the contract. One copy of this document is to be deposited with Mr. Lomax, who will store it in a bank vault and then arrange for a large amount of money to be paid to me. Apparently he doesn't even have to check the pages I gave him are not blank." Part Four, Beginnings, The Thirteenth Tale, pg. 401



Topics for Discussion

Who is Margaret Lea? What is significant about her as a character? Why is it important that she was once a twin? Why is it important how she found out about her twin? How does this connect Margaret to Miss Winter?

Who is Miss Winter? What is significant about her in the beginning of the story? Why does Miss Winter want to tell her story now? Why has Miss Winter lied about her life for so long and why does she change her mind now? Why does Miss Winter choose Margaret to tell her story to?

What is the significance of *Jane Eyre* to the novel? How does *The Thirteenth Tale* compare to *Jane Eyre*? Compare and contrast the two novels. How many comparisons can you make? How does Margaret compare to Jane? How does Miss Winter compare?

What is the significance of the relationship between Charlie and Isabelle? What are the implications of their relationship when the twins are born? Is Charlie the father of the twins? How does this affect the story?

Are Emmeline and Adeline mentally retarded or are they products of their parents' neglect? Are they so close to each other because they are twins or because of their parents' neglect? When the twins are separated, why do they go into such a deep depression? Do they need to be together to function as Hester thought? When Adeline appeared to be listening to Hester's lessons, was it really the girl in the mist as Hester thought, or was it the unnamed girl pretending to be Adeline?

Why did John-the-dig think it was so important to hide the unnamed girl? How did this decision affect the girl's life? Why did she live like a ghost in the house? What would have happened if the villagers had learned about the unnamed girl? Why did the girl decide to take Adeline's identity after the fire?

Who did Miss Winter save from the fire? Who was the twin looking for all those years in the garden? Why did she think that person was in the earth? Why did Miss Winter abandon the baby? How did this affect Aurelius's life? Could Miss Winter have done anything different the night of the fire?