

The Time Keeper Study Guide

The Time Keeper by Mitch Albom

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Contents

The Time Keeper Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue: Chapter 1 and Part 1, Beginnings: Chapters 2-16.....	5
Part 2, Cave: Chapters 17-23.....	8
Part 3, The In-Between: Chapters 24-28 and Part 4, Falling: Chapters 29-32.....	10
Part 5, Earth: Chapters 33-39 and Part 6, City: Chapters 40-54.....	12
Part 7, Letting Go: Chapters 55-59, Part 8, New Year's Eve: Chapters 60-63 and Part 9, Stillness: Chapters 64-69.....	15
Part 10, Future: Chapters 70-79 and Epilogue: Chapters 80-81.....	17
Characters.....	19
Objects/Places.....	22
Themes.....	24
Style.....	26
Quotes.....	28
Topics for Discussion.....	29



Plot Summary

The Time Keeper is a novel by writer Mitch Albom. In this novel, Dor is obsessed with time. Dor's obsession takes up so much of his time that he misses out on some of the most important things in life. As Dor's wife lies dying, he turns to God to ask for more time. Instead, Dor is locked in a cave and forced to listen to man's obsession with time, an obsession begun by him. To return to his own life and time, Dor is then given the task of forcing an elderly man and a young girl to appreciate the time they have been given. The Time Keeper is a heartwarming novel that reminds readers to value every moment of every day.

Dor is a young man living in a time before the written word, before math, before calendars and clocks. However, Dor has found ways to measure time and he spends a great deal of his time pursuing this interest. Even as he marries and has three children, Dor continues to be obsessed with his time keeping inventions. One day, a childhood friend who has become a rich king, comes to Dor and tells him of his plan to build a tower to reach the heavens. This man wants to destroy the gods and become the ultimate ruler. This man wants Dor to help him with his odd inventions. Dor refuses. The man tells Dor he should leave the city because he will make him help if he does not.

Dor and his wife leave their children with Dor's parents and move away, creating a home in the middle of nowhere hours from the city. A visit from another exiled couple who are clearly suffering some strange disease causes Dor's wife to become ill. As she lies dying, Dor struggles with the loss and begins to wish he had more time. To gain more time, Dor runs back to the city and climbs the tower his childhood friend has made to demand time from God. Instead, Dor finds himself trapped in a cave where he is destined to listen to pleas from the people on earth as time becomes more and more of an obsession among modern man.

In New York, in modern times, there is a wealthy man named Victor Delamonte, who is dying of cancer and kidney failure. Victor does not want to die. In fact, he wants to live forever. For this reason, Victor arranges behind his wife's back to have his body frozen before death in hopes that he will be revived in some future time and cured.

In a suburb of New York lives Sarah Lemon, an awkward young girl who has suffered greatly in the aftermath of her parents' divorce. Sarah is very smart, but she has no friends. When a boy begins paying attention to Sarah, she believes he is in love. However, the boy turns out to be using Sarah for his own pleasures. Sarah is so devastated by this boy's cruel treatment of her that she decides to commit suicide.

Dor is sent back to earth and told that he can finish his story by helping two people understand the things he himself failed to understand. Dor is given the power to control time. Dor uses this power to learn all he can about the world in a short period of time. Dor then goes to New York where he meets both Victor and Sarah. On New Year's Eve when both Victor and Sarah have chosen to end their lives, Dor stops time and introduces them to one another in hopes that this meeting will help them.



Dor then takes both Sarah and Victor on a tour of their pasts and the future. Sarah and Victor come to the realization that their choices will only hurt those they love the most. For this reason, when time begins again, they both make the decision to continue living. They meet in the emergency room and Victor gives Sarah the money she needs to go to an Ivy League school to give her the education she will use to one day cure the same cancer from which he suffers. At the same time, Dor returns to his own time where he is able to hold his wife as she lies dying.



Prologue: Chapter 1 and Part 1, Beginnings: Chapters 2-16

Prologue: Chapter 1 and Part 1, Beginnings: Chapters 2-16 Summary

Chapter 1. A man sits in a cave alone, his beard very long. Voices from earth haunt his every moment. Sarah Lemon, a teenager on earth, is one of those voices. She is anxious about time as she prepares to meet a young man later that evening. Victor Delamonte is also one of those voices. Victor is a wealthy business man who is dying of cancer and kidney failure. The man listening is Father Time who is waiting until the moment when he is allowed to return to earth and finish what he started.

Chapter 2. Dor is a small boy running up a mountain with his friends, Alli and Nim. This is a time before man kept time, but Dor is beginning to count the moments.

Chapter 3. Sarah continues to get ready for her date while trying to ignore her mother. Victor Delamonte arrives home with his wife where he struggles with the emotional impact of learning his time is running out.

Chapter 4. Dor, Alli, and Nim begin to grow up. Nim becomes obsessed with power. Alli becomes the embodiment of desire. Dor becomes obsessed with counting time. Dor invents a crude sun dial and is visited by a strange, elderly man who breaks Dor's invention and disappears into thin air.

Chapter 5. Sarah continues to get ready, ignoring her mother's attempts to be a part of her plans. Victor becomes angry when his wife shows him a newly delivered wheelchair for his use.

Chapter 6. Dor and Alli marry and have three children. Dor and Alli live with his parents. They will never become rich because Dor spends all his time working on his odd inventions. Nim becomes a powerful king and begins building a tall tower like no one has ever seen.

Chapter 7. One day Nim comes and tells Dor that he plans to use the tower he is building to attack the gods and take over as king. Nim wants to rule from the clouds. Nim asks Dor to come to the tower and help him, but Dor refuses. Nim warns Dor to leave the city or his men will force him on to the tower.

Chapter 8. Sarah is meeting a boy she has met at the homeless shelter where she works. Victor calls a researcher for one of his companies and asks her to research immortality.



Chapter 9. The night after Nim's visit, Dor and Alli spend one last night on the hillside to watch the sun set. Alli is unhappy about having to leave the city. Dor is distracted from Alli by one of his time keeping instruments.

Chapter 10. Sarah is nervous. Again Sarah argues with her mother. Victor is given soup by his compassionate wife.

Chapter 11. Dor and Alli move to the high plains alone, leaving their children with Dor's parents. Dor continues his obsession with time, but Alli is unhappy without her children. Dor's father comes often with news of the city.

Chapter 12. One day a couple with odd blotches on their skin come to visit. They have been exiled from their home because the people are afraid they are ill. Dor is afraid as well and warns Alli not to touch them, but Alli cannot help but offer comfort to the woman.

Chapter 13. Within a few months, Alli becomes ill. Dor is worried, but does not want to leave her to get help.

Chapter 14. Sarah leaves to meet her boy, Ethan. Victor receives information from his researcher.

Chapter 15. Dor lies with his wife under the stars. Alli asks him to ask the gods for help. Dor prays all night, but in the morning Alli will not wake. Dor decides to go to the city for help. Dor runs the whole way and does not stop when he reaches the city, but goes to the tower and races to the top. As Dor runs up the tower, others follow him. Then the tower begins to break apart. People fall, their tongues twisted to speak new languages. Dor, however, makes it to the top and finds himself inside a cave.

Chapter 16. Time will stop in the future and a museum guard will see a man with a long beard dismantle and restore ancient clocks in a matter of seconds.

Prologue: Chapter 1 and Part 1, Beginnings: Chapters 2-16 Analysis

The beginning chapters introduce the three characters who will have the most impact on the plot of the novel. Dor is a man who lives in ancient times. Dor is the first man to begin counting time. He becomes obsessed with the counting of time even though those around him do not understand what he is doing or why. Dor's obsession becomes such that he allows some of the more precious moments of time to pass him by. Dor does not live in the moment nor does he does not appreciate each moment he has to live with his wife and children. This leads to a moment when Dor finds himself regretting all these lost moments.

Sarah is a very intelligent teenager who has been scarred by her parents' divorce. Sarah is unable to make friends. This causes Sarah to be somewhat isolated and



inexperienced in social interactions. She is awkward and shy making her the perfect target for young men who like to use and abuse young girls like Sarah. As the novel begins, Sarah is preparing for a date with a young man who is popular at their school and very good looking. This leaves the reader wondering if perhaps this young man might not be looking to hurt Sarah.

Victor is a rich man who has lived a full life. However, despite his advanced age, Victor is not ready to die. Unfortunately, Victor has cancer and is dying of kidney failure. Victor is determined not to die, however, and is desperately searching for a way to find more time.

All of these characters are struggling with time in one way or another. Each wants more time for one reason or another. It is this desire that creates a common thread and gives the reader some idea in which direction this plot will move.



Part 2, Cave: Chapters 17-23

Part 2, Cave: Chapters 17-23 Summary

Chapter 17. Dor is trapped in the cave. He cries for a long time. Then the same old man he once saw as a child comes and tells Dor that he created time and must now listen to man's obsession with time until earth meets heaven.

Chapter 18. Sarah is very smart, especially in science. Sarah is also a little overweight, a result of emotional eating after her parents' divorce. This combination has caused Sarah to become an outcast at school. Therefore, when Ethan began speaking to her on Saturdays at her job at a homeless shelter, she was overwhelmed with pleasure. Now they are to meet at a local convenience store.

Chapter 19. Victor Delamonte became an orphan at the age of nine when his father died in a fight in a tavern and his mother committed suicide. Victor was then sent by his grandmother to America from his native France to live with an uncle. As a teen, Victor bought two pinball machines then sold them eight months later. Victor continued to invest and then reinvest until he became wealthy, owning everything from gas stations to a string of banks. In 1965, at the age of forty, Victor met Grace in an elevator. They were married less than a year later. It was a happy marriage for more than thirty years, but in the last ten they have become more like roommates.

Chapter 20. As Dor sat trapped in the cave voices began to fill the space. Man asking for more.

Chapter 21. Sarah receives a text from Ethan telling her something has come up and he cannot meet her. Although upset, Sarah is polite in her response to the text.

Chapter 22. Victor has always been able to solve problems. However, his cancer will not be solved, so he has turned his focus to time. The researcher has sent him information on cryogenics. The idea of beating death, of being frozen and coming back to continue his life, appeals to Victor.

Chapter 23. The voices come from a pool created by Dor's tears. As the years pass and Dor listens to these requests for more time, he begins to hate the thing that once obsessed him.

Part 2, Cave: Chapters 17-23 Analysis

Dor is trapped in a cave where he is told that he must listen to man's growing obsession with time until the earth meets heaven. Dor is devastated by this because he knows his wife lies dying alone in the high plain. He cries and this creates a pool from which the voices of men and women from earth fill his cave, begging for more time. Dor soon



comes to resent this, to hate the one thing that once obsessed him. He is learning that time is precious and should be spent wisely.

Sarah has been hurt by Ethan, learning at the last moment that he will not be meeting her as planned. This is devastating, but she is already counting down the minutes until their next meeting, showing the reader that she is very lonely and that time has become something that only stands between her and the next meeting with Ethan.

Victor has decided that he cannot die. Victor wants to live longer. The reader learns that Victor tragically lost both his parents at a young age, an experience that has taught him not to hold on to anything too tightly. This seems to include his wife, Grace, with whom he has spent more than forty years of marriage. However, Victor has failed to share with Grace his desire to beat death. This suggests something of a problem later in the novel for Victor and Grace.



Part 3, The In-Between: Chapters 24-28 and Part 4, Falling: Chapters 29-32

Part 3, The In-Between: Chapters 24-28 and Part 4, Falling: Chapters 29-32 Summary

Chapter 24. When Sarah sees Ethan that Saturday at the shelter, she tries to play it cool, but cannot stop herself from asking what happened. Ethan avoids answering the question or committing to another date.

Chapter 25. Victor goes to visit a cryogenics facility. When Victor sees the couch for visitors and wooden box where flowers can be left, he decides he does not want visitors and he wants a cylinder of his own. Victor wants to wait to be reanimated alone.

Chapter 26. In Dor's cave there are a stalagmite and stalactite growing toward one another, but Dor does not notice. Instead, Dor spends his time carving pictures of important moments in his life.

Chapter 27. Lorraine, Sarah's mother, is worried about her daughter and wonders why they can no longer speak. Grace worries about Victor's emotional struggle with his terminal illness.

Chapter 28. Dor cannot see the people whose voices he hears, but from time to time the people can see Dor in their sleep. His image becomes the image of Father Time as created by great artists.

Chapter 29. The old man returns to Dor's cave. The old man turns the stalagmite and the stalactite into an hour glass and fills it with sand. On the hour glass are the images from the walls that depict Dor's life story. The man tells Dor that it is time for him to finish his story. He must choose two people among the thousands of voices and teach them what he has learned.

Chapter 30. Sarah dresses sexily to get Ethan's attention the following week at the shelter.

Chapter 31. Victor reviews the cryogenic process again.

Chapter 32. Dor falls through the pool back to earth.



Part 3, The In-Between: Chapters 24-28 and Part 4, Falling: Chapters 29-32 Analysis

Dor has spent thousands of years in his cave, long enough for a stalagmite and stalactite to touch one another, earth touching heaven. Now it is time for Dor to take the lessons he has learned and teach them to two souls on earth who need to learn the lesson as well. Dor does not know for sure what that lesson is, but he is willing to try if it means he will be allowed to die and be reunited with Allie.

As Dor falls to earth, Sarah continues to attempt to gain the interest of Ethan while Victor ignores his wife and makes plans to have his body frozen. Victor believes that by being frozen, he can awake one day when there is a cure for his disease and he will be able to continue his life. Victor is a sad, lonely man who prefers his own company to anyone else and tries not to form attachments. This comes from witnessing the profound impact his father's death had on his mother. However, Victor is so selfish in his need to outwit death that he does not see how his actions impact those around him, especially his wife.



Part 5, Earth: Chapters 33-39 and Part 6, City: Chapters 40-54

Part 5, Earth: Chapters 33-39 and Part 6, City: Chapters 40-54 Summary

Chapter 33. Lorraine remembers good times with Sarah when they got along. Grace fills her time with chores others could do, taking joy from providing healthy meals to her husband.

Chapter 34. Dor comes to life during a festival in a small Spanish town, frightening a young boy. Dor runs away and slowly discovers that the hourglass in his hands controls time. Dor can slow down time so that he might walk among man and explore modern machinery without notice.

Chapter 35. Sarah and Ethan finally get together at his uncle's food warehouse. Ethan provides vodka and they kiss. The more they drink, the more they kiss, but Sarah will not go further than kisses. On Monday, however, she wonders if she made a mistake. She decides to get Ethan a Christmas gift to deepen their connection.

Chapter 36. Dor slows time so that he can read every book in a library, explore museums, and discover the changes in modern time. Dor also cuts his own hair and beard.

Chapter 37. Victor meets with the director of the cryogenics facility and asks him to freeze Victor before he is legally dead. Victor has arranged for a doctor and coroner to sign off on his death before it happens in hopes that if he is frozen before death he will have a better chance of being revived.

Chapter 38. Dor continues his travels, learning as much about the world as he can. Finally he begins to swim across the ocean to America.

Chapter 39. Dor arrives in New York and is shocked by the number of people and the ambition of man displayed by the skyscrapers.

Chapter 40. Dor gets a job in a clock shop.

Chapter 41. Victor goes to a clock shop to buy an antique pocket watch that he plans to stop when he is frozen and start again when he awakens. Victor is helped by Dor.

Chapter 42. Sarah is concerned by the distance with which Ethan treats her the following Saturday.

Chapter 43. Victor is presented with a pocket watch from 1784 with a picture of a family on its case on his return to the clock shop.



Chapter 44. Sarah travels to New York to buy Ethan a gift.

Chapter 45. Victor meets with his lawyers to arrange a trust for Grace's car and to place the rest of his wealth in a trust that he will be able to access upon his reawakening. As they talk, Victor sees a man sitting on the ledge of a building.

Chapter 46. Sarah arrives at the clock shop and asks for a watch like the ones from the Men in Black movies. Dor presents her with the exact watch she wants.

Chapter 47. Dor watches the sun set each night and thinks of Alli.

Chapter 48. Victor is annoyed with his dialysis and plans to quit very soon to bring on his death. Dor watches over Victor and wonders why he would want more time.

Chapter 49. Sarah tries to give Ethan his gift at school, but chickens out.

Chapter 50. Dor meets Victor in his office to give him his watch.

Chapter 51. Sarah decides to have Ethan's watch engraved. She chooses, "Time flies with you." Dor is fascinated by this saying.

Chapter 52. Dor has reminded Victor of his desire for time to move backward shortly after his father's death. Later, Victor tells Grace he plans to stop the dialysis.

Chapter 53. Sarah calls Ethan and arranges to meet him Christmas night at a Dunkin Donuts.

Chapter 54. Grace and Lorraine wait. Soon everyone in the world will stop aging while one will start.

Part 5, Earth: Chapters 33-39 and Part 6, City: Chapters 40-54 Analysis

Dor comes to earth and finds himself in a place he does not understand. Dor spends a great deal of time learning about the modern world, but to the people of earth only a short time has passed because Dor can control time, slowing it down and speeding it up. When Dor has learned all he wants to know, he goes to New York where he quickly makes contact with two souls who asked him for more, or less, time, Victor and Sarah.

Victor has decided to have his body frozen so that he might be cured sometime in the future. Victor does not want Grace to know what he has chosen, however. Instead, Victor simply allows Grace to think he has decided to stop fighting by his decision to end the dialysis. In truth, however, Victor has decided to end the dialysis to cause his death to come quicker so that he can have a doctor and coroner declare him dead shortly before he would have died so that he can be frozen before his organs shut down. Victor wants to give himself all the possibility of surviving in the future that he can.



Sarah meets with Ethan and they make out. To the reader, it becomes clear that Ethan is only interested in Sarah for his own pleasure, but Sarah is in love. Sarah does not have much experience with relationships and therefore thinks a kiss is love. This leads her to buy Ethan a gift that she hopes will win his love, hinting to the reader that she does understand on some level that not all is right. It is clear to the reader, however, that Sarah is headed for trouble.



Part 7, Letting Go: Chapters 55-59, Part 8, New Year's Eve: Chapters 60-63 and Part 9, Stillness: Chapters 64-69

Part 7, Letting Go: Chapters 55-59, Part 8, New Year's Eve: Chapters 60-63 and Part 9, Stillness: Chapters 64-69 Summary

Chapter 55. Victor has become bedridden due to the side effects of ending the dialysis. Victor finds himself wanting to tell Grace his plan, but he does not.

Chapter 56. When Sarah meets Ethan to give him her present, he makes it clear after she confesses her love that he is not interested in her. He gives the watch back. Sarah is devastated.

Chapter 57. Dor comes to the realization that knowing time is not the same as understanding it.

Chapter 58. Victor convinces Grace to go to a gala they have traditionally attended to hand over a check to their charitable foundation.

Chapter 59. Sarah is depressed and spends hours in bed. Lorraine is worried, but Sarah will not talk to her about it. Sarah decides to contact Ethan through his Facebook page, but is shocked to discover he has written on the page that Sarah came on to him. The comments embarrass and shame Sarah.

Chapter 60. Grace dresses for the gala on New Year's Eve, but does not want to go. She reluctantly says goodbye to Victor and promises to be back soon. Victor feels guilty, but it does nothing to distract him from his plans.

Chapter 61. Lorraine dresses and prepares to go out with her group of friends. Lorraine is worried about Sarah and does not want to go, but she is obligated. When Lorraine is gone, Sarah goes to the garage.

Chapter 62. Dor watches over Victor as he prepares to be frozen and Sarah as she prepares to take her own life.

Chapter 63. Dor is frustrated that he cannot do anything to stop Victor and Sarah. He decides to slow time and take Sarah to Victor. Dor hopes that when they meet, they will learn from one another. Dor then takes Victor and Sarah into a room at the warehouse where Victor is to be frozen and he places both their hands on the hourglass as he stops time completely.



Chapter 64. Victor is shocked to wake without pain.

Chapter 65. Sarah is shocked to wake somewhere other than her mother's car.

Chapter 66. Victor thinks he might be between worlds. However, the girl draws him out and he realizes they are still in the cryogenics warehouse.

Chapter 67. Victor tells Sarah his story.

Chapter 68. Sarah tells Victor her story. Then they notice Dor.

Chapter 69. Dor is coughing. Victor and Sarah pepper Dor with questions. He tells them he has stopped time. Dor then tells them some of his story.

Part 7, Letting Go: Chapters 55-59, Part 8, New Year's Eve: Chapters 60-63 and Part 9, Stillness: Chapters 64-69 Analysis

Victor stops his dialysis and his body instantly begins to break down. Victor wants to die, but he wants to be declared dead before his actual death so that he can be frozen in as intact a condition as possible to improve his chances of being reanimated and cured of his illness. For this reason, Victor plans to be frozen on New Year's Eve. Victor continues to choose not to tell Grace out of fear of her protesting and causing a complication. Victor seems heartless, as though he does not care about Grace or spending any more time with her, but the reader can see in Victor's moments of weakness his desire to tell Grace the truth.

Sarah has been dumped by Ethan in a most ungraceful way. Ethan never really had any feelings for Sarah and he is still treating her with impartiality despite her conviction that she loves him and can make him love her with gifts. However, when Sarah discovers that Ethan has written about her on Facebook, quite inaccurately, and that his friends have answered in humiliating and shameful ways, she loses her desire to fight. Sarah makes the decision to commit suicide, as many teens in her position might do.

Dor is frustrated. He has finally learned the lesson the strange, elderly man has been trying to teach him. However, he does not know how to teach this lesson to Victor and Sarah. For this reason, Dor does the only thing he thinks he can, he brings them together. The reader, however, must wonder what this will lead to. While meeting a man running out of time might help a young girl ask for more time, will it be enough to help Sarah overcome her desire to die rather than face humiliation? The reader must also wonder if Victor will find any inspiration in Sarah's disregard for life.



Part 10, Future: Chapters 70-79 and Epilogue: Chapters 80-81

Part 10, Future: Chapters 70-79 and Epilogue: Chapters 80-81 Summary

Chapter 70. Dor opens the hourglass and pours out the future. Dor then takes Sarah and Victor inside the hourglass, which has grown into a large tunnel.

Chapter 71. Dor shows Ethan to Sarah in the immediate future, seducing another girl and talking about Sarah's death as though it means nothing. Dor then takes Sarah to the homeless shelter where she is missed by one of the homeless men. Finally, Dor takes Sarah to a car lot where her grieving mother is selling the car inside of which Sarah died. Then Dor shows Sarah a snippet of his own past in which he was drawing a picture of Alli's hair. Dor then tells Sarah there is a great deal more for her to do.

Chapter 72. It is Victor's turn to look at the future.

Chapter 73. Dor brings Victor to Grace visiting his corpse in the weeks after his death. Grace kicks the cylinder, clearly angry with Victor's choices.

Chapter 74. Dor takes Victor into the future where he discovers that he has been awakened. Dor wonders why Victor would want to live more than one lifetime.

Chapter 75. Victor has been awakened by a race of people who no longer feel emotion in their everyday lives. They have Victor in a tube so that they can view his memories and learn from them.

Chapter 76. Dor tells the rest of his story to Victor and Sarah. Then Dor collapses.

Chapter 77. Sarah and Victor take Dor to the clock shop where the elderly man who once imprisoned Dor works.

Chapter 78. The man replaces the grain of sand Dor removed from the hourglass to stop time.

Chapter 79. Dor returns to his own time and runs back to Alli. Dor lies with Alli as they both die.

Chapter 80. Sarah wakes in the car and manages to escape the garage. She is taken to the hospital where she meets Victor in a gurney beside her own. Victor also woke and gave his assistant a signal they arranged ahead of time to end the freezing.



Chapter 81. Years later, Sarah will be honored for finding a cure for the illness that ended Victor's life. Victor played a part in this by leaving in his will the money for Sarah to attend an Ivy League university.

Part 10, Future: Chapters 70-79 and Epilogue: Chapters 80-81 Analysis

Dor takes both Sarah and Victor into the future to show them the impact of their deaths on the people they love. Sarah is shocked to discover that an anonymous homeless man knows more about her than Ethan ever did. Victor is shocked by Grace's clear anger with him for his choices. Victor is further shocked by the fact that his reanimation does not go quite as he expected it to. This, added to the realities of Dor's story, convinces both Victor and Sarah to make different choices with the time they have been given.

The gist of the story is to show the reader how to appreciate the time they have been given and to stop obsessing about things they cannot control. Dor's story is touching and the reader is pleased when he is able to return home to be with his wife upon her death. Dor has clearly learned a lesson, as have Sarah and Victor. With the time allotted them, Sarah and Victor were able to make a difference in the world, to give more time to others. This, in a way, separates from the overall point of the story, but also shows the reader that time is important and there are great consequences to throwing it away.



Characters

Dor

Dor is a man who lives in ancient times before calendars, clocks, and the written word. However, this does not stop him from teaching himself to count with numbers yet to be invented and from creating instruments to count time. Dor becomes the inventor of time. This becomes an obsession for Dor and it begins to take him away from precious moments of which he should be aware.

Dor and his wife are sent into exile and Dor does not notice how unhappy his wife is without her children. In fact, it takes an illness for Dor to notice how precious time is and to begin to wish he had more time with his wife. When Dor climbs the Tower of Babel to ask God for more time, he is imprisoned in a cave and forced to watch the misery created by his obsession with time.

Dor is eventually released from his imprisonment and sent back to the world to convince two people — one who asks for more time and one who wants less — that time is precious. Dor comes to earth and learns all he can about the modern world. Dor then finds Victor and Sarah, a man planning to freeze himself for a second chance and a teen contemplating suicide. Dor manages to convince them of the importance of each moment in time. As a reward, Dor is allowed to rejoin his wife and die with her.

Alli

Alli is Dor's wife. Alli and Dor have been friends since childhood. Dor loves Alli passionately, but he allows himself to be distracted from her and their marriage by his obsession with time. When Alli becomes ill, Dor is drawn out of his obsession long enough to wish for more time. It is this catalyst that causes Dor to climb the Tower of Babel, an action that leads to his imprisonment in the cave as Father Time.

Nim

Nim is a childhood friend of Dor's who grew up to be a powerful king. Nim is the man behind the construction of the Tower of Babel. Nim wants to climb into the heavens and fight the gods for control. Nim believes he is strong enough to rule from the heavens. However, Nim's tower is destroyed. Only Dor makes it to the top.

Elderly Man

Dor sees an elderly man when he is young. The man tries to destroy Dor's first sundial. This sighting, however, does not frighten Dor away from his obsession with time. When Dor rises to the heavens in the Tower of Babel, this elderly man imprisons Dor in a cave



for thousands of years, forcing him to listen to man's growing obsession with time. In the end, it is the old man who sends Dor to teach the lesson he has learned to Victor and Sarah and this old man who returns Dor to his wife.

Victor Delamonte

Victor Delamonte is a wealthy business man living in New York. Victor was orphaned at the age of nine when his father died in a bar fight and his mother committed suicide. Victor came to America to live with an uncle. As a teen Victor began making investments and buying product. In time Victor came to own many businesses, including gas stations and banks. Victor, however, learned to never become too attached to anything. This philosophy has helped Victor in business. However, in his personal life it can be a burden since it causes him to discount the advice and emotions of his wife, Grace.

When, at the age of eighty-four, Victor learns that he is dying, he looks at the situation as he would anything in his business life. However, the problem of death refuses to be solved. For this reason, Victor decides to outsmart death by having himself frozen so that he might awaken when a cure is found for his particular disease. Victor chooses not to tell his wife because he knows she will object. Victor then arranges to be frozen before he is dead hoping that this will give better results when he is reanimated. However, with Dor and Sarah's help, Victor changes his mind at the last minute.

Grace Delamonte

Grace is Victor's wife. Grace is a widow when she meets Victor at the age of thirty. They meet on an elevator and quickly fall in love, marrying less than a year later. Grace and Victor spend more than thirty happy years together. However, the final ten years become something less than happy due to the complications that often come into a long marriage. Grace remains completely devoted to Victor and when he becomes ill, she does all she can to help care for him. There is a great deal of love in this relationship despite Victor's attempts to pretend there is not.

Roger

Roger is Victor's personal assistant and most trusted employee. When Victor makes his decision to be frozen, Roger is the only one completely aware of his plans. It is Roger Victor trusts with his plans and with the safety word he will say if he should change his mind. When Victor does change his mind, Roger gets him quickly to a hospital to treat symptoms related to his decision to stop dialysis.

Sarah Lemon

Sarah is a seventeen year old girl. Sarah is very smart, but she is also somewhat overweight. This combination causes Sarah to have no friends at school. Sarah's father



left the family when she was young and this, added to her lack of friends, leaves her vulnerable to young men who want to use and abuse her. This happens when Ethan, a popular boy at her school, takes advantage of her inexperience and tries to use her. In the end, Ethan humiliates Sarah by posting on his Facebook profile that he would never be interested in her. Sarah decides she would rather die than live with this humiliation. In the end, however, Dor and Victor convince her she has more to live for.

Lorraine Lemon

Lorraine is Sarah's mother. Lorraine is a divorcee who handled her divorce with all the grace she could, but has been unable to protect her daughter from all the fallout. Lorraine finds that she has little time to spend with her daughter, but she loves her daughter very much and worries about her. Lorraine and Sarah's relationship is something of a typical mother-teen daughter relationship.

Ethan

Ethan is the young boy on whom Sarah has a crush. Sarah gets to know Ethan when she begins working at a homeless shelter. Ethan's uncle owns a food warehouse business that makes deliveries to the homeless shelter. Every Saturday Sarah and Ethan speak during his deliveries. Sarah falls for Ethan, but Ethan is only using her for his own private pleasures. In the end, Ethan humiliates Sarah publicly on Facebook and she contemplates suicide as a result.



Objects/Places

Hourglass

When the earth meets heaven, a stalagmite reaches a stalactite and the elderly man turns it into an hourglass that he tells Dor holds all the time in the world. Dor uses it to control time, slowing it down and speeding it up. Dor also uses it to stop time in order to teach Sarah and Victor the lesson he has learned, that time is precious and not to be taken for granted.

Pocket Watch

Victor wants an antique pocket watch that he will stop upon his death and restart upon his reanimation as a symbol of his second chance on life. Dor finds Victor a watch that depicts a family on its case.

Men in Black Watch

Sarah buys a watch that is a replica of the one the characters wear in the movie Men in Black. Sarah plans to give this watch as a gift to Ethan.

Sad Song

Sarah downloads a sad song, End of the World by Skeeter Davis, to her phone that she heard while in New York to buy a gift for Ethan. Sarah listens to this song over and over as she prepares to commit suicide.

Facebook

Facebook is a social platform on the Internet. Sarah goes to Ethan's Facebook page to leave him a message and discovers that he has written a post in which he says that Sarah came on to him and he would never go there. Sarah is so humiliated by this post and its responses that she contemplates suicide.

Homeless Shelter

Sarah volunteers at a homeless shelter on weekends to make her more appealing on her college applications. This is where she becomes friendly with Ethan.



Clock Shop

Dor gets work at a clock shop in New York City. This is where Sarah and Victor meet Dor and he discovers that they are the souls he is meant to teach the lesson he has learned about time.

Cyronics Warehouse

Victor is transported to a cryonics warehouse on New Year's Eve when he is near death so that he might be frozen before death to ensure his ability to be reanimated at some point in the future.

Tower of Babel

Nim builds a large tower that he hopes to use to rid the heavens of the gods and replace them as ultimate king. Dor climbs this tower to heaven even as the tower breaks apart under him, twisting the tongues of those below, creating many new languages.

New York City

Victor lives in New York and Sarah lives in a suburb near the city.



Themes

More Time

This novel is about time. People look at time in many different ways. Many people feel there is not enough time for many reasons. Victor feels that he does not have enough time to live the life he wants to live. Dor feels that he needs more time with his wife, Alli, as she lies dying. Lorraine feels that there had never been enough time to spend the quality moments with her daughter that she wanted.

As Dor sits in his cave, he listens to people asking for more time. Time to work more, time to spend with their families, time to do all the things that they want to do. It is frustrating for Dor, who once was obsessed with time and spent many precious hours trying to measure time. Dor must learn the lesson that each moment is precious and people must pay attention to it when it is there, not regret and ask for more when the time is up.

More time is a theme of the novel because it is something that many of the characters in the novel have in common. Victor, especially, wants more time and he takes this wish to a dramatic place. Victor wants to live more than one lifetime. Dor, who has been forced to do just that without a desire to do so, cannot understand Victor's obsession. In the end, however, Dor is able to show Victor that his desire is selfish and useless, that he cannot have all that he wants and he should enjoy the moments he does have.

Less Time

Less time is also a theme of the novel because of Sarah. Sarah Lemon is a teenager who wants nothing more than to be loved. Sarah's father left when she was a young girl, abandoning the family and leaving Sarah without that important guidance that a young girl needs from her father to figure out how to behave in relationships with other young men. For this reason, Sarah falls in love quickly and unwisely with the first young man to show interest in her.

Sarah's love for Ethan is a product of her loneliness and her feeling of being an outsider among her peer group. Sarah is naive and inexperienced, which allows Ethan to take advantage of her. In the end, Sarah's heart is broken and she is publicly humiliated. For this reason, Sarah does not want any more time. Sarah wants to end her life.

Dor shows Sarah what her death will do to the people who love her. Sarah realizes how her death will impact others and also realizes that she has a full life left to live. For this reason, Sarah decides to live and to take more time. Sarah is offered something different from what Victor is given, but she also learns that she must appreciate every moment she is given.



Family

Family is an important theme of this novel for multiple reasons. In Victor's life, it is family that has caused him to be a man who does not make attachments, a man who prefers to be alone. When Victor's parents left him an orphan, he learned that it only hurts to be attached to someone and to lose them. For this reason, Victor becomes a ruthless business man and makes few friends. All Victor has when he learns he is dying are his wife and a business that will more than likely not last long after his death.

For Sarah, family is her mother. Sarah's father left the family when she was young, leaving her somewhat scarred and desperate for a man's attentions. This leaves Sarah in a vulnerable position that will ultimately lead to her contemplating suicide.

Dor's family consists of his parents, his wife, and his three children. The only thing that really matters to Dor, however, are his experiments with time. Dor forgets to pay attention to the important moments in time, to the love of his wife and children. Instead, Dor focuses on his useless devices that, in the end, cannot give him the one thing he truly wants: more time with his wife.

Family is an important theme in this book because it is the one thing that all three main characters take for granted and the one thing that they learn in the end is the only thing that truly matters.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person omniscient point of view with authorial voice. The point of view of this novel uses multiple characters as the narrating character, including the main characters Victor, Sarah, and Dor. However, the novel is told in such a way that the reader feels as though the author is speaking directly to the reader about these characters rather than telling the story through their eyes.

The point of view of this novel allows the reader to hear and see the emotions of the main characters as well as their actions. At the same time, the author tells the reader many things that the characters cannot know, such as things that will take place in a future point and things that have happened that none of the characters were present to observe. This gives the novel a sense of being told a story, as though it is a story being told over a camp fire. There is a great deal of intimacy between the reader and the writer that is included along with the sense of concern the reader has for the main characters.

Setting

The novel begins in ancient Biblical times and moves into modern times. The novel begins in a small city where a man named Dor has become obsessed with learning and creating devices to measure time. The novel then jumps into modern times, moving the reader into the weeks before and after Christmas 2012. This change in time is not confusing because the author handles it with a clear separation of character and plot.

The setting of this novel is both historical and ordinary. The setting of Dor's life is fascinating as the author takes the reader back to a time that is described in the Bible. It is like being present in the time before time itself began. The author then jumps into the future, setting the novel in a time with which the modern reader is clearly familiar. This jump highlights the differences in these two times and it brings the reader to a place that is familiar and comfortable, making the message intended in the plot that much more dramatic when the two worlds collide.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in simple, educated English. Since the novel is intended for an audience of many ages, the language remains simple even as the reader can see in the word choices that there is a great deal of thought and intelligence behind the story line. It is the simplicity of the language that makes the complexity of the plot easy to follow for the reader.



The language of the novel works well with the plot because it contains little that might lead to confusion. There are no foreign phrases or slang in the novel. The language is simplistic enough for the reader to believe a man who knows nothing of written language could express his thoughts with clarity while a man who is wealthy and clearly successful in his life could express himself with the same language. The language is authentic to all its characters and to the purpose of the plot.

Structure

The novel is divided into a prologue, epilogue and ten parts. There are eighty-one chapters, each one dramatically short. The novel is told mostly in narration, though there are a few scenes that include well written dialogue. The novel is told in a linear time line, though Dor's story, which is set in an early time, is told alongside the modern story of Victor and Sarah.

The novel contains three main plots. The first main plot follows Dor as he lives a life consumed with time until his wife is dying and he needs more time. Another plot tells the story of Victor, a rich man who is dying but who is unwilling to allow death to win. The last of the three plots follows Sarah, a teen who is publicly humiliated by a boy and considers committing suicide. All these plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

"A man sits alone in a cave." Chapter 1, pg. 8

"Sarah finds time in a drawer." Chapter 5, pg. 17

"Sarah speaks to time. 'Go slower,' she says." Chapter 14, pg. 35

"Victor had always been able to see a problem, find its weak spot, and crack it open." Chapter 22, pg. 55

"If he wanted a moment's indulgence, she would have that ready, too." Chapter 33, pg. 81

"Sometimes, when you are not getting the love you want, giving makes you think you will." Chapter 42, pg. 103

"Even after the funeral, young Victor wondered if his father might return one day, magically, as if all this—the priest, the weeping family, the wooden casket—was just some phase you went through when adults had accidents." Chapter 52, pg. 122

"It would not be long now." Chapter 58, pg. 135

"Dor screamed in frustration." Chapter 63, pg. 148

"When we are most alone is when we embrace another's loneliness." Chapter 70, pg. 169

"Victor looked at Dor, who was barely conscious, and realized he had been wrong about who he was, but he had been wrong about so many things, even about the pocket watch, which Dor had chosen not for its antique value but for the painted reminder of a family—father, mother, child—hoping Victor would realize what he had with Grace before it was too late." Chapter 78, pg. 189

"This is a story about the meaning of time, and it begins long ago, but it ends years from now, in a crowded ballroom, where a respected research doctor is applauded by a crowd." Chapter 81, pg. 196



Topics for Discussion

Who is Dor? In what time period does he live? Why is he obsessed with time? Why does he invent so many things to help him keep track of time? What is exceptional about these inventions? Why? Why does an elderly man appear to Dor and try to stop him from making these inventions? Why does Dor not heed this man's warnings?

Who is Victor? What happened to his parents? How has that impacted his life? Who is Grace? What is Victor's relationship like with Grace? For what reason? What is Victor's obsession? How does it compare to Dor's obsession with time? Why does Victor not want to die? What is Victor afraid of in death? How does he try to beat death?

Who is Sarah? Why does she think Ethan likes her? Why does she not realize he is using her? Why does Sarah continually hope that she and Ethan can go out? Why does Sarah become convinced that Ethan loves her? Does he? Why does Ethan go out with Sarah if he does not like her? Why does Sarah not see the warning signs?

Who is Alli? Why is she unhappy when she and Dor must leave their home? Why do they leave their family? Their children? Why does Alli not listen when Dor warns her to stay away from a sickly couple who comes to visit? What happens as a result of Alli's compassion? How is this ironic? Why does Dor not immediately go for help for Alli? Why does he go for help later?

What is the Tower of Babel? Why is Nim building it? Why does Nim want Dor to help him with his tower? Why does Dor refuse? Why does Nim tell Dor to leave town? Why does Dor listen? What happens when Dor climbs the tower? Why is Dor the only man who is allowed to climb the tower? What happens when Dor reaches the top?

What is cryogenics? Why does Victor turn to this as a solution to the problem of dying? What will it do for him? At what cost? What does Victor expect to find when he is reanimated? What does Dor show Victor that he is destined for in the future? What does Victor think of this future? How does it compare with his expectations? How does this influence Victor's decision to give up what little time he has left?

What lesson does the old man want Dor to learn? What lesson does Dor attempt to teach Victor and Sarah? What does Dor do to teach this lesson? How does Sarah feel when Dor shows her the immediate future? How does Victor react to seeing his future? How does Victor feel when he sees his wife visit his frozen body? How does Dor's attempt to teach this lesson change Victor and Sarah? How does it change the world?