

Time's Arrow Study Guide

Time's Arrow by Martin Amis

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Time's Arrow Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1: What Comes Around Goes Around.....	4
Chapter 2: You Have to be Cruel to be Kind.....	6
Chapter 3: Because I Am A Healer, Everything I Do Heals.....	10
Chapter 4: You Do What You Do Best, Not What's Best To Do.....	13
Chapter 5: Here There Is No Why.....	15
Chapter 6: Multiply Zero By Zero And You Still Get Zero.....	17
Chapter 7: She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not.....	19
Chapter 8: Because Ducks Are Fat.....	21
Characters.....	22
Objects/Places.....	25
Themes.....	26
Style.....	28
Quotes.....	29
Topics for Discussion.....	31

Plot Summary

The narrator of the story is an entity who lives inside a man named Tod Friendly. He is a bystander and cannot control what Tod says or does in any way. The narrator sees Tod's life progressing backwards—from death to birth. He comes into consciousness with Tod's death and learns to translate reverse speech. Most life events confuse him because he sees them occurring backwards. He sees Tod getting stronger and more virile as he recovers and grows noticeably younger.

Tod "starts" a long-term relationship with a woman named Irene, which commences with her leaving him for good. Again, the narrator is trying to rationalize the reverse events in the tumultuous relationship. He works as a doctor and his actions to help people are viewed as hurtful by the narrator because people come to him well and leave sick and in pain. Tod seems to be a tortured man; he has nightmares about doctors and babies. He has a sordid past that he is running from. The narrator has an intuitive grasp of this and also knows that life can't be altered because suicide is not possible.

Tod's name changes to John Young. John is living in New York and is tipped off by Nicholas Kreditor that the authorities are aware of him, so he changes his identity to Tod. John's life gets better while he is still living quietly in the country. He is a popular doctor and has many friends. He is a womanizer and has many girlfriends, including Irene. The narrator is very disturbed by John's work at the hospital. He works traumatic cases which, when viewed in reverse, are interpreted by the narrator as John hurting people.

John leaves for Europe to fight in the war although in actuality, he is fleeing Europe to travel to America. His name changes to Hamilton de Souza while he lives in Portugal for a short time. He then travels through Europe to Italy, and finally back to Germany where his name is Odilo Unverdorben.

Odilo works at Auschwitz, where the narrator sees his work as magical. In his view, they are bringing thousands of people back to life. He works closely with a character named "Uncle Pepi" in the experimentation rooms. His wife Herta, does not approve of his work. Their child, Eva dies shortly after birth.

Odilo works at "lesser" facilities which "process" unwanted people like the insane and blind. The narrator is upset by the decline in "great work." His relationship with Herta grows more intense as they move towards their marriage, then fades as they get to know each other. Odilo then is back at medical school, where he meets Herta. He moves home with his family and becomes a child. The narrator is upset knowing his life will end at Odilo's birth.



Chapter 1: What Comes Around Goes Around

Chapter 1: What Comes Around Goes Around Summary

First, there was a dark sleep. The narrator awakened to the sight of doctors all around him. He was completely paralyzed for several minutes, then noticed that he could move his eyes. The doctors seemed disinterested and distracted, as if they were thinking about something else. He suddenly remembered that he hated doctors. Strength started to return to his body and he could move again. Then time passed and orderlies carried him on a stretcher out of the hospital and put him on the ground. They shocked him and he thought one of them kissed him. Then more black and he was back in his house feeling strangely. He walked in the door backwards and remembered his name was Tod T. Friendly. No, that's wasn't completely true. It was his name, but yet not really him. He was not Tod, merely a voice in Tod's head that had no real control. He was helpless-a bystander, along for the ride. He felt Tod's emotions, but couldn't read Tod's thoughts or control Tod's body. He did sense what Tod sensed. He, them...he and Tod, lived in "Main Street U.S.A.", regular America. Things were normal, but yet they weren't. People spoke backwards, but he soon learned to reverse the words to make more sense. He also knew that at one point Tod spoke a second language, because he dreamt of it sometimes. He noticed himself getting younger, taller, and stronger. He saw everyone else getting younger too. They never spoke of it. Why didn't they find it strange? The narrator was truly powerless, and wondered if everyone else had a force, like him, inside them. He and Tod read the paper every day. They read tabloids bottom to top, ending with the large caption. He could not control where Tod's eyes went. The garbage man delivered the tabloids in the morning. The days proceeded: October 2, October 1, September 30... He sensed that this was backwards. He realized that he was intelligent. He knew facts, figures, grammar, jokes, among other things. He noticed that Tod didn't like looking at himself, in fact; he had learned to shave by touch. Then Tod had some bad dreams and had a look at himself in the mirror by mistake. The reflected face was very old and had eyes full of fear.

The toilet somehow seemed to be the key to substance. Tod sat on it with the awful smell, pulled the handle, then suddenly there was pain as it went up inside him. Then the pain receded slowly. He would then wind the toilet paper back on the wall, pull up his pants, and walk away. The narrator was disgusted by the act of eating as well. Eating off dirty dishes, picking scraps from the garbage, chewing, and spitting food on the plate was both strange and bewildering. Then he would push the food back into larger pieces with his utensils and return the food to the store, where they would pay him.



Ronald Reagan was in office and Tod was happy about it. He noticed he was constantly feeling better and the constant neck and ankle pain was diminishing. He was able to move around more quickly. He also started looking at women more in the supermarket. He had started touching himself at home; as well as drinking and smoking. Tod even started playing tennis. It was very painful the first game, but he became much better with practice. It was a very strange game; the ball jumped out of the net and into play until the server put it in his pocket. The other players seemed to like Tod, though. He also played cards with old people.

Still, Tod wasn't a kind person, and it constantly bothered the narrator. Tod had a habit of taking toys from children on the street, although but they still smiled afterward. He then would take the toys to the store for money. He also took money, usually a big bill, from the church offering plate on Sunday. He made letters from the fire and put them in the mailbox every few days.

Chapter 1: What Comes Around Goes Around Analysis

There is an entity in Tod's head that is reliving his life backwards as he narrates the story through Tod's eyes. This slowly becomes evident in the initial pages of chapter one. There is a basic awareness of the workings of life, but the entity is struggling to make sense of backwards reality. Tod starts out at death and begins getting younger. Basic tasks seem bizarre when viewed in reverse: eating and going to the bathroom are both strange and disgusting when performed backwards. Tod is an old man and gives candy to children; the narrator sees this as taking candy from children. He also sees Tod stealing money from the offering plate at church. It is usually one of the larger bills. In reality, Tod is trying to ease the guilt of his past life, but the narrator can't see this as he continues to see it in reverse.



Chapter 2: You Have to be Cruel to be Kind

Chapter 2: You Have to be Cruel to be Kind Summary

There was a new house, followed by a new job and a car. Tod and he were at the hospital when the paramedics suddenly drove them to an accident scene. A policeman put Tod in a vehicle. There were people staring. Suddenly, Tod stomped his foot on the brake and the car lurched off of the fire hydrant it had been perched on and went backwards down the street. Later, a man was telling Tod his "driving days were over." He had started driving more since then, however. Strangely, the car had five reverse gears and one forward gear (marked "R"). Tod always looked where he came from, instead of where he was going, when he drove. It seemed dangerous, but it worked. They drove often to the old house, but it was always empty.

He heard someone named Irene on the phone, talking to Tod. She was saying goodbye; she knew he was running from something and had changed his name. Then Tod said, "Yes," and hung-up the phone, only to listen to it ring for a few moments before it stopped. The narrator hoped things with this Irene person would get better. Tod was routinely finding love letters in the trash and putting them in a drawer.

Tod went to a party and put on a white coat. Then he started working as a doctor. Things got busier; he was in the city now. Medical books and prescription pads accumulated in the house. Tod took a medical certificate from the trash and put it on the wall. He woke up sick after drinking tea; then he took a lot of pills to feel better. The narrator was very squeamish about medical practices, but Tod wasn't in the least. He tried to avert his eyes, but they were really Tod's eyes after all, so he couldn't. Memories filtered through dreams: a knife blade healed a cut finger; a father slapped a child to stop the crying.

Irene called a lot. The narrator thought it was good they were getting to know each other. Irene said that although she was sad and lonely, she didn't blame Tod much. She said that she didn't know why she loved him, but she did. She also said that love was strange. Irene had contemplated suicide, but the narrator realized that wasn't an option. He intuitively knew that life was a ride, and there was no getting off; once you're here, you're here to stay. Tod had started masturbating much more. He was lonely and had more strange dreams.

Tod worked at Associated Medical Services, AMS, in gerontology and dealt with a lot of people older than he was. He would take prescriptions from them, work them over, and then ask introductory questions. They usually didn't look happy as they left. The narrator liked Tod and his standing as a doctor; he felt important. They were also feeling much better physically; he didn't understand why Tod didn't seem to appreciate this. Just a few months ago, it was an effort just to cross the room and going to the bathroom could



take an hour. Didn't Tod remember this? He also got spare body parts from the trash; like hair, teeth, and fingernails.

Tod did more disturbing things when he visited the city. He took money and drugs from hookers and bums on the street, then brought them back to the pharmacy for use. He saw so-called crisis centers that actually caused crisis. Women hid there from men who would eventually save them. Their cuts and bruises got progressively worse until a man showed up to take them back and instantly heal them with his hands. Some of the women were raped in order to be made better. The narrator also didn't understand why Tod never seemed to like pimps. He saw Tod rubbing dirt on bleeding girls, and it was always the pimp who arrived later and fixed them up with his fists. Then the pimp gave her money and sent her away.

Tod was visited by mothers with babies in the middle of the night. The mothers would pay him with antibiotics while Tod checked over their babies. It was very upsetting, they almost always left worse off than when they came in, usually kicking and screaming. The moms always left crying, too. The narrator surmised it was because the mothers were worried about the coming time when their babies would disappear. The children did get smaller and smaller and seemed to cry more and more. A mother would take them to the hospital, to the cold room with the forceps. "Two go in, but only one comes out." He saw how upset the mothers were after what he called, "The long goodbye to babies."

Irene still called, but she seemed to be angry most of the time. He didn't know if it was something Tod had said or done. Tod had been looking at more women. The narrator liked it, even though Tod didn't always look where he wanted him to look. He enjoyed having some things in common with Tod.

He felt that Tod was wasting his life. There were new love letters to Irene. Tod would take them from a trash bag to read. He found a crushed photograph and straightened it in his fist. He began muttering at night the same word, "shtib." Soon the narrator figured out what it meant. One night Tod prepared the ashtray with butts and ash. Soon Irene arrived. The narrator was shocked to see her walk forward towards the house. She was crying and swearing at Tod. Then she took off her clothes and looked at him. "Bad joke," he said. They talked, had sex and went to a movie. Irene cried at the beginning of the film. People kept giving Tod money throughout the evening. He ended up with \$31 extra by the beginning of the night. The narrator was upset because he was in love with Irene, but felt Tod was too "cool" for that. He knew that someday Tod would have a family. He still wondered where the babies went. Tod was having a recurring dream. It was about a person in a white coat with babies around. The narrator thought it was a premonition.

Tod worked in the garden and cried because of its disrepair. The narrator thought creation was easy, because most things destroyed quickly in forward motion were instantly "created" in reverse. Tod seemed to have an opinion about all races, classes, and careers. The narrator saw a Japanese student at AMS who actually read right to left, beginning to end. This stood out in contrast to normal life where water rose, smoke descended, fire created. He noticed that people said goodbye when they left and then



felt bad for things they hadn't done yet. He saw so-called garbage men litter the parks in the morning. The narrator coined the phrase, "vomitorium" to describe the act of eating. Tod and a date had been at a restaurant where they just talked and spat piles of food on their plates.

Tod was also spending less time on the toilet. The narrator wanted him to be excited about life, but he wasn't. They were dreaming more about babies. Things seemed upsetting and pointless to the narrator, no matter what they did, things always seemed to get worse. Irene still made regular visits, but Tod had started seeing someone else. Dating had become more routine and more worrisome. It always started with Tod paying the waiter just before he caught the eye of a woman walking towards him. She would walk up to Tod and a fight would ensue. Then they would go home to have sex. He noticed that some male/female conversations actually made more sense backwards. After sex, it was always the same. The women, except for Irene, never slept over. The attraction then became less and less until it faded away completely. Soon they didn't seem to know Tod at all; they would pretend they didn't recognize him.

Tod did understand fashion. He had worn flared pants for years when no one else was wearing them. Suddenly, everyone had caught on. Short skirts came into fashion as well. For some reason, cell phones disappeared from everyday life. There was also going to be a war, but not a very big one. The cities changed. More industry came; it seemed that everybody had a job. Gas cost less. Everything seemed better. Tod loved being part of a crowd. This way he could lead while still being anonymous. He protested the Vietnam War, but didn't really care about it. He knew there was a big war coming, set to start in exactly 25 years. Everyone knew about it somehow. Tod still had his dreams. They caused him to fix things in the middle of the night: a broken chair, a cracked mirror, a dented refrigerator.

Irene told Tod that he had no soul and that hurt the narrator. He had no real power over Tod, but if he could have somehow, he would have made him be faithful to Irene. The narrator believed in, "one man, one woman." He wished he could say, "Tod may be two-timing, but I'm true to you. I am constant. I am true." Irene asked Tod about his past. She said that she would forgive him if he would just tell her his secret. He always replied, "You don't want to know." He also told her not to trust doctors. Tod was more confident now, more virile and proud of his body. He was handsome, and proud of it. He also was meeting many of his girlfriends at work. They pretended not to know him, then he flirted, asked his roster of questions, which put them off, and they finally left.

Tod retrieved a letter from the fire every year from a man named Reverend Nicholas Kreditor. It said that it hoped he was well and that the weather was good in New York. The weather seemed to always be good there. Tod would put the letter on the mat by the door, and it would be gone in the morning. Then Tod started finding brochures to remote locations in the trash. A letter from Nicholas Kreditor described New York weather as "getting better." Then suddenly, everything changed. Tod began selling furniture and destroying the house. He worked on the plumbing and then the faucets didn't work. The narrator didn't understand and felt cheated that all of his comforts were gone. They were suddenly without money. No one seemed to recognize them. Tod met



with a realtor and seemed happy. The narrator didn't see how he could sell the place after all of the damage he caused.

Abruptly, Tod was demoted at AMS. He was no longer a doctor but he worked the garbage detail. No one knew him at work anymore. The narrator wondered, if they were being punished for some reason. He also wondered why his body was getting better.

They took a train and Tod kept saying his name over and over, as if trying to remember who he was. He was nervous and the narrator realized that they were going to the place in the brochures where the weather was always good-New York. He knew that Tod was moving towards his secret and he would find out about it soon.

Chapter 2: You Have to be Cruel to be Kind Analysis

Tod's longtime girlfriend Irene finally leaves him for good after finding out he is on the run after changing his name. This confuses the narrator, because he sees this final argument as the start of the relationship that will, from his point of view, last for years. During this time of many arguments with Irene, he says "shtib" a lot, which is "bitch" in reverse. He relives the final days with Irene backwards and perceives it as the relationship slowly getting better. The narrator also scoffs at Irene's notion of suicide because he knows intuitively that he is living backwards and his life will end at birth. Since it has already happened and he is just reliving events, this cannot be stopped or changed in anyway. Therefore suicide is not possible.

Tod has his retirement party and, from the narrator's point of view, returns to work. Tod is angry about retiring; he takes enough pills to get sick and throws his medical certificate in the trash. He also throws his old love letters away; again, the narrator interprets this as Tod picking letters from the trash.

Simple actions are fascinating when viewed backwards. The act of eating becomes an act of spitting up food and putting it on the plate. Whenever Tod goes out to buy anything, he is given money. Tod wearing flared pants years after they went out of fashion make it seem to the narrator as if he started a trend. People follow him. When Tod buys his new house and starts renovating it, the narrator sees the already-updated house being systematically dismantled.

The chapter ends with Tod being "demoted" because he has just started his job at AMS. People become distant because they have just met him and haven't gotten to know him yet. He leaves for New York and is actually fleeing to the small town to escape the authorities.



Chapter 3: Because I Am A Healer, Everything I Do Heals

Chapter 3: Because I Am A Healer, Everything I Do Heals Summary

Tod looked where he was going for a change after getting off the train and started bumping into everyone. They got a new apartment; the name on the door said, "John Young." Tod went to a basement apartment where a young man gave him papers and a lot of money. The man laughed when Tod said, "Tod Friendly." Tod spoke, "You were expecting me. My name is John Young," and that was that. Tod had become a new man. He went back to the apartment and clothes flew at him from all directions as he put them on. John, or Tod, knelt at the toilet as it filled with awfulness and then they were at bar after bar. The first few bars wouldn't serve them, but the later ones did. They started feeling better. After the last place, the cab was waiting and took them to the Imperial Hotel without being told where to go.

They were met by Reverend Nicholas Kreditor himself. He was a large, good looking man who reminded the narrator of a politician. John was saying that he just wanted to help people and the Reverend guaranteed he could do so. There was talk of a "clean break" and possible problems with the Immigration and Naturalization Service revoking citizenship. Then they shook hands and John left. Back at home, the phone rang; it was the Reverend again. He spoke of stormy weather coming and nothing more.

John changed for work. He put on a short-sleeved bib and a white smock. He went to work at another hospital. It was dirty and they worked on covered victims. This distressed the narrator. A man in a head bandage came in. John found a hole in his head and stuck a nail in it while the man was screaming. There were many other men just waiting to be hurt. Some looked familiar, like people John had worked with.

All of a sudden, John was popular again. He had friends and colleagues. His sex life got better. He dated many nurses from work. Most encounters happened in the second floor laundry room. The narrator learned to recognize that when a woman wanted sex, she would usually start by calling Tod an asshole.

Then a strange thing happened. John was walking down the street when he started taking off his pants and running. He sprinted up a flight of stairs into an apartment to see a woman in bed being hit by a furious-looking man. Surprisingly John then took off the rest of his clothes and climbed into bed with her. He looked the man straight in the face and the man left. The woman screamed, "My husband!" John knew these people from work. Soon, they would forget what happened.

John seemed to be most elated when he zoomed through the pediatric ward, taking toys and candy from drugged children. John was dedicated at work and he gave the



others strength. He encouraged the other younger doctors constantly, but they always felt worse after his pep talks for some reason. The narrator didn't understand John's sense of humor either. John was laughing with a colleague as they rubbed glass on some teenage boys and covered them with blood.

In a moment of lucidity when he was destroying a child's hips, the narrator saw the child crawl forward and the mother reading a book from front to back before things reverting back to "normal." He felt that the world would never make sense. The hospital was always grey, regardless of the season. The narrator felt that the hospital was an "atrocious-producing situation." No one there seemed to be able to stop what they were doing. He hated what John did for a living. He was glad he didn't control the hands, but wanted his own body, if only just to ask for forgiveness. The narrator thought again of suicide, but knew it just wasn't possible. He already knew when his life would end.

Another card arrived from the Reverend. The weather in New York was okay, they both knew what that meant. Nuclear war seemed to be the talk again after years of disarmament. JFK was introduced to a "hero's welcome" at Dallas. Time passed. There weren't as many cars on the road and those that were, had fins. Doctors had more power, but many of their "modern" conveniences had disappeared. Exercise became much more rare. Everyone smoked and drank. Then some men came in and replaced the color TV with a black and white one. He saw that people forgot how things used to be. The stars in the night sky could be seen in the city for the first time. John liked to look at them, as did the narrator.

John seemed to be treating Irene better. She admitted she had given up a child at a young age. John didn't mind women with husbands but did mind ones with children. He began some of his affairs by operating at home. He would take miniature babies from the toilet, and implant them in his girlfriends before sending them home. The affair usually started a couple months later.

Then Irene finally stopped loving John. She just visited twice a week to clean. She would leave money and go away. The narrator wondered why she paid to clean while he paid to work at the hospital. He felt tired and weary of being human.

Chapter 3: Because I Am A Healer, Everything I Do Heals Analysis

The chapter begins with John being warned by his "friend" Nicholas Kreditor that the authorities are close to discovering his Nazi identity. John leaves his city life, which upsets the narrator, and he becomes Tod Friendly, with the help of a fake ID.

John's work at an inner-city hospital seems gruesome to the narrator. Pulling a nail out of an accident victim and treating them, in reverse order, seems sadistic. Also, the simple act of cleaning up bloody victims and pulling out shards of glass is equally disturbing. John's affairs confuse the narrator; he gives women abortions at home. The affair, when John is caught in bed, make him look brave to the narrator.



Irene initially meets John while working as his housekeeper. This develops into a relationship, which goes on for many years, through John's name change to Tod. After the initial infatuation phase of the relationship, John doesn't treat Irene well, but she stays around for many years despite this.



Chapter 4: You Do What You Do Best, Not What's Best To Do

Chapter 4: You Do What You Do Best, Not What's Best To Do Summary

In 1948, John Young sailed for Europe. He was off to war. The ship was crowded, but everyone seemed to be happy to be on the way to fight. John was happy too. He was 31 years old, and had a decent tan. He also worked out a lot. John had met with Reverend Kreditor in anticipation of the voyage. He stood often at the stern of the ship, watching the ocean churn in the direction they were headed. The narrator was still feeling traumatized by the hospital experience. He remembered it all. He didn't get to escape like John.

They docked in Lisbon and their name changed again, to Hamilton de Souza. They had a good life almost immediately upon arriving, living with three maids and a gardener, in a villa north of Redondo. A lawyer he knew as "the Agent" visited twice a month. The narrator looked wistfully at the servants and thought of Irene.

Hamilton collected gold with the help of "the Agent." He paid an old Spanish man, who then would hand over the ingots to him. Hamilton pretended he was not a doctor. He was obsessed with his body and was preparing it for war. "The Agent" visited again and spoke of the Japanese surrender. Then the staff grew cold and distant. Soon Hamilton was traveling again, on a small ship towards Salerno, Italy. He had his gold underneath his shirt.

They lodged in a boarding house. Hamilton dropped back into his habit of taking coins from church. People on the street were in disarray; there were naked kids and women in sacks wandering around aimlessly. They went to the Vatican to meet with Father Duryea. He took their passport and the Portuguese Visa. Hamilton didn't talk much anymore. He put together the pieces of a photo. Some instinct told the narrator it was his wife.

Duryea also gave him other papers. Hamilton was renamed Odilo Unverdorben. He set out to the north, through Bologna. Guides met him and guided him through the small towns. He stayed at farms in seclusion, where men would give him gold in reward for staying. The narrator felt that the world was going to start making sense very quickly.

Chapter 4: You Do What You Do Best, Not What's Best To Do Analysis

Odilo flees Germany after the collapse of the Nazis. He bribes men to help him get to Italy. There, a priest assists him with proper papers to get to Lisbon, including a



temporary name change to Hamilton de Souza. He lives there comfortably, with servants, for three years, then sails for the United States under another assumed name, John Young.

The narrator is upset because he doesn't get to "escape" his bad American hospital experience like John does. This is because it hasn't yet happened for John. He has no memory of it. The narrator sees that his stress goes away and thinks it is because he is happily thinking of going to war like most others on the voyage. Of course, most of the people are happy because they are fleeing war-ravaged Europe and going to America. This is a good example of the narrator's backwards point of view giving him the exact opposite meaning of what is really happening, or what has happened.

The Nazis had a network of sympathizers, used after the war to get Nazis to safe zones where they could disappear. There were highly-stationed individuals who would help them establish new identities and gain passage to America and South America. Sometimes, they were assisted financially as well.



Chapter 5: Here There Is No Why

Chapter 5: Here There Is No Why Summary

Odilo traveled across the countryside on a motorcycle, which he found in a ditch. He finally arrived at Birkenau, Auschwitz Central. He could speak German almost at once. The place was dirty, with human feces everywhere. The camp staff seemed nervous, no one spoke for the first couple weeks at the officer's hall. Then the camp started filling up. Odilo's German was surprisingly accurate. Soon, his colleagues became more talkative and there was an ever-present sweet smell in the air.

Then a man arrived to change the world "for the better." The narrator was in awe of him. He was a doctor known as "Uncle Pepi." He created "sprinklerrooms" from burning debris in mere seconds as if by magic. Everyone was excited to do their jobs. The narrator felt that the group had a "preternatural", or supernatural, purpose. They created people, usually Jews, from the elements, "with gas, with electricity, with shit, with fire." The ovens were opened to show the patients stacked neatly inside. Then they were taken to the gas room where Odilo personally withdrew the Zyklon B pellets and gave them to the pharmacist. Odilo worked in the sprinklerroom, and gave possessions, such as gold, hair, clothes, and jewelry, to the Jews before they came to life. The narrator always got excited watching for the first signs of life. Then the patients dressed and were given a "shower" that was not real, just meant to calm. The guards were kind; angry Jews were given extra jewelry to calm them down.

Most of the women and children were "processed" with gas and fire. "The men work[ed] for their freedom." Those men were initially very thin and tipped their heads back towards the sky strangely. The narrator thought that they were visualizing their families, waiting for them to assume human form so they could soon meet. It was touching when the "newly created" were gathered together by the Auschwitz workers. The strong feelings were evident as they all went back home on the trains.

The narrator thought of it all as God's work; even the ovens were named in reference to heaven. He thought that Odilo's German was good but not natural, probably an after-effect from a lifetime of speaking English. They spoke to Odilo's wife, Herta. Her letters were written in German and came from the trash, not the fire. Odilo spent considerable time erasing them until he had blank sheets of paper. There was talk of a baby named Eva. Odilo reassured Herta that there would be more.

"Uncle Pepi" was seemingly omnipotent and meticulously clean. He made everyone else around him feel dirty. The group felt lucky to assist "Uncle Pepi." In the Block 20 medical room, Odilo used Phenol injections to bring dead patients back to life.

Herta visited at a time when over 10,000 Hungarian Jews were being held at Auschwitz. Odilo was ashamed of the look of the place. Herta told him that he was a stranger and she didn't know him anymore. They now moved corpses by the ox-cart load for



reprocessing. "Uncle Pepi" was sent boxes of bones for building people. Herta visited again. She said that she didn't approve of Odilo's workplace. She called him names and spoke of the baby, Eva. She even questioned the legality of his work.

Then the war starting going better and Odilo had fewer people to fix. He had more free time on his hands. Winter turned to autumn. "Pepi" was working in a new lab where he carefully built humans out of spare parts; he even had a box of eyes on his desk. They would work together on a body, then the smiling patient would get up and go back to work. In fact, nearly all of Pepi's experiments were 100% successful.

The narrator knew that the baby was coming. He took time off for the funeral. Then little Eva was better, weak, but improving. He missed his family, but he slept with whores on occasion. He went there for gratitude, but that wasn't his main goal. He said, "I love the human body and all living things." The great work was ending and it upset him. The camp had already lost two sprinklerooms. He held a child down for Pepi, and she didn't thank him afterwards. Then Pepi was gone and it was Odilo's lab again. He extracted gasoline, kerosene, and even air itself from people's chests. They didn't say thanks,, either after he took his foot off their chest.

Chapter 5: Here There Is No Why Analysis

Odilo holds an important position at the Auschwitz death camp. He works hand-in-hand with "Uncle Pepi", who is probably a characterization of the real Josef Mengele, one of the most sadistic of the Nazi "doctors." Odilo both performs, and directly assists in amputations, injections, and other torturous experiments. He also personally drops the Zyklon B pellets to activate the gas chambers themselves. In this horrific light, the reverse nature of the narrator's perspective becomes most pronounced in this chapter. The only way something as ghastly as Auschwitz can be viewed in a positive light is to look at it backwards.

It is very disturbing to the reader, knowing what was really happening, to hear the narrator's naïve, reversed feelings. He was in awe of the magic, life-giving qualities of the camp. In actuality, Odilo's own wife leaves him over his death camp activities. The narrator sees this as making sacrifices for the good of all. He simply can't understand why his wife can't see the good that is happening.



Chapter 6: Multiply Zero By Zero And You Still Get Zero

Chapter 6: Multiply Zero By Zero And You Still Get Zero Summary

The narrator was happy that Odilo was finally looking out for himself and lessening his great sacrifice for humanity. He suffered terribly the last few days at Auschwitz and then settled back in to married life. He was 25 years old and was shocked to realize that Auschwitz was a secret to everyone else. Herta was pregnant and they discussed baby names endlessly. She relaxed by unsewing baby clothes while he took apart baby furniture. He worked a five-month assignment with the Waffen Secret Service, and accomplished a lot on the eastern front, but soon realized that nothing would ever compare to Auschwitz. It was the high point of his life and the narrator felt he was lucky to have been there.

Odilo was impotent with Herta. His unit ferried Jews away from the ghettos and back to their villages. They still needed fixing, but it was much less efficient than Auschwitz. Usually a batch of bodies was taken from a mass grave and invigorated with carbon monoxide in the back of a van. Everyone in his unit dressed as doctors and waited until they heard thumping in the van before opening the doors to let the Jews out. Then they were led, naked, to a warehouse to be fed and clothed. He also saw Treblinka as it was being shut down. The rail station was a fake, a prop to reassure the polish Jews from Warsaw and elsewhere. The railway clock always read 13:27.

Odilo's work seemed to take all his energy; he had nothing left for Herta. Her stomach shrunk, and they didn't talk about the baby anymore. They only made love once, just before his new posting in Austria. Schless-Hartheim was a weak attempt to recreate the magic of Auschwitz. Ashes were received from victim's families and reanimated in the ovens. It didn't work right, however. The patients always came out with some defect: blindness, deformity, or madness. He was upset with this, but didn't know if he necessarily agreed with the camp saying that, "there is such a thing as life that is unworthy of life." Nobody seemed to want the people that were created.

Herta visited when she could. She became more annoyed with Odilo's impotence. She had heard rumors of the camp's work, which he discounted. The camp celebrated its five thousandth patient, but the narrator was depressed. He felt he was unable to handle the failure of what had become of his life. He was still there, but Odilo was to be on his own.



Chapter 6: Multiply Zero By Zero And You Still Get Zero Analysis

Odilo's career follows the Nazi "learning curve" of efficient killing. This slippery slope of declining morality started with the "mercy killing" of undesirables, the crippled, blind, and deformed "for their own good." It soon progressed to small-scale killings of undesirable Jews and later, the large-scale murders at Auschwitz. Odilo somehow finds a way to justify what he is doing-the work hardens him to the point where he becomes impotent and withdrawn from his new wife. He later tries to redeem himself by living a somewhat moral life in America.

From the narrator's viewpoint, the decline in "people-making" skills is disturbing and he is depressed by the regressive events, up to the point where the new people "aren't right", because it is actually mental patients who are being killed at this point. The narrator finds the thought of such "great" work being lost to society almost unbearable. He is shocked that no one Odilo talks to knows about the work being done at Auschwitz; again, it hasn't happened yet.



Chapter 7: She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not

Chapter 7: She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not Summary

The war ended and all the past blurred and went away for Odilo. He seemed to have forgotten everything. The narrator assumed they must have lost the war. Odilo seemed innocent and he had stopped worrying. The man in the white coat, who appeared often in his dreams, was replaced by a woman. The narrator believed the woman was his mother. "Odilo is, it turns out, innocent, emotional, popular, and stupid."

He and Herta had passionate sex and they still wanted a baby. They had an apartment in Munich. Odilo was working as a doctor. The narrator had grown to love Herta almost as much as Odilo. She was only eighteen. Their lovemaking became more tender as the wedding neared. Odilo went out with more friends, sometimes to help Jews. He didn't mind; he actually liked Jews.

Then the wedding came and went; they switched rings and she moved back to her parent's house. He was living in a boarding house at medical school. The narrator wondered where Odilo's family was. Herta was working as a secretary at the school; they still kissed secretly in the stairway. They walked together often. The narrator felt his manhood and status diminishing, however. Herta granted him an occasional touch, and then he would spend hours begging afterwards. He saw her working and realized that he would never have her again.

The narrator was happy in seeing good things happen for the Jews. They finally began to get their pick of the best jobs. The racial laws were repealed. Jews were allowed to keep pets and buy cheese. They even were allowed to have relations with Aryans. Then even their curfew was lifted. Odilo still said, "I love you," to Herta, but she never responded in kind. She was sixteen and he felt lucky to get a small kiss. The narrator thought of using violence to heal and mend her. He found Odilo unexceptional in his youth. He always blended in; he was a follower, especially in a crowd.

On *Kristallnacht*, Odilo played and frolicked with everyone else to assist the Jews. He gave Herta back the lock of hair he had always kept. Then she didn't talk to him at all. She waved goodbye once and then ignored him completely. He looked for her, but it seemed that Odilo didn't care at all, as if he was already over her. He was laughing the next day in school, and then it was back to medicine. Soon, he met his mother in the hospital. He figured they would probably move in together soon. Her name was Margaret and she kept saying, "Where am I?"



Chapter 7: She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not Analysis

To some extent, Odilo allows himself to be sucked into the Nazi party so that he can be with the "popular" crowd, which they were at the time. Before that, he is an innocent. He meets his sweetheart, Herta, and they get married. He is studying to be a doctor. Odilo again goes along with the crowd on *Kristallnacht*. As usual, the narrator confuses this with Odilo "helping" the Jews. In reality, Odilo is caught up in the propaganda fervor about the Jews having the best jobs and property, which leads to the increasingly prohibitive Jewish Laws.

The narrator sees Odilo as becoming innocent "after" the war. This is correct in that he hadn't committed any of the killing acts, which become his specialty once he joins the German SS regiment. Odilo is still naïve, he thinks of his love, Herta. To the narrator, it must seem that Odilo is becoming a much less important person.



Chapter 8: Because Ducks Are Fat

Chapter 8: Because Ducks Are Fat Summary

When Odilo was thirteen, he visited Auschwitz. They were camping and he walked back to the railway tracks. He saw the old barracks and some other industrial structures, which were actually owned by the Polish. The narrator thought it was very sad. He had wanted to see Auschwitz again, but all the old magic had been erased by time's passage.

Then he was three and the narrator realized that he would soon be born. He lived with his family at the edge of Solingen, known for its surgical instruments. The narrator knew a secret, that it was also the birthplace of Adolf Eichmann, but no one else knew it. Odilo's mother worked as a nurse. His father was sick, but could still take Odilo's pain away with a swat of his hand. Odilo talked baby talk to his mother. She held him a lot and he didn't mind her kissing him openly. Soon, the narrator knew he would enter her and she would scream in pain. Then she would scream that he was gone. Father looked wasted, as if he wasn't eating enough. He could not forgive his father for getting ready to have intercourse with his mother and kill him once and for all. Odilo dreamed only of colors and noises, and then he closed his eyes.

Chapter 8: Because Ducks Are Fat Analysis

As Odilo grows more childlike, the narrator has a lifetime of wisdom and circumstance to fall back on. He looks around and realizes he knows many things that people around him do not know. He remembers the war because he has already lived through it. For everyone else, it hasn't happened yet. He is sad because he realizes exactly when he will die. He knows his father will kill him by inseminating his mother. Since he has his intellect up to the point of physical birth, when Odilo closes his eyes, is it possible he keeps that intellect, and the capability of thought, nine more months until actual conception?



Characters

Odilo Unverdorben / Hamilton de Souza / John Young / Tod Friendly

Odilo is a popular boy who gets along by following the crowd. He is in medical school when he falls in love with his sweetheart, Herta and gets married. He is enlisted in the German Waffen SS and his medical practice is perverted by experimenting on Jews. He has a daughter who dies soon after childbirth. His marriage soon suffers as a result of his "work," of which Herta disapproves. Odilo moves from small-scale mobile killing operations, to Schloss Hartheim, where he works exclusively on social deviants and deformed people. He then progresses to Auschwitz, where he soon works under "Uncle Pepi." His marriage grows more strained; his wife finally visits him at the camp, says she doesn't know him anymore, and leaves him for good. When the Soviets move in and the camp is dismantled, Odilo flees, eventually ending up in Lisbon where he lives for a time as Hamilton de Souza. He then changes his name again to John Young and sets sail for America on a steamer ship.

Once in America, John works for a hospital for several years before it is discovered that he is an ex-Nazi. He then changes his name again to Tod Friendly. Tod seems to be trying to redeem himself after his actions in Germany. He repeatedly states he just wants to live a life for good and get his past life behind him. But he is a crass womanizer, who cannot open up emotionally to another person. He has a relationship with Irene for several years, he does not tell her about his past but she eventually finds out he is on the run and leaves him. He works hard as a doctor to try and forget his past. He eventually retires and dies alone in the hospital.

The Narrator

The entity inside of Tod/John/Hamilton/Odilo's head is basically an innocent. He is naïve and has an understanding of many aspects of life, but cannot grasp many others due to the strangeness of experiencing life backwards and being unable to control anything. He develops an affection bordering on love for both of Tod's major love interests, Irene and Herta, and is very hurt by the way Tod lives his life.

The narrator rationalizes many aspects of what it sees as "normal" life and gets one thing completely backwards; John / Tod is seen as bad by helping people in later life, since events run backwards, and Odilo is seen as doing "saintly" work. The narrator is calm at times and near crazy at others by being forced to view and live in Tod/John/Hamilton/Odilo's world. He grasps that things are backwards, for example he learns understand reverse speech, but fails to interpret the meaning of backwards actions. This gives him an inverse view of cause and effect for most of the story. For example, Odilo isn't helping Jews at Auchwitz, and John/Tod isn't hurting patients as a doctor in New York, as the narrator believes.



"Uncle Pepi" (Josef Mengele)

Uncle Pepi is a larger-than-life character with a godlike ability to recreate people from ashes, bodies, and even "spare parts." Odilo works for him at Auschwitz. This "hero", from the narrator's point of view, is probably based on the real life Josef Mengele who was nicknamed "Beppo."

Reverend Nicholas Kreditor

Kreditor is John Young's American accomplice. A handsome but large man, he looks somewhat like a politician. Kreditor lives in New York and sends simple, coded messages to John / Tod about any problems with his secret Nazi status. The code they use is that the weather in New York is sunny, meaning that there are no problems. When someone becomes wise to John Young, Kreditor makes the phone call that predicts stormy weather. That event predicates John changing his name for the last time, to Tod Friendly. Throughout Tod's waning years, Kreditor sends the "sunny" postcards.

Adolf Eichmann

Although only briefly mentioned in the novel for sharing Odilo's hometown of Solingen, Eichmann played a very large part in the real "final solution" for the Jews in which Odilo's character participated. As "Transportation Administrator" for the German Reich, he was responsible for the efficiency in which millions of Jews were moved to concentration camps from 1942-1944. He was acknowledged as saying he was responsible for sending five million Jews to their deaths.

Irene

Irene is John/Tod's longtime girlfriend. She comes to work as housekeeper for John shortly after his arrival in New York. Later, a relationship begins which lasts through many years, John's identity change to Tod, and his subsequent relocation. Irene displays low self esteem in that she stays long after John/Tod starts treating her badly and cheating on her. Irene has a daughter who she gave up at birth. The narrator loves her and wishes Tod would treat her better. Irene leaves Tod after realizing he is on the run and has changed his name for that reason.

Herta

Herta is Odilo's sweetheart and wife. She meets Odilo while working as secretary at Odilo's medical school. Herta gives birth to a daughter, Eva, who dies shortly after birth. She grows more distant from her husband after finding out about his sinister line of

"work" and she questions its legality. Herta finally leaves Odilo for good after visiting him at Auschwitz while thousands of Jews are being "processed."



Objects/Places

AMS

Associated Medical Services

Lisbon

Port city of Portugal, in extreme Eastern Europe.

Auschwitz

One of the most notorious German death camps that was transitioned from a concentration camp in 1942 to accomplish the German genocidal "final solution" to liquidate, murder, Jewish and other undesirable populations. Auschwitz was one of the most "efficient" in this task, responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths.

Sprinklerroom

German euphemism for the fake shower rooms, which were secret gas chambers used to murder people, hundreds at a time. One of the "efficient" methods worked out for the Nazi "final solution" to the Jewish "problem."

Zyklon B

Chemical pellet used in German gas chambers. When dropped into liquid, it produces deadly gas which was used to kill Jews.

Schless-Hartheim

Early German death camp prototype that pre-dated the "final solution." Early experimental victims were unwanted people from mental hospitals.

Kristallnacht

A German government-caused, anti-Jewish riot that resulted in the destruction of several Jewish neighborhoods and many deaths.



Themes

Reverse Life

The perception of events occurring backwards by the entity in Tod/John/Odilo's head throughout the novel brings both innocence and a convoluted perception to everything.

While the narrator is able to translate simple happenings, like backwards speech, and has a rough feeling that things are in reverse, becoming excited when people walk towards him or read front-to-back, he still evaluates most events as "value reversed" based on seeing the cause and effect working backwards and misinterpreting what he sees.

The biggest example of this is his life on the German death squads. He imagines, in the most awful real situation where Odilo is directly involved in the deaths and torture of thousands of people, that it is a great, even saintly thing that Odilo, is doing. His reverse view gives him the impression that he is creating life, instead of destroying it. His view tells him that he is taking corpses and magically reanimating them, finally to clothe them and reunite them with their families. He sees patients actually reassembled from parts. The reader realizes that the more in awe the entity is, the more awful the real event.

The entity also sees relationships in a reverse view. These would generally follow the short-term pattern: "final" breakup, big argument, sex, and talking. For a long-term overview, a relationship starts almost absurdly fast, with an argument leading very rapidly to sex. But in the end stages, the relationship appears to slowly fade away, just as in forward motion, the people are tentatively getting to know each other. This is very frustrating for the narrator, who doesn't understand how shouting leads to sex and is very hurt when long term partners "pretend" to not know who he is because they don't know him yet.

Passing through History

"Time's Arrow" links many key events into the tapestry of the story. The story begins with the narrator's birth, Tod's death, sometime in the late 1980s or early 1990s, and progresses in reverse from there. His actions are placed in context with the happenings going on around him in terms of history and technology, especially since he is a doctor. The regression in technology is considered puzzling by the narrator: the disappearance of cell phones, swapping the color TV for a black and white one, and non-disposable syringes, among other things.

Tod's character seems to enjoy the Reagan years. Then it is the Vietnam era, which is considered a "small" war. There are flared pants and short skirts. Tod protests the war because it is the popular thing to do at the time. People know World War II was coming; they talk about it because it has already happened. Gas is cheap and good manufacturing jobs are plentiful. These are the "boom" days after World War II that last



up until the early seventies. Cars then become less plentiful and sport fins in the late fifties /early sixties. The cold war gets colder with greater worries about nuclear attack; this is immediately in the shadow of WWII, with the rise of the Soviet Union. With fewer cars, there is less pollution; Tod/John can finally see the night sky from New York City. Then World War II occurs. Before the war is the rise of Nazism in Germany and the passing of the Jewish Codes.

Self Determination and Redemption

As a helpless passenger, the narrator has no real control over his destiny. The only control he has was in rationalizing events and wishing for how things should be. He does have a sense that events are backwards, but he still can not interpret this into proper cause and effect. He intuitively knows that his course is unalterable. He recognizes that suicide is impossible since his fate is effectively sealed. He eventually realizes that he will die at birth and nothing can stop that.

The torment of seeing Tod/John's good actions, which appear bad to him, and the ebb of Odilo's killing, which he sees as life-creating, give him the ability to eventually "tune out" and let life take its course.

Odilo, on the other hand does have a choice. The decisions he makes as a relatively young man haunt him the rest of his life. John / Tod, the latter reincarnations of Odilo, have a desire to forget the past. More than that, there seems to be some effort at redemption later in life. There are nightmares about Auschwitz. John/Tod does seem to make a concerted effort to turn his life around and do something for the benefit of society. John tells Kreditor that he just wants to be able to do some good. He donates heavily to the church, gives candy to children, and helps prostitutes and the homeless.



Style

Point of View

Time's Arrow is told in the first person. The point of view is taken from an entity, the narrator, who resides in the main character's head and lives his life backwards. Real events are often misinterpreted and misconstrued to mean exactly the opposite of what is really happening. Other life actions take on different, and sometimes important, meanings when viewed in reverse. For instance, the narrator appreciates Tod/John getting younger because he remembers how bad it was being older, slower, and in pain. Tod/John does not have this hindsight.

Setting

The main setting of the story follows the main character backwards from "small town America" to New York City, where John/Tod works as a doctor. He then travels across the ocean to Lisbon and Italy, before returning to Germany as Odilo. The life of a doctor trying to deal with his past while working in the medical field, takes up the second half of the character's life. The first half of his life deals with his work at a Nazi death camp as a "doctor" in that tragic setting.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of the story is given through the backwards words and actions of Tod/John/Hamilton/Odilo as witnessed by the narrator. The reader sees the narrator trying to make sense of Tod's twisted life. While the narrator understands many things that are going on, actually appreciating more than his host Tod/John/Hamilton/Odilo at many points in the story, he also misunderstands many events in his backwards context. In this perspective, good often seems bad and visa versa.

Structure

"Time's Arrow" is divided into eight chapters, and an afterword. Chapter one details the death and late-life events of Tod Friendly. Chapter two describes the day-to-day life of Tod, as well as the narrator in his head. Tod Friendly becomes John Young in chapter three. John sails for Europe, lives in Portugal as Hamilton de Souza, and travels back to the war in Germany in chapter four as Odilo Unverdorben. Odilo's work at Auschwitz is detailed in chapter five, and his early military work and marriage were explained in chapter six. Chapter seven describes Odilo's early relationship with his wife, Herta. Odilo finally is born, and the narrator "dies", in chapter eight.



Quotes

"People are free then, then, they are generally free, then are they? Well they don't look free. Tipping, staggering, with croaked or choking voices, blundering backward along lines seemingly already crossed, already mapped Oh, the disgusted look on women's faces as they step backward through a doorway, out of the rain. Never watching where they are going, the people move through something prearranged, armed with lies. They're always looking forward to going places they've just come back from, or regretting doing things they haven't yet done. They say hello when they mean goodbye." Chapter 2, pgs. 42-43

"Then our eyes will be firmly caught and firmly held by a bent female figure hurrying across the room toward us. Fair, dark, slim, plump, elegant, not so elegant. Then she spins round. It's a big power moment when they spin round, with the flourish of challenge, and we get to see what they look like. Speaking personally, for now, it's always cause for alarm, when they spin round-whatever they look like. Because here's the weird thing about these relationships with women: you get everything on the first date. Well every now and then it's the second date, but generally it's the first. Instant invasion. Instant invasion and lordship. And hour or two here, max is all it takes. Oh mercy. You can go up to a woman on a street corner and start yelling at her and ten minutes later she's back at your place doing God knows what." Chapter 2, pgs. 50-51

"He is traveling toward his secret. Parasite or passenger, I am traveling there with him. It will be bad. It will be bad, and not intelligible. But I will know one thing about it (and at least the certainty brings comfort): I will know how bad the secret is. I will know the nature of the offense. Already I know this. I know that it is to do with trash and shit, and that it is wrong in time." Chapter 2, pg. 63

"Auschwitz lay around me, miles and miles of it, like a somersaulted Vatican. Human life was all ripped and torn. But I was one now, fused for a preternatural purpose." Chapter 5, pg. 116

"We needed magic, to resolve significance from what surrounded us, which scarcely permitted contemplation: we needed someone godlike-someone who could turn this world around. And in due course he came...." Chapter 5, pg. 119

"Enlightenment was urged on me the day I saw the old Jew float to the surface of the deep latrine, how he splashed and struggled into life, and was hoisted out by the jubilant guards, his clothes cleansed by the mire. Then they put his beard back on." Chapter 5, pg. 124

"One morning of diagonal sleet and frozen puddles we were unloading some Jewish families at a rude hamlet on the River Bug. It was the usual sequence: we'd picked up this batch from the mass grave, in the woods, and stood waiting by the van on the approach road while the carbon monoxide went about its work...We then drove them closer to town, where one of our men was readying the piles of clothes. Out they all



filed. Among them was a mother and a baby, both naked, naturally, for now. The baby was weeping in a determined, muscular, long-haul rhythm, probably from earache. Its mother already looked exasperated by these cries. Indeed she looked stunned-stopped dead in the face. For a moment I wondered if she'd fully come round from the carbon monoxide. I was concerned." Chapter 6, pg. 141

"Even the streets are like a dorm these days, with much peer group pressure and unpredictably intense scrutiny, adolescent, unpleasant, sexual, but sexually obscure or half-formed, and made up of ridiculous postures no one is allowed to laugh at. Laugh at these ridiculous postures, and everybody will want to kill you. How fortunate than I am unkillable. Unkillable, but not immortal. What happened to our manhood?" Chapter 7, pg. 154

"A parallel pleasure and comfort, for me at any rate, was to watch the Jews. The people I had helped to dream down from the heavens. And I was inspired by the size of the contribution they were clearly destined to make. It would all work out. Wisely cautions at first-awed, probably by sheer numbers (because they were coming in, now, from all over the shop, from Canada, from Palestine)-German society duly broadened itself to let the newcomers in. Their brisk assimilation, and their steady success, caused some harsh words to be spoken. The Jews were walking into all the plum jobs, in the medical profession especially, which infuriated Odilo and his friends, and which, to be frank, even worried me." Chapter 7, pg. 155

Topics for Discussion

Point out several backwards events that have opposite meanings backwards and forwards.

Why did Odilo's wife leave him?

Name and differentiate the prison/death camps that Odilo worked in.

Explain the meaning of the "stormy / sunny weather" postcards from Reverend Kreditor.

How did the narrator know he couldn't commit suicide?

Why did the narrator feel proud to have worked at Auschwitz?

What reasons did John Young have to change his name to Tod Friendly?

What aspects of everyday life did the narrator find hardest to understand in his backwards frame of reference?