

To Say Nothing of the Dog, or, How We Found the Bishop's Bird Stump at Last Study Guide

To Say Nothing of the Dog, or, How We Found the Bishop's Bird Stump at Last by Connie Willis

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Plot Summary

Ned Henry and Verity Kindle are time travelers, working for Oxford's history research department. The program has been commandeered by wealthy heiress Lady Schrapnell, who is employing historians to research Coventry cathedral, which was bombed by the Nazis in 1940, never rebuilt, and had its site turned into a mini-mall in 2018. She has begun a project to reconstruct the cathedral on Oxford grounds. Verity Brown, while on assignment in 1888 to investigate the life of Lady Schrapnell's ancestor Tossie Mering, rescues a cat from drowning, and set in motion a series of events that threatens to unravel the course of history. Ned Henry is sent back in time with the cat, to try to restore the timeline. At stake is the outcome of World War II and all of its subsequent effects on the future.

While investigating the disappearance of the bishop's bird stump from the Coventry cathedral on the night of the raid in 1940, Ned Henry is pulled from the field with symptoms of time lag. At the same time, Verity Brown arrives from 1888, bearing with her a cat named Princess Arjumand, which she rescued from drowning in the river. As the cat is the first thing historians have ever been able to bring forward in time, there is instant worry about the impact its disappearance has made on the time continuum. Verity returns to her posting, where she is trying to recover pages of Lady Schrapnell's ancestor Tossie's diary. Ned Henry is given the task of returning the cat.

Ned arrives in 1888 and quickly befriends a young man named Terence, who has fallen in love with Tossie Mering. The two rent a boat and row down the river Thames accompanied by Terence's bulldog Cyril, for a rendezvous Terence has arranged with Tossie. On the way, they rescue Terence's mentor, Professor Peddick from drowning. After a brief meeting with Tossie and Verity Brown, who is undercover as a cousin of the Merings, the three men row to the Mering's estate, Muching's End.

At Muching's End, they return Tossie's missing cat. Verity tells Ned that Tossie is supposed to marry a man whose name begins with a 'C,' but when Terence and Tossie announce their engagement, Verity worries that her rescue of the cat has upset the timeline. Tossie's diary, the parts of which that are not damaged, is being studied in the future. It reveals that Tossie is soon to have an experience that changes her life and leads her into the arms of her husband. The event is to take place in Coventry cathedral and somehow involve the bishop's bird stump.

Ned and Verity use a fake séance to maneuver the Merings into visiting the cathedral on the fated day, but nothing remarkable seems to happen, except that Tossie has a dispute with the family's butler Baine over the artistic merits of the bird stump.

The timeline seems to have been disrupted. Tossie will not marry Mr. 'C,' leave for America, and found the movie studio which begins Lady Schrapnell's family empire. Terence will not marry Maud Peddick and have a son who flies an important bombing mission during World War II. Also, it appears the disappearance of the bird stump from

the cathedral on the night of the raid in 1940 has somehow compromised the Allied decryption program Ultra.

But, after a confrontation in the garden at Muching's End, Tossie elopes with the butler Baine, who turns out to be the mysterious Mr. 'C.' The timeline repairs itself, and it is left to Ned and Verity to put the pieces of the mystery together and recover the bird stump in time for the consecration of the new cathedral.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

Ned Henry, a time traveler for Oxford, is scouring Coventry in late 1940, looking for information about what became of the bishop's bird stump after the Coventry cathedral was bombed by the Nazis. Verity Brown is working undercover in 1888, trying to recover pages from the diary of Lady Scrapnell's ancestor, Tossie Mering.

Chapter 1

Ned Henry, Carruthers and a new time travel recruit are rooting through the rubble of recently bombed Coventry Cathedral looking for the Bishop's bird stump. A dog named is sniffing through the wreckage while Carruthers tries to convince the verger that they are from the Auxiliary Fire Service. Carruthers finally appeases the man by telling him that they were sent personally by her majesty the Queen to help salvage what they could from the beloved cathedral.

Lady Schrapnell has sent historians back in time to investigate the cathedral's every detail so that her multi-billion dollar reconstruction project can recreate every feature of the building as it existed before the German bombing in 1940.

Ned and Carruthers discuss their many attempts to find out whether the bishop's bird stump was in the cathedral at the time of the bombing. Ned begins to suspect that Carruthers is suffering from time lag, one of the symptoms of which is a tendency toward sentimentality.

The dog spooks a cat, and the new recruit becomes overly excited, telling Ned that this is his first jump, and that he is simply amazed to see in the flesh a creature that has been extinct for forty years. Mr. Spivens returns and Ned beginning a long sentimental speech about the nobility of the dog, during which he is yanked out of the scene by the net.

Chapter 2

Ned awakens in the Infirmary. The attending physician suspects he is suffering from time-lag, and begins quizzing him to determine what symptoms he has. He attempts to fool her, answering no to every question about time-laps symptoms, but he fails to correct guess the number of fingers she is holding up. In the end, she shows him an old postcard of Oxford and he begins a sentimental speech, which she interrupts by yanking the card out of his hand. She prescribes two weeks bed rest, but Ned knows that Lady Schrapnell will find him and put him back in the field. She is maddeningly persistent, and she does not believe there is any such thing as time-lap syndrome. When the nurse leaves to order more tests, Ned climbs out the window.



Ned tries to search Oxford for Mr. Dunworthy. If anyone can find him a place to hide from Lady Scrapnell and convalesce, it's Dunworthy. Ned becomes hopelessly lost on the grounds of Oxford. Many of the landmarks seem to have moved and he is convinced that the Germans are going to start bombing at any moment. Mr. Finch, Mr. Dunworthy's secretary, finds Ned and guides him to Mr. Dunworthy's office.

When they arrive, they can hear Mr. Dunworthy shouting at Ms. Kindle. Ned can tell that Dunworthy is upset because Kindle has brought something through the net, but another symptom of time-lag is difficulty distinguishing words, and Ned gets confused about what Mr. Dunworthy is saying. He seems to be saying something about bringing a rat through, or perhaps a cab. Ms. Finch comes out of the office. She is in a Victorian dress and is soaking wet. Ned, in his delirium, mistakes her for a naiad.

Mr. Chiswick, the head of Time Travel, arrives and begins to rant about Lady Schrapnell, while Dunworthy tries to coax information out of him about what would happen if an object was brought back through the net. Chiswick says that an object coming through the net could cause a parachronistic incongruity, which could be calamitous.

Dunworthy decides to send Ned to a quiet spot in the Victorian era to recuperate.

Chapters 1-2 Analysis

Animals will play a major role in the novel, and the author wastes no time introducing two to the first scene, as well as the piece of lore that in the present day of the story, 2054, cats are extinct. Part of the back story, which was touched on in the first book of the series, is that there was a pandemic in the early 21st century which wiped a significant portion of the human population. Cats were involved in the transmission of this cross-species virus, and were wiped out.

Lady Schrapnell's arrangement with the Oxford time travel department illustrates one of the dangers of science's frequent dependence on big business or, in this case the wealthy. When the time travel program first started, there was so much interest in the possibilities that the new academic community receive ample patronage. But, as experimentation established that objects could not be brought forward through time, nor could important events be altered, much of the support waned, and the program was left to kowtow to the obsessive mission of one eccentric billionaire.

The idea that Verity and Ned have never met takes some suspension of disbelief. While it is true that they have different fields of study, it seems bizarre that in a department that is so strapped for personnel they would have never met before, at least in passing. The author's storytelling contains many of these loose threads, but this is offset by the fact that the story itself is somewhat whimsical.



Chapter 3-4

Chapter 3-4 Summary

Chapter 3

Finch and Dunworthy take Ned to the lab. Miss Warder is running the net.. Miss Warder is also raving about Lady Schrapnell, and does not want to send Ned through because she has a long list of pickups of other historians to do. Mr. Dunworthy insists, and they begin prepping Ned for travel to the Victorian era.

An undergrad assistant from Time Travel arrives and tells Mr. Dunworthy that Mr. Chiswick has quit. Mr. Dunworthy assigns the undergrad, whose name is T.J. Lewis the task of researching parachronistic incongruities.

Ned starts listening to an audio prep course on Victorian history and customs, while Miss Warder fits him for a costume and Fitch gets him appropriate luggage and money.

T.J. returns and tells Mr. Dunworthy that most time travel experts seem to believe that a parachronistic incongruity is simply something that comes through the net whose absence does not alter history, and most believe that nothing larger than a microbe can get through the net anyway. One scientist, named Fujisaki, differs from his peers by suggesting that it is possible for objects to come through the net, but that the universe will protect itself by increasing slippage times around important events, and lining up redundancies to compensate if an event that should occur does not. He believes that this activity will be marked by an unusual number of coincidences, which a time traveling history might be able to observe.

Dunworthy tells Ned his mission, but between the tapes he is trying to listen to and his time-lag Ned misses most of the instructions. Miss Warder brings Carruthers back through the net. Carruthers is upset because since Ned was yanked out of the net and sent to infirmary, he has made four more attempts to jump to the day the cathedral is bombed, but the slippage is preventing him from getting close.

Miss Warder sets the coordinates for Ned's jump. Lady Schrapnell arrives, forcing her way past Fitch who keeps insisting that Ned is not there. Ned activates the net and dives in.

Chapter 4

Ned finds himself resting on train tracks, his luggage scattered about him. There are two nearby locations to chose from, the railway station, and a boathouse. He decides on the railway station, because he thinks that he remembers Dunworthy telling him to make for a location ending in 'End.' At the railway station, he scours the posted schedule for any location ending in 'End,' but finds none.



A train arrives, and two passengers debark, an old woman accompanied by a young lady named Maud. They eye Ned suspiciously while they discuss Maud's delinquent uncle who is supposed to be there to meet them. In the end, they hire a carriage and leave. The conversation jogs Ned's memory somewhat, and he now recalls that he is suppose to meet a contact, someone from the future already implanted here that will tell him the details of his mission.

A young man arrives. He is out of breath and checking his watch. He asks Ned if the train has already come through, for he was charged by his tutor to meet two young relatives coming to Oxford for a visit. Ned tells him of Maud and the old woman.

The young man introduces himself as Terence St. Trewes, and he immediately makes a proposition to Ned. He concludes from Ned's outfit that he must be intending to travel on the river. Terence says that he has already reserved a boat to travel down the river with his friend Cyril, but that his tutor Professor Peddick held him up with this trip to pick up relatives at the train station. Terence has used some of the money he intended to use to rent the boat to hire a hansom try to make it to the train station on time. He proposes that Ned go in with him on the boat, and join him and Cyril on a tour downriver. Ned looks for a way to turn down the proposition, but when Terence mentions that one of the sights downriver is Muching's End, Ned changes his mind.

Ned and Terence walk across Oxford to the river. Cyril, who turns out to be a large, white, British bulldog is waiting for them by the rented boat. The three cram Ned's luggage into the small craft and set off.

Chapter 3-4 Analysis

The scene in the lab is one of academic chaos and it reveals how thinly the department is spread in working on Lady Scrapnell's project. The action can be difficult for the reader to follow, especially since, at this point in the story, the reader is very much in the dark. The author conveys the chaos by overlapping and interrupting the dialogue, and by keeping the characters in a constant state of agitation with each other and the situation. At many points, the style bears a stronger resemblance to a play than to prose.

The historians have become very cavalier with their time travel. They have grown comfortable with the apparent fact that the continuum will not allow them to disrupt major events. Thus, Mr. Dunworthy thinks nothing of sending Ned to the Victorian era to hide him from Lady Scrapnell, even though his mind is temporarily compromised by time lag and he has not been properly vetted for travel in the Victorian era. This established norm by subsequent events. The actions of the characters seem almost ludicrous considering the nature of the work they do, but then it must be remember that in human being familiarity can breed indifference to even the most bizarre or complicated of activities.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

Chapter 5

Ned is beginning to piece together Dunworthy's instructions. He remembers that he is supposed to return an object of some kind.

Terence tells him about meeting a woman named Tossie who the day before was down at the river's edge looking for her lost cat. They rescue Terence's tutor, Professor Peddick, from the river. He tells them that he was pushed in by Professor Overforce after a spirited debate about the forces that move history.

Professor Peddick rides with them toward Iffley, upon whose bridge Terence hopes to rendezvous with Tossie.

Chapter 6

Tossie is waiting on the bridge at Iffley, along with her cousin Verity Brown. Verity is Ned's contact, who Ned overheard arguing with Dunworthy. The ladies tell them that they are returning to Muching's End that night. Before they leave, Tossie takes them to see the Iffley church. While Tossie and Terence explore the interior of the church, Ned and Verity talk outside.

Verity tells Ned that she assumed that he was sent back with the cat. When he tells her that he was not given a cat, she decides that Mr. Dunworthy must be ensuring in some other way that the cat will be returned to Muching's End today, while the family is away. Verity's original mission was to read Tossie's diary. It turns out that Tossie is an ancestry of Lady Schrapnell. It is Tossie's diary, her description of the bishop's bird stump in the Coventry cathedral and of how it changed her life, that inspired Lady Schrapnell to undertake the reconstruction project. Parts of the diary are waterlogged and damaged, and Verity was sent back to fill in the blanks.

Three days ago, she was in the garden at Muching's End, when she saw the butler, Mr. Baine, carrying the cat that Tossie has named Princess Arjumand. She followed Baine, and saw him toss the cat into the river and walk away. Verity dove into the river and rescued the cat, and then took refuge in the net. When the net activated, she was brought forward into the future with the cat.

Now she is concerned she has caused an incongruity, because the diary indicates that this summer, Tossie is suppose to marry a man whose name begins with a 'C.' The full name is undecipherable. Now Tossie has met Terence, and the two seem to be in full courtship. Verity's worries are compounded by Ned's story. She worries that if Ned had not interfered, Terence would not have had the money to come downriver today and keep his appointment with Tossie.



They decide that Ned should do what he can to influence Terence to return to Oxford and not follow Tossie to Muching's End. Verity will return to Mr. Dunworthy for further instructions.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

By this point, the most debilitating symptoms of time lag have abated, and Ned is able to begin putting together the pieces of the mission. Ned spots Verity first on the bridge, before Terence sees Tossie. Ned assumes that Verity is Tossie, and he thinks she looks like the paradigm Victorian woman, and he laments that the circumstances of his life preclude him ever having a love affair with such a woman. This is ironic, because it is Verity, woman from his own time, and a woman whom he will eventually marry, that he is seeing.

The author does not explain how Verity has been able to insinuate herself into the Mering household. Her cover story is that she is a cousin of Tossie. Yet, it seems highly unlikely that a wealthy family in the Victorian age could be fooled by such a claim, given the much greater attention paid at the time to every part of the family tree. Again, a suspension of disbelief is required of the reader. Verity violates Victorian mores and her roll as chaperon by allowing Tossie and Terence to enter the church unaccompanied.

Verity mentions that the reason that parts of Tossie's diary are unreadable is that the diary suffered some water damage. This foreshadows the dunking Tossie will receive at the hands of her future husband.



Chapters 7-9

Chapters 7-9 Summary

Chapter 7

Ned and Terence had left Professor Peddick in the nearby village of Sonderheim before meeting with Tossie and Verity in Iffley. When they return to the river, they find that the boat is gone. They surmise that Peddick has taken it downriver to look for more historical sights. Ned, Terence, and Cyril run downriver. They see a young girl on a porch swing stroking a white cat, and Ned has to dissuade Terence from stealing the cat and using soot to blacken its fur so that it resembles Princess Arjumand.

Eventually, they catch up with Professor Peddick, who is fishing for rare specimens. They learn from him that the two women that Ned saw debarking from the train are indeed his relatives. Ned tries to use this as a reason to return to Oxford, but Peddick assures him that the women are strong-willed and can take care of themselves. Ned is now sure that Terence was supposed to meet Maud, not Tossie. The men decide to camp near the river and take the boat downriver to Muching's End the following day. While searching for food in his luggage, Ned discovers Princess Arjumand.

Chapter 8

Ned now guesses that he was intended to transfer the cat to Verity to take back to Muching's End. He now has two conflicting goals: get Princess Arjumand back to Muching's End, keep Terence away from Tossie. He decides that the return of the cat must take priority, as it is the cause of the incongruity.

Ned, mistakenly believing the cat will respond to verbal commands, lets her out and she quickly disappears in the woods. After Terence and Professor Peddick have gone to sleep, Ned searches the area for the cat. He fumbles about in the woods and is attacked by a swan. Despairing that he will ever find the cat again, he returns to the camp and finds Princess Arjumand curled up with Cyril on his pallet.

Chapter 9

In the morning, Ned stows her in his carpetbag. As the men are packing, Professor Peddick notices that one of the specimens he caught yesterday is missing.

They set out, but soon stop in the village of Abingdon, where Professor Peddick leaves the boat to send a telegram to Maud. When the professor does not return, Ned takes the carpetbag with him into Abingdon to search. He stops for some food, and opens the carpetbag to give the cat some lunch. The cat flees and Ned searches for her in the village, until he finds her sitting next to Professor Peddick's fishing bucket. The professor stopped absent-mindedly on a bridge over a stream in the village to fish. Ned



secures the cat, hoping that Peddick had not seen her, and convinces the professor to return to the boat.

Chapters 7-9 Analysis

Professor Peddick absconding with the boat is just one of many examples of his absentmindedness. Ned describes him with affection as a stereotypical bumbling Victorian Oxford professor, men who were known for their unreliability and anti-social behavior. Ned and Terence have to constantly run interference against the academic whims of the older man, who is constantly spotting historical battle sites or ripe fishing grounds on the way down the river. To Terence, caught in the impatience of a youthful love, it is more than a little exasperating, but Ned finds the professor's quirky behavior endeared, and seems to enjoy overriding each of the professor's tangents with a prodding suggestion about what else lay just a bit further down the river. This behavior is on display again in Chapter 9, when the professor becomes distracted fishing for specimens on the Abingdon bridge. The reader later learns that this venture lead Peddick to forget to send a telegram to Maud, with regrettable consequences.

The name of the river is never mentioned directly by the author, and there are two running through Oxford, but from the locations mentioned on Ned and Terence's trip, the river can be infer to be the Thames. River cruising for leisure was in great vogue at the time, as immortalized by Jerome K. Jerome's humorous novel *Thee Men in a Boat*.

Princess Arjumand's very feline affinity for fish will crop up again and again, and will in fact prove a key factor in the unfolding of events. Ned's ignorance about the docility of cats, or lack thereof, is comical. It takes several escapes from Princess Arjumand for Ned to learn his lesson.



Chapters 10-11

Chapters 10-11 Summary

Chapter 10

The men continue their trip down the river. Terence begins to despair of making Muching's End by nightfall. Ned suggests that they stop at an inn, but Terence insists on pressing on. He wishes to see where Tossie lives before they find an inn. They arrive at Muching's End in the twilight. As their boat floats past the estate, Cyril falls overboard, and Terence is forced to jump in to save the dog. Terence recovers Cyril but as he is climbing back on board he capsizes the boat. The three men and Cyril make it to shore, but the boat has drifted away and their luggage has been lost in the river.

Professor Peddick hands Ned the carpetbag, telling him regretfully that it was the only article of Ned's luggage he was able to save. Ned peeks in the bag and finds that Princess Arjumand is damp, but alive. Ned produces the cat in such a way as to trick his comrades into believing they have just stumbled upon it. Terence is delighted and heads eagerly to the house.

The men walk up to Muching's End and stumble in during a séance, their appearance coinciding with the medium's call for spirits to show themselves. Mrs. Mering, Tossie's mother, believing them to be spirits, faints dead away.

Chapter 11

Tossie is delighted at the return of Princess Arjumand and at the arrival of Terence. Mrs. Mering is revived with smelling salts. They have a hard time convincing her that they are not spirits, and when they do, she accuses Terence of impersonating a spirit intentionally and frightening them all to death.

Colonel Mering, Tossie's father is equally suspicious of the intruders, but quickly bonds with Professor Peddick, both men being Naturalists. The Colonel insists on taking the professor out to his goldfish pond to show Peddick the rare specimens that he has collected. The Colonel invites them to stay at the estate.

The butler, Baine, dashes about, satisfying the frequent requests of Mrs. Mering, Tossie, and the Colonel, and it is clear to Ned that the man is mistreated. Rooms are arranged for the new arrivals, but Mrs. Mering forbids Terence to allow Cyril to sleep in the house. Ned settles in to his room, but before he can get to sleep Terence sneaks and tells him that there is a crisis.



Chapters 10-11 Analysis

Ned, whose boating skills are lamentable, has been getting steering and rowing instructions from Terence. It is therefore ironic that it is Terence, not Ned, who upends the boat and dumps them all in the river.

Verity's story about Baine tossing Princess Arjumand in the river had made the butler look like a monster. Nevertheless, Ned clearly feels sorry for the man. Mrs. Mering and Tossie are overly demanding, petty, condescending, and ungrateful toward both Baine and the other servant Jane. This begins with the dehumanization of both of the servants. Neither of them is allowed to use his or her real name. Baine's real name is part of the big reveal at the end of the story, and Jane's proper name is Colleen. They are both Irish, a fact that Mrs. Mering finds unnerving, and part of the reason why she bestowed new names upon them. It is commonly inferred that this demeaning life was standard fair for servants in the Victorian era, but it is far more likely that, as with all human behavior, that between masters and servants in the era varied widely, and that, while there were many posts like Baine's, there were equally many that were agreeable.

The reader witnesses the first of Mrs. Mering's faints. There are many more to come. The author does not indicate whether these are true losses of consciousness or plays for attention. Given Mrs. Mering's temperament, it could be either.

One of Tossie's more obnoxious attributes is her tendency to talk in baby talk to Princess Arjumand. The newly found cat's return set off one of these nauseating speeches. She does not just talk this way when she talks to the cat, but will also do so when she is talking to anyone else about the cat, or any animal for that matter.

Princess Arjumand is named after Mumtaz Mahal, a 17th century empress of India, whose nickname was Arjumand Banu Begum. Her husband, Shah Jahal built the famous Taj Mahal as her mausoleum.

At one point on the trip down the river, Ned spots three men in a boat and thinks he is seeing Jerome K. Jerome and his traveling companions on the trip that inspired Jerome's wildly popular humorous travel book *Three Men in a Boat*. He is overcome with excitement at the sight, and mistakenly asks Terence and Professor Peddick what they think of seeing the famous men. Terence and Professor Peddick of course have no idea who the men are. Jerome's book about the expedition would not be published until one year later, in 1889.



Chapters 12-14

Chapters 12-14 Summary

Chapter 12

Terence tells Ned that Cyril has a weak chest and cannot spend the night in the barn. He asks Ned to sneak the dog up to his room. Ned manages to get Cyril upstairs.

Verity visits Ned. She tells him that she has been back to the lab to see Mr. Dunworthy, and that he told her that Ned had the cat. Dunworthy and T.J. now believe that the slippage Carruthers and Ned were experiencing around Coventry in 1940 is related to an incongruity Verity caused by rescuing the cat. Dunworthy had changed his mind and decided that the cat should not be returned and hoped that Verity could head Ned off. Now Verity is worried that, with the cat returned, the incongruity will not be reversible. Ned tells her about Terence not meeting Maud at the train station.

Baine visits Ned and thanks him for finding Princess Arjumand. He confesses that he has been trying to cure the cat of going after the Colonel's goldfish by throwing her in the river. He says that he never throws her far and she swims well enough, but this time she did not return, and he was terrified that she had drowned.

Verity jumps back to the lab to tell Mr. Dunworthy this new development. When she returns, she slips back into Ned's room. T.J. told Verity that they now believe that her rescue of the cat is indeed to focal point of an incongruity, and that the continuum is creating slippages both before and after it in time, to attempt to correct the damage. He and Dunworthy have now detected major slippages not only in Coventry in 1940, but in Oxford in 2018. Verity tells Ned that Terence is not mentioned significantly in historical records, but it is clear that he is not suppose to marry Tossie. She must marry the unknown Mr. 'C.'

Chapter 13

At breakfast, Mrs. Mering discusses the impending church fete and jumble sale. Mrs. Mering seems to have forgiven Terence for the events of the night before. She is treating him very solicitously and seems pleased that he is courting Tossie.

Later, when they are alone together in the library, Verity tells Ned that Mrs. Mering has learned that Terence's family owns a large estate in Kent and that he is in line for five thousand pounds a year. Verity will try separating Tossie and Terence by suggesting they perform separate chores in preparation for the jumble sale. Meanwhile, she'll search the house for Tossie's diary.

Ned and Tossie go to the nearby Chattisbourne estate. Ned is shocked when Mr. Finch answers the door.



Chapter 14

Mrs. Chattisbourne introduces Ned to her four daughters. Ned sees that Tossie has her diary with her. Finch pulls Ned aside and explains that he is on another mission for Mr. Dunworthy, but that he cannot tell Ned the specifics of the mission. Ned asks after the Chattisbourne's only son, Elliott, thinking he might be Mr. 'C', but learns that Elliott is on a two year tour in South Africa.

Ned and Tossie return to Muching's End with items for the jumble sale donated by the Chattisbourne. Verity had no luck finding the diary, and decided to report to Mr. Dunworthy. She learned that Terence married Maud Peddick. One of Maud's letters mentions them meeting on the platform at the train station in Oxford. Verity says this could be a serious incongruity, as Terence and Maud had a son who flew in the first bombing raid of Berlin, which triggered the German bombing of England, including Coventry.

Chapters 12-14 Analysis

When Ned first gazes upon the four-poster in the bedroom he has been giving, he thinks with relief that he will now finally be able to engage in the comfortable convalescent for which he was sent to the Victorian era. He is then subjected to a seemingly endless string of interruptions. This is in keeping with one of the recurring themes of the book, which is a constant tension between the characters and their environments.

One of the things that can be hard for the reader to get use to is that, given the nature of time travel, a character like Verity can go forward into the future, collect a great deal of information over as many days as need, and then return to the described scene instantaneously. The author breaks up the certainty of this godlike power by introducing the idea of slippage, which allows the carefully planned timing of the protagonists to be constantly upset.

Verity tells the Merings that Ned spent time in America. This is to cover up any faux pas he commits because he has not been properly prepped on the Victorian era. Ned has had his fill of jumble sales. For the past month, before he was sent to the Victorian era, he had been going to every jumble sale in and around Coventry in the weeks prior to the cathedral bombing. Lady Scrapnell wanted to check for the possibility that the bishop's bird stump was packed away during the raid and later sold. Ned decided to buy the same type of item, a penwiper, at each of these sales. He does not know what a penwiper is, and is delighted later on when Verity uses one in front of him.

Ned is dismayed when he cannot find any of the usual suspects in the breakfast buffet. Verity tells him that eggs, bacon, and sausages are all considered low class. Wealthy families like the Merings break their fast with baked fish, meat pies, rice and puddings.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

Chapter 15

Ned begins trying to convince Terence that they should return Professor Peddick to Oxford to see his niece. Verity makes several trips to the future. Mr. Dunworthy will not tell her what Finch's mission is either, and she worries that it is to drown the cat, as the researchers at Oxford have just found a line in Tossie's diary alluding to 'poor drowned Princess Arjumand.'

Mrs. Mering is convinced that there are spirits in the house. The next day, Verity manages to send Tossie and Terence on separate errands.

Mr. Finch visits Muching's End with biscuits for the fete. Jane, the maid, tells Ned that Finch asked about Tossie's cat, and whether or not it had ever had kittens. Ned goes looking for Princess Arjumand and finds her by the Colonel's goldfish pond. The net, which is behind the gazebo, shimmers and Verity emerges. She has been running jumps for T.J., trying to determine slippage times around 1888.

Ned, noticing that Verity is showing pronounced symptoms of time lag, puts her in a row boat along with Princess Arjumand and Cyril, and takes her to a secluded spot upriver to sleep. Verity tells Ned that Carruthers is trapped in 1940. The net will not open for him. Verity deliriously confesses that she fell in love with Ned at first sight when he was with Terence on the river. They fall asleep on the boat. When they awaken, Verity does not remember what she has said. She tells Ned that the researchers now say that Mr 'C's name is seven to ten letters long and ends with an 'N' or an 'M'.

Verity and Ned row back to Muching's End where they are greeted by Tossie and Terence with the news that the two are engaged.

Chapter 16

During the fete the next day, Ned manages to slip away and jumps forward to Oxford to tell Dunworthy about the engagement.

Dunworthy is not in the lab when Ned arrives. Warder and T.J. are still trying to get Carruthers out of 1940 Coventry. T.J. shows Ned simulations that he has conducted, introducing incongruities into the Battle of Waterloo, to study how they propagate slippage and coincidences throughout the continuum. The simulations confirm what they are seeing after the possible incongruity Verity created, slippages into the future and past. But, all of the simulations make the assumption that the net would allow historians to get near key events and alter them, which the net has never before allowed.



Dunworthy arrives and Ned tells him about Tossie and Terence's engagement. Ned demands to know what mission Finch is on. Dunworthy says they cannot reveal the mission, but that it does not involve drowning Princess Arjumand.

Ned returns to past and rejoins the fete. Finch arrives and tells him that forensics has deciphered the date of Tossie's fateful trip to Coventry. It is the 15th, tomorrow. When he tells Verity, she hits upon the idea of having a séance that evening to try to introduce to the Merings the idea of taking a day trip to Coventry cathedral tomorrow. The fete ends and everyone returns to Muching's End to find a new visitor has arrived. It is Mrs. Mering's medium, Madame Iritosky.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Verity and Ned will later learn that the line in Tossie's diary about Princess Arjumand drowning is composed later, and still does not correct predict the fate of the cat. One of the principle reasons that Mrs. Mering is convinced there are spirits about the house is that she is hearing Cyril's heavy snoring coming from Ned's room at night and mistaking it for spiritual activity.

Finch's interest in Princess Arjumand will be revealed later, but his query about whether or not she has ever been pregnant is a hint to the reader.

The physical appears of the net is never described. It can be inferred that the shimmering it makes when it is active is not an arresting visible phenomena like a sudden flash, but is rather a general brightening that may be mistaken for an intensified spot of sunlight. Otherwise its appearance would be impossible to conceal from the contempts.

Ned risks scandal to help Verity recover from time lag. There is something chivalrous about the action, but he is also keeping her from disrupting the mission further. Upon arrival, in her semi-lucid state, she tells Ned that she is going off to give Tossie a lecture about why she cannot marry Terence.



Chapters 17-19

Chapters 17-19 Summary

Chapter 17

Madame Iritosky is accompanied by Count deVecchio. She has come in response to a letter Mrs. Mering wrote her describing the spiritual activity in the house. Verity and Ned have no choice but to attempt the séance that night under Madame Iritosky's nose. Ned finds two pieces of wire which he will hook under the table and use to shift it during the séance. Baine tells Ned that as he was unpacking Madame Iritosky's traveling closet, which he was told not to do, he has found all manner of suspicious items including a wires, horns, and a tin of fluorescent paint. Baine suspects the Madame is a con artist, and has taken it upon himself to hide all of Mrs. Mering's jewelry. He also worries that the Madame will try to maneuver Tossie into the Count's arms. He is a known lothario and likely a rake, who is no doubt here to aid the Madame. Ned decides to let Baine in on the plan to induce Tossie to go to Coventry the next day. Baine offers to help.

At dinner, Madame Iritosky says she will need several days to prepare a séance and is offended when Verity says that they will hold an amateur one for fun that evening. The séance begins. Ned succeeds in moving the table and convincing the room that spirits are present. Verity has sewn one side of a wooden box to each of her garters, and she uses them to clap out a message to the room. Despite interference from Madame Iritosky, Verity and Ned eventually succeed in conveying the importance of going to Coventry cathedral. The importance of the moment is cemented by the appearance of a grotesque ghost which walks in through the outer doors, once around the room, and then walks out.

Chapter 18

Ned and Baine wash the luminous paint off of Cyril, who played the ghost in the séance. In the morning, Verity tells Ned that Madame Iritosky and the Count bribed the groom to help them slip out of Muching's End in the early hours. Ned and Verity almost kiss, but they are interrupted by a scream from the house. Mrs. Mering has discovered that all of her jewelry is missing. Baine quickly reveals that he has removed the jewelry for cleaning.

The Colonel, Professor Peddick, and Cyril stay behind at Muching's End while everyone else takes the train to Coventry. Ned is busy trying to get the last names of every male that Tossie meets, including porters and drivers. They arrive in Coventry and take a carriage to the cathedral in the pouring rain, where they find that it is closed for renovations.

Chapter 19



Ned convinces the young curate to allow them to tour the cathedral. Verity and Ned find the bishop's bird stump. It is a cast iron vessel, embossed with a variety of scene both Christian and pagan.

Tossie sees the bird stump and gushes over it. Tossie asks Baine if he thinks the bird stump is an example of the best kind of art. Baine contradicts her, and she gets upset with him. The curate agrees with Tossie and the two of them begin to chat. Miss Delphinium Sharpe arrives with penwipers for the upcoming Coventry jumble sale and is irritated that the curate is occupied with Tossie.

Mrs. Mering, gazing at the bird stump, has a premonition, and declares that they must return to Muching's End at once. Ned fails to get the curate's surname before they leave.

Chapters 17-19 Analysis

Baine further redeems himself in Ned's eyes. Ned has been noticing too that Baine is the most frequent user of the Mering's library. Neither Mrs. Mering, nor the Colonel are readers, and think it a low habit. That bought the contents of the library in one piece at an estate sale, because it was considered at the time a point of fashion for an estate to contain a library. Baine is, ironically, the most educated person in the household. Tossie too shows great interest in learning. But her studies have been dictated by the expectations of the times. Women studied primarily languages, Tossie speaks three, and music.

Madame Iritosky is indeed a con artist. She is taking advantage of the Spiritualism religious movement that was all the rage in the late 19th century. When Verity made up the fact that Ned had spent time in America, Mrs. Mering had immediately asked him if he knew the Fox sisters. The Fox sisters were the most famous mediums of the Spiritualism movement, and were active for almost three decades, from the 1850s to the 1880. Ironically, the events at Muching's End are taking place in 1888, which is the year that Margaret Fox finally confessed that the sisters were frauds. Kate and Margaret Fox subsequently demonstrated their technique of creating rapping sounds by careful control of the muscles and tendons of the lower leg and hands. During the séance at the Mering house, Ned, who is standing beside Madame Iritosky at the table, deliberately stands on the woman's foot so that she can not make cracking sounds and interrupt the message that Verity and Ned are trying to spell out.

Mrs. Mering and Tossie keep sending Baine out to the carriage in the pouring rain to fetch trifles like shawls and books. The man is thoroughly soaked when Tossie pulls him over to the bird stump to ask his opinion on its merits.



Chapters 20-22

Chapters 20-22 Summary

Chapter 20

Tossie seems distracted on the train back to Muching's End. Verity tells Ned that she managed to get the curate's name, Doult.

Mrs. Mering catches sight of a headline on the back of Terence's paper and faints. Tossie leaves the car to find Baine, who returns and revives Mrs. Mering. They all study the headline announcing the drowning death of Professor Peddick.

Chapter 21

Terence and Ned determine that Peddick must have forgotten to send the telegram to his niece and is merely presumed dead. They try to convince Mrs. Mering that a mistake has been made, but she begins to entertain the notion that Ned, Terence, Professor Peddick, and Cyril all drowned when the boat capsized, and that there have been spirits at Muching's End all along, just as she suspected.

But, Professor Peddick is safely alive when they return. They confront him with the headline and he admits forgetting to send a telegram when they stopped in Abingdon. Peddick sends a telegram to Oxford and receives a return note from his niece.

Tossie leaves her diary out and Ned sneaks a peek at her entry for the day, but it is unremarkable. Ned is in the process of hiding the diary when Baine comes into the library and offers to take the book up to Tossie.

Chapter 22

The Colonel takes to his bed ill, and Terence has to accompany Professor Peddick back to Oxford. Ned and Verity discover that the net will not open for them. Verity worries that the incongruity has finally broken down the continuum and is inhibiting all time travel. Verity finally gets through.

An argument erupts nearby in the garden. Ned conceals himself and watches as Tossie confronts Baine, demanding that he apologize for contradicting her the day before. Baine apologizes to her, but when she demands that he admit the beauty of the bird stump, he initially refuses. She gets angry and invokes the difference in their class. Baine eventually relents, but makes it clear that he is doing so only because she wishes him to, not because it's true. Tossie is not satisfied with his answer. The argument becomes heated and Tossie dismisses Baine. He then proceeds to tell her off, saying that she is wasting her sharp mind with frivolity.



Finch stumbles upon Ned's hiding place, telling Ned that he just came from the lab. Finch says that Verity has not shown up at the lab after her jump. Finch mentions that T.J. thinks larger aberrations in the net are now possible because of the incongruity, including destination malfunction. Ned makes for the net as Baine picks Tossie up and slings her over his shoulder. Ned hears Tossie demand to know what the scoundrel is doing. Baine replies that it is for her own good. Ned makes it to the net, which begins to shimmer. Just before he jumps, he thinks he hears a splash.

Chapters 20-22 Analysis

Professor Peddick did stop at the telegram office in Abingdon. In yet another example of his absentmindedness, the professor forgot that he was to send a telegram to his niece, and instead fired off two of them to academic contacts abroad. The telegrams consisted of several thoughts he had on history and science while walking from the boat to the telegram office. As Mrs. Mering's said her premonition involved water, the new headline acts as a confirmation of the event, despite Ned's and Terence's reassurances that it was very likely just a mistake.

Tossie later writes to her mother that one of the things that endeared her to Baine was his tenderness and the care he gave to her mother. She recalls specifically his apparent distress at learning from Tossie that Mrs. Mering had collapsed on the train. When Verity first hears this she kicks herself for not preempting Tossie to go find Baine.

During the fight in the garden between Tossie and Baine, the butler quotes the famous, although speculative, Galileo statement, "Et pur si muove," or "And yet it moves," which he purportedly made following his trial by the Church for heresy. This was in response to the Church's stance against a heliocentric model of the universe. Galileo was forced to make a statement before the court affirming the Earth's place at the center of the universe. Baine employed the quote to defend his critique of the bird stump. Like Galileo, he was forced by the moral institutions of his time to dissemble and finally lie about his opinions.

There is a strong parallelism between Baine's act of dunking Tossie in the river and his similar acts against Princess Arjumand. Tossie, in her insistence on propriety of class over moral decency, was engaging in a common practice among Victorian aristocrats. Princess Arjumand was hunting fish, a common activity for cats. But in both of their cases, Baine, the savior, saw that for each of them, it would be better or safer for them not engage in the common action. For Tossie, the trappings of the Victorian social class, and its restrictions on her thinking, was ruining her sharp mind. For Princess Arjumand, the peril was more direct. The Colonel was going to end up putting her in a bag and throwing her in the river if he caught her eating his prized specimen goldfish. Baine tried to cure both of them of these wasteful and dangerous habits with the same action.



Chapters 23-25

Chapters 23-25 Summary

Chapter 23

Ned arrives in the lecture room that served as the makeshift time travel lab in 2018. He hides behind the curtains that conceal the primitive net as a young woman lets herself into the lab. The woman seems familiar to Ned. A youthful Mr. Dunworthy arrives. From their conversation Ned figures out that the woman is Elizabeth Bittner. She and Mr. Dunworthy discuss the bleak fate of Coventry Cathedral, which has just been denied protection as a landmark by the Appropriations Committee. They begin a test on the net, and it is activated with Ned inside.

Ned jumps to Blackwell's bookstore in Oxford, in winter. He overhears three women discussing the latest Agatha Christie novel. The net shimmers and Ned finds himself in a pitch black, stone stairwell. Ned decides to wait where he is rather than explore the stair. He falls asleep and awakes with daylight filtering down the stairwell. He now can tell that he is in a tower, and he suspects that it is the tower of the Coventry cathedral, which was built in 1395. He overhears a conversation in what sounds like Middle English between a builder and a woman who he guesses is Mary Botoner, who was responsible for the tower's construction. Ned jumps again.

Chapter 24

This time, the net functions correctly, and Ned finds himself in the lab in 2057. Warder is still trying to get Carruthers out of 1940 Coventry, and ignores Ned's demands that she cease what she is doing and attempt a fix on Verity. Carruthers finally appears and says that with all of this time stuck in 1940 he was able to determine two things, the bishop's bird stump was not in the rumble, but was in the cathedral at the time of the raid. He tells them that a contempt named Miss Sharpe, a member of one of the cathedral's social committees has written an editorial in the Coventry paper claiming that whoever robbed the church had foreknowledge of the raid.

Warder gets a fix on Verity. She is in Coventry during the raid. Ned jumps back to retrieve her. The building is already on fire when he arrives. Ned searches for Verity in the confusion. The curate is leading a group of volunteers to rush valuables from the building. Ned goes to the nearby police station where the goods are being carried, but the bishop's bird stump is not to be found. He watches a member of the fire brigade, who is trying to clear the building, arguing with Miss Sharpe, an older woman who Ned finds familiar. She will not leave her post at the north entrance, where she is guarding the cathedral from looters.

Ned eventually locates Verity by the south doors, and they charge back into the burning church to get to the north tower stairwell, where the drop is. On the way there, they pass



by the altar and Ned sees that the bird stump is clearly missing. Verity and Ned make it to the drop and through the net.

Chapter 25

Ned and Verity arrive in the Mering's wine cellar. Ned makes his way out to the barn, where he finds Cyril chained up. Ned unchains the dog and walks with him down to the dock, where he finds a wistful Terence. Terence is cryptic and melancholy, but Ned manages to ascertain from his description of events that he and Verity have been gone for three days. Terence took Professor Peddick to Oxford, where he met the professor's niece Maud, and fell instantly in love. He now feels trapped by his engagement to Tossie.

The Colonel has been sick for three days and Mrs. Mering, who has rarely left her husband's side, has not noticed Ned and Verity's absence. Ned, who saw the Colonel carrying a sack of burlap toward the pond on his way in, guesses that the illness is not serious.

The mail arrives. Mrs. Mering, reading one of the letters, faints. Jane is sent to find Baine to help revive Mrs. Mering, but Baine cannot be found. The Colonel and Terence arrive as Mrs. Mering is revived and the contents of the letter are made known to the room. It is from Tossie. She writes that she has eloped with Baine, and that they have sailed to America with Princess Arjumand. Mrs. Mering is devastated, and tells the Colonel that they must disown Tossie at once, all the while apologizing sympathetically to Terence, who can barely contain his joy at the news.

Verity is sick with dread. Tossie did not meet Mr. 'C' on the trip to Coventry, and now she has eloped with the butler and sailed away. But, Ned, who has procured the letter from Mrs. Mering, shows Verity that Tossie has signed the letter with her new married name, and the two of them learn that Mr. 'C' was right under their noses. The letter is signed Mrs. William Patrick Callahan.

Chapters 23-25 Analysis

The conversation between Elizabeth Bittner and Mr. Dunworthy also hints that they two of them were once an item, and that she jilted him for her current husband, the last curate of the Coventry cathedral. The scene also features a cameo from Shogi Fujisaki, the theories about parachronistic incongruities are being simulated by the grad student T.J. in 2057. In 2018, Fujisaki is himself a young grad student working in the fledgling time travel program.

In the conversation between the ladies which Ned overhears in Blackwell's bookstore, one of the women, in reference to common themes of contemporary mystery novels, mentions a special type of ending in which the apparent crime is revealed to have obscured the real and much larger crime. It is this commit that starts Ned thinking about whether or not Verity's rescue of Princess Arjumand is really the focal point of the



incongruity. Ned later speculates that the whole reason that the continuum sent him to Blackwell's was so that he could overhear the comment.

The author implies that Ned is seen by Mary Botoner just as he flashes out of existence in 1395. This sighting seems to have no consequence, as it is not mentioned as part of the lore of the cathedral anywhere else in the book, nor is it revealed to play a role in the unfolding of events in the future.

Ned is frantic in his pursuit of Verity, and his willingness to dive back into the past given the net's malfunctioning state shows his love for her. Ned is not the only person frantic to retrieve someone from the past. Warder is desperate to get Carruthers back from 1940, and it is later revealed that the two have begun a relationship.

When Ned first arrives in the cathedral, an incendiary crashes through the roof and lands beneath a pew in the nave. Ned, acting on instinct, grabs a bucket filled with sand and douses the sputtering firebomb. He immediately thinks about the possible consequences of his action. Will the church still burn down? It is quickly revealed that parts of the church are already on fire, and his action will have no effect on history.

It takes Ned some time to wrangle a description of the events of the previous days out of Terence, because the younger man responds to most of his queries by quoting poetry.

Mrs. Mering's assignment of blame for her daughter's elopement include the fact that Baine was a reader, the fact that he was Irish, the fact that her husband would employ a butler with either of those dubious traits, the fact that Ned spent time in America, and the fact that her husband, Colonel Mering, continued to speaking openly about his contempt for Spiritualism and Madame Iritosky, while the spirits in the house were clearly trying to warn of the coming doom.



Chapters 26-28

Chapters 26-28 Summary

Chapter 26

Terence departs with Cyril for Oxford. Mrs. Mering is blaming everyone in the house for Tossie's elopement. The Colonel tells Verity that she should return to her mother's and Ned that he should follow Terence back to Oxford.

Ned and Verity pretend to leave for the train station, but instead sneak out to the gazebo to the drop. Verity tells Ned that when she first jumped to the cathedral, the raid was just beginning and she clearly saw the Bishop's bird stump in place by the altar. Ned, seized with an epiphany, begins grilling Verity on every detail of the raid. They return to 2057.

Chapter 27

Ned asks T.J. to run a new simulation, with the focal point of the incongruity not on Verity's rescue of the cat, but on the air raid in 1940. He sends Verity to records to gather copies of Coventry newspapers from the weeks after the bombing. He asks Carruthers to travel to present day Coventry to look up church records of all committee members at the time of the raid, and for all marriages in Coventry from 1890 through 1920. It is then that he learns that their return drop had even more slippage time, and they have jumped in on the day of the consecration of the new cathedral, which is in less than three hours. They decide to send Carruthers back one week into the past so that he can go to Coventry and perform the necessary research.

Carruthers makes the jump as Verity returns. Ned begins to scan the papers she has brought. Carruthers returns, and says that there is no Miss Sharpe listed on any of the committees. Ned contacts Lady Schrapnell and tells her that he thinks he knows where the bird stump is and that she and Finch must try to delay the consecration an hour or two while Verity and he attempt to recover it.

Verity and Ned take the tube to Mrs. Bittner's. On the way, Verity tells Ned that she has figured out what Finch's mission was, but they arrive before she can tell him. Mrs. Bittner is expecting them. She tells Ned that he is correct when he guesses that in 2018, desperate to persuade the Appropriations Committee to include Coventry Cathedral, she broke into the time travel lab and traveled back to the time of the raid to steal the bird stump. She only learned afterward that the act could cause an incongruity, but when she tried to fix what she had done, slippage kept her from getting near the time of the air raid.

Ned explains that Verity's rescue of Princess Arjumand was not an incongruity, it was a coincidence arranged by the continuum to repair the incongruity cause by Mrs. Bittner. In Mrs. Bittner's attic, they find the bishop's bird stump, along with several other artifacts she managed to bring forward.



Chapter 28

Dunworthy arranges for a hearse to take Ned, Verity, and the artifacts to the cathedral.

Ned explains that the only reason that Tossie needed to be in Coventry cathedral on that day was so that she could be seen flirting with the curate when Miss Delphinium Sharpe arrived with penwipers for the jumble sale. Miss Sharpe was in love with curate Doult. Ned imagines a scene after they left, in which the curate tracks down the jealous Miss Sharpe and asks her to marry him. Their marriage was listed in the records Ned requested of Coventry weddings. They moved away when the curate was given another charge. Therefore Miss Sharpe was not still a member of the Coventry cathedral flower committee in 1940. She was not there to stand guard at the north door, nor to write the editorial suggesting that the thieves had prior knowledge of the time of the bombing. This was important because the Nazis were watching British newspapers and allied activities for any sign that their encryption scheme, Enigma, had been broken. The British had in fact already broken the code with their program Ultra. This is what the continuum was trying to protect. The removal of the bishop's birdstump had allowed for the possibility that the Nazis would find out early that Enigma had been broken, and the course of World War II, a major historic event, would be altered. Therefore the continuum created a series of instances propagating back in time, through coincidences and slippage, to ensure the Miss Sharpe would have married and moved elsewhere by the time of the raid. All of Verity and Ned's actions, from Verity's saving Princess Arjumand, to Ned's keeping Terence from meeting Maud and providing him with the means to get to Muching's End and his temporary engagement with Tossie, was the continuum's way of making sure that curate Doult proposed to Delphinium Sharpe.

Ned asks Verity to marry him, but they are interrupted by Finch, who is carrying a large cardboard box. He asks them to select their cat. Verity then tells Ned that she figured out that Mr. Dunworthy and Finch had been conducting experiments with bring soon to be destroyed objects forward in time. Finch's mission had been to rescue kittens tied in sacks and flung into rivers, a common population control practice in the Victorian times, and attempt to bring them through into the future to rebuild the species. Verity selects a black kitten with white paws, like Princess Arjumand.

T.J. pulls Ned aside and says that he has been continuing the simulations Ned suggested, but that the slippages still do not match up. He decided to keep moving the focal point of the incongruity forward in time until the slippages resolved themselves. He stresses that it may be just a miscalculation, but the simulation now shows that the actual focal point of the incongruity is June 15th, 2678. This suggests that the stealing of the birdstump did not cause the incongruity, but was itself, like Verity's rescue of the cat, a correctional event set in place to solve the real incongruity in the future.

Lady Scrapnell finds Ned and they look at the birdstump in its place in the cathedral. She says it is hideous.

Verity has named the black cat Penwiper. She consents to marry Ned.



Chapters 26-28 Analysis

The Colonel tells Verity and Ned that they are not to blame for Tossie's elopement. He is careful to frame the request to leave the house with this assurance, telling them that the action is necessary only as a curative for Mrs. Mering's shattered nerves. Colleen, the Irish maid, is rightfully worried that she will be dismissed out of hand because of her nationality.

Ned is so excited by his epiphany that he almost causes them to miss the drop by insisting that Verity answer all of his questions at the gazebo. This seems unnecessarily reckless on his part as they are supposed to be traveling back to the lab where, presumably, he would be free to ask the same questions. Perhaps he fears that on their arrival they will be swept up and separated by whatever activity is going on in the lab, or perhaps he is just being single-minded.

Carruthers can safely jump back one week to do research because at that time he was stuck in 1940. One of the rules of time travel is that a time traveler is not allowed to be in the same place at the same time. If there is any possibility that he would meet himself by jumping back, the net would not open, or he would experience slippage that would take him past the possible meeting.

The exact details of how Mrs. Bittner snuck into the cathedral during the raid are left somewhat vague, although when she tells her story Ned suddenly remembers seeing a figure moving through the fire that was most likely her.

Ned tells Mrs. Bittner that she has inadvertently proven that there is a class of objects that it is safe to bring forward, that is, objects that are about to be destroyed.

At one point, Verity shows Ned a letter the researchers found from Tossie to Terence, congratulating him on his engagement to Maud, and thanking him for again finding Princess Arjumand, whom she and Baine lost in their hurry to elope.

T.J.'s prediction that the ultimate focal point of the incongruity is in the distant future places the actions of the book into a possible infinite loop. There is a Russian doll feel to the explanation, with one incongruity nestle inside another, each correcting the damage of the one before, forward in time.



Characters

Ned Henry

Ned Henry is a faculty member of the history department at Oxford. He is a specialist on World War II, and has been a key time travel operative for Lady Schrapnell in her quest to gather all of the information needed to reconstruct Coventry cathedral. Ned's exact age is never mentioned, but given his ability to pass as an older student and peer to the likes of young Terence St. Trewes, it can be assumed that he is not over thirty. He has spent the last six months running missions for Lady Schrapnell, mostly involving the specific disposition, arrangement, and fate of various items inside the Coventry cathedral before the Nazi bombing in late 1940.

Ned is quick witted and well educated. He is as at home trading historical theories with Oxford Professor Matthew Peddick as he is at identifying Terence's frequent poetry quotations. The errors he makes when he is sent back to 1888 result from his time lag, and from the fact that he was not properly vetted for the period.

He first sees Verity Kindle when she emerges from Mr. Dunworthy's office, soaking wet in a Victorian dress following her rescue of the cat, Princess Arjumand. Ned falls in love with her immediately, but fails to recognize her for who she is the next time he sees her, as Verity Brown on the bridge at Iffley in 1888. Ned falls in love with this woman as well, and when he learns that they are one and the same, he is thoroughly in love.

Verity Kindle

Verity is a beautiful young redheaded history operative for the time travel department at Oxford. She is by nature confident, calm, and independent and exemplifies the women she studies, 1920s suffragettes. She has an affinity for early 20th century British mysteries, including the works of Agatha Christie and especially Dorothy Sayers. When she first meets Ned, she thinks he looks, in his boater hat and Oxford outfit, like Lord Peter Wimsey, the famous sleuth of Dorothy Sayer's bon vivant mysteries. Indeed, as their love for each other grows and they attempt to solve the developing mystery of the historical incongruity that Verity believes she has caused, she begins to imagine herself as Harriet Vane, Wimsey's sometime partner, lover, and eventual bride.

Although it is Ned who makes the final deductive leap that solves the mystery, it is Verity who, throughout, solves most of the problems and directs their attempts to repair the timeline.

Carruthers

Carruthers is a time traveler and a member of the Oxford history department. He is in love with Miss Warder.



Lady Scrapnell

A wealthy heiress on a mission to reconstruct Coventry cathedral, Lady Schrapnell is descended from Tossie Mering, and is a domineering, tyrannical woman.

Mr. Dunworthy

Mr. Dunworthy is the learned head of the history department at Oxford and an expert in time travel. He has been a time traveler himself since the beginning of the program. He has a deep understanding of almost all historical epochs and an intuitive knack for understanding cause and effect.

Mr. Finch

Finch is Mr. Dunworthy's much put-upon assist, who subsequently finds, when he is sent back to 1888 as a butler, that he rather enjoys the life.

Miss Warder

Miss Warder is the wardrobe technician responsible for outfitting all time travelers in apparel appropriate to their assignment. She has received an informal battlefield promotion to operator of the net because the department is so short on help.

T.J. Lewis

A grad student in computer science at Oxford, T.J. is completing an internship at the Time Travel department when its head, Mr. Chiswick, quits, and T.J. is asked by Mr. Dunworthy to do research in his stead. T.J. considers that he has the good fortune of being black, a condition which makes it too dangerous to send him back to either 1888 Oxford or 1940 Coventry. He can thus work freely at Oxford without being drafted by Lady Schrapnell.

Terence St. Trewes

Terence is a young aristocratic Oxford student in 1888. He is in love with Tossie Mering, and has promised to find her missing cat. When he meets Ned Henry on the train platform after failing to arrive in time to meet his future wife Maud Peddick, Terence befriends the time traveler and together they boat down the Thames to the Mering's estate at Muching's End.



Cyril

Cyril is Terence St. Trewes's large white British bulldog.

Tossie Mering

Tossie is the daughter and only child of Colonel and Mrs. Mering of Muching's End. She is an ancestor of Lady Schrapnell and is fated to begin the business that will grow into the Schrapnell fortune.

Princess Arjumand

Princess Arjumand is Tossie's black cat, who is named after the famous India princess Mumtaz Mahal, also called Arjumand Banu Begum.

Colonel Mering

Tossie's father is a retired military colonel of some wealth.

Mrs. Malvinia Mering

Colonel Mering's wife and celebrated fainter.

Professor Matthew Peddick

Professor Peddick is Terence St. Trewes extremely absentminded mentor at Oxford. He is obsessed with historical battlegrounds and is an Naturalist and collector of specimens.

Madame Iritosky

Madame Iritosky is con artist who derives her patronage from rigged seances.

Count de Vecchio

Iritosky's partner in crime, whom she is attempting to set up with Tossie Mering.

Baine/William Patrick Callahan

Baine is the Mering's butler, an Irishmen of low birth by with an excellent education conferred by his passion for reading.



Jane/Colleen

Colleen is the Irish maid that Mrs. Mering forces to use the more proper English name, Jane.

Miss Delphinium Sharpe

A young socialite teetering on the edge of Victorian spinsterhood, who is in love with the Coventry curate Doult.

Elizabeth Bittner

The widow of the last curate of Coventry and a former lover of Mr. Dunworthy.

Contempts

The name given by time travelers to people from the past.



Objects/Places

Bishop's Bird Stump

The bird stump is a cast-iron vase, embossed with numerous scene from the bible and antiquity, along with a few scene from later history including the death of Mary Queen of Scots.

Coventry Cathedral

Also known as St. Michael's cathedral, the Coventry cathedral is the second structure bearing the name, and is a Gothic church of 14th century construction. The cathedral was bombed during World War II, and remains in ruins to this day, though a new cathedral, the third to bear the name has been built at another location.

The Net

The net is a small square of space which shifts through time. Its function is governed by the rules of quantum physics and it cannot theoretically transport anything through time that will affect the outcome of major historical events.

Muching's End

The Mering's family estate is large, and includes gardens and a dock on the river.

Oxford

A famed town on the Thames river and the location of the equally famed college bearing its name.

Abingdon

Abingdon is a small village on the Thames where Ned and Terence stop so that Professor Peddick can send a note to his niece Maud at Oxford.

Iffley

Another village on the Thames, and the site of Terence and Maud's rendezvous. It is also here where Verity first meets Ned Henry.



Three Men in a Boat, To Say Nothing of the Dog

A wildly popular humorist novel by Jerome K. Jerome, written in 1889 and based upon the boating trip made by Jerome and two of his friends down the Thames in 1888.

Victorian Morals

Victorian morals play a huge role in the unfolding of events. It is the rules involving the servant class that play the biggest role, particularly the interactions of Baine, the Irish butler, with his soon-to-be wife, the English aristocrat Tossie Mering.

Suffragette

Literally, a woman seeking the right to vote, but the word was for decades rolled out as a derogatory slang used for any woman who tried to move beyond her station, either by seeking education in the largely male-dominated universities, or by daring to run businesses.

The Fix

A process used in the lab to pinpoint the location of a time traveler both in space and time.



Themes

Victorian Morality

Victorian morality plays a major role in the events of the book, guiding the social interactions between men and women, and between one class and another.

Ned and Verity are, in their quest, constantly restricted by the need to maintain Victorian social norms involving sex. If they want to meet to discuss their next actions, or to try to brainstorm together about the nature of the incongruity, they are forced to do so by sneaking around, because as they are both unmarried, they cannot simply take a walk together alone to talk. To do so would be to risk scandal because unmarried Victorian women were not permitted to be alone with a man. They were always chaperoned. Verity actually used this rule to her advantage. It allowed her to accompany Tossie to the meeting with Terence at Iffley, and thus to meet and confer with Ned for the first time.

Ned nearly commits a faux pas at the Chattisbough house when he begins to comment on the fact that their cat, which has seated itself in his lap, is pregnant. Finch saves Ned by interrupting. The remark would have been considered a dreadful breach of protocol because sex was not discussed in mixed company, and even mentioning the cat was pregnant, which of course implied that the cat had had sex, would have stepped over this line. This incident involving Finch and a pregnant cat is also another hint to the reader of his secret mission.

The most dynamic and important moment in the book occurs because Baine, a servant, is willing to break Victorian norms by contradicting Tossie, the daughter of his master. Baine and the maid Jane have, in Mrs. Mering's eyes, two strikes against them. They are low born and they are Irish. She is horrible to both, and Tossie is quickly learning from her mother. Baine's refusal to give in to Tossie's demand that he alter his personal views to fit hers is an eye-opener to the young woman. After she dismisses Baine out of spite, the butler takes the breach even further by picking up the willful young woman and flinging her into the river. It is clear throughout that Baine is quite fond of Tossie, and he tells her as he is carrying her to the riverbank that what he is about to do is for her own good, and that she is ruining her sharp mind. This willingness to break protocol endears Tossie to the butler, and she, an aristocratic young woman, elopes with the low born Irish servant.

Treatment of Animals

Animals, particularly cats and dogs, have their paws all over the storyline of *To Say Nothing of the Dog*. The treatment of animals is, in general, kindly, and moreover the story implies that there is virtue in doing so.



For much of the book, it is believed that Verity Kindle caused the incongruity by rescuing Tossie's cat Princess Arjumand from drowning in the river. Verity risked the failure of her mission to rescue the cat. It was later learned that the butler Baine had no intention of drowning the cat, but was routinely throwing the cat in the river to try to break her of the habit of hunting Colonel Mering's prize goldfish. Baine, in his confession to Ned Henry, reveals that he has bears the cat no ill-will, and moreover wishes to protect her, principally because he is fond of her master, Tossie.

Ned goes out of his way to sneak Cyril up to his bedroom every night and back down in the early mornings, because Terence insists that Cyril has a weak chest and cannot spend the night outside in the cold, damp barn. Ned is fond of Cyril, and does not perform the task grudgingly, despite the many difficulties it presents.

When it is learned that objects that are about to be destroyed can be safely brought through the net and into the future, Mr. Dunworthy and Mr. Finch decide to repopulate the cat species, which was wiped out in the pandemic of 2014. Finch returns to 1888, posing as butler, and attempts to rescue newborn kittens, which are frequently bound up in sacks and thrown in the river just after birth, as a method of feline population control.

Character versus Trend in the Shaping of History

The theme of character versus trend in the shaping of history is stated explicitly in the book, and the events of the book can be seen as an argument for both sides. The argument is defined as follows: Do the actions of individuals matter in the shaping of history? Or, is the shaping of events government by trends, represented by technological and ideological advances and retreats?

It is this argument that puts Professor Peddick in the river to be rescued by Ned and Terence. Peddick is arguing the matter with Professor Overforce, who takes the viewpoint that, applying the newly discovered theories of Darwin to the subject of history, it can be seen that history is thematic, and is not shaped significantly by individuals, just as the actions of a single creature do not shape the fate of the species. This is not to say that individual acts do not alter history. It suggests rather that history is already moving in a direction when any individual act occurs, and if the act did not occur, another having the same result quickly would. Peddick thinks the argument is nonsensical. In his opinion, the shape of history is created by specific individuals and their actions in the world, and this is evidenced by the fact that the most dynamic individuals tend to make the greatest changes to the timeline. The argument between the two men deteriorates into a shoving match, and Peddick ends up in the river.

The events of the book can be said to argue both cases. On the one hand, the dangers of the incongruity created by the stealing of the bishop's bird stump, and the elaborate series of corrective events it sets off, seems to argue that even the tiniest change has the potential to greatly alter history. In this line of reasoning, it would seem the individual acts are extremely important and consequential. On the other hand, the continuum does repair the incongruity and no major event is altered by the rift. It rearranges a series of

smaller, inconsequential events to make sure the important ones occur. This suggests that the major event is inevitable, and that the myriad acts leading up to it can together take any one of an infinite number of possible combinations without undoing what is to come.



Style

Point of View

The book is told in third person, with Ned Henry as the sole point of view. This point of view is maintained even when Ned is delirious, and the dialogue of the characters is rendered as Ned, in his delirium, would hear it. This means that at times, particularly at the beginning of the story, the narrative is unreliable. Ned is frequently mistaking one word for another. In general, these substitutions can be puzzled out by the reader, who enjoys a slightly more knowledgeable point of view than delirious Ned. But, for the most part, the knowledge of the reader is carefully restricted to that of the principle character. There is no omniscience in the narration. This is typical of a mystery.

Setting

There are four principal settings in the book, Oxford, Coventry cathedral, Muching's End, and the River Thames. The book is extremely light on setting description, almost all of which is left to the reader's imagination.

The only description attempted of Oxford is cursory at best, and occurs from the point of view of Ned when he is delirious with time lag and is wandering the grounds of the university looking for Mr. Dunworthy's office. Oxford dates to at least the 11th century, though its exact date of founding is unknown. Has burned several times, but still features a variety of architectural forms in its many academic buildings. The author gives no substantial description of Oxford in 2054, or in 1888.

Coventry cathedral, also called St. Michael's cathedral, is a Gothic cathedral built in the 14th century. Its style is architectural style is typically Gothic, with pointed arches and spires. The roof and several of the side chapels were destroyed in the Nazi bombing in 1940. It was left in ruins. In the book, the ruins are eventually denied protection from the Appropriation Committee for historic sites and the sight is sold to a religious sect which eventually goes bankrupt and the ruins are eventually bulldozed for a mini-mall.

Muching's End is a fictional location on the river Thames where the author sets the estate of Colonel Mering and his family. The estate comprises several floors, an attic, and a wine cellar. It is surrounded by extensive grounds, including a park, a dock on the river, and at least one large goldfish pond in which Colonel Mering maintains his collection of rare species of fish.

The river Thames is a river in southern England, famous principally because it winds its way through the metropolis of London. It is further upriver though, that the story takes place. There was a brief craze for river boating in the 1880s, a fad immortalized by Jerome K. Jerome's famous humorist novel *Three Men in a Boat*. The Thames is a wide river of varying currents, some dangerous. By 1888, the time of the story, it had been



festooned with locks, which controlled the current and made the river relatively easy to navigate.

Language and Meaning

The vocabulary in the book is kept at a high school level of comprehension. The most striking element in the language is the frequent and almost incessant overlap of dialogue. The author does not make frequent use of the ellipsis, as is often the case in such forms, but instead writes out the whole text of a character's statement, and follows it with the entire statement of the next character. It is left to the reader to determine the timing, but the context of the statements, which typically reveal that they characters are paying little attention to what is being said around them, lead the reader to conclude that the statements are all occurring at once. The effect is chaotic, and in places unsettling.

There are a few terms the author introduces to describe the new field of time travel, including the net, contempts, and the fix.

The tone leans toward the humorous throughout, appropriate for a work that seems in many ways to pay homage to early English humorists like the aforementioned Jerome K. Jerome.

Structure

The novel is broken up into chapters but not divided into larger sections like parts or books. The chapters are unnamed, but are headed by a long series of short statements describing the action to come and separated by breaks. There are around 20 of these statements stung together in this manner at the beginning of each chapter. Many of the statements are intended to be humorous summaries of the subsequent action. The style is a direct emulation of the descriptive chapter headings in Jerome K. Jerome's book *Three Men in a Boat*. As a further tribute to Jerome's work, the author has borrowed her title *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, as the name of the name of her book. This is a deliberate humorous twist, because *To Say Nothing of the Dog* is the subtitle of Jerome's book.

The novel assumes the structure of a mystery, though one in which the supposed crime, in the end, turns out to be superceded by an even greater crime. In general, the action tends throughout to go from bad to worse, with the character's hope of repairing the timeline and figuring out the mystery of what is causing the incongruity becoming more and more bleak until the final upswing occurs with the solving of the mystery.



Quotes

"The nurse flipped the card over. 'Tell me what you see.'

It appeared to be a postal card of Oxford. Seen from Headington Hill, her dear old dreaming spires and mossy stone, her hushed, elm-shaded quads where the last echoes of the Middle Ages can still be heard, murmuring of ancient learning and scholarly tradition, of—

'That's about enough of that,' she said, and wrenched the card out of my hand. 'You have an advanced case of time-lag, Mr. Henry.'"

Ch 2, p. 17.

"I distinctly remember Mr. Dunworthy saying, 'Here are your instructions,' and after that a jumble of Stilton spoons and collars and the All-Clear, and then he'd said the rest of the two weeks was mine to do with as I liked. Which obviously meant that a portion of it wasn't. And when I'd got in the net, Finch had said, 'We're counting on you.'

To do what?"

Ch. 4, p. 50.

"And he seemed so smitten with her. Not that that's unusual. Every young man who meets Tossie is smitten with her.' She looked up at me from under her veil. 'Speaking of which, why aren't you?'

'She thinks Henry the Eighth had eight wives,' I said.

'I know, but I'd have thought with your time-lag you'd have been in poor Titania's condition, wandering about ready to fall in love with the first girl you saw.'

'Which was you,' I said.

If she had been the untouched English rose she looked like, she'd have blushed a becoming pink under that veil, but she was Twenty-First Century."

Ch. 6, pp. 95-96.

"But his niece—'

'You heard him. Sensible. Intelligent. His niece is probably one of those dreadful modern girls who have opinions and think women should go to Oxford.' He pulled out a skillet and several tins. 'A most unpleasant sort of girl. Not like Miss Mering. So pretty and innocent.'"

Ch. 7, p. 113.

"Meow,' I said, lifting branches to look under the bushes. 'Come here, cat. You wouldn't want to destroy the space-time continuum, would you? Meow. Meow.'"

Ch. 8, p. 124.

"That's what Fujisaki's research was about. She'd be reduced to her component parts, and the complexity of their separate interactions would drop exponentially.'

Meaning her poor body would drift down the Thames, decomposing into carbon and calcium and interacting with nothing but the river water and hungry fishes. Ashes to ashes. Dust to nonsignificance.

'Which would make it possible,' Verity said, 'for her to be removed from her space-time



location without any historical effects."
Ch. 12, p. 172.

"She ate the Colonel's silver Emperor fantail. An extremely rare fish. The Colonel had it shipped all the way from Honshu, at great expense,' he said, anguished. 'It had arrived only the day before, and there she was, sitting next to the dorsal fin, calmly licking her paws, and when I cried out, 'Oh, Princess Arjumand! What have you done?' she looked up at me with an expression of utter innocence. I'm afraid I quite lost my temper."
Ch. 12, p. 175.

"I removed it gently from Verity's shoulders, wrapped Princess Arjumand in it, and began to rub her dry. 'Fish are going to be the death of you, you know that, don't you?' I said, toweling her back and tail. 'Cats only have nine lives, you know, and you've already used up six that I know of.' I rubbed her tail. 'You need to switch to a safer habit, like smoking."
Ch. 15, p. 232.

"Miss Mering is an impressionable young girl,' he said earnestly. 'She has not been trained to think scientifically or to examine her feelings logically. I fear she may do something foolish.'
'You truly care about her, don't you?' I said, surprised.
His neck reddened. 'She has many faults. She is vain and foolish and silly, but those qualities are due to her poor upbringing. She has been spoilt and pampered, but at heart she is sound.'
Ch. 17, p. 261.

"What do you mean, 'no'?"
'I mean the sculpture is a hideous atrocity, vulgarly conceived, badly designed, and shoddily executed,' he said, folding the shawl carefully and bending to lay it back in the bundle.
'How dare you say that?' Tossie said, her cheeks very pink.
Baine straightened. 'I beg your pardon, miss. I thought you were asking my opinion.'
'I was, but I expected you to tell me you thought it was beautiful.'
He bowed slightly. 'As you wish, miss.' He looked at it, his face impassive. 'It is very beautiful.'
Ch. 19, p. 296.

"But in a chaotic system, there was no such thing as a simple tear. Every event was connected to every other. When Verity waded into the Thames, when I walked down the tracks to the railway station, dozens, thousands of events had been affected. Including the whereabouts of Mr. C on 15 June, 1888. We had broken all of the threads at once, and the fabric in the space-time loom had come apart."
Ch. 20, p. 306.

"Mr. St. Trewes and the Reverend Mr. Doult are gentlemen. How dare you contradict their opinions! You are only a common servant.'
'Yes, miss,' he said wearily.



'You should be dismissed for being insolent to your betters.'

There was another long pause, and then Baine said, 'All the diary entries and dismissals in the world cannot change the truth. Galileo recanted under threat of torture, but that did not make the sun revolve around the earth. If you dismiss me, the vase will still be vulgar, I will still be right, and your taste will still be plebeian, no matter what you write in your diary.'

Ch. 22, pp. 330-331.

"'I dared to speak the truth to you because I felt you were deserving of it,' Baine said seriously. 'I had only your best interests at heart, as I have always had. You have been blessed with great riches; not only with the riches of wealth, position, and beauty, but with a bright mind and a keen sensibility, as well as with a fine spirit. And yet you squander those riches on croquet and organdies and trumpery works of art. You have at your disposal a library of the great minds of the past, and yet you read the foolish novels of Charlotte Yonge and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Given the opportunity to study science, you converse with conjurers wearing cheesecloth and phosphorescent paint. Confronted by the glories of Gothic architecture, you admire instead a cheap imitation of it, and confronted by the truth, you stamp your foot like a spoilt child and demand to be told fairy stories.'"

Ch. 22, p. 331.

"Had we made a mistaken assumption about the incongruity? Was there some way of looking at it which explained everything—from the lack of slippage on Verity's drop to the excess of it in 2018? Some way of looking at it in which everything fit—Princess Arjumand and Carruthers and the bishop's bird stump and all those bloody jumble sales and curates, to say nothing of the dog—and it all made sense?"

Ch. 23, p. 348.

"Our beautiful, beautiful cathedral. I had always put it in the same class as the bishop's bird stump—an irritating antiquity—and there were certainly more beautiful cathedrals. But standing here now, watching it burn, I understood what it had meant to Provost Howard to build the new cathedral, modernerist-ugly as it was. What it had meant to Lizzie Bittner not to see it sold for scrap. And I understood why Lady Schrapnell had been willing to fight the Church of England and the history faculty and the Coventry City Council and the rest of the world to build it back up again."

Ch. 24, pp. 365-366.

"'Are you saying the continuum arranged for me to save Princess Arjumand?' Verity said.

'Yes,' I said. 'Which made us think you'd caused an incongruity and we had to fix it, which is why we arranged a seance to get Tossie to Coventry to see the bishop's bird stump and write in her diary that the experience had changed her life—'

'And Lady Schrapnell would read it,' said Verity, 'and decide to rebuild Coventry Cathedral and send me back to Muchings End to find out what happened to the bishop's bird stump, so I could save the cat—'

'So I could be sent back to return it and overhear a conversation about mystery novels in Blackwell's and spend a night in a tower—'



'And solve the mystery of the bishop's bird stump,' Mrs. Bittner said."
Ch. 27, p. 411.

"A Grand Design we couldn't see because we were part of it. A Grand Design we only got occasional, fleeting glimpses of. A Grad Design involving the entire course of history and all of time and space that, for some unfathomable reason, chose to work out its designs with cats and croquet mallets and penwipers, to say nothing of the dog. And a hideous piece of Victorian artwork. And us."
Ch. 28, pp. 421-422.



Topics for Discussion

Describe how Victorian morals influenced the course of events in the novel.

Note the role of animals in the book. How does the interaction of the characters with Cyril and Princess Arjumand shape the story?

The book makes two arguments regarding the course of history. What are they? What are the merits of each argument and which argument is correct? Are they, or can they, both be correct?

Describe the various ways in which Willis pays homage to Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*, and to the works of Dorothy L. Sayers.

Describe the ways in which the continuum tries to correct the incongruity caused by the stealing of the bishop's bird stump.

What are Ultra and Enigma, and how did the incongruity threaten the outcome of World War II?

How is the net supposed to protect history meddling by time travel. What loophole did Mrs. Bittner inadvertently discover in these protections and what does the discovery mean for the future study of history?

How does class play a role in the story? Use the confrontation between Baine and Tossie in your answer.

Was Baine justified in his actions of tossing Princess Arjumand in the river? Was he justified in tossing Tossie into the river?