

To the End of the Land Study Guide

To the End of the Land by David Grossman

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Plot Summary

To the End of the Land by David Grossman is a novel about the way the constant wars in the Middle East affect the people subjected to them. When her son Ofer is summoned to an army operation instead of receiving his release as was expected, Ora decides to still go on their planned journey to Galilee, only she is joined by Avram, Ofer's biological father, instead of her son. She spends the journey telling Avram about their son who he has refused to meet. To the End of the Land is a very difficult novel to read but is quite interesting overall.

Ora meets Avram and Ilan at the age of sixteen while they are all hospitalized in 1967. She is attracted to Ilan while Avram falls in love with Ora. In 2000, Ora hires a cab to drive her son, Ofer, to a meeting place in Gilboa for a military campaign. She does not consider the insensitivity of hiring an Arab, Sami, to make the journey until after the fact. At home, Ora worries about receiving notice of Ofer's death, and in order to thwart the military's procedure, she decides to escape this event by pursuing her journey to Galilee that she had planned to take with Ofer. When Avram, Ofer's biological father, phones to ask if Ofer has been released, Ora offers to visit him, deciding to convince him to accompany her on her journey.

Avram wakes in a field to learn Ora kidnapped him and forced him to join her to Galilee. As they walk, Ora claims that she needs to talk about Ofer because it will keep him safe, but Avram refuses to hear about the son he has never met. Eventually, Avram agrees to listen to Ora talk about their son, warning her to start at a distance. Ora begins by talking about her older son, Adam, and her relationship with her husband, Ilan. She continues with anecdotes about Adam and Ofer's childhoods and how they are best friends. Ora believes Ofer will be safe as long as she talks about him.

As they walk along the path through Galilee toward Jerusalem, Ora and Avram recall their previous romance, her marital issues with Ilan, Avram's friendship with Ilan, and the time Avram spent as a prisoner of war at the hands of the Egyptians. Avram admits that he likes Ofer as he learns more about his son from Ora. After they make love, Ora tells Avram about Ilan searching for him during the war. She is jealous of the possibility of Avram having another child when she listens to his messages and learns his girlfriend, Neta, had a pregnancy scare that turned out to be a false alarm; however, Avram assures Ora that Ofer is his only child and that Avram and Ora will always be together. Suddenly, Ora and Avram feel that Ofer is in danger, and Ora begs Avram to help her hold Ofer together, even as she worries she is shortening Ofer's life by talking to Avram about it instead of insuring Ofer's safety as she originally believed. After making Avram promise that he will remember everything about Ora, Avram, Ilan, Adam and Ofer, Ora pulls away from him, lies on the ground and stares vacantly.



Section 1: Prologue, 1967, pages 3-47

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To the End of the Land by David Grossman is a novel about the way the constant wars in the Middle East affect the people subjected to them. When her son Ofer is summoned to an army operation instead of receiving his release as was expected, Ora decides to still go on their planned journey to Galilee, only she is joined by Avram, Ofer's biological father, instead of her son. She spends the journey telling Avram about their son who he has refused to meet. To the End of the Land is a very difficult novel to read but is quite interesting overall.

He yells at her to be quiet because her singing woke everyone up, and when he yells at her again the next night, she wonders if she was singing the same song since she has the same dream nearly every night where everything is white, including her red-headed friend, Ada. Though he enjoys making her laugh, he is unable to stay awake, the journey from his room leaving him exhausted. When her voice wakes him, they discuss their illnesses and the war, and she begs him to come back when he insists on leaving her. The next night, he returns to complain about her singing but finds her sitting up, awake and waiting for him. The trembling will not stop, and their speech is choppy as they talk. She is 16, and he is a few months older. Ora is annoyed that she is the only one left of the nine girls who occupied this room, and Avram likes the fact that they have not exchanged names after three nights. Leaving Ora's room, Avram returns to Room 7 and sits on the edge of his classmate's bed, recalling the snobbish Ilan from his class. As he flies to Ora's room and falls asleep, Ora dreams of Ada, and when Ora wakes, she lights a match so she can see Avram. She also holds a match near her face for his perusal. Both wonder if they will ever get better.

Ora explains that Ada, her best friend, has been dead for two years, holding Avram's hand as she feels she has revealed a secret. Ora tells Avram about her friendship with Ada and how Ada died because she was hit by a bus while on vacation. After Ada died, Ora never visited her parents, so when Avram offers to visit Ada's parents with Ora, Ora tells him he is kind, unlike other boys. As Ora wakes from the same strange nightmare the next night, Avram pushes a wheelchair into the room with another guy who is sleeping and introduces her to Ilan. He hates Ilan when he is awake, but Ilan is a different person when he sleeps. Ora is furious to learn Avram told Ilan about her, so she tells Avram to leave. Avram tells Ora she is beautiful and praises her voice. He says he will be back and leaves, ignoring Ora when she calls for him to return. Ora hears an unfamiliar male voice calling her name from the corner. When Avram returns with blankets from Ilan and himself, Ora asks about Ilan; she turns the light on to look at him, and though he is handsome, he is not her taste. Though Avram asks if Ilan spoke, Ora sings to ignore him, and when he recognizes the song as what she woke him with, she admits it was Ada's favorite song. She makes the boys leave so she can dream of Ada. Shortly before dawn, Ora goes to Room 3, and Avram asks if she wants to see Ilan. Avram confides that he writes all kinds of things, annoying Ora when he insinuates he



will have different interests in the future. Ora dreams of her new friends after Ada and wakes on one end of Avram's bed. She wonders where Ilan is because he told her he was going to die. Ilan had kissed her arm as she tried to comfort him, and she decides not to tell Avram that Ilan is beautiful because it is only further proof of her stupidity. After convincing Avram to go to her room because they are better there, Ora asks if he will write a story about the hospital, and when he shares his idea about a boy in the hospital during the war who signals enemy planes with matches, she suggests the boy might not do so if he had a friend. She kisses him and admits she writes a little too, so he convinces her to sing the song she and Ada wrote for their last day of camp at Machanayim. Though Ora refuses to answer Avram's question about whether she kissed Ilan also, he is enchanted by her song and realizes he wants her to be his wife. As they hear Ilan crawling to them, Ora says to take him back, but Avram refuses and tells her to say something to Ilan. Ora calls to Ilan, who is surprised she is real, telling him to come in the room and they will be together for a while.

Section 1: Prologue, 1967, pages 3-47 Analysis

The Prologue is set in a hospital in 1967 and introduces three of the main characters, Ora, Avram and Ilan, though none of them are named at first. They are all teenagers, and a boy enters her room to chide her for waking him with her singing. While trying to befriend the boy, the unnamed girl threatens to sing if he does not come and sit with her; as he laughs, she barely resists telling him her ability to make people laugh is disappearing, like her intuition, wit and sense of love. The boy inches nearer and further away as though it is a game for him. Everyone at the hospital seems angry at them for being the last ones left from the plague. Ora tries to figure out how she knows him, and when he concludes they knew each other in the future, she tries to penetrate the darkness to see him. Avram often speaks about himself in third person, and his hopefulness for the future irritates Ora at times, since neither of them is sure of their survival. Ora is haunted by memories of her best friend, Ada, who died when they were fourteen, and when she tells Avram about Ada, Avram is very understanding and considerate, even offering to visit Ada's parents with Ora after they are released from the hospital. When Ora gets mad at Avram for telling Ilan about her, she realizes her anger is exaggerated and she is trying to protect herself from the treacherous affection rising in her. Ilan shared his method to always being happy with Ora when he met her: he skips to the next part of his soul if one part feels bad. Ora knows Avram is an artist, and her female intuition tells her he will get better. Ora's refusal to talk to Avram about Ilan foreshadows her romantic entanglement with both of them; it is obvious that Ora feels for Ilan what Avram feels for Ora, though it is never clear what Ilan feels exactly and for whom. At the end of the Prologue, Ora summons Ilan to them, promising they will be together for a while, and this foreshadows the remainder of the novel as Ilan, Avram and Ora are together, in one sense or another, for the remainder of their lives.



Section 2: The Walk, 2000, pages 48-90

Section 2: The Walk, 2000, pages 48-90 Summary

Sami, the Arab taxi driver, does not look at Ora or Ofer during the drive, and Ora feels guilty for not thinking it was a bad idea to have an Arab drive this particular trip. She was too preoccupied to think of it after finding Ofer on the phone that morning and learning her weeklong trip has been diminished to only a few hours. As they shop and eat lunch, Ofer tries to fill her in on all he has left out, and Ora fights the urge to ask why they are no longer friends like they used to be. She cannot imagine what will happen after 3 P.M. when Sami picks them up, but she knows Sami will make the trip easier for her because they are friends, though they do not discuss politics. After telling Sami they need to take Ofer to the campaign at the meeting point near Gilboa, Ora tries to ease the tension with idle chatter. Sami is the only Arab in the large convoy and is obviously scared. After parking, Sami asks Ora to be quick, and she follows Ofer through the crowd, worried he will get consumed by the crowd and she will never see him again. Ofer stops and chides Ora for bringing an Arab here, and though she feels guilty, she cannot explain she was not in a state to consider that after learning Ofer received the call asking him to come immediately.

That evening, Ora tells herself that everything will be fine as she stands in the kitchen, cooking, but she fears receiving a visit to tell her of Ofer's death. At 9 P.M., she sees a shot of herself and Ofer on the news. When the reporter asked what a son tells his mother at such a moment, Ofer whispered in her ear, and Ora does not understand why he told her that and where he got such an idea. Ofer phones to ask Ora to record the Sopranos for him. He explains that there are not enough vests or tanks for the troops that showed up, but they plan to eliminate the terrorist infrastructure. Ora tells Ofer she is still going on their trip to Galilee, and he is upset at the idea of her going alone, but she explains she is suffocating at home. Ora refuses to take her cell phone because she does not want to be found, and she attempts to explain to Ofer that she is leaving him for his own good; her maternal instinct tells her she cannot stay here. Ofer knows Ora is making a vow but does not understand, so he tells her to do it after she promises not to do anything stupid. A man calls; Avram asks if Ofer's service is over today, and Ora explains they needed him for an emergency, but she tries to reassure him that it will soon be over and Ofer will be fine. When Avram says he cannot be alone now, Ora says she will visit on her way up north, but she decides she will flee and take him with her. After changing her outgoing message and leaving a note for Ofer trying to explain what she does not understand, Ora calls Sami. She had apologized to him after leaving Ofer at the meeting place, and their friendship has actually deepened after being tempered by the genuine fire of reality.



Section 2: The Walk, 2000, pages 48-90 Analysis

During the drive to Gilboa, Ora is horrified that she did not consider Sami's feelings before asking him to drive Ofer to the meeting place for the military campaign against the Arabs. There is a confidence between Ora and Sami that she will never ask him for something she is forbidden to ask for and he will never disappoint her; today, Ora has failed, and her failure is causing Sami to fail also, but she had not realized it until Ofer approached the car in his uniform and with his rifle. She is horrified that Ofer volunteered to prolong his service to the army. Ilan won again; she will not have her planned week with Ofer, and she wishes she could sleep through the entire military operation. Ofer is angry at his mother for her inconsideration of Sami's feelings regarding the event. That evening, Ora listens to a woman on the radio talking about her sons who are in the army, and thinking about Ofer at war, Ora feels the visible and hidden threads connecting her to this massive process of which everyone is a part. Ora is terrified that her son will die at battle. She goes to Ofer's room, thinking that Ilan and Adam already left her, and now Ofer is also gone. She wonders if Ofer has notified the army of the split in his parents' addresses. Avram calls, and thinking he must have seen her on television with Ofer, she is jolted by the idea that he knows what Ofer looks like. Avram's concern about Ofer, and Ora's reaction to it foreshadows the revelation of Avram's relationship with Ofer, though it is unclear at this point in the novel. This section ends with Ora's belief that things are alright between her and Sami as she calls him to ask for a ride to Avram in Tel Aviv.



Section 3: The Walk, pages 91-115

Section 3: The Walk, pages 91-115 Summary

Sami answers that he is not feeling well, and Ora, hearing the lie in his voice, knows she will have no peace until she clears up what happened earlier. Sami returns to the phone and agrees to take her to Tel Aviv, but he needs to make a stop in the north of the city first. Ora grabs Ofer and her backpacks and waits for Sami on the sidewalk. When Sami arrives, a young boy burning with fever, Rami, lies in the backseat, and Sami abruptly explains he is taking Rami to his family in South Tel Aviv. Ora hugs the sleeping boy to her as Sami watches in the rearview mirror, his gaze discomfiting. Sami admits the boy's real name is Yazdi and explains something is wrong with Yazdi's indigestion so he needs a doctor. When Ora asks for Yazdi's story, Sami refuses to tell her, but Ora, offended, demands Sami tell her about the child before they reach the checkpoint. Her tone reminds Sami of things she has never wanted or needed to mention explicitly, and Sami assures Ora that there is nothing about Yazdi concerning security. After passing the checkpoint, Sami admits Yazdi is an illegal resident who is very sick and needs to get to a hospital. Ora and Sami take Yazdi to an elementary school in Jaffa, and Ora follows Sami into the school though he tries to dissuade her at first. As Ora uses the bathroom to wash Yazdi's vomit from her clothing, she feels she has left her post by taking Ofer to war. She finds Sami who ushers her back to the cab, explaining that this makeshift hospital moves around every few weeks when neighbors start to notice. He asks Ora not to tell Ilan that he accidentally hit her when trying to hit Yazdi for vomiting in his car, and Ora tells him to just drive, surprisingly enjoying her newfound authority.

Section 3: The Walk, pages 91-115 Analysis

Ora's belief that the dispute between Sami and her has been solved is evidently untrue as Sami's original response is that he is too tired to drive her to Tel Aviv; however, he agrees after arguing with people at his house. Ora's decision to go on the journey to Galilee without Ofer is her way of thwarting the deal that she will receive the army's notification of her son's death. The reason for Sami yielding to Ora's request is revealed by the young, sick boy in his car. The boy in Sami's car reminds her of Ofer, and she still cannot believe Avram was not there with them when Ofer was young, again foreshadowing the discovery of Avram's relationship to Ofer. Sami is a distant extension of Ilan for Ora, and she is homesick for her last house in Ein Karem with Ilan. Ora believes that Ilan knows that only together can they bear all that happened to them when they were young, though he has now traveled as far as he can from her. Sami is cold toward Ora and treats her much more unkindly than she is used to. As Ora uses the bathroom at the makeshift hospital to wash Yazdi's vomit from her clothing, she feels she has left her post by taking Ofer to war. When Sami asks Ora not to tell Ilan that he accidentally hit her when trying to hit Yazdi for vomiting in his car, Ora tells him to just drive, surprisingly enjoying her newfound authority. This indicates a definitive

change in their relationship which foreshadows the events detailed in the next section of the novel.



Section 4: The Walk, pages 116-138

Section 4: The Walk, pages 116-138 Summary

As the sun rises, only Ora and Avram lie on the edge of the field, and when Avram asks where they are, Ora explains Sami dumped them here, somewhere in Galilee. Her body hurts from carrying Avram down the steps and through the fields until they had collapsed here. Ora informs him they are going to explore the area, but Avram is confused and claims he needs to be at home. She promises to explain on the way, but she must keep moving and cannot stay in any one place for too long. As Avram follows Ora toward the path, she recalls seeing him last night and noticing how much he has changed in the past three years. Though she makes the offer immediately, he refuses, asking where Ilan is. Ora begs, promising to bring him home the next night, but he says his pill will soon knock him out. Ora begs him not to leave her alone with this, asking him to come even if he is unconscious, and insisting he must come because it is for him also. She leads him downstairs where Sami watches without helping. Ora waits for Avram in the field, pointing out Mount Hermon and the stream they walk along. As they cross a stream, Ora worries about destabilizing Avram, but she knows there's still something left of him inside this shell. She talks, trying to distract him so he will not get scared. He cannot remember any of last night, and Ora wonders if she will ever tell him about that night with Sami. Ora had not realized she forgot to tell Sami they were picking up a man until she emerged from the apartment with Avram, and Sami threw her hostile, questioning and frightened looks as he drove to where the country ends. He turns the radio on to avoid talking to her, ignoring her requests to turn it down until she reaches forward and shuts it off. Avram wakes and needs to urinate, so Ora asks Sami to pull over. As Ora helps Avram on the side of the road, Sami tosses their packs out and drives off, cursing the Jews and the Arabs.

Section 4: The Walk, pages 116-138 Analysis

Ora and Avram wake in a field in Galilee, and Ora explains that Sami dumped them here last night. She insists on exploring the area, though Avram objects, and walks onward so that he is forced to follow her. Ora is seized with the feeling that she must not stay in the same place for very long. Ora recalls the previous evening when she basically kidnapped Avram who did not want to come with her on this journey to Galilee. Avram supposes their adventure is over when they reach a fence blocking the path, but Ora finds a gate and asks him to help her open it. Noticing that Avram is becoming irritable, Ora asks herself what she is doing to him. She attempts to distract him so that he will not be frightened, but she seems to know there is something in Avram that needs to be healed; this foreboding foreshadows Avram's reaction to their journey through Galilee. When Avram admits he cannot recall the previous evening, Ora recounts it in her mind, though she is unsure whether she will ever share the events with him. Sami had been agitated to learn they were picking up a man he does not know, and he bickered with Ora during the drive as Avram slept. Once they stop to allow Avram to

urinate, Sami unloads their bags and leaves them stranded in the field where they now find themselves.



Section 5: The Walk, pages 139-266

Section 5: The Walk, pages 139-266 Summary

After they eat, Ora watches Avram stand slowly and imagines Ofer being with them, though she has been able to sneak little information to Avram about Ofer in the many years she has been forbidden to talk to him. Wondering what Ora wants from him, Avram asks where Ilan is, and Ora explains that they separated nine months ago. They walk without speaking, and Ora decides to tell Avram about Ofer if the right time comes "so at least he would know this person he had brought into the world" (page 144). Waking from a nightmare about officers knocking on her door, Ora feels a pain as they set off, and she hurries Avram along when she realizes the pain is Ofer. She tells him that the silence, not speaking to him about Ofer, is killing both her and their son, and she demands he decide whether he is really here with her. She hates him for saying not now, and that evening, the pain is so strong that Ora locks herself in the tent and cries. Avram wants to help her but knows he will not. He tries to imagine a male version of a young Ora and attempts to understand what happened between Ora and Ilan, but he does not understand families, as he had been telling his girlfriend, Neta, for thirteen years until she disappeared about a month ago. Avram had not even realized she had been gone so long because he withdrew from people as Ofer's release came closer. Avram rushes to Ora as she calls to him, and when Ora says she needs to be able to talk about Ofer to give him strength, Avram asks her to give him another day. Ora digs a pit and, burying her face in the pit, tells the earth about Ofer. Akiva, a strange man singing as he leads a procession, approaches and convinces them to join him for an hour or so because he can see some trouble has befallen them. They follow Akiva to a small, hidden village as he takes each of his procession to their homes. Avram is distressed when Akiva places a baby in his lap, and Ora wishes she had taken Ofer to see Avram when he was a baby. Calming as the baby plays with his hand, Avram nods to Ora and tells her to "start from a distance" (page 175). Ora's pain subsides as she knows that Ofer is safe and protected now. As Avram and Ora resume their walk, Ora recalls the first time Ilan left her, after Adam was born. While nursing Avram at the hospital, Ora and Ilan drove to Avram's house in Tzur Hadassah and conceived Adam. Ilan was distant with Adam, and when Adam was a month old, Ilan insisted upon leaving. Ilan left and rented a small apartment on the opposite side of town, but he called daily to talk to her. After Adam was born, Ilan continued caring for Avram, and though he quickly lost interest in Adam, he insisted that Ora help care for their other son, Ofer, by pretending all was well between them to avoid upsetting Avram. Panicking as she suddenly cannot recall Ofer's face, Ora urges herself to tell Avram about his son.

As Ora continues telling Avram about how she and Adam spent most of their time together for the first few years of his life, she realizes she and Avram are practicing on Adam before they get to Ofer. Two years after he left, Ilan moved into the shed in the backyard, but they still avoided each other. When Ora told Adam about the man living in the shed, Adam called for the man to come play with them. Ora recalls the day Avram asked about Adam; he knew about her son from the start, though no one told him. As



they walk, Avram asks Ora to describe what Ofer looks like. After she learned that Avram knew about Adam, Ora took pictures of Adam to the hospital, and after his rehabilitation, Avram began going out on his own, though he would only talk about the present moment. One day, Avram told Ora about a nurse who had asked him out twice, but he had refused her because he was impotent. Ora asked if he would be able to engage in intercourse with her, and he said no. Ora admits Adam is travelling the world with Ilan, but Adam does not speak to Ora. Ora continued questioning Avram as she undressed, removed his clothes and began making love to him. Avram wakes Ora from her slumber to ask about how Ofer started walking as a baby, and as Ora answers, she wonders if Avram really wants to know or is just trying to make her feel good. When Ofer took his first steps, he walked to Adam. Ora takes out a notebook and writes about Ofer because she is afraid to forget his childhood. Avram used to write all the time, and Ora asks if he has written anything lately, but Avram insists he is done with words. He had once intended to write her every year, even if she continued belonging to Ilan. After Ora slept with Avram, he began to decline and asked her not to visit him anymore. She was compelled to chase him, but when she informed him she was pregnant, Avram wanted her to have an abortion. He avoided her for thirteen years, and when he finally met her, Avram refused to hear anything about Ilan, Adam or Ofer. He arranged a visit every six months until Ofer was drafted, and then, he told Ora he would not be in touch until Ofer was discharged. The day after Avram dismissed Ora from his life because she was pregnant, she went to Ilan in the shed and told him about her pregnancy. Ilan asked to come home, and Adam accepted him when Ilan agreed to stay and be his daddy. Ilan visited Avram who asked all of them to leave him alone as it drove him crazy to think about having a child in the world, something to hold him here. Resuming her writing, Ora feels Ofer is safe when she writes. She falls asleep with her hand resting on the notebook, and Avram thinks of how beautiful her hand is as he looks at her for a while. Around midnight, Ora wakes, rattled with fear for Ofer and confused about how Avram cannot feel it also. She grabs her notebook and resumes writing about Ofer, addressing her notes to Avram.

Section 5: The Walk, pages 139-266 Analysis

As they begin their journey through Galilee, Ora imagines seeing Ofer and Avram together. The clues so far seem to indicate that Avram is Ofer's biological father, and this fact is explicitly revealed in this section of *The Walk*, 2000. Avram learns that Ora and Ilan have separated, and as Avram grasps that he is truly alone with Ora without Ilan for the first time in thirty-five years, Ora feels a thrill as he looks at her and knows the depths of her grief. Ora decides to tell Avram about Ofer if the right time comes, and this foreshadows the main purpose of her journey, though she did not know the purpose at the outset. Ora is struck with pain as she thinks of Ofer, and she informs Avram that they must talk about their son or it will kill Ofer. As Ora cries in pain over Ofer, Avram thinks of the boys around Ofer's age who he has followed through the streets as Ofer's discharge date approached, showing that he truly cares about Ofer, though he has refused to meet his son. After holding a baby in the village where Akiva takes them, Avram agrees to listen to Ora talk about Ofer, and Ora begins telling him about Ofer's ex-girlfriend, Talia. She tries to decide what to tell Avram, fearing she does not really



know Ofer, and she realizes how important it is to her that Avram love Ofer. Ora feels better after she begins talking about Ofer. She tells Avram stories about her family, beginning with the time around Adam's conception and birth. When Ilan left Ora shortly after Adam's birth, Ora thought of how coincidence decided lives, recalling when Avram and Ilan had called her from the military base and asked her to draw lots to decide which of them would return home. Avram is happy to hear that Ofer has been taller than Adam since he hit his growth spurt because he has a self-esteem issue with his own height. As she writes about Ofer in her notebook, Ora wonders who she intends to read the two pages about Ofer's birth. Ora recalls how she seduced Avram because he told her he was impotent, and her seduction resulted in the conception of Ofer. When Avram found out Ora was pregnant with his child, he was distraught and wanted nothing to do with the child, so he asked Ilan and Ora to keep Ofer's paternity a secret. Avram disappeared for many years and then began meeting Ora once in a while, but even that ceased when Ofer joined the military. Waking in pain caused by her fear for Ofer, and realizing she cannot trust Avram since he cannot feel Ofer's danger as she can, Ora wonders why she dragged Avram here. Writing to Avram in her notebook, Ora admits she was not a good mother, but she claims they were a good family who had twenty good years until they got trapped.



Section 6: The Walk, pages 267-320

Section 6: The Walk, pages 267-320 Summary

While resting at the top of Keren Naphtali Mountain, Avram realizes this trip is good for him since he has lost weight and is able to sleep through the night without pills. Ora resumes her stories about Ofer, and Avram is fascinated as she talks about Ofer's rage as a child when he learned that people killed animals to eat their meat. Ofer became a vegetarian until he was sixteen years old. When Ora realizes she left her notebook where they slept the previous night, Avram insists on going back to get it, and they hope no one else finds it. They had seen a strange man that morning who told them he was a doctor and seemed concerned for Ora. As they pass through Yesha Fortress quickly, Avram distracts Ora from her memories by telling her about the Indian restaurant where he has worked for two years, and Ora realizes Avram's words are returning to him. Avram wonders how Ora chose Ofer's name, and she explains it came from a verse in the Song of Songs, but she had also thought of girls' names. Ora explains that she always wishes she'd had a daughter who might have softened her three men toward her, plus Avram would have seen their child if it had been a girl. When Ora was pregnant the second time, she prayed for a girl; Avram prayed she would miscarry. Ora is excited that she and Avram are finally talking to each other. She recalls making love to Avram and how he allowed her to be the focal point as they take a dip in the lake, but she is annoyed that he barely looks when she gets out of the water naked. As their walk continues, Ora tells Avram about breastfeeding Ofer and Ofer's childhood; when she mentions Ofer's patience, Avram claims Ofer did not get that attribute from him, but "in what he negates, [Ora] hears what he is affirming" (page 310). Ilan taught Ofer words, and Avram claims that was his thing, that he had planned to give each word to his child, if he ever had one, as a present. As Ora and Avram stare at one another, Ora feels like she has not seen him in years and attacks him for punishing them for so many years. Avram holds her, reminding her of their lovemaking, and Ora is disappointed when he releases her because she is ready if he had only wanted her.

Section 6: The Walk, pages 267-320 Analysis

Avram begins to realize that this trip is healthy for him at this point in the novel, and this is evident by the increasing logic in his thoughts and conversation. Ora continues telling him about Ofer and Adam until she realizes she has misplaced her notebook filled with stories about Ofer. She searches Avram's backpack for her notebook, and though it is not there, she is unable to close the bag, putting her face near to smell Ofer's clothes that Avram still refuses to wear. Ora recalls the doctor they saw earlier as she searches for her missing notebook, and they find the notebook in the doctor's backpack. They rest on their descent because Ora feels they are returning home too fast, and Ora admits that, since Avram returned from war, Ilan and she were acting out a play on his stage. Ora confesses her secret desire for a daughter and recalls her previous physical relationship with Avram, though she is agitated when he ignores her nudity at the lake.



In regards to Ofer's patience, Avram acknowledges that Ofer did not get that from him, thus acknowledging that there are things Ofer may have gotten from Avram since he is Ofer's father. Looking at Avram, Ora is angry at him for the many years he has not been involved with her family. When Ora attacks Avram, he holds her, and after he releases her, Ora tells him not to run away from her and asks if he remembers them together.



Section 7: The Walk, pages 321-459

Section 7: The Walk, pages 321-459 Summary

When he came home, Ilan began educating Adam and taught him to speak. While Avram was in an induced coma, Ora would read him letters that he had written to her in hopes that his own words would penetrate and rouse him. Avram began writing to Ora the day after their last night together in isolation, and he always interjected something about Ilan because he was convinced Ora loved Ilan. When Avram started writing about his love for Ora, she confessed to loving Ilan who insisted to Avram that he did not return her feelings. After Avram was hospitalized for jumping from a tree to prove his indifference to separating his body and soul, Ora wrote that he would always be her soul mate and she could not imagine life without him, and in response to the pages she wrote about her love for Ilan, Ilan told Avram he was not interested in any girl and maybe should be a homosexual. When Avram awoke in the hospital, Ora explained he had been medicated since his return, recalling going to meet Avram's plane with Ilan. Neither knew Avram had been injured until they saw him, and on the way to the hospital, Avram told Ora it was a pity they did not kill him. After insisting he was staying with Avram, Ilan pulled Ora to him and kissed her. Awake again, Avram asked Ora what they were, and she reminded him that he and Ilan used to rotate weeks coming home. She admitted they were lovers, but when Avram said he had no love for anything or anyone, Ora wondered what Avram was without love and what she was without his love.

As Ora and Avram reach a mountain, they retrieve the map from Ofer's backpack and trace their path to find they are at Mount Meron. Ora recalls her anger when Ilan bonded with Adam, explaining to Avram that she keeps talking about Adam because they are a family so they are all part of one another. Avram smiles as Ora tells him Ofer did not talk until he was three years old, making her realize Avram really wants to hear about Ofer. Ilan gave up being judgmental so he could love everything about Ofer, but he accidentally turned his back on Adam in the process. Adam began speaking in rhymes and showed symptoms of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, such as repeatedly washing his hands. Ora tells Avram what Ofer whispered to her at the meeting place: "If anything happens to him, he wants us to leave the country" (page 367). Ora recalls how Ofer, at the age of six, was very upset by the persecution of the Jews, and he began looking at his parents as though they had been given death sentences. Ofer decided he did not want to be Jewish anymore because "they always kill us and always hate us" (page 376). When he was sick with a fever, Ofer was convinced an Arab was with him, so the next morning, Ora drove him to see the weapons at the Armored Corps site in Latrun, figuring "that what was good enough for a whole country was good enough for my child" (page 379).

Ora and Avram come upon the doctor sleeping, and after Avram retrieves Ora's notebook from his backpack, Ora leaves a note for the doctor. Glancing at her notes, she is agitated and intrigued to find the man has written in her notebook. When Avram wonders if Ofer wanted to take a big trip after his release from the army, Ora tells him



Ofer had planned to take a trip to India with Adam because they are best friends. She explains they have been best friends since the beginning. Adam's psychosis worsened to the point that he had to blow on each body part he touched, but he was unresponsive when they took him to psychologists. Ofer began insisting on helping Adam with his OCD rituals, and though it angered Adam at first, he yielded to his younger brother's demands. Though Ora does not know exactly what they did that summer, they played together "and while they did all that- don't ask me exactly how it happened- one of them saved the other" (page 411). Ora is charmed as Avram comes back to life and asks him to kiss her, and after he complies, they hold hands as they continue walking. Avram tells Ora about Neta who tried to convince him to see Ofer, and when he admits that he had called to discuss the possibility of seeing his son, Ora is distraught at the thought of what she had to tell him when he called.

When Avram asks about Adam the next morning, Ora feels the need to tell him something about Ofer because he is too drawn to Adam. Ora and Ilan bought the house in Tzur Hadassah from Avram after he finished his treatments and decided to never return to it, and this is where they raised their sons. After Adam turned eighteen and enlisted, Ofer found his first girlfriend, and it was hard on him when she left him. Many people came to visit him and share their stories of love which is how Adam met his girlfriend. Ora really does not know much about Adam's life because he is angry at her for not wholeheartedly supporting Ofer during one particular army mission. She recalls all four of them going to an expensive restaurant to celebrate Adam's birthday not long ago. When Ora suggested toasting Adam, he agreed only if Ofer did it, and Ofer spoke of how proud he was to be Adam's little brother, sharing anecdotes from his childhood and things he has heard from other soldiers about Adam. Ofer did not know how he would have survived if Adam did not care for him in bad situations that he could not discuss with his parents; "there's no one in the world I trust like you, and value and love like you. No one" (page 451). Ilan toasted their family, and as he and Ora watched their sons hug, they knew they would always stay together and be family.

Suddenly, Avram yells at Ora to tell him about Ofer. Ora is certain Ofer is alright because they are talking and writing about him. Ora recalls laughing together as she helped Ofer with his homework, and Ilan was angered at her lenience and indulgence, but as he continued to listen, he realized she was more patient with the boys and was very grateful for what she gave their sons that he could not.

Section 7: The Walk, pages 321-459 Analysis

When Ora tells him about Ilan educating Adam after he returned home, Avram smiles because he would have done the same thing with his child, and Ora is excited at the idea that perhaps Ilan was trying to be Avram as a father rather than looking for a substitute for Avram. Avram began writing Ora after their release from the hospital in the Prologue, but Ora's responses became a sort of diary since she could not write to Avram about how much she missed Ilan. Ilan's insinuation that maybe he should be a homosexual due to his lack of interest in girls suggests that his love for Avram may be more romantic than Ora seems to suspect. When Avram awoke in the hospital, Ora



explained their relationship to him: Ora was with Ilan for five years but had also been with Avram for the past year, and Avram could not understand how he did that to his best friend.

Ora admits to Avram that she is trying to engrave everything along their walk into her memory because she feels she is saying goodbye to her country on this journey since she promised Ofer that she would leave the country if anything happened to him. As Ora explains that the country does not have a chance, a group of soldiers jog past them. Regarding Adam's OCD symptoms, Ora tells Avram about how Adam seemed better one day, hugging Ora after she helped clean his room, but the reprieve was short-lived. Ora realized Adam had discovered how the force of negation could consume him from inside. When Avram asks if the boys are similar today, Ora tries to avoid unfair comparisons due to the state of her relationship with Adam and attempts to recall how she and Ilan used to talk about their sons. Envisioning Ora and Ilan as a couple, Avram realizes that he misses Ilan. As Avram tells Ora about his girlfriend, Neta, Ora begins to see what Avram and Neta have in common, and Avram admits Neta is jealous of Ora because Ora is Avram's life support while Avram is Neta's. At Adam's birthday dinner, Ora did not listen much as Ilan, Adam and Ofer talked about the war and the army, thinking about when she found Ofer carving a club shortly after he enlisted; she wants Avram to know about this because it was such a bad moment for her as a mother. Reading a line from her notebook about the difficulty of making one person in the world after Avram demands that she tell him about Ofer, Ora commands Avram to add "one person who is easy to destroy" (page 454), though she assures him Ofer will be alright because they are writing about him.



Section 8: The Walk, pages 460-513

Section 8: The Walk, pages 460-513 Summary

Laying in bed, Ora worried Ilan was thinking about leaving again and warned him he would not have a place to stay because it would tear Adam apart. In the next wave of fear, he embraced Ora and admitted he was afraid of the unborn baby because he felt his personality was already fully formed. When he wondered whether they should tell him about Avram, Ora admitted she did each night. Both worried about raising Ofer, but both were excited at the idea of caring for Avram's child. As Ora writes in her notebook, Avram startles her when he awakes and asks if Ofer looks like him, so Ora describes Ofer in detail for the first time to Avram. Avram asks to join Ora, and when she agrees, he climbs into her sleeping bag, and they make love; Ora knows there will be an Ofer if she and Avram are like this again. Ora blurts out that Ilan went to the Canal to look for Avram on the second or third day of the war, and Avram insists on hearing the story. Ora agrees; she heard this story only once, on the morning Ofer was born. Ilan walked to Hamama and was admitted into the stronghold, lying that he was there to collect classified information from Magma, where Avram was stationed. Ilan was astounded and outraged to learn Magma had been invaded, and when the Egyptians bombarded Hamama, Ilan was struck with the thought of all the things he would never again get to do with his Avram, his best friend. Ilan threatened the Intelligence NCO until he set up the scanner, and when Ilan heard Avram over the scanner, he rushed to the Commander who claimed Avram was driving them crazy and it was impossible to rescue him from Magma. Ilan listened to Avram talk for hours about the war, Ilan and Ora, including making love to her. Ilan never asked Ora if this was true as he made love to her while telling this story shortly before Ofer's birth so that he could be Ofer's father. Ilan took notes as Avram talked, and he was devastated when the Egyptians entered Magma, fired a shot at Avram which caused him to scream, and the line went dead. Since no one was coming to rescue the men at Hamama, the Commander gathered his men, including Ilan, and they hid in the hills until a tank retrieved them. Ora felt like Ilan was poisoning her child while thrusting inside her, but as he finished his story, her water broke.

Section 8: The Walk, pages 460-513 Analysis

Ora recalls a time while she was pregnant with Ofer when she feared Ilan would leave her again. In his fear, he admitted his fear of raising another child. Both Ilan and Ora were excited at the idea of raising Ofer because it would be like seeing Avram as a child, and this demonstrates the love that both have for Avram. After Avram asks Ora to describe Ofer and she complies, Avram asks to join her in her sleeping bag, and they make love; this indicates that he feels a stronger connection to Ora as he learns more about his son with her. Once their physical reunion is completed, Ora accidentally mentions that Ilan searched for Avram during the war, and this causes Avram to beg her to tell him the complete story, though she has only heard it once, on the morning before



Ofer was born. She describes how close Ilan was to Avram and how he was tortured as he listened to Avram pleading for help over the transmitter since he could not help his dearest friend. Ilan even took notes of what Avram talked about. Though Avram mentioned making love to Ora while on the radio, Ilan never questioned her about it, instead making love to her shortly before Ofer's birth so that he could also be Ofer's father. Ilan was tormented by his inability to rescue Avram, but he escaped from Hamama and returned to Ora. As he finished telling her this story, Ilan climaxed just as Ora's water broke.



Section 9: The Walk, pages 514-553

Section 9: The Walk, pages 514-553 Summary

When Avram asks about what Ora and Ilan changed in his mother's house after they bought it, Ora explains they barely changed anything, but she tells him about the beautiful bed that Ofer built in high school. Ofer spent ten months designing and constructing the bed and then decided to give it to his parents, saying he would build one for himself when he married. As Ora and Avram begin walking down the mountain toward Shibli, Avram suddenly announces that he likes Ofer, and Ora is stunned because there is still so much he does not know about their son. She recounts how Ofer restored a decrepit well near Beit Nekofa with his family's help. As pain burns through her, Ora worries that she is wrong; "perhaps the more stories she tells Avram about Ofer, the less will remain of Ofer's life" (page 521). She wonders what Ofer will be like when he returns from war and thinks he is more suited to life here than she is since she might still have a family if she had kept her big mouth shut. Ora recalls that it was hard on her when Ofer gave up being a vegetarian as though he had decided to be as rigid and masculine as possible. Thinking of her drive with Sami and Ofer, she decides to call and apologize to Sami as soon as she gets home. Ora and Avram hurry when they see Arab shepherds watching them, but Ora greets the three men they encounter at the foot of a group of boulders, and the men offer coffee to Ora and Avram. Ora asks the older man to answer two questions, but he opts against it. As Ora and Avram continue their journey, she recalls how Ofer sealed himself off like her other men though he returned home on leave every three weeks. She remembers arguing with Ofer a year earlier after insisting he never shoot to hurt a human being because he objected that they are at war; she cannot use her one crushing argument, that his life will never be the same if he hurts a human being, because she is uncertain that is true as she looks at the strength in his body. Ofer always came to life once Adam joined them, and then the whole family came alive when he did.

About a year ago, Ora asked her secretary to cancel her next patient while she went shopping. She rested at a bus stop and boarded the bus when it stopped, riding the bus to the end of its route and then catching a bus back to town. She was terrified at the thought that the driver could be a suicide bomber. She began taking these trips daily because they gave her a slight reprieve from her arguments with Ilan, Ofer and Adam. When a bus exploded going the opposite direction one day, all of the passengers disembarked except Ora and one older couple who also rode the buses back and forth as she did. She summoned the image of an old man dancing naked in front of soldiers when he was finally freed from the meat locker in Hebron. Ofer was angry when she asked his friend, Dvir, how they could forget a person. Ofer sent her home without letting her wait to hear the results of his preliminary inquiry, and as she drove home, dejected, Ilan called to yell at her. He reminded her that Ofer needed her full support and the incident was not Ofer's fault; Ofer had asked about the man and been told someone must have let him out by then, "and Ora realized that perhaps there comes a moment when you can no longer ask that kind of question, because you begin to fear



the answer" (page 549). After arguing and hanging up on Ora, Ilan called back to remind her no one died, though the old man went crazy from being locked in the meat freezer for two days. Ora told herself to be grateful that Ilan is so supportive of Ofer and reminded herself to keep her mouth shut. When Ora says that she and Ilan felt their family coming apart quickly, Avram wraps his arms around himself and shakes his head no. Ilan tried to placate Ora as she drove, but she was furious and could not understand how Ofer forgot a man when he remembers everything. Ilan defends Ofer: it was not his responsibility and he was busy with a big operation. The police pulled Ora over as she drove, but she ignored them as she recounted how Ofer forgot to check on the man and never mentioned it when he came home. Laying her head on the steering wheel, she asked, "But it's Ofer, do you understand that, Ilan? It happened to us. It's our Ofer. How could Ofer, how could he?" (page 553).

Section 9: The Walk, pages 514-553 Analysis

At this point, Avram shows his interest in Ofer by asking Ora questions about their son, rather than simply waiting to hear what she decides to tell him. This results in Avram announcing that he likes Ofer, a fact that makes Ora extremely happy as earlier indicated by her acknowledgement that it is important to her for Avram to like their son. She brags about Ofer's ability to make the bed that he gave his parents and his talent in restoring a decrepit well. When Ora again feels the pain that she associates with Ofer, she worries that she was wrong originally and that she is shortening Ofer's life by telling Avram about him. Her thought that she might still have a family if she had kept her mouth shut foreshadows her revelation of why she lost her family. Meanwhile, her issues with Sami still continue to plague her. The animosity between the Jews and Arabs is evident as Ora and Avram rush after seeing Arab shepherds watching them, but the old men with whom they have coffee are also Arabs, showing that peace is possible between the two peoples. Ora recalls Ofer's visits home while he was on military duty, including his happiness to see his brother and best friend. Ora details the bus trips she took a year ago as a reprieve from her arguments with her husband and sons. Though she was terrified, she still rode the bus daily, even after a bus going the opposite direction was bombed. Ora angered Ofer when she asked his friend how they could forget the old man that was locked in a meat freezer for several days, and when Ofer told Ilan, Ilan also chided her, reminding her that the incident was not Ofer's responsibility or his fault; however, Ora still partially blames Ofer because he never forgets anything, so she feels that his negligence in this matter was some sort of betrayal.



Section 10: The Walk, pages 554-576

Section 10: The Walk, pages 554-576 Summary

When Ora and Avram wake and disentangle from each other at 5:30 A.M. so Ora can go to the local grocery store, it feels strange since they have not been apart in such a long time, and Ora tells Avram that they will figure out what works best for them after they finish the trail. Avram confesses that it is good for him to be with her, and after kissing him goodbye, Ora thinks that the walk is reviving him and wonders what place, if any, she will have in his life after this journey ends. Ora is eager to continue onward when she returns an hour later, causing Avram to worry she heard the news. When they climb the mountain, Ora admits she called home for her messages and learned Ofer is fine, according to his twelve messages, the last from 11:15 last night. Avram is restless because he can tell something bad happened; happiness has returned to him in small steps since sharing a night of love with Ora convinced their bodies that they would not be separated for many years to come. Avram never imagined it was possible to live an entire life without purpose, and when he asks if a child is a purpose in life, Ora tells him not always. Instructing Avram to hold her, Ora asks if they will always be together, and he tells her "until death do us join" (page 560). As Avram suddenly feels that Ofer is in danger, he holds Ora hard, and she demands that he think about Ofer. Ora says that Ofer's messages conveyed his worry about her journey which is normal since he has worried where his family was since he was a child. When Avram asks about her other messages, Ora admits Ilan called because he is worried about her disappearance, and Ofer sent Adam's regards also. Then, she tells Avram to leave her alone. As they pass more war memorials, Avram is concerned only for Ora. They meet two boys on the path who tell them about meeting a doctor from Jerusalem who asked them two questions and wrote the answers in his notebook. The doctor had planned to take this trip with his wife for many years, but before she died three years ago, she made him promise he would still take the journey and record questions and answers from everyone he met. Feeling Ora push him outside of the circle she has made with the boys, Avram feels Ora's stare as though she is seeing something new and painful in him. They continue their journey hurriedly as though they are running to reach Ofer. Upset that Ora is no longer talking about Ofer, Avram repeats the stories she told him to himself. He blocks her path finally, demanding she tell him what she is hiding. Ora admits she also checked Avram's messages from the grocery store, and most of them were from Neta who thought she was pregnant but it was a false alarm. Ora is distraught at the idea of Avram having a child, possibly even a daughter, but he insists he only has Ofer, that he and Ora have Ofer. When Ora objects that Ofer is only words to him, Avram asks to see a picture of him, and after she complies, Ora asks Avram to tell her what Ofer is for him. Avram says Ofer is Ora's child and is filled with her abundance, love and generosity which will always protect him everywhere, so Ora allows Avram to hold Ofer together with her. Her stare grows vacant as though she is falling asleep, and Avram wants to breathe life into her. He feels like she is trying to take Ofer somewhere but cannot do it alone and needs his help. Feeling that Ofer is sleeping, Ora panics that he must be awake the whole time, and she worries they were wrong about the path and the



walking; she thought they could protect him together if they both kept talking about him, but now she fears it is the opposite. Ora makes Avram promise he will remember everything from their youths, about the wars, and about Ilan, Avram, Ora, Adam and Ofer. She ignores Avram's kisses as she demands that he remember Ofer's whole life. They sit there, Avram holding Ora, for a long time until she detaches herself and rests against a rock, seeing nothing though her eyes are open and thinking "how thin is the crust of Earth" (page 576).

Section 10: The Walk, pages 554-576 Analysis

Ora and Avram feel strange when Ora leaves him to go to the grocery store, but they make plans to be together after they return home from their journey through Galilee. Furthermore, Avram admits that being with Ora is good for his mental health, as evidenced by the improvement in his mental status during this trip. Ora's anxiety to continue when she returns from the grocery store informs Avram that something is wrong, but she insists everything is fine. She confesses to phoning home for her messages and is thus able to assure Avram that Ofer was in good health as of the previous evening. Able to tell something is wrong from Ora's attitude, Avram continues to be uncomfortable, and this saddens him because he had believed he and Ora would not be separated for many years to come after their bodies were reunited the previous evening. As Avram holds Ora at her request, she asks if they will always be together, and he assures her they will. Avram's ability to feel that Ofer is in danger seems to parallel Ora's earlier feelings and indicates that Avram has become a parent to Ofer finally. Though Avram is concerned about Ora, she refuses to talk to him very much. They encounter two young boys who tell Ora about the doctor she had previously encountered, and she pushes Avram away as she talks to the boys. They continue their journey quickly as though trying to reach Ofer in a hurry. Avram subscribes to Ora's theory that Ofer will be safe as long as they talk about him; he tells himself the stories that Ora shared with him about their son since she is no longer talking. Finally, Avram insists Ora tell him what is bothering her, and she admits she checked his messages at the grocery store as well. Ora is jealous and upset about Neta's messages and the possibility of Avram having another child; however, Avram assures her that he only has one child, Ofer. Avram finally agrees to see a picture of Ofer, and when he tells Ora that Ofer will be protected by her abundance, love and generosity, she allows him to hold Ofer together with her. Ora worries again that she was wrong and talking about Ofer injures him rather than sustains him. After Avram promises to remember Ofer's entire life, Ora curls up against a rock and sees nothing. It is unclear whether the novel ends with her death or if she is mourning for Ofer or if she is just resting.



Characters

Ora

Ora is the main character in *To the End of the Land*, and her viewpoint is the one used most frequently as the story is told. She is Ilan's wife and the mother of Adam and Ofer. Avram loves Ora, and they have been lovers at various points in their lives. She is a red-head. Ora is sixteen years old in the Prologue, 1967. Ora meets Avram and Ilan at the age of sixteen while they are all hospitalized in 1967. She is attracted to Ilan while Avram falls in love with Ora. In 2000, Ora hires a cab to drive her son, Ofer, to a meeting place in Gilboa for a military campaign. She does not consider the insensitivity of hiring an Arab, Sami, to make the journey until after the fact. At home, Ora worries about receiving notice of Ofer's death, and in order to thwart the military's procedure, she decides to escape this event by pursuing her journey to Galilee that she had planned to take with Ofer. When Avram, Ofer's biological father, phones to ask if Ofer has been released, Ora offers to visit him, deciding to convince him to accompany her on her journey.

Avram wakes in a field to learn Ora kidnapped him and forced him to join her to Galilee. As they walk, Ora claims that she needs to talk about Ofer because it will keep him safe, but Avram refuses to hear about the son he has never met. Eventually, Avram agrees to listen to Ora talk about their son, warning her to start at a distance. Ora begins by talking about her older son, Adam, and her relationship with her husband, Ilan. She continues with anecdotes about Adam and Ofer's childhoods and how they are best friends. Ora believes Ofer will be safe as long as she talks about him.

As they walk along the path through Galilee toward Jerusalem, Ora and Avram recall their previous romance, her marital issues with Ilan, Avram's friendship with Ilan, and the time Avram spent as a prisoner of war at the hands of the Egyptians. Avram admits that he likes Ofer as he learns more about his son from Ora. After they make love, Ora tells Avram about Ilan searching for him during the war. She is jealous of the possibility of Avram having another child when she listens to his messages and learns his girlfriend, Neta, had a pregnancy scare that turned out to be a false alarm; however, Avram assures Ora that Ofer is his only child and that Avram and Ora will always be together. Suddenly, Ora and Avram feel that Ofer is in danger, and Ora begs Avram to help her hold Ofer together, even as she worries she is shortening Ofer's life by talking to Avram about it instead of insuring Ofer's safety as she originally believed. After making Avram promise that he will remember everything about Ora, Avram, Ilan, Adam and Ofer, Ora pulls away from him, lies on the ground and stares vacantly.

Avram

Avram is one of the main characters in this novel. He is Ilan's best friend, though he is in love with Ora and they are lovers sometimes during their lives. Because of this, he is



also Ofer's biological father, but he is distraught when he learns he impregnated Ora and so refuses to see their child. In the Prologue, 1967, Avram is sixteen and one-quarter years old. Like Ora and Ilan, he is hospitalized due to his illness. This is where he meets and befriends Ora and where he becomes friends with Ilan, his classmate who he previously disliked. Avram falls in love with Ora. Once he is eighteen years old, Avram joins the military, but he is taken from Magma as a prisoner of war and tortured by the Egyptians.

When Ofer is supposed to be released from the military, Avram calls Ora to find their son volunteered for another mission. Distraught, he agrees to let Ora visit him. Ora basically kidnaps Avram while he is semi-conscious and takes him with her on her journey to Galilee. On the journey, Avram agrees to hear about Ofer, and Ora spends the trip telling him about their child. She is thrilled when Avram announces that he likes Ofer. After they make love, Avram is upset to find Ora acting differently, and when she confesses she is jealous of Neta since Neta could still give him another child, he tells her he has only one child, Ofer. Sensing Ofer is in danger, Ora allows Avram to hold her, thereby helping her hold Ofer together. She makes Avram promise to remember everything about her, him, Ilan, Ofer and Adam before she pulls away and lies on the cold stone.

Ilan

Ilan is Ora's estranged husband, Avram's best friend and the father of Adam and Ofer, though he is not Ofer's biological father. As a teenager, Ilan is afflicted with the same illness as Ora and Avram, so he is also isolated in the hospital in Prologue, 1967. He is Avram's classmate, and while Avram does not like him when Ilan is awake, they get along well when Ilan is sleeping. Like Avram, Ilan joins the military once he reaches the age of majority. He helps Ora care for Avram after Avram is released from being a prisoner of war, but he leaves Ora when Adam is only a month old. Ilan returns a few years later, when Ora is pregnant again, to help her raise Ofer, Avram's son.

Ilan is successful in business and obviously cares deeply for Avram, though he is often cold towards Ora. During *The Walk*, 2000, he is travelling the world with Adam after having left Ora because of how she blamed Ofer for neglecting the old man who was locked in the meat freezer for two days. Regardless, Ilan is very concerned when he learns that Ora went on her journey through Galilee without Ofer.

Ofer

Ofer is Ora and Ilan's youngest son, though he was actually fathered by Avram. He is best friends with his older brother, Adam. Ofer planned to go on the trip to Galilee with his mother after being released from the military, but he volunteers for another mission. After Ora drops Ofer off in Gilboa, she worries about his safety and goes on the trip to Galilee with Avram who she tells about Ofer, believing Ofer will survive if they talk about him. Avram promises Ora that he will remember all of Ofer's life.



Adam

Adam is the oldest son of Ora and Ilan as well as the best friend of Ofer, his younger brother. During the novel, he travels the world with Ilan and does not speak to Ora because he is angry at her failure to fully support Ofer. During her journey through Galilee, Ora tells Avram about Adam's childhood. When he learns where his mother is, Adam sends his regards through Ofer.

Ada

Ada is Ora's childhood best friend who died at the age of fourteen after being hit by a bus. In the Prologue, 1967, Ora dreams of Ada frequently.

Sami

Sami is the Arab taxi driver who conveys Ora and Ofer to Gilboa in order for Ofer to report for the military mission he volunteers for. Sami is angry at Ora for not considering how the trip would make him feel, and Ora is distraught at the dissent with her friend. He agrees to drive Ora to Tel Aviv because he needs to take Yazdi, a sick young boy, to a makeshift hospital in that city. After picking Avram up, Sami drops Ora and Avram off in a field in Galilee, cursing the Jews and Arabs as he drives away.

Talia

Talia is Ofer's ex-girlfriend who broke his heart. Ora mentions her several times since she was also deeply hurt when Talia left Ofer.

Yazdi

Yazdi is a sick Arab boy who Sami and Ora take to a makeshift hospital in Tel Aviv.

Neta

Neta is Avram's girl friend of thirteen years who regularly disappears on him. When Ora hears that Neta thought she was pregnant but it was a false alarm, she is jealous of the idea that Avram may have more children still.

Libby

Libby is Adam's girl friend who he met through Ofer. Ora hopes they are happy together but is unsure because Adam will not speak to her.

Doctor

Avram and Ora encounter a doctor during their journey through Galilee. The doctor had planned this trip with his wife for many years, but before she died three years earlier, she made him promise to take the trip and ask everyone he meets two questions. He worries about Ora after meeting her, and when he finds her notebook about Ofer, he writes in it. His notes anger and intrigue Ora.



Objects/Places

Room 3

Room 3 is Avram and Ilan's room in the hospital in the Prologue, 1967.

Room 7

Room 7 is Ora's room in the hospital in the Prologue, 1967. This is the main setting of the Prologue and is where Avram and Ora first encounter one another.

Tapuach

Ofer served at the checkpoint near Tapuach for seven months, and he tries to amuse Ora with stories of his time spent here before leaving her to go to the meeting place of the military campaign for which he has volunteered as The Walk, 2000 begins.

Gilboa

Gilboa is the meeting place for the military campaign that Ofer volunteers for. Sami drives Ora and Ofer and is upset because he is the only Arab in the caravan. Ora is distraught at her thoughtlessness but is too concerned for Ofer to consider how the drive to Gilboa would affect Sami.

Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv is where Avram lives and where Ora has Sami drive so she can collect Avram for her journey through Galilee. During their journey through Galilee, many of the stories pertaining to Ora and Avram's pasts occur in Tel Aviv.

Galilee

Galilee is where Ora and Ofer planned to take a journey after his release from the military, but when he volunteers for another military campaign, Ora decides to take the journey with Avram, though she has to force him to join her. During their journey through Galilee, Ora tells Avram about Ofer because she feels talking about her son will keep him safe. Galilee is the main setting of The Walk, 2000. Avram and Ora come upon many war memorials as they walk along the path through Galilee that will take them to Jerusalem.



Ein Karem

Ein Karem is where Ora and Ilan last had a home together, and Ora occasionally misses their home during her journey through Galilee with Avram.

Tzur Hadassah

Avram's mother's house is located in Tzur Hadassah, and when he refuses to return to it after his rehabilitation, Ora and Ilan buy the house from him and raise Adam and Ofer. This house is the setting of many of Ora's stories about her sons' early years.

Hamama

Hamama is a fortress on the canal, near Magma, where Ilan traveled during the war in search of Avram. Here, he learned Magma was under attack by the Egyptians, and he listened to Avram plead for help over the transmitter. After hearing Avram be taken by the Egyptians, Ilan escaped from Hamama with the other soldiers stationed there.

Magma

Magma is the fortress on the canal where Avram was stationed during the war. Ilan managed to get to nearby Hamama in search of Avram, and when he learned Magam was under siege by the Egyptian, he listened to Avram talking over the radio until Avram was taken as a prisoner of war.



Themes

War

War is the main theme in *To the End of the Land* since all of the events in this novel are instigated or affected by war in some manner. Avram, Ilan and Ora meet while hospitalized in the Prologue, 1967 which is during a war as their conversation reveals. This could be part of the reason for their psychoses. A few years later, both Avram and Ilan join the military, and this is when they ask Ora to draw lots without telling her that she is choosing which of them will come home. Although Ilan travels to the canal in his attempt to find and retrieve Avram, he is unable to rescue his best friend and Avram is taken by the Egyptians as a prisoner of war. The torture he endures as a result affects his mental state for the rest of his life as can be seen in *The Walk*, 2000, which occurs approximately thirty years later. The racial tension between the Jews and the Arabs also results from the constant wars in the Middle East.

Once Ora's sons are of age, both Adam and Ofer join the military. At one point in the novel, Ora notes that Adam was significantly changed by the time he spent in the army, and noting that Ofer grew into a man during his work at the checkpoint near Tapuach, she wonders how much more he will be altered by the military mission for which he volunteers in the beginning of *The Walk*, 2000. Ora is distraught that Ofer volunteers for the mission nearly immediately after his service is completed and he has been released. Due to her distress, Ora decides to still journey through Galilee in order to thwart her deal with the army that she will accept news of her son's death. Avram is also bothered by his son's participation in the military as evidenced by his distress when Ora informs them that Ofer has not been released as expected. During their journey through Galilee, both Ora and Avram are careful to avoid the news as they refuse to receive any notice from the war that may be negative. As they walk, they also come across many war memorials, nearly at every place they visit, serving as an explicit demonstration of the prevalence of war in that particular region of the world.

Family

An important theme in *To the End of the Land* is the concept of family but not necessarily as defined by a blood relationship. In the hospital in the Prologue, 1967, Avram, Ilan and Ora become a family, tied together by shared experiences and emotions. After Avram is returned to them after being taken as a prisoner of war, Ora and Ilan do their best to take care of him because they love him. Ora and Ilan conceive Adam, but when Adam is only a month old, Ilan leaves his family; however, he insists that Ora still help him care for their other son, Avram. Several years later, Ora finds herself impregnated by Avram, but since Avram wants nothing to do with his son, Ilan helps Ora raise Ofer as though he is Ilan's own son.



During their journey through Galilee in *The Walk*, 2000, Ora tells Avram about her family. Though she plans to tell him about Ofer, she begins with Adam, explaining that Ofer is Adam, Ilan and Ora. Because they are a family, they are all the same, and Avram must get to know all of them in order to know any of them. She shares anecdotes from her marriage as well as her sons' youths. At Adam's birthday dinner not long ago, Ora and Ilan were both very happy when Ofer toasted Adam and the two brothers hugged because this lets them know that their sons will always support one another and be family, even after their parents are gone. At the end of the novel, Ora begs Avram to remember Ora, Avram, Ilan, Adam and Ofer; he must remember her entire family so they can always be a family.

Racism

One major theme in *To the End of the Land* is connected to the most important theme, war, and this is racism. This racism between the Jews and the Arabs leads to war which, in turn, results in more racism, continuing in an endless circle. In the Prologue, 1967, this can be seen by the derogatory attitude that the teenaged Ora and Avram take toward the Arab nurse who takes care of them in the hospital. In the beginning of *The Walk*, 2000, racist attitudes are seen through Sami's fear of driving Ofer and Ora to Gilboa since he is the only Arab in the caravan. Ora's thoughtlessness about this matter reveals one of two things; either she does not think about it because she is not racist and sees Sami as just another person, or she is racist and fails to consider an Arab's feelings. The first option is more likely due to her reaction to the dissent that results between her and Sami.

When Ora tells Avram about Ofer, she mentions his fear of Arabs as a child and his desire to cease being Jewish since everyone hates and kills the Jews. This shows the growth of Ofer's racism as well as his acknowledgment of the racism against his own people. During the journey, Ora is particularly disturbed by the war memorials and any Arabs whom she and Avram meet, showing her fear of her nation's enemy. When Ora asks if Avram hates the Arabs, he admits he does not, showing that he has not been poisoned with hateful racism, even though he was taken as a prisoner of war and thus has the most reason of any character in this novel to exhibit a racist attitude. This racism prevails subtly through the novel and can be seen in the opinions expressed about the war. These two nationalities have waged war on one another continually for centuries due to their prejudices which are only reinforced by the wars in which they partake.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person and omniscient. The point of view is generally reliable, though this is debatable at some points due to the mental status of both Avram and Ora. The fact that the point of view is third person and omniscient is proven by the fact that the narrator is able to report the thoughts and feelings of his characters, as well as the reasons behind them; he knows their pasts, presents and futures and is thus able to inform the reader why his characters react certain ways to specific stimuli. The point of view in *To the End of the Land* is important because it allows the readers to see how the horrors of war affect individuals, even at a much later date but especially when faced with a new war for the new generation, a terror well-known in the Middle East.

The novel is written using a very small amount of dialogue and mostly exposition, but because the majority of the exposition is actually stories from the past that Ora shares with Avram during their journey, these stories could also be considered dialogue in some way, meaning the bulk of the novel is written as dialogue though it is not formatted as such. This distribution is used to allow Ora and Avram to share all of their thoughts with the reader, though they do not reveal all of their thoughts and feelings to one another. It is effective because it allows the reader insight into the minds of these two main characters. The majority of the novel is told from the viewpoint of Ora with small sections revealed from Avram's viewpoint. Additionally, some of the stories that Ora shares are focused more on being told from the viewpoint of Ilan, Adam or Ofer, though she still possesses the all-encompassing viewpoint that tells the story.

Setting

To the End of the Land is set in the real world, in the Middle East. The Prologue opens at a hospital in 1967, and then, the novel skips forward to *The Walk* which occurs in Galilee in 2000. The characters in the novel are mostly Jews who are at war with the Arabs constantly. This poses a problem in Ora's friendship with Sami since he is an Arab. Additionally, the four main male characters, Avram, Ilan, Adam and Ofer, have all served in the Israeli military at some point which greatly affects Ora, the woman in all of their lives. Their military careers are also very integral to the novel's plot since a major theme is focused on the effect of war on individuals.

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the military campaign he has volunteered for as *The Walk, 2000* begins. Gilboa is the meeting place for the military campaign for which Ofer volunteers. Sami drives Ora and Ofer and is upset because he is the only Arab in the caravan. Ora is distraught at her thoughtlessness but is too concerned for Ofer to consider how the drive to Gilboa would affect Sami.

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Language and Meaning

The language used in this novel is generally casual and informal. The sentences are constructed fairly properly but are sometimes fragmented due to Ora's concern for Ofer and Avram's mental instability. The style of the language is useful as it reveals the inner workings of Ora and Avram's minds. Additionally, it provides the reader with a clearer concept of how the characters' minds have been affected by the continuous wars in their homeland.

The language tends to characterize the characters and their mental states, as well as their feelings about the wars, one another and other characters in the novel. The novel is written using a very small amount of dialogue and mostly exposition, but because the majority of the exposition is actually stories from the past that Ora shares with Avram during their journey, these stories could also be considered dialogue in some way, meaning the bulk of the novel is written as dialogue though it is not formatted as such. The language utilized in this novel serves to familiarize the reader with the characters, providing insight into their hopes and fears, in addition to the reasons behind these reactions. Overall, the language is fairly easy to understand, though the novel is unclear

at times as a result of the characters' disjointed thought processes, especially in the Prologue.

Structure

This novel consists of 576 pages divided into two chapters, Prologue, 1967 and The Walk, 2000. The Walk is further divided into nine sections. The chapters range from between 23 pages and 139 pages per section. The Prologue is comprised of 45 pages while The Walk contains 531 pages. Though the Prologue and The Walk are titled and dated, the individual sections of The Walk are not titled or numbered; they are indicated only by a fresh page. Each chapter or section is generally quite long and very detailed as Ora recounts the past in ways that generally leads to many tangents which are also described minutely. The Prologue occurs over a period of several days while The Walk takes place over a few weeks; however, since Ora spends that time telling Avram about the past thirty years, The Walk actually provides a synopsis of 30 years in addition to the detailed account of their walk through Galilee over several weeks.

To the End of the Land by David Grossman is a novel about the way the constant wars in the Middle East affect the people subjected to them. When her son is summoned to an army operation instead of receiving his release as was expected, Ora decides to still go on their planned journey to Galilee, only she is joined by Avram, Ofer's biological father, instead of her son. She spends the journey telling Avram about their son who he has refused to meet. To the End of the Land is a very difficult novel to read but is quite interesting overall.

The pace of the novel is slow due to the amount of stories that are shared which results in very little action in the novel's present. The novel is very difficult to comprehend at times because of the disjointed and non-chronological nature of the stories which Ora shares in combination with Avram's sporadic psychoses. Flashbacks are prevalent throughout To the End of the Land since most of the novel is written as Ora's recollections of the past while she tells Avram about Ofer, their son. Overall, the novel is often difficult to understand but still manages to be enjoyable, though seeing how war has affected the characters' lives is heartrending.



Quotes

"Dear diary, sighed Avram in a heavy Russian accent. At the midnight hour of a cold and tempestuous night, when I, weebegone, at last met a girl who was certain she knew me from somewhere- Ora sniffed contemptuously. Long story short, Avram continued, we examined every possibility, and after rejecting all her horrendous ideas, I came to the conclusion that perhaps it was in the future that we knew each other." Prologue, page 11

"I am happy, [Avram] thought with wonder. I want her, I want her to be mine, always, forever. His thoughts skipped, as usual, to the brink of possibilities, a lovesick dreamer: She'll be my wife, the love of my life." Prologue, page 46

"In every car sits a young boy, the first fruits, a spring festival that ends with a human sacrifice. And you? [Ora] asks herself sharply. Look at you, how neatly and calmly you bring your son here, your almost-only-son, the boy you love dearly, with Ishmael as your private driver." The Walk, page 63

"And what do I have to complain about? I held my child for twenty-one years-wakhad wa-ashrin sana. But they went by so quickly, and I barely had time for anything with him, but now that his army is finished we could have really started." Ora, The Walk, pages 111-112

"Don't run away on me now! Come asleep, come unconscious, but come! Don't leave me on my own with this." Ora, The Walk, page 123

"He's no longer part of me or of my life and really hasn't been for years. How could it be that the person I thought was my own flesh and blood, the root of my soul, would not tug at my heartstrings when he is severed from me in this way? What am I doing with him now? Why did this fixation grab hold of me now, when I need all my strength to rescue one child- why burden myself with another?" Ora's thoughts, The Walk, pages 140-141

"Avram, I can't go on like this... With you not even willing to... That I can't even say the name in front of you. Listen. This silence is killing me and it's killing him, so make up your mind... About whether you're really here with me." Ora, The Walk, pages 150-151

"Ora, it's my finally hearing from the outside something I've been hearing inside my head for years." Avram, The Walk, page 194

"How did it happen, she wonders, that while I only softened with the years, the three of them grew tougher? Maybe Ilan's right, maybe it's because of me that they hardened. They hardened against me." The Walk, page 238

"I wanted to write you like that every year. I thought it was something I would do with you over the years, many years. Fifty years like that is what I wanted. I thought... my plan was, once a year I would describe your body and face, every part of you, every



change in you, word by word, throughout our lives together, and even if we weren't together, even if you kept being his. That you'd be my model, but for words." Avram, *The Walk*, page 250

"You're practiced at this, aren't you?... At running away from bad news. You're a thousand times more practiced at it than I am, right? You've spent your whole life running from bad news. Running away from the bad news that is life itself, one. Running from the bad news that is Ofer, two. Running from the bad news that is me, three... Just remember that sometimes bad news is actually good news that you didn't understand. Remember that what might have been bad news can turn into good news over time, perhaps the best news you need." Ora, *The Walk*, pages 284-285

"My whole life I've felt that I missed out terribly by not having a daughter. Because I always think a girl would have made us into a family... That if I had a daughter, if Adam and Ofer had a sister, it would give them so much, it would change them, and also, if I'd had a daughter, I think it would have strengthened me against them, the three of them, and maybe it would also have softened them a little toward me." Ora, *The Walk*, page 291

"I didn't write it properly. I just don't feel that I'm getting the main point across. Not when I write, and not when I'm talking to you. I want to tell all the minutiae about him, the fullness of his life, his life story, and I know I can't, it's impossible, but still, that's what I need to do for him now." Ora, *The Walk*, page 294

"I can't say the thought never crossed my mind... That that was really what he was looking for. A partner like you. So that he'd have someone to be witty and clever with... Because I wasn't a good enough substitute. At least not in that regard. I couldn't do it and I didn't try, either." Ora, *The Walk*, page 325

"I feel as though we've been surgically separated. I am wounded, bruised, and desolate, now that you're uprooted from me." Avram in a letter to Ora, *The Walk*, page 330

"It was not love at first sight because I loved you long before that stop before I met you stop I love you backwards too stop even before I existed stop because I only became me when I met you stop." Avram in telegram to Ora, *The Walk*, page 334

"I keep talking about Adam, but Ofer is never Ofer alone. You understand that, don't you? Ofer is always also Adam, and Ilan, and me. That's the way it is. That's a family. You have no choice, you'll have to get to know us all." Ora, *The Walk*, page 359

"I also think about Ilan, about how he just left Ofer be himself and loved everything about him. He even gave up his damned judgmentalism, just so he could absolutely love everything Ofer was, without any inhibitions." Ora, *The Walk*, page 362

"And in those moments, I always think: This is my country, and I really don't have anywhere else to go. Where would I go? Tell me, where else could I get so annoyed about everything, and who would want me anyway? But at the same time I also know that it doesn't really have a chance, this country. It just doesn't. Do you understand? If



you think about if logically, if you just think numbers and facts and history, with no illusions, it doesn't have a chance." Ora, *The Walk*, page 372

"It was all because you didn't want me. If you'd said yes right away, if you hadn't tortured me for five years before giving in, I wouldn't have needed that whole march of folly... Not the way I wanted you. You wanted Ilan more; I was just the zest... You didn't want me, you were afraid... You were afraid, Ora, because the fact is you gave up on me in the end. You gave up. Admit it." Avram, *The Walk*, page 426

"When they hugged, I suddenly knew, body and soul, that even when Ilan and I were gone they would stay together, they wouldn't grow apart, they wouldn't be cut off, they wouldn't be alienated, and they'd help each other out if there was a need. They would be family, you see?" Ora, *The Walk*, page 452

"I'm afraid of him. I'm afraid of what I'll feel when I see him for the first time, and I'm afraid he'll look like him." Ilan, *The Walk*, page 461

"You just have to remember everything I'm telling you. What do you have such a big head for? Because I'll forget, I know I will, and you'll remember everything, every word. And in the end, you'll see, we'll give birth to a book." Ora, *The Walk*, page 470

"[Ilan] just walked. He didn't know if he was heading in the right direction. You asked what he was thinking, and he wasn't. He walked because he walked. Because you were there at the end of the road. Because only by chance were you there instead of him. I don't know, I think I would have done the same thing. Maybe you would have too, I don't know." Ora, *The Walk*, pages 471-472

"Dear listeners. Hurry up and get here, 'cause soon there won't be any Avram left for anyone... This is your beloved Avram. This is Avram begging you to hurry and save him before he lies with his forefathers, who, incidentally, adamantly refuse to lie with him, claiming his injury is considered menses." Avram, *The Walk*, page 488

"Wait, I didn't even tell you-wow, you really stunned me with that. Touch here, feel. The way you said, you know, that you like him, and there's still so much I haven't told you about him." Ora, *The Walk*, page 519

"But it's Ofer, do you understand that, Ilan? It happened to us. It's our Ofer. How could Ofer, how could he?" Ora, *The Walk*, page 553

"It's good for me to be with you. I want you to know that... The way you let me be with you like this, and with Ofer, and with all of you. You don't know what you're giving me, Ora." Avram, *The Walk*, page 555

"One thing I know, which I never imagined... You can live an entire life without purpose... Once, when I was still the dearly departed me, if you'd told me this was what I could expect, a whole life of this, I'd have done myself in on the spot. Today I know it's not terrible. That you certainly can. I'm living proof... I mean that nothing really hurts you

and nothing makes you happy. You live because you live. Because you happen not to be dead." Avram, *The Walk*, page 559



Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast Avram and Ilan.

Why does Ora insist Avram accompany her on her journey?

What causes the conflict between Ora and Sami? How does Ora feel about it?

How does Avram change during his journey with Ora?

Why does Ora feel it's so important to tell Avram about Ofer?

Who are the four men in Ora's life, and how have each of them hurt her?

Why does Ora panic at the idea of Avram having another child, and how does he reassure her?