

TransAtlantic Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Lily Duggan is a maid in a Quaker household in Ireland when Fredrick Douglass comes to the country for a visit. Lily is so moved by Douglass's words about freedom and possibilities, that she walks many miles to the Jennings' house in a coastal town where she plans to talk to Douglass again before boarding a boat to America. Lily is embarrassed to discover that Douglass doesn't recognize her. She later admits that she doesn't know what she expected from him and he certainly doesn't know how to handle the situation. After an awkward encounter, Lily leaves the Jennings' house in the middle of the night and goes on to America.

Lily has a brief relationship and has a son. When the Civil War breaks out, her son joins the Union Army. Lily becomes a nurse so she can be nearer to his regiment. She is working at a field hospital the day his body is brought for burial.

By this time, Lily has become friends with the man who delivers ice. His name is Jon Ehrlich. They marry and have four children. There are three older boys and a daughter, Emily. Two of the boys and Jon are killed in an accident. Lily builds a comfortable living for herself and her remaining children. She later divides the company between her remaining sons.

Emily loves to read. She spends hours with her books and, as an adult, wants to become a writer. She has an affair with a newspaper editor and spends years under his editorial thumb, always believing she will someday break into the journalism field in her own right. She has a child by that man. Lottie is brash and outgoing. Emily winds up moving away before she becomes a respected reporter and writer. She covers the efforts of Jack Alcock and Teddy Brown as they prepare to make the first transatlantic flight. By this time, Lottie has become an accomplished photographer and she takes the photos that accompany Emily's articles.

One evening, Emily writes a thank-you note to Isabel Jennings. Lottie asks Jack to take the letter with him, and to mail it once he reaches Ireland. Jack accepts the letter and puts it in his pocket. Ten years later, Lottie and Emily visit Jack to write an anniversary article. Jack admits that he forgot to mail the letter, and he gives it back to Emily. The letter remains unopened.

During that trip, Lottie meets a young man and they soon marry. They have a daughter named Hannah. The years pass and Lottie is happy in her life, though the family is not nearly as wealthy as her husband's family had been years earlier. They have a small cottage on the lough where they love to spend time. The men often duck hunt there. Hannah has a son named Thomas. He's quiet and prefers to think about star charts than hunting. However, during his second year of college, Thomas participates in the hunt. He's out before dawn one morning, placing the decoys, when soldiers kill him. Lottie and Hannah mourn as a mother and grandmother would naturally do.



Senator George Mitchell heads up peace talks in Ireland. As he finally brings the process to a close, Lottie finds a measure of peace with Thomas's death. Lottie never finds that peace. She eventually lives in the cottage on the lough but faces serious financial problems. With the bank demanding more money than she has, Hannah considers the one thing she has that might be of value – the unopened letter written by Emily and flown across the Atlantic.

She tries to sell it but soon discovers that it's of little value because it can't be authenticated. With the help of a new-found friend, she finally opens the letter and finds that it's merely a brief thank-you note. With that hope dashed, she packs up and prepares to let the cottage be put up for auction.



Prologue 2012; 1919: Cloudshadow

Summary

The story opens with a prologue titled 2012. A woman is in her cottage near the lough. She wakes very early, “even before the children,” and listens to the sounds of the cottage. She discovers that the pinging she hears is the sound of seagulls dropping shells on the roof as they try to break them.

Book One of the novel opens with 1919: Cloudshadow. The chapter begins with a description of the Vickers Vimy. It's an airplane that was used as a bomber during the war but is being refitted for the first transatlantic flight. Jack Alcock and Teddy Brown were involved in flying the bombers during the war. Both had been captured. Alcock was taken captive by the Turk when his plane was shot down. Brown was captured while he was doing photographic reconnaissance. He was shot in the leg and now walks with a limp.

Alcock and Brown meet at a Vickers factory in early 1919. Both recognize that the other wants to forget about the war and move forward. They begin working on the plane. They put extra fuel tanks in the bomb bays. They prepare to set out from a field in England, near the Cochran Hotel. They spend weeks eliminating boulders so the field will be safe for takeoff and landing.

Lord Northcliff of London has offered a reward for the first person to make a transatlantic flight. Alcock and Brown are one of many teams working on the process. There are soon plenty of onlookers at the field near the Cochran Hotel, including reporters who are writing about the planned flight for various newspapers around the country. Alcock and Brown know the conditions have to be perfect for their effort to succeed. They stay at the Cochran Hotel. Each morning, they rise, have breakfast, and watch the weather.

Brown has a fiancée. He's 32 years old and carries a cane because of the limp. Alcock is the one who usually speaks at the press conferences. While both men outwardly say they are determined to succeed, Brown has created a will in case he dies.

Emily Ehrlich is among the reporters. She writes for the Evening Telegram. She's quiet but constantly writing in her notebook. She lives at the Cochran Hotel with her daughter, Lottie, who takes pictures for Emily's articles. Emily has become an accomplished reporter but it's Lottie who asks the questions when they are with Alcock and Brown. Some of the men resent the 17-year-old Lottie but she confident questions about wind pressure, what it's like to see the sea beneath the plane, and whether Alcock has a girlfriend. Brown believes Emily's writing is the best he's seen.

On the day Alcock and Brown are due to depart, Lottie goes to the post office and buys a stamp for a letter, but she discovers there isn't an “overprint for the transatlantic post”



available. Late that night, Lottie goes to get her mother a cup of hot milk and meets Brown on the stairs. She asks if he'll do her a favor. He doesn't know how to refuse, but wishes he did. She retrieves the letter and asks if he'll take it with the mail bag they are carrying in his bag. He agrees. The next morning, Lottie makes sandwiches for Alcock and Brown, for their trip.

Alcock and Brown find acceptable conditions and take off on their flight. There's a tense moment during take off as they battle with the heavy weight of the fuel on the plane. They settle in for the lengthy trip. It's brutally cold and exhausting. Emily begins to write her article, including that there are two men with 197 letters, each with a special stamp. The trip is brutal. They have wires connected to a battery and run inside their suits to help keep them warm, but that power runs out before they reach their destination. They have problems with visibility and there is a period of escalated fear as they hope they are on the right course. At one point, they fall into a spin but manage to pull out.

They arrive over land at Clifton, Ireland, and immediately begin looking for a place to put the plane down. They choose what they believe is a fairly level field but when the front wheels hit, they realize it's a bog. The wheels dig in and they come to an abrupt stop. People soon come running toward them and they know that there is always a war of some kind going on in Ireland. They have a moment of panic as they worry that they'll be shot by soldiers, but it turns out that it's just people arriving at the scene from a mass service.

Analysis

The opening paragraph is set in 2012, a year after the final chapter of the book. There's a woman living in the cottage by the lough. It's obvious the cottage is the one owned by Hannah in the final paragraph. There are children in the house, indicating that the house has been purchased. The first instinct of some readers might be that Hannah's new-found friends, David and Aoibheann Manyaki, purchased the house. There's a mention of "children," which could refer to the Manyaki children. However, the woman in this prologue is just learning the sounds of the house. Hannah knew all about the cottage and was familiar with every sound. This is a new family and it means that Hannah has moved on. All this will make much more sense when the reader has the information presented in the final chapter.

There is a lengthy description of the Vickers Vimy early in this chapter. The plane's dimensions, maximum speed, weight of fuel, amount of oil, and horsepower ratios are among the pieces of information. While it may seem monotonous and pointless, it lends yet another level of credibility to the novel. The reader should remember that there are real people and events included in the story line.

Alcock and Brown are men of the early 1900s, and they have the sense of personal pride about themselves in keeping with that time period. They have a pan at the edge of the landing field that they use for shaving each day, just in case they are able to fly that



day. They also have razors with them so they can shave as soon as they land, so they can be presentable.

The mail is an important part of the story line. Alcock and Brown are carrying a pouch of 197 letters. Emily has written a letter that she wants included in the mail pouch, but there isn't a stamp available. Lottie asks for a favor and the letter winds up on the plane. However, Alcock will later admit that he forgets to put it in the mail when he reaches Ireland. That letter becomes a major issue in the novel.

The trip is brutal and there are times that Alcock and Brown aren't sure they are going to complete the journey. The author describes the trip in detail, including an uncontrolled spin, cloud cover, and some engine problems. The plane is so loud that they have trouble hearing anything when they land. The reader has to remember that this is a first. No one has made this flight before. They don't have modern instruments or navigation tools. They have to make their way based on stars, the horizon, and math calculations. It's not at all an exact science and their fears are legitimate.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the trip taken by Alcock and Brown. Why is it important? Why is it especially dangerous?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Emily? Who is Lottie? What do you know about them as characters?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the favor Lottie asks. Do you have a guess about the contents of the letter? Why do you think the author keeps the contents secret at this point?

Vocabulary

keen, crucible, anonymity, knack, intuit, obliteration, abyss, penchant, carnage, eloquently, smitten, benevolent, whimsy, tarmacadam, hefty, gait



1845-46: Freeman

Summary

The next chapter is 1845-46: Freeman. The story drops back in time and the setting is Ireland. Frederick Douglass as a renowned spokesman, although he is still technically an escaped slave. He is speaking out against slavery and oppression. He is in Dublin, Ireland, raising money for the fight against slavery in America. When he arrives on the ship, he unloads his own trunk because he's not accustomed to having other people do things for him. He arrives at the home of Mr. Webb, his Irish publisher. The footman struggles with Douglass's trunk because he has a special set of weights in the trunk.

Douglass arrives in Dublin at the home of his host, Mr. Webb, who is the man who publishes Douglass's books in Ireland. Douglass has a nap in the afternoon and wakes at dinner time. He recalls his trip across the ocean. Whites objected to his presence in first class and he wound up in steerage. Douglass tells his story often. He has run away multiple times. He is now traveling through Ireland and England, hoping to call on the people there to help put an end to slavery "through peaceful moral persuasion."

The next morning, Webb takes him for a tour of the area. He expects an orderly, prosperous place but finds men passed out on the streets and desperate children begging for his attention. The following day, he writes a note to his wife, Anna. He realizes that he feels differently because he is not in immediate danger of being captured and returned to his owners. Webb shows him a copy of the book cover. Douglass notices that he looks less "black" in the drawing, as if Webb or the artist is trying to erase that part of him.

Douglass struggles to find balance between showing respect and deference, and of appearing subservient. He accepts instructions on the cut of his coat so that he appears appropriately modest. Douglass notices a young maid in Webb's household named Lily. He is slightly disturbed by her presence. Douglass and Webb soon begin to grate on each others' nerves and discover that they don't really like each other. Webb tries to closely control the donations Douglass receives. He seems stingy in his personal dealings and Douglass feels that Webb is watching him as if hoping he'll fail. Douglass realizes that he is not perfect himself and that Webb isn't as bad as Douglass sometimes thinks.

Douglass realizes that the common people among the Irish are often oppressed and even starving. This disturbs him and he wants to address it during his speeches, but Webb advises against it.

They begin the trip to Cork and find there are lots of hungry, desperate people along the way. They see a woman carrying a dead child, and pleading for help for the baby. They arrive at the Jennings family home. One of the daughters, Isabel, explains that they have no servants in the house. They talk briefly about the situation, including the famine



that is threatening the people. Eventually, Douglass and Isabel discuss the situation. Her family owns warehouses full of food but they can't pass it out to the poor. Through her, Douglass realizes that there are dictators on the wealthy as well as the poor. Douglass finds that he is relieved to be back in a nice home in a comfortable situation. After six days, Webb leaves. Douglass is relieved.

One morning, Douglass arrives at the table for a meal and finds that Lily is there. He doesn't recognize her until someone introduces her. Lily says she was so inspired by Douglass's story that she has decided to leave Ireland and go to America in search of a better life. Douglass is caught off guard. He doesn't know what she expects of him. The next morning, Isabel wakes Douglass with the news that Lily left during the night. Isabel and her sisters are determined to find Lily. Douglass is still upset and doesn't know what is expected, but he doesn't feel he can refuse to accompany the sisters. They set out by horse and find that Lily is about to board a boat. Isabel gives her some money, some food, and a brooch. Douglass spends a few more days in the country before preparing to leave.

Analysis

From this chapter, it's evident that the novel is not going to be told in chronological order. Emily's mother is Lily, and she appears briefly in this chapter, first as a servant in a wealthy home and then as a young woman setting out for America. There is not a great deal of significance in this chapter, other than the fact that Douglass prompts Lily to leave Ireland in search of a better life. For the most part, the chapter provides a great deal of interesting information about Ireland and Douglass, but adds only a couple of pieces of information that are actually relevant to the story line.

Douglass carries a set of weights with him as he travels Ireland. They are special because someone forged them from the chains that once held slaves. These weights are symbolic of ending slavery. Douglass works out with the weights during his travels. There is a time when he feels that the weights are in the way and he wishes he didn't have them with him. This indicates that Douglass struggles with his life and his purpose.

Douglass is appalled by the conditions facing the really poor people of Ireland. He finds that many of the people are literally starving. He gives one little boy some money and the boy hugs him desperately, leaving a trail of snot on Douglass's coat. Douglass and Webb later find a woman carrying a dead baby. All this combines to make Douglass very aware of the plight of the poor Irish and he tries to talk to some of the wealthy gatherings about it, but Webb warns him against it. Webb points out that Douglass is asking these people for funding for the anti-slavery movement in America, and that he can't criticize their own country if he expects them to help him. Douglass realizes that he can't take on another cause and he stops talking about the Irish, returning his focus to slavery in America. Douglass's decision to focus on his priority is one of the book's themes.



Douglass's first encounter with Lily happens when he is in the Webb home. He is a guest there and Lily is a servant. He's aware of her and is slightly disturbed by her presence. It may be that he is sexually aware of her or that he's uncomfortable because she is a servant and she waits on him. The details of his impression are not revealed but it's later obvious that she doesn't make a lasting impression on him.

Douglass is an attractive man and lots of ladies want to spend time close to him. He seems to feel a connection to Isabel, especially after they ride in search of Lily. This aspect of his character is an important one because of the way some people see him.

Isabel Jennings and her family own warehouses filled with food while common people are starving. Isabel says they don't have the freedom to hand out that food. There are undoubtedly social and political dictates in place, but it's mainly left to the reader to determine what Isabel means.

Isabel Jennings is obviously a kind character who cares deeply about other people. This is seen in her determination to find Lily and to give her a helping hand as she sets out on her journey. Lily's trip is much easier because of Isabel's kindness. Obviously, it remains important to Lily throughout her life, and she shares the story with her family. Emily knows about Isabel many years later and she writes a thank-you note that Alcock and Brown carry across the ocean on their first transatlantic flight.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Frederick Douglass from the information this writer provides. Does it seem historically accurate? Why do you think the writer includes real historical characters and events in the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Lily? Why do you believe she's introduced in this way? Considering the fact that you know Emily, introduced in the first chapter, is her daughter, predict what happens to Lily after she leaves Ireland.

Discussion Question 3

What is the situation in Ireland during this time in history? What are the difficulties faced by the ordinary people?

Vocabulary

increments, bollard, stave, fervor, pander, condescending, chattel, fetid, audacious, insinuated, strident, penchant, ineradicable, rancorous



1998: Para Bellum

Summary

In 1998: Para Bellum, Senator George Mitchell is leaving his apartment in New York. He lives there with his second wife, Heather, and their infant son. He takes a moment to return to the apartment and say another good-bye to Heather and their son. He knows that Heather worries about his safety and fears that he might be assassinated.

A man named Ramon drives Mitchell to the airport. As they part ways, Mitchell gives Ramon tickets for an upcoming baseball game. Inside the airport, he receives special treatment. He makes the trip to Ireland each week, then to Washington, D.C., then home for the weekend. While he waits for his flight, he thinks about the coming deliberations. He knows there will be focus on wording and arguments over the details.

Mitchell grew up in a typical American home. His mother was Lebanese and he has been mocked for his "American boyhood." Mitchell served as a senator and was majority leader for six years. When he retired, he planned to practice law and live a less stressful life, but President Clinton called and asked Mitchell to oversee peace negotiations in Northern Ireland. The project was to last a couple of weeks but that date has come and gone multiple times. His expenses are paid but he doesn't draw a salary for the work he's doing.

By now, Mitchell has learned to tell the differences in accents and the history behind the various geographical locations. He has also learned that he really has to be careful about every word and action. He knows many people are waiting for him to fail. Many older women say they are praying for his work. When he arrives on this particular trip, a young man says that he is praying for Mitchell.

Mitchell finds a few moments to watch a tennis match. Lottie Tuttle, in a wheelchair, is also watching. Mitchell and Lottie introduce themselves. Mitchell discovers that Lottie is often at the tennis club, and that her grandson was killed years earlier. Mitchell doesn't ask how the grandson died because he doesn't want to get caught up in it.

Everyone involved in the treaty process is working in the same office building. Mitchell has given a deadline and that date seems to have everyone focused. A few days later, Mitchell encounters Lottie again and she introduces him to her daughter, Hannah. Lottie urges him to finish the peace process "for us." The chapter ends after an agreement has been reached. Mitchell prepares to head home, promising Heather he'll be there no later than Easter Sunday.



Analysis

Senator George Mitchell is actually a former senator. He no longer holds that office but many of the people continue to refer to him with that title. For the sake of continuity in this study guide, he is referred to as Mitchell except in direct quotes.

Like the previous chapter, this chapter does not include a lot of information relating to the four women that are the focus of the book. Mitchell encounters Lottie, but only briefly, and his role in the story seems incidental until the final chapter. In that chapter, Hannah reveals that Mitchell plays an important part in Lottie's ability to come to peace with Thomas's death. Even when that is revealed, it seems the author puts a great deal of time and effort into this chapter and it serves basically as nothing more than a tiny piece of the overall story line. Some readers may be annoyed at the lengthy chapter and the fact that only the end result of Mitchell's work is actually relevant to the story line.

Mitchell is real and he really worked on the peace process in Ireland. This is another case in which the author used real people and events but added the fictional meeting with Lottie and Hannah, possibly as a means of making the novel seem more real.

The chapter concludes with a sentence that some readers will find confusing. The line reads, "There is always room for at least two truths." The author is apparently talking about the differences in perceptions, especially when the people involved have vastly differing ideas and goals.

Discussion Question 1

Who is George Mitchell? What is his role in Ireland?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think the author used Mitchell and the peace treaty process as a background for the novel?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think the author means by the final sentence of the chapter, "There is always room for at least two truths"? Why do you think he chose not to explain the sentence?

Vocabulary

cavalcades, permutations, audacity, semantics, roil, posterity, vanities, intransigent, minutiae, caisson, parsimony



1863-89: Icehouse

Summary

In 1863-89: Icehouse, Lily is in America. She is serving as a nurse in a field hospital in 1863 during the height of the Civil War. She notes that many of the young men brought to the hospital are mortally wounded, but seem to “wait until they were in a woman's hands” before dying.

Lily was living in Saint Louis until her son joined the Union Army. She immediately left the city to be near his unit. When she arrived at the field hospital, she worked as a laundress but was soon asked to help with the patients and a black woman took over the laundry work. She talks to everyone about her son, asking if they've seen him. His name is Thaddeus Fitzpatrick.

Lily arrived in New York along with many others seeking a better life in America. She was disappointed that the city was dirty and she met so many crude people upon her arrival.

Jon Ehrlich is a quiet man who delivers ice every few days to the field hospital. Lily usually meets him and walks with him as he hauls the ice to a cooler. He asks about her son. One day, Lily finds Thaddeus among the bodies brought to the hospital for burial in a nearby plot. Lily tells them not to bury him yet. She takes time to do her part for the wounded men before she turns her attention back to her son. She takes his body inside and prepares him for burial. He has been shot near the armpit. The next time Jon arrives to deliver ice, Lily is waiting as usual. When they go to the cooler, Jon is amazed to find Thaddeus's body. Lily's grief finally spills over and she strikes Jon until she's too tired to continue. They bury the boy early the next morning and it's accepted by both of them that Lily is going to go with Jon.

Jon has a home north of the Grand River. Lily accepts baptism to become a Protestant though she has no religious faith. She and Jon are then married. When Lily is 37 years old, she has her first child with Jon. His name is Adam. Benjamin, Lawrence, Nathaniel, Thomas, and Emily follow. The older boys are soon working with their father, learning the ice business. They are very careful as they prepare to harvest the ice from their small lake. Everyone helps with the harvest and even young Emily can slide huge chunks of ice across the lake. It's then carefully stacked in an insulated building and the ice will remain there throughout the winter. In the spring, the family loads the ice on barges bound for Saint Louis.

The family prospers. They have a new house and smokehouse, and there's an abundance of food. They share their extra stores with other families at their church. One day, Jon returns from a trip to Saint Louis with a painting he presents to Lily. The painting depicts a beautiful scene including an arched bridge and a distant cottage. Jon



says it's supposed to be a scene from Ireland, Lily's homeland. Lily is dumbfounded. This looks nothing like the harsh countryside of her childhood.

Jon plans to get rid of the painting. That night, Lily tells Jon about her life in Ireland. She talks about her drunkard parents and the harsh life she lived as a maid. She then talks about meeting Fredrick Douglass who talked about democracy and possibilities, and she set out for America based on his ideas. She tells Jon about her trip to Cork and meeting Isabel Jennings. She cries and Jon doesn't know what to do. The painting finds a home above the mantle and Lily sometimes imagines Isabel or Douglass standing in that very scene. Lily thinks about her own impressions. She knows that she had greatly admired Douglass while he was in Ireland, and felt he was a gentleman. Here, though, she is confused by wars and death, and finds herself hating blacks though she prays for an end to those feelings.

Jon set out to build a new shed, complete with a pulley system he believes will make the work easier. One day, Lily hears a crash and she finds Jon, Benjamin, and Adam dead in the wreckage of the shed. Lily manages to stop the other children from seeing the sight of the dead. She hires men to repair the shed and knows that she's going to have to figure out how to run the business in order to support her remaining children. She believes that the other children are old enough to help and that they have a way to survive.

The year after Jon's death, Lily hires men and buys new machinery. In the fourth year after Jon's death, Lily sells her cabin and the ice equipment, and moves her family to town where she establishes a business, Middle Lake Ice, with herself as a dealer. She is amazed at her success. She no longer has to even touch the ice and she's making a good living. The orders continue to climb.

By the time Emily turns 14, she is happiest spending time in her room, usually reading. The next year, Lily divides the business between her three remaining sons. Lily and Emily move to a smaller house. They don't have many guests and not many young men are interested in Emily. She doesn't care.

One day, Emily and Lily attend a meeting of the National Women's Suffrage Association. Fredrick Douglass, 70, is in attendance. Lily vividly remembers the day Douglas had left the Dublin house where she was a servant. He'd shaken the hands of each staff member and they were later rebuked by the head butler. She remembers realizing that there was nothing keeping her in Ireland and the shame she felt upon arriving at the Jennings' home to discover that Douglass didn't remember her. Lily listens to the speech and feels every bit of her history that brought her to this place. She watches as Emily hunches over in order to get enough light to read.

Outside, Douglass heads for a waiting carriage with his second wife, a white woman. There is a moment where Lily could probably have caught his attention. She realizes that she wouldn't gain anything by hearing Douglass say her name and that he might not remember her at all. She has her sons, her daughter, and her memories. She tells Emily that it's time to go home.



Analysis

Chronologically, this chapter belongs after the chapter about Fredrick Douglass. Lily has arrived in America and has a son. Details about her trip and the early years in America are sketchy but the narrator does give some information. General information is provided later, including that Lily's trip was easier because of the kindness shown by Isabel Jennings.

Lily is torn about wanting to see her son. She's working in the field hospital, which means the only way he'll arrive at her location is if he's injured. Most of the men who arrive at the hospital stay only a short time. They either die of their injuries or they are sent to another hospital farther from the fighting. Lily prays that she won't see her son but she worries that her prayers will merely keep him in the middle of the fighting.

Lily's son is like most young men of this time. He was caught up in the idea of glory and was determined to fight. He probably didn't realize the true horrors he would face.

Emily and her three younger brothers are upset when their father and brothers die. In the moments after the deaths, the boys cower in the house in fear but Emily is nearly comatose. She doesn't seem to be able to act or react to Lily's words. Lily slaps her in order to snap her out of it, and it works. Emily leans into Lily, obviously seeking comfort. This says a great deal about the connection between Lily and her only daughter. That connection means that Emily will eventually know the details of Lily's trip from Ireland, including her chance meeting with Isabel Jennings. That puts other points of the novel in play, including Emily's letter that eventually winds up in the hands of Hannah, Emily's granddaughter.

Lily builds her business into a small empire, which is amazing for a woman of this time period. She has a line of credit at the local bank and they greet her by name. People talk to her with deference in their voices. Lily admits that the situation frightens her. Lily set out from Ireland because Douglass talked of opportunities and possibilities, and she has reached goals that she could only have imagined as a young girl in Ireland. This drive to reach goals is one of the novel's themes.

It's noted that Lily divides her business between her three sons when she retires, but she doesn't give anything to Emily. It's not that Lily is trying to play favorites, but in this time of history, it's typical for a woman to bend to the will of the husband and for the husband to support her. It's interesting that Lily gives her three sons a good start in life but doesn't help Emily, and Emily winds up unmarried and supporting herself as a writer for her entire life.

Discussion Question 1

What do you know about the relationship between Lily and Emily? What factors impact their relationship? Don't forget to mention historical factors, such as social dictates of the time.



Discussion Question 2

Describe Lily's life after her arrival in America. Do you believe she accomplished the dreams she had in Ireland?

Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the painting Jon buys for Lily?

Vocabulary

vitriol, gallantry, oblique, truncheon, striated, lilt, taciturn, supine, commemorative, brusque, meticulous, keen, brandished, espoused



1929: Evensong

Summary

The next chapter is 1929: Evensong, and it opens with Emily on a ship with her daughter, Lottie. Neither usually worries about her appearance, but they help each other dress on their first night on the ship. Emily is in her 50s and is overweight. She walks with a cane. Lottie is 27. She is tall with red hair, and has an inherent air of confidence. When the ship is far enough from land, a bell sounds announcing they are no longer under the prohibition law. The two women are on a 6-month trip. Emily will write stories for a Toronto magazine and Lottie will take photos along the way.

They read a novel together during the voyage. Lottie spends time with other passengers, always lively and always finding something to do. Emily thinks about this trip where the two women are in first class with plenty of ice available, courtesy of an electric ice maker. She compares that to her mother's life. Lily's conditions were horrible during the passage to America. She spent much of her life focused on the ice industry and lost a husband and two sons to the business.

Emily had never been in love. She had an affair with a newspaper editor named Vincent Driscoll. He was 42, lived and worked in Saint Louis, and was married. Emily hoped that she would break into journalism. She soon saw one of her articles in the newspaper but Driscoll had claimed the byline for himself. She continued to write and he continued to publish the articles with his own name. When she became pregnant, he accused her of blackmail but gave in to her demands, with some conditions. He allowed her to write as E.L. Ehrlich, but insisted that she continue to write for him as well. She agreed. He died of a heart attack in 1904 and left behind a letter claiming that he'd written all her articles. She was fired on the spot.

Emily moved with Lily to Newfoundland where they moved into the Cochran Hotel and she began to work for the Evening Telegram. She published some poetry with only minor success.

On the ship, Lottie spends more time away from Emily. One day, Emily falls ill and Lottie remains by her side for the coming days. Lottie is happy and wonders if she might have unintentionally fallen ill just because she wanted to spend time with Lottie, then she realizes that Lottie is enamored with the young ship's doctor.

They arrive at their first destination and a young man named Ambrose Tuttle is to be their driver. At Swansea, they arrive at the home of Teddy Brown and his wife. It's the 10-year anniversary of Brown and Alcock's transatlantic flight. Emily is writing a story for the anniversary and Lottie will be taking the photos for the article. Brown's wife greets Emily. Minutes pass before Brown enters the room. He has a letter and says it's the one Lottie gave them to deliver after their transatlantic flight 10 years earlier. He says he forgot about it and apologizes. Emily takes the letter but tells him it really doesn't matter.



They talk and Emily realizes that Brown is really struggling now. They talk about Alcock, who died just six months after the transatlantic flight. His plane crashed on his way to an air show. Brown says Alcock wouldn't have seen his death as tragic because he died in a plane. Brown says he doesn't do much anymore, and that he's made a career of living off his former fame.

When Emily finishes her interview, Lottie asks Alcock to go outside for a photo. He is self-conscious and she seeks to put him at ease. She asks him about the color of the carpeting at the Cochrane Hotel, and he realizes what she's doing. He guesses it was red but she corrects him, saying it was green. She talks about other photos she took of him during the months before the flight.

By the time they are driving back, Lottie and Ambrose have an obvious connection. They marry four months later in Belfast. After the ceremony, Emily thinks back over her life. She remembers her father's eyelashes, frozen together in death. She remembers her mother's life. As she looks through her memories, she understands more fully why Brown no longer wants to fly.

At one point during the reception. Emily tells Ambrose's family about her mother and her trip from Ireland. Their first and most pressing concern is whether she was a Protestant. Emily assures them she became a Protestant in order to marry Jon Ehrlich. Emily struggles through brief jealousy over Lottie's happiness but the actual moment of releasing her daughter is easier than Emily expected. She knows that Lottie will be cared for and that she's actually free to return to Newfoundland where she'll focus on filling her days alone. She knows she'll do some writing and that she's already stepping back in that direction.

Analysis

Emily is in her 50s by this point of the story. She has lived an unconventional life for a woman of this era, and she's tired of a lot of things. She's lived as an unwed mother, which was unheard of during this time. She has also become a respected journalist, but neither journey was easy. The author will present details about Emily's early life, but it's clear that she is simply tired of trying to please other people and of working so hard for the things she wants in life. It's interesting that Emily wasn't particularly moved by Fredrick Douglass's speech during the Women's Suffrage Association's meeting so many years earlier but her first published article is about Douglass. She has lived her life without bowing to the dictates of society and has succeeded in a male-dominated career choice. Despite this, and the fact that she and Lottie are best friends and constant companions, Lottie feels a lack of fulfillment.

The relationship between Vincent Driscoll and Emily was tumultuous and it seems that Emily might have hoped that the relationship would help launch her writing career. She wasn't romantically attracted to Driscoll and he treated her badly. When he stole her article about Fredrick Douglass, Emily was angry but Driscoll said she should be happy he printed the article and that he allowed her to use his name. This is an important look



at Driscoll's character and it provides the idea that Emily was desperate to become a newspaper reporter. She was "sickened" by his actions and that she allowed it.

Before Emily and Lottie leave Brown's house, Emily has discovered that the rumors about his drinking problem were true. She faces the question of what she'll write in her article and knows that she won't mention the booze. She says she wants to remember him as he was when he was flying and wants her article to "give him back his dignity." This is a look at Emily's character. She is now older and wants things to be like they were years earlier, and she doesn't want to use her opportunity to hurt Alcock just because it's the truth.

Emily makes a discovery about herself during this chapter. She has spent all her time with Lottie over the past years. They are highly connected to each other and it seems likely that Emily will struggle with Lottie's new life. Instead, Emily quickly accepts the new situation and knows that she'll be alright. Changes are one of the novel's themes and this is just one example of the changes that the characters endure.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Emily at this point of her life.

Discussion Question 2

What aspects of Emily's life are outside what's typically accepted for women of this period? What does this say about Emily?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the relationship between Emily and Lottie. How does it change over the course of this chapter?

Vocabulary

curlicue, anarchists, tandem, petty, canons, languid, exasperation, quiescent, compromise, ovation, condolences, accumulated, blasphemies, collaboration



1978: Darkdown

Summary

Lottie is at the tennis courts with her grandson, Thomas. He is Hannah's son. Lottie lives with Ambrose in a house in town, but they still own the cottage on the lough that Ambrose's parents gave them for a wedding present. Lottie and Thomas go to the tennis courts each Wednesday. He has decent technique but isn't at all interested. She teases him, saying he should "pretend it's rocket science." Thomas has always been very serious. He's studying to become an actuary. She wishes he would get a little crazy because she wants him to have some fun during his youth. She gives him a 20-pound note at the end of their tennis session, like always. She tells him not to spend it all the bookstore. She knows that he'll probably put it aside toward some larger purchase, such as a telescope. She asks if he has a girlfriend and Thomas makes a comment that makes her think he might. She's pleased with the answer.

Lottie and her family live in Belfast. The situation is tense and there is an evident military presence. Thomas and Lottie are stopped at a checkpoint on their way home from the tennis courts. Lottie is upset at the situation.

Lottie stops on the steps and hears Thomas enter the basement where Thomas lives. This gives him some much-needed space between himself and his stepfather. Lottie then goes into the house she shares with Ambrose. He has become "deaf as a post" and she worries constantly that he'll fall or have serious health problems. The family linen business "went bust" years earlier. Ambrose constantly worries about money but Lottie knows they have enough saved to live out their days comfortably.

Lottie is no longer so caught up in photography. She sometimes paints but doesn't like the new cameras and technology. During one trip with Ambrose, she left her camera at home, wanting to find out how it would be to have only memories.

Lottie is very concerned about the state of affairs. She is horrified by the violence in Northern Ireland. When she considers that Thomas may simply choose to save the money she gives him each week, she thinks that there may be no need for it, considering the conditions in Ireland.

Lottie and Ambrose set out for the cottage on the lough. Hannah will be there with her husband, Lawrence, and his guests. Lottie believes he invited too many but accepts that this is his week to do what he likes. Thomas is there as well. The hunters put out their decoys at five o'clock in the morning, well before daylight and the sounds of gunfire begin as soon as it's light.

Hannah and Lottie spend time together in the kitchen. Lottie notes that Hannah is smart but has "a talent" for giving away money. Hannah says she learned everything from Lottie. Hannah asks Lottie to try to get Thomas involved in the hunting. She says



Thomas listens to Lottie more than to Hannah. She suggests he could put the decoys out in the mornings. Lawrence presses for Thomas to be involved but Hannah says Lawrence should leave Thomas alone.

That evening, at “darkdown,” Thomas rows out on the water to look at his star charts. The next morning, Lottie wakes Ambrose for the day’s hunt. Lottie and Hannah provide a quick breakfast. Everyone is surprised when Thomas joins the hunters. Lottie asks Ambrose to keep an eye on him and Hannah makes the same request of Lawrence.

They all return safely that evening. In months and years to come, Lottie wonders why she didn’t ask Thomas why he decided to hunt that day. She will later consider that it might have been because Ambrose wanted Thomas to join them or because Thomas was just bored.

The final section of the chapter opens with this line: “Thomas is shot dead seven weeks into the hunting season.” Lottie is awakened before dawn by a shot. She knows it’s too early for hunters. She then hears a second shot. She gets out of bed and looks out the window for a minute. She’s just about to get back into bed when she hears a third shot.

Analysis

Thomas dutifully goes to the tennis courts with Lottie each week even though he has literally no interest in playing. This is an important look at Thomas’s character. Lottie really loves him and she would not force him to play tennis with her, but Thomas goes along willingly. It indicates that he loves her and wants to do his part to make his grandmother happy.

Lottie was passionate about tennis in her youth and she continues to be interested even in her old age. The chapter about Senator George Mitchell appears chronologically after the end of this chapter. Lottie meets Mitchell on a tennis court.

There are some details about the cottage on the lough offered up in this chapter. For example, the entry has a split door and there are several bedrooms. The kitchen is large enough for Hannah and Lottie to move around together, and there’s a pantry attached. An important aspect of the cottage is that the letter Emily wrote to Isabel Jennings is in the cottage. Lottie knows that Brown has died in recent years and she still remembers that he returned the letter to Emily. That letter remains at the cottage, unopened, even after all these years.

The final years of Emily’s life are covered only briefly. She continues to live at Cochrane Hotel and she continues to write up to her final years of life, though she mainly writes short plays near the end.

There are pieces of foreshadowing included in the chapter. The section in which Thomas decides to join the hunt is ripe with foreboding and the reader may literally be surprised to discover that Thomas survives the hunt. After the hunter return, there is a lengthy paragraph in which Lottie wishes she had taken time to talk to Thomas about



what he was thinking and feeling during the hours leading up to that hunt, and during the hunt itself. She obviously wants to know about this because it would give her a level of comfort as she has to deal with Thomas's death.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Lottie at this point in the novel. What kind of person has she become?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Thomas and how does he die? How do you think his death will affect Lottie and Hannah?

Discussion Question 3

What do you see as one of the most important themes of the novel up to this point? Give at least three examples of this theme.

Vocabulary

swoon, actuary, predictions, blithely, gusto, flippancy, nestled, mottling, curmudgeonly, frothy, calamity, concoction, penchant, chagrin, incendiary, banter,



2011: The Garden of Remembrance

Summary

The final chapter, 2011: The Garden of Remembrance, opens with Hannah talking about the letter. She says she has had the letter for a long time. She recounts its history, including that it traveled across the Atlantic Ocean in a Vickers Vimy almost 100 years ago. She describes the envelope, including that there are some water spots but no seal or “insignia.”

Hannah, now 72, admits that she has spent most of her life without a true goal and without a definite purpose. She worked as a nurse, a farmer, a cosmetic salesperson, and raised dogs. None of it has filled the longing she has to hold her son, Thomas. Hannah is in financial trouble. She has been receiving threats from the bank regarding her financial situation. She vows to Thomas's memory that she won't let the bank take the property.

She spends a lot of time outside. She sometimes swims, using a wet suit because of the cold water. She wanders around the property most days, regardless of the weather. Her old dog, Georgie, usually accompanies her. There has been no hunting here since Thomas's death. She and Lawrence split up in the years after Thomas's death.

Hannah goes for a walk and the phone is ringing when she returns. She doesn't get there in time to answer but hears the bank manager, Simon Leogue, politely demanding money. She can't erase the message without listening to it again, and she doesn't have the heart.

The story then reverts to Thomas's death. He was killed as he pulled his boat up to shore after dropping off the decoys for the day's hunt. Soldiers killed him because he had a bird gun with him. Hannah has never learned which military unit was responsible. When Lottie heard the third shot, she rushed into Hannah's room and said it was strange that there were shots so early. By the time Hannah got out of bed, Lawrence was running across the lawn saying “O, my God, Thomas” over and over. The current caught his boat and they had to go a long way to retrieve it. Lawrence picked his body up from the boat and carried him to shore. Even then soldiers were demanding that Lawrence put the body down. By then, there were sirens and spotlights. The newspapers reported that Thomas was outside in the predawn hours, armed with a gun.

As a child, Thomas heard about Alcock and Brown from Lottie's first-hand accounts. He was amazed that they'd flown across the ocean without a gyroscope for navigation. He often studied the stars. Sometimes military patrols encountered him on the water at night and they were often hostile but the local patrols had come to accept the “family's habits.”



Hannah thinks often of Thomas. She says she still can't stand to say that he was murdered. She feels very alone.

The next day, Hannah goes for another walk. Her BlackBerry beeps and she discovers that the bank now has her mobile number. She realizes that she can't simply ignore the situation and that she's eventually going to have to take some action. She gets into her old Land Rover with Georgie as her passenger. She arrives at the bank and has a meeting with the manager. He's polite but Hannah can see the seriousness of her situation.

Hannah returns home and weathers storms for the next two days. She then loads up the car again and sets out, this time with Georgie in the back and the letter, written by Emily all those years ago. That letter had flown across the ocean on the first transatlantic flight and Hannah hopes it will be worth enough money to get her finances back in order.

The story reverts to Hannah's mother, Lottie. Lottie had struggled with Thomas's death but she came to a more peaceful place once George Mitchell negotiated the peace treaty. Lottie died in her sleep and her cremated remains were scattered at sea. Until the end of her life, she loved the story of Alcock and Brown.

Hannah arrives at the offices of a philatelist. The man examines the letter. He says the indicia and envelope were correct for the letter to be from Newfoundland, but it lacked the transatlantic stamp that would make it worth more than "a couple hundred pounds."

Hannah has some wine after her disappointing visit. A police officer objects to the crooked way she's parked and realizes that Hannah has been drinking. Faced with the possibility of being taken to jail, Hannah calls a former lover, Jack Cradogh. Jack's wife isn't pleased with the situation but they agree that Hannah can come to their house. Eventually, an officer drives Hannah's car and Hannah rides with another officer to Jack's house.

Jack and his wife Paula sit with Hannah for awhile. Paula excuses herself, leaving Jack and Hannah alone. Hannah eventually reveals the letter to Jack. He says there's a professor named David Manyaki who is one of several people very interested in Fredrick Douglass. Back at home, there are more messages from the bank. Then Hannah learns that David would like to meet with her to discuss the letter.

Hannah is surprised at David's appearance. He is young with dreadlocks. They go to a small cafe. David says he can't really tell her what the letter is worth but offers to put her in touch with a collector. He takes photos of the letter and promises to be in touch.

Hannah begins the trip home but Georgie falls ill, unable to move her hindquarters and with no control over her bowels. Hannah goes to David's house where his wife, Aoibheann. They immediately take charge, calling a vet and making both Hannah and Georgie comfortable. The vet decides the dog is malnourished and tired. Hannah tries to pay the vet but Aoibheann takes care of it, then insists that Hannah will spend the



night. She winds up staying four more days and Aoibheann makes her feel completely welcome.

David says the collector might pay as much as a couple thousand for the letter, but that it would be worth more if it was opened and there was proof that the letter referred to Fredrick Douglass. Hannah knows that the letter might be completely worthless if she does open it. Hannah returns home with the knowledge that she has no way out of her financial mess other than letting the bank foreclose on the cottage. David calls, saying Hannah had left the letter behind. She knows she did and she says she wants him to be the one to open it. They discuss it and David agrees. He opens the letter and describes the contents.

The letter is two pages, written on the Cochrane Hotel stationary. The letter is dated June 1919 and it's from Emily Ehrlich. She says she wants to thank Isabel Jennings for her kindness to Lily.

In 2011, Hannah puts the cottage up for auction. Jack and Paula help her pack and she gives them several of Lottie's watercolor paintings. The bank manager arrives and looks guilty over the situation. A real estate agent walks through the rooms. Prospective buyers arrive. Georgie makes every step Hannah makes. Hannah imagines that Georgie knows they'll soon have only their memories of the cottage. Hannah learns to accept that Thomas was murdered. She also accepts that she has allowed herself to drift with no purpose ever since the soldiers murdered Thomas.

One day, Aoibheann and David arrive with their sons. It seems obvious that they are interested in buying the cottage but Hannah knows she won't continue to live there, even as a gift from them. That evening, Aoibheann puts the boys to bed. Aoibheann, David, and Hannah sit for awhile and she is pleased with their tenderness. She is also glad that the world doesn't end just because things change.

Analysis

The final chapter is written in first person from Hannah's perspective. While the perspectives of other chapters have been limited to the specific characters, this chapter is somewhat more limited because of the first-person perspective. At one point, Hannah says that she decided to "put pen to paper" because she feels so lonely. Without Thomas, she has no one who is really interested in her life anymore. This might explain why the final chapter is presented in first person.

Hannah's financial situation has become dire by this point in her life. Lottie once remarked that Hannah had a talent for giving away her money. While Lottie was generous, she realized the need to take care of her own needs. Hannah seems to have never learned this and now it's really too late for her to recover. The situation is driven home when she stops for gas during her first trip in this chapter. The young man at the gas station returns her credit card "with a slightly embarrassed shrug," then said there was no charge. It seems obvious that she has no credit available on her card and that



someone decided not to charge her at all. It seems possible that she might have done a good deed for someone, prompting that kindness in return, but it may also be that people simply know she's in trouble and are willing to help her.

When Hannah arrives in Dublin, there's another look at Hannah's money problems that give a deeper understanding of Hannah's character. She goes to an upscale hotel where she is turned away because she has Georgie with her. She argues the point but then leaves. Once she's away from the hotel, she admits that she didn't actually have enough money for a hotel. Hannah still has some pride but her situation is so serious by now that she doesn't have many options available. Hannah herself says she doesn't know how it got to this point. Most modern-day readers can identify with how quickly financial problems arise.

Hannah spends a lot of time looking back on her past. She sees the beautiful watercolors when she's visiting Jack and Paula, and it makes her think that she has wasted a lot of time swimming and walking around her property when she might have been doing something more productive. This seems fairly typical of a woman in her later years of life and it offers yet another look into Hannah's character.

Hannah's reaction to the letter is chaotic. She has placed a lot of hope in this letter and seen that hope dashed. When David reads the letter to her, she thinks over her past. She imagines her son walking through the door. She writes that "The world does not turn without moments of grace." It's bound to be horrible for her, discovering that there's no mention of Fredrick Douglass, which would have made the letter more valuable, and that it's a simple note of thanks. The reader should put himself in Hannah's shoes at this moment to fully understand her reaction.

Discussion Question 1

How does Thomas die? How does his death affect his family?

Discussion Question 2

What does Hannah learn about the letter during this final chapter of the novel?

Discussion Question 3

Describe Hannah at this point in her life. What are her challenges?

Vocabulary

discernible, insignias, flourish, qualms, perplexing, truculent, empathized, trajectory, monastic, balked, scuppering, resonance, morose, bespectacled, cabal, reciprocating, claustrophobia, aplomb, malevolent, ambient, philatelist



Characters

Emily Ehrlich

Emily is the daughter of Lily, mother of Lottie, and grandmother of Hannah. Like all the women, she has strengths but she also has some weaknesses. Her major strength is that she's self-confident and is willing to defy convention. This allows her to become a single mother, though she admits that she briefly considered abortion. She never feels the need to marry simply for the sake of appearances. She also pushes her way into journalism, which is a male-dominated field during Emily's lifetime. She has to work hard at her craft and it takes years for her to become a respected member of the journalism community.

Emily is also fully aware of her mother's background, which leads her to write a thank-you letter to Isabel Jennings, the woman who gave Lily money, a brooch, and encouragement when Lily set out for America. This letter is an indication that Emily is a kind person who is conscious of the feelings of others.

Emily and Lottie are best friends and spend most of their time together until Lottie marries Ambrose. Emily doesn't resent Lottie's happiness or the fact that she is now going to live alone, which is another statement of her deeply caring character.

Lily Duggan Ehrlich

Lily is a maid in a Quaker household in Ireland when Fredrick Douglass comes to the country for a visit. Douglass is a renowned anti-slavery advocate. He talks about hope and following dreams. With his words in her mind, Lily packs up her meager belongings and leaves her employer. She walks for miles to the coastal town where Douglass is staying with the Jennings family before setting out for America.

Lily is a strong character, though she seems to lack a level of self-confidence when she's young. This is seen as she sets out from Ireland all on her own but is embarrassed when Douglass doesn't recognize her.

When her son joins the Union Army, Lily becomes a nurse in a field hospital in order to be near him. When his body is brought in from the battle field, Lily finishes caring for the living soldiers before turning her attention to her dead son. When her husband and two other sons are killed, Lily takes on the responsibility for the family's financial well-being, which is an incredible undertaking in this time. Even then, when she's built a small empire and provided a comfortable living for her family, she is amazed that businessmen recognize her and call her by name. These are all important aspects of her character that emphasize her difficult childhood in Ireland.

The story picks up when Lily is already an adult, living and working as a maid in a Quaker household in Ireland. Details about her childhood are presented only as brief,



vague memories of brutality at the hands of drunkard parents. Her life as a maid is only slightly less brutal, but it's still very difficult. She connects with Douglass because she lives a very controlled life, with few options and very little time to do as she likes. She realizes, through Douglass, that there is an opportunity for a better life. The fact that she reaches out on her own and takes it is indicative of her strength. The fact that she's embarrassed that Douglass doesn't remember her is evidence of her lack of self-confidence. She keeps both traits through adulthood.

Hannah

Hannah is Lily's great-granddaughter, Emily's granddaughter, and Lottie's daughter. Her character is somewhat different from the other women of the novel, mainly because the majority of information about Hannah is presented as she nears the end of her life.

An important aspect of Hannah's character is that she's Thomas's mother. She has married a man who is not Thomas's father, and the two men seem to have nothing in common. Thomas is quiet and interested in math while Hannah's husband is an outdoorsy type, interested in hunting. Hannah wants the two to get along and she gently pressures Thomas to participate in a hunting ritual while they are at the cottage. Thomas is setting out decoys one morning when soldiers shoot and kill him.

Hannah, as can be expected, never comes fully to terms with Thomas's death. She and her husband split up because of it and it seems likely that she would be prone to blame him, though the story line doesn't go into detail about the breakup. She notes that Lottie does seem to find a level of peace regarding Thomas. While she doesn't seem bitter about her mother's attitude, she can't ever reach that stage herself.

The final chapter of the novel follows Hannah's final weeks in the family cottage on the lough. She loves the place but is in trouble financially. She is furious at the situation but her answer initially is to burn the bills and ignore the calls from the banker. When she finally has to face the issue, she hopes that Emily's unopened letter will bring enough money to save the cottage. It isn't and Emily is forced to accept that she's going to have to leave.

Lottie

Lottie is the granddaughter of Lily, daughter of Emily, and mother of Hannah. As a young woman, Lottie discovers a love of photography. She spends years honing her craft and takes the photos that accompany her mother's articles. She is skilled at taking pictures, including the ability to put her subjects at ease during the photography session. Later in life, she loses interest as cameras become more sophisticated. She eventually stops taking photos and begins painting.

As an older woman, Lottie is very much afraid for her husband's health. She watches him carefully and worries when he becomes quiet, fearful that he might have fallen or had some other problem. This indicates the level of love she has for him.



Lottie loves tennis and she especially loves the time she spends playing with her grandson, Thomas. As a college student, Thomas lives in the basement of Lottie's house, which gives him a little distance from his stepfather. Lottie worries that he is too serious and she urges him to get a girlfriend. When he teases her about that comment, she hopes it means that he has met someone.

Lottie is understandably horrified by Thomas's death. She grieves, as would be expected. Thomas was shot by soldiers and Lottie closely follows the progress of Senator George Mitchell as he negotiates peace talks. When Mitchell's work is finished, Lottie finds a level of peace regarding Thomas's death.

Thomas

Thomas is Hannah's son and Lottie's grandson. He is a college student by the time his story is presented. He lives in Lottie's basement, partly because it provides a little distance between Thomas and his stepfather. Thomas is a math major and has declared that he wants to be an actuary. He spends part of each Wednesday playing tennis with Lottie, though he obviously has no interest at all in the game. This is an indication of his loving nature.

Thomas has never joined in the hunts at the cottage prior to the hunting season of his death. He may have wanted to please his stepfather or he may have felt that, as a man, he should join in the hunt with the other men. Lottie later wishes she had asked what made him decide to join the hunters. Thomas is putting out decoys one morning before daylight when soldiers shoot him, ostensibly because he has a hunting rifle in his possession at the time. It's years before Hannah can call talk about the murder of her only child.

Fredrick Douglass

Fredrick Douglass was a famous orator who spoke out against slavery. In this novel, Douglass arrives in Ireland while he is still technically an escaped slave. He spreads his message, often through the Quakers, and raises money to fight slavery in America. Douglass greatly identifies with the people of Ireland because he senses that many of them are slaves to their situations. They are often hungry and those who are well often are sometimes bound so that they can't offer significant help.

Douglass doesn't realize that he's made such an important impression on the young maid, Lily, until she arrives at a coastal town on her way to America. He doesn't know what's expected of him and he can't imagine what he's supposed to say.

While Douglass is a real historical character, his role in this book is fictional, according to the author.



Senator George Mitchell

Senator George Mitchell is in his 60s when he's in charge of the peace talks in Ireland. He is married to his second wife, a much younger woman, and has an infant son. Mitchell wishes he wasn't responsible for the process and he isn't paid for his work. He's often frustrated but takes his role very seriously, spending a great deal of time and energy on it.

Mitchell and Lottie meet entirely by chance. He is impressed by her attitude, which is evident even at her advanced age. His work greatly affects Lottie. With the peace agreement, Lottie finds a measure of peace regarding the death of her grandson, Thomas.

Ambrose Tuttle

Ambrose is a young RAF soldier when he meets Lottie and Emily. His job is to drive Lottie and Emily as they conduct an interview for an article. By the time they begin their return trip, it's obvious there's a connection between Ambrose and Lottie. They marry and have one daughter, Hannah. By the time the story focuses on Lottie, Ambrose is old and Lottie has begun to worry about his health. He is among those hunting at the cottage the day Thomas is killed.

Jon Erhlich

Jon is the owner of property next to a lake where he harvests ice each year, selling it in the spring and summer months to the restaurants and other businesses around the Saint Louis area. Jon is a kind man who meets Lily when he delivers ice to a field hospital during the Civil War. He asks Lily during each visit if she has heard from her son, indicating that he knows of her concern and that he's concerned as well. Jon and Lily marry after Lily's son dies, and they have six children of their own, including Emily. Jon dies when a wall collapses, and his two older sons are also killed in that accident.

Alcock and Brown

Jack Alcock and Teddy Brown are the first men to fly across the Atlantic. They rush to be the first to successfully make the trip. They meet Emily and Lottie as they are preparing for their first flight, and Brown reconnects with the women when they write the 10-year anniversary story.

Symbols and Symbolism

The Letter

The Letter that Emily writes to Isabel Jennings just before the first transatlantic flight is due to take off becomes a symbol of hope - and then disappointment - throughout the novel. Lottie has the responsibility of mailing the letter, but she can't procure official stamps to be included with the pouch of mail in that first flight. She asks one of the pilots to take the letter as a favor, and he does, but then forgets to put it in the mail once he arrives in Ireland. The pilot hands the letter back to Emily ten years later. It is never opened but is handed down to Lottie and then to Hannah. When Hannah finds herself in financial trouble, she tries to sell the stamp or the letter, but can't get enough money to save herself from eviction. In the end, she learns that the letter is merely a thank-you note for her kindness to Emily's mother, Lily, as Lily was leaving for America.

The Painting

The painting of an Irish countryside given to Lily by her husband is symbolic of the Ireland that she doesn't really know and of a brutal childhood that she's tried to forget. However, she keeps the painting and later imagines Frederick Douglass and Isabel Jennings are somewhere in the scene. When Lily sells her house after Jon's death, the painting is the first thing she packs to move to the new home.

The Vickers Vimy

The Vickers Vimy is symbolic of forward progress in history. This is the airplane that Alcock and Brown fly for the first transatlantic flight. The plane was used as a bomber in the war but Alcock and Brown refit it for the flight. They put fuel tanks in the bomb bays and make other modifications, changing it from a war machine to a plane that will make history.

Fredrick Douglass's Weights

Douglass considers the weights he carries in his suitcase to be a symbol of the end of slavery. The weights were forged from the chains that held slaves.

The Women's Suffrage Association

The Women's Suffrage Association symbolizes a missed opportunity for Lily. This is an organization that holds a meeting near Lily's home with Frederick Douglass as a guest speaker. Douglass addresses the rights of women which makes Lily think back to the



first time she met him, and to their meeting at the Jennings' house. Lily has a chance to talk to Douglass at the end of the meeting, but she passes it up.

Middle Lake Ice

Middle Lake Ice symbolizes Lily's independence and self-reliance. She establishes this business after Jon and her two sons die in an accident on the ice farm. The business sets Lily up as a dealer so that she puts buyers and sellers in touch with each other. Middle Lake Ice is successful and Lily becomes a recognized member of the local business community. She eventually divides the business between her three sons.

The Cockrane Hotel

The Cochrane Hotel is where Emily, Lottie, Brown, and Alcock stay during the months before the transatlantic flight. Emily lives out her days at the hotel but Lottie leaves when she marries, and Brown and Alcock leave after their flight. There isn't a great deal of description other than the fact that there are several floors and some of the carpeting is green.

The First Transatlantic Flight

The flight symbolizes change and technological advances. Alcock and Brown make the first flight all the way across the Atlantic, which changes history. The flight, along with other advances including radio, make the world "a little smaller."

Georgie

Georgie represents Hannah's feelings of being alone, which have been intense because of Thomas's death. Georgie is Hannah's dog during her later life. Georgie is old with failing health, but is Hannah's constant companion.

The Irish Peace Treaty

The treaty, brokered by Senator George Mitchel, becomes an important symbol in Lottie's ability to cope with Thomas's death.



Settings

The Cottage on the Lough

Ambrose's parents give Ambrose and Lottie a small cottage on the lough as a wedding gift. They spend hours there together, working on the cottage and building it into a retreat that they love. The cottage has a half-door and a sloping lawn. It is always subject to the weather. When Hannah lives there as an older woman, it's impossible to keep the entire house warm. There's a sunroom that was added years after the other rooms were complete. The cottage is near the water and is very private, though Hannah sometimes has to chase off interlopers. The cottage comes to represent family and security for Hannah. As she is preparing to leave it for good, she can still imagine Thomas walking into the rooms.

Ireland

Many of the characters spend some or all of their lives in Ireland. Fredrick Douglass visits and finds he can identify with the Irish people. At the time of his visit, many people are starving and Douglass believes that they are virtual slaves to their circumstances. Lily is born in Ireland and leaves as a young adult. Lottie settles there and Hannah remains there. The country is chaotic at times and prone to violence. Thomas's death can be traced directly to that violence.

Senator George Mitchell spends a lot of time trying to help the people establish a peace treaty. His efforts finally pay off and the end result bring a sense of peace to Lottie as she deals with Thomas's death.

The Ice Farm

This is the farm owned and operated by Jon Ehrlich in the mid- to late-1800s. Jon has a successful business here, harvesting ice from a nearby lake, prior to meeting Lily during the height of the Civil War. Jon is trying to advance the farm with more modern facilities when a wall collapses, killing Jon and two of his sons. Lily expands the farm once she's in control, buying more modern equipment and hiring hands to take care of some of the work. Lily eventually sells off the farm and moves to town.

Newfoundland

Newfoundland is where Emily and Lottie live before the transatlantic flight of Alcock and Brown. They move there when Emily has to find a new job and live in the Cochran Hotel. The area isn't described other than the area where Alcock and Brown prepare for their flight. They make an airstrip where they have their plane awaiting the proper time to take off.



The Field Hospital

Lily works in a field hospital during the Civil War. She moved to that area to be nearer her son, Thaddeus, who was fighting in the war. The hospital is in an old glass factory. There is a place set aside to store ice and a nearby cemetery where many men are buried after they die in the fighting.



Themes and Motifs

Freedom

The text shows that freedom is sought by people of many situations - not only slaves in the traditional sense. Freedom is a theme for several of the characters of the novel, most notably in the chapter devoted to Fredrick Douglass. Douglass is still technically a slave during the time he visits Ireland. He is living as a free man, but he knows that he could be returned to his owners at any time. He lives with that sense of dread in the years after his escape because he knows that his newfound freedom could be revoked at any time. Douglass plans to negotiate for his formal freedom by buying himself from his masters soon after leaving Ireland.

Douglass has a great affinity for many of the people of Ireland because he can tell most of them have very limited resources and their choices are limited even further. He travels across some of Ireland's very poor districts and is amazed at the number of people who are literally starving to death because of crop failure. The people have a very limited diet and when there are problems with those crops, they aren't able to turn to other food sources in order to live. Douglass feels their pain because he had no choices when he lived as a slave. Even after he escaped, his life was limited by the fear that he might be returned to his owners. The Irish people have that same kind of fear, but for different reasons. They aren't technically slaves, but they are "enslaved" by their lack of options.

Many of the Irish people are trying to leave the country and Lily Ehrlich is one of them. She is inspired by Douglass's words and uses that inspiration to give her the courage to leave Ireland. This is a major undertaking for a young girl who doesn't have any support network at all. Lily has the freedom to embark on the journey as long as she has the money to pay her way, and it's rather amazing that she is apparently able to put herself in a situation to do so.

Isabel Jennings is yet another example of this theme. Isabel is a member of a wealthy family in Ireland. Her family is playing host to Douglass during the second part of his stay and Lily arrives at the Jennings home on her way to set sail for America. Isabel helps Lily by giving her a piece of jewelry, a little food, and some money, but she says she isn't free to do all the service she wants. Isabel's family has stores of food while people all around her are starving. She says it's not acceptable for her to hand out their food, but she doesn't explain why. It seems likely that there are social and political dictates of the time that limit what the Jennings family can do.

Alcock and Brown are also examples of this theme. Both served in the war and both were captured during their service. While they survived, both feel the need to move on from those memories and, by unspoken agreement, they never talk about their time as prisoners.



The Importance of Family

The novels shows, through the lives of Lily, Emily, Lottie, and Hannah, that life is inevitably intertwined with, and influenced by, family.

Lily arrives in America as a single woman. The details of how she has her first child are not fully revealed, but she has a son named Thaddeus Fitzpatrick. Thaddeus is her only child when the Civil War erupts. He joins the army and Lily moves to be near his regiment. The fact that she works first as a laundry woman and then as a nurse in a field hospital is a statement of her devotion to Thaddeus. She wants only to be as near him as possible. The day his body is brought to the field hospital, Lily packs up and leaves.

Lily and Emily are very close, mainly because Emily is the only daughter in Lily's second family and they live together after Emily's father dies. Their relationship is probably not nearly as close as the relationship between Emily and her daughter, Lottie. Emily is an unwed mother, which is a huge break in convention during this time period. She works as a journalist, which is a male-dominated field at this time. She takes Lottie with her and that probably sparks Lottie's interest in photography. By the time Lottie is in her late teens, she is taking all the photos for her mother's articles and is a published photographer, all because of her close relationship with Emily.

It's also because of her relationship with Emily that Lottie is traveling and meets Ambrose, the man she later marries. Emily remains devoted to Ambrose when they are old. She worries about him almost constantly and checks on him often. They have a daughter of their own, named Hannah. There is not a great deal of information about the relationship between Hannah and Lottie, but they move easily around each other when they are staying in the cottage together, indicating that they are close enough to work together with no problems.

Hannah has one son, Thomas. Thomas is an intelligent, thoughtful young man by the time he's introduced. He is a college student and wants to work in the accounting field. Hannah loves and worries about him, as evidenced by her conversations with Lottie. Thomas lives in Lottie's basement and he spends time with her. The fact that he goes with her to play tennis even though he has no interest in the sport is an indication of his love for his grandmother.

Lottie and Hannah are naturally devastated when Thomas is killed. Hannah never gets over it, which is understandable. She lives in the cottage in the later years of her life and she imagines that she sees him walking through the rooms.

Another example of this theme is seen in the fact that Hannah knows the story of how her great-grandmother was inspired Fredrick Douglas to leave her home and travel to America. The story is obviously passed down to her, which is evidence that the women of the family felt it was important.



Opportunities and Goals

There are several characters who set out to attain goals and others who seize opportunities. Fredrick Douglass is important because he sets many other characters onto paths that will lead to their own opportunities. Douglass seized the opportunity for freedom by running away from his owners multiple times, and by arranging to formally purchase his freedom so that he could live his life as a free man. Douglass talks at length about his life and the opportunities that await others who are brave enough to take hold of them. Lily is one of many people who hear Douglass's words while he's visiting Ireland. There is a mass exodus from the country with many headed to America in the hope of finding a better life. Most of these people are hard working and need only to have the right opportunities.

Lily talks about her own decision to leave Ireland. She remembers standing in the house in Dublin after Douglass left and realizing that she had only a few possessions and a job. There was nothing actually holding her in Ireland, which is why she set out for America within a short time of Douglass's departure. Once in America, Lily has a son and loses him in a way, but then marries and helps her second husband build their ice business into a profitable endeavor. After her husband dies, Lily advances the business and eventually becomes a dealer. She didn't set that as a goal, but she seizes the opportunity when it becomes available to her.

Douglass also talks at a women's suffrage event. He compares the plight of women to the plight of slaves before the war, saying that women should have the same opportunities as men. By this time, Lily has divided her business among her three sons and is living a happy, quiet life. She has an opportunity to talk to Douglass, but realizes that she doesn't need his approval or even a comment from him to validate her life. She's happy with the way her life has turned out, despite the heartaches along the way.

Emily is present at the suffrage event but she doesn't seem very interested in Douglass's words or in her mother's reaction to them. Emily, however, spends her life outside the traditional role of a woman of this era. She manages to work her way into a career in journalism and raises a child as a single parent.

Thomas is another character with clear goals, but he doesn't reach them because his life is cut short. Thomas has a flair for the maths and sciences, and Lottie is amazed that Thomas wants to become an actuary. His goals are to finish school and to settle down with a good career. Lottie admires his determination even though she doesn't really understand why he chose this field.

Senator George Mitchell is another example of this theme. His goal is clearly outlined and he has accepted the challenge to negotiate a peace treaty in Ireland. Mitchell sets deadlines and mandates in an effort to reach an agreement, and many people are invested in the process as well as the outcome.



Finally, Alcock and Brown see the opportunity to be the first team to make the transatlantic flight, and they accept that challenge. Their success changes the world in many ways and impacted many people.

The Effects of War

The novel demonstrates how the effects of war affect are much father reaching that the soldiers directly involved in it; it changes families, towns, and the course of history.

Lily and her son are chronologically one of the first examples of this theme. Lily comes to America because Fredrick Douglass convinced her it was a land filled with opportunities. When the Civil War erupted, Lily's son Thaddeus quickly joined the military. Lily virtually lost her son as soon as he enlisted. The casualties during the Civil War were incredibly high and Lily's son was one of the thousands of victims. She struggles while she is uncertain of his fate because she wants to pray for his safety but fears that dooms him to remain forever on the battlefield. In the end, Lily is working at the field hospital when her son's body is brought in from the fighting. Not only had Lily given up her life to be near her son's regiment, she is present when his body is brought in from the battlefield. There's no doubt that moment irrevocably changed her forever. Thaddeus loses his life and Lily is destined to grieve for him for the rest of her life.

Thomas's death is another example of this theme. Thomas is a college student in war-torn Northern Ireland when he joins his family for the annual hunting trip. He is setting out decoys one morning when soldiers shoot and kill him. His mother Hannah and grandmother Lottie never know for certain which military unit is responsible. The newspapers report that Thomas was armed when the soldiers shot him. That's true but he was armed with a hunting rifle. Like Thaddeus, Thomas's life is cut short. He has a promising career ahead of him but doesn't get the opportunity to fulfill it. Lottie and Hannah are left to grieve as only a mother and grandmother can. Lottie and Thomas are especially close and she describes feeling a hole in her chest after his death.

Lottie comes to a level of peace regarding Thomas's death once Senator George Mitchel brokers a peace treaty in Northern Ireland. That peace treaty, and Mitchell's role in the process, are also examples of this theme. Mitchell had planned to enjoy his retirement when President Clinton called, asking him to oversee the treaty process. Mitchell agrees to take on the challenge. Over the months of his involvement, he sees the effects of war, including the many women who are mourning their sons, husbands, and fathers. There are many deaths associated with the fighting and each leaves a family behind, forced to grieve and to go on without that loved one. Thomas was one of many innocent casualties.

Alcock and Brown are yet another example of this theme. Both had served in World War I prior to their decision to attempt a transatlantic flight. Both were captured and apparently endured horrible conditions during their incarceration. While they had that experience in common, they silently agreed never to talk about it. It might seem that their experiences would come up in conversation, but it never does. This seems to



indicate that the men were greatly affected by the war and their experiences during the fighting.

Hope

Several of the characters depend heavily on hope as a means of going on with their lives. Other characters struggle to find sufficient hope to deal with difficulties.

Lily is one of the most important examples of this theme. She is beset by tragedy from an early age. She says her life as a child was brutal and her life as a maid was little better. She grabs onto the ideas Fredrick Douglass presents as a chance for a better life. Once in America, she is present at the field hospital when her son's body is brought in from the battlefield. She marries Jon Ehrlich and has six more children, but loses two of them and her husband in an ice farming accident. Through it all, Lily continues to hope for a better life and she never stops working toward that.

Lottie is another important example of this theme. Lottie has a reasonably happy life and she hopes that her only grandson, Thomas, will also find happiness. Shortly before his death, she tells Thomas that he should go find himself a girlfriend. Thomas hints that he might have one, which makes Lottie extremely happy for him. Her hopes for his future are dashed when he is killed. Lottie grieves but eventually finds a level of peace because of Senator George Mitchell's peace treaty.

Emily has unfulfilled hope and that weighs on her, especially during her later years of life. Emily has lived an unconventional life, becoming a respected journalist and raising a daughter on her own. But during her voyage toward her interview with Teddy Brown, she admits to feeling that there is something missing in her life. She can't imagine what it is that she is missing. There seems to be only a minor hope that she'll find that thing that's missing.

Hannah is also struggling with hope. There's not really information about her state of mind prior to Thomas's death, but she admits that she has problems in her later years. She winds up in financial trouble and knows that it's because she was never able to come to terms with Thomas's death. She never held a job for any length of time, mainly because of a lack of hope for her future. She notes the paintings in the home of a friend and thinks about the time that she's wasted, swimming and walking around the area surrounding her cottage. She imagines that she might have been able to do more if she'd had the drive. That is likely traced directly back to her lack of hope after Thomas's death.

At the end of her life, when financial problems were forcing her out of her home, Hannah held onto the hope that the letter might provide enough money to get her past the hurdles she's facing. That hope is dashed but Hannah, with a new-found attitude of hope, realizes that the world will go on, and she's thankful for that.

Other characters show signs of this theme. Fredrick Douglass hopes that he'll become a free man. Senator George Mitchell hopes he'll be able to broker peace. Alcock and



Brown hope they'll successfully make the flight across the ocean. While both men hold to the hope that they'll succeed, Alcock made out a will, just in case. This indicates that they had hope but faced the real possibility that they might die.



Styles

Point of View

The story is presented from a limited perspective. The point of view changes several times over the course of the novel. Several of the chapters are seen from the perspective of four generations of women of a single family. Other chapters are seen from the perspective of characters who touched their lives. Some of the events overlap, so that scenes are presented from multiple perspectives. For example, Fredrick Douglass visits Ireland where he first meets Lily Duggan Ehrlich. He talks about meeting the staff members of the household, including the maid named Lily, but he doesn't realize that she listens to his words and that he inspires her. She makes another appearance in his life before he leaves the country and, from his perspective, the meeting is awkward because he doesn't know what she expects of him. When she remembers their meetings, the reader sees them from her perspective.

This is seen again when Thomas is shot. Lottie hears the shots and feels that there must be something wrong. At the end of the chapter devoted to Lottie's perspective, Thomas's death is revealed. More details about his death are offered in the chapter devoted to Hannah's perspective.

The limited perspective means the reader sometimes has to figure out meanings and connections that seem tenuous at best. For example, there's an entire chapter devoted to Senator George Mitchell as he deals with peace talks in Ireland. He briefly meets Lottie but that meeting seems tenuous until Hannah talks more about Thomas's death. She then reveals that Lottie had come to a peaceful acceptance of Thomas's death because Senator Mitchell was able to broker a peace package.

The changing perspective is necessary because the novel spans more than a century of time and characters who appear in the story during the early years are not alive as the final chapter comes to a close. The limited perspective is acceptable because it allows the writer to keep some details secret, such as the contents of Emily's letter.

While the majority of the story is written in third person, the final chapter changes to first person. This chapter ends the saga of the four generations of these women. The change from third person to first drives that point home and puts the reader more deeply into the fact that this final chapters happens in a relatively modern time.

Language and Meaning

The novel is presented as a series of short stories that weave together the lives of four generations of a single family. The women travel the world and live unconventional lives. While the novel is presented in modern English, there are words and phrases that come directly from the time periods and places of the various events. Most readers will be



able to follow these without any problem. For the most part, the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases can be determined by the context.

The fact that the chapters do not follow a chronological order may be a problem for the casual reader. Some readers may have difficulty remembering names of the characters, especially those who are mentioned in an early chapter and then brought up again several chapters later.

The novel is presented mainly as narrative. There is some dialogue but the conversations are implied. Unconventional punctuation – including the lack of quotation marks – makes it occasionally difficult to decide if a passage is just a narrative or if there's a dialogue taking place.

In the final chapter, there are several instances of curse words used. These seem to be an effort to ensure that the reader understands that times have changed and that the final character is living in a modern world with all the extremes of modern society. Some readers may find these words offensive.

There are many partial sentences that end with periods. These are generally short and abrupt. For example, Lily thinks back to her life as a maid. She describes her life, including, "A half-day off a week. Sloshing through dark streets. To buy tobacco. The only relief." In most cases, these passages imply abrupt, chaotic thoughts. There are also some lengthy passages with run-on sentences. These also serve a purpose. The prose is sometimes flowing and poetic but is crude at other times. The changes are sometimes indicative of the situation or character, and are sometimes meant to create emotions within the reader.

Structure

The novel is divided into three sections the author titles as books. Book One contains three chapters. They are 1919: Cloudshadow; 1845-46: Freeman; and 1998: ParaBellum. Book Two is divided into three chapters. They are 1863-89: Icehouse; 1929: Evensong; and 1978: Darkdown. Book Three has a single chapter. It is 2011: The Garden of Remembrance.

As is clear by the dates of the chapters, the book is not presented in chronological order. The first chapter is about Emily and her daughter, Lottie, as they cover the first transatlantic airplane flight. Lottie asks that the pilot take a letter to be mailed once he crosses the ocean. The second chapter drops back in time to Fredrick Douglass and his meeting with Emily's mother, Lily. Lily was so moved by Douglass's ideas that she went to America. The third chapter is devoted to Senator George Mitchell who brokers a peace deal in Ireland. While there, he meets Lottie, Emily's daughter.

The first chapter of Book Two is presented from Lily's perspective as she deals with the death of her son, meets her husband, and has three more sons and a daughter, Emily. The second chapter is devoted to Emily and her daughter, Lottie, as they travel together

until Lottie meets and falls in love with a man she marries. The third chapter of this novel is devoted to Lottie's life as a loving grandmother.

The final chapter of the novel focuses on the last of the family, Hannah. Hannah is living in poverty and, faced with eviction, tries to sell the letter that traveled in the plane that made that first transatlantic flight.



Quotes

That's what pleased Brown the most. They were using the bomber in a brand-new way: taking the war out of the plane, stripping the whole thing of its penchant for carnage.”

-- Narrator (1919: Cloudshadow paragraph 18)

Importance: Both Alcock and Brown had been captured during World War I and they hated war. The effects of war is one of the novel's themes.

Can you put it in the mail bag? No imposition at all, he says, turning on the stairs once more, slipping the envelope inside his tunic pocket.”

-- Narrator (1919: Cloudshadow paragraph 81)

Importance: This is a conversation between Lottie and Teddy Brown the day before he hopes to set out on the transatlantic flight. Brown worries that she's going to give him some ridiculous keepsake and is relieved when it turns out to be a letter. Lottie had actually tried to buy a transatlantic stamp so the letter could be officially included in the mail, but there were none available. This letter becomes very important in the chapter about Hannah.

On occasion I have to pause, astounded that I am not a fugitive anymore.”

-- Fredrick Douglass (1845-46: Freeman paragraph 63)

Importance: Douglass is writing to his wife, Anna, and is talking about how differently he feels now that he's in Ireland and can be relatively assured that he won't be captured and returned to his owners in America. Freedom is one of the novel's themes and Douglass is a major example of that theme.

Famine. The word had not occurred to him before. He has seen hunger in America, but never a countryside threatened with blight.”

-- Narrator (1845-46: Freeman paragraph 333)

Importance: Douglass has been across a large region of Ireland by now and has seen people starving and on the brink of madness because of the hunger. He hadn't expected to find that the average Irish person was in such dire circumstances. It's a revelation for him and he wants to do something about it, but knows that working against slavery is too big for him to take on anything else.

What she worries most of all is that he will become the flesh at the end of an assassin's bullet.”

-- Narrator (1998: Parabellum paragraph 26)

Importance: This is Heather, wife of Senator George Mitchell, as he's headed back to Ireland to continue his work on the peace treaty. She, along with the rest of the world, realizes that he's in serious danger there because of the unrest. That unrest claimed Thomas's life.



So many of them waiting until they were in a woman's hands."
-- Narrator (1863-89: Icehouse paragraph 4)

Importance: Lily is working in a field hospital during the Civil War. She sees hundreds of wounded young men taken to the hospital and Lily sees many of them hold onto life until they arrive at the hospital.

It was much later, when all the living had been attended to, that she glanced out the window at the row of bodies still waiting in the grass. Mounds of flesh. Only the clothing would march off again."
-- Narrator (1863-89: Icehouse paragraph 66)

Importance: Lily has tended to the wounded men at the field hospital and is now turning her attention to her son, Thaddeus. He is among those killed that day. She comments on the brutality of war, saying that they were "mounds of flesh" and that their clothing would be taken for other soldiers to use.

No part of Ireland had ever vaguely resembled the canvass Jon Ehrlich had brought home.
-- Narrator (1863-89: Icehouse paragraph 129)

Importance: Jon bought a painting as a gift because the artist told him it was an Irish countryside. The idea of a beautiful Irish countryside is not unique to Jon or this artist. Fredrick Douglass had also expected at prettier country. Lily lived in the rough part of the country, in a rough life, and the picture initially makes her cry but she later comes to like the picture, imagining Fredrick Douglass or Isabel Jennings just out of sight.

There was something she wanted, just out of reach, but she was never quite sure what it could possibly be. She had a sense of something more, the turn of a page, the end of a line, the push of a word, a break in the structure of her habits."
-- Narrator (1929: Evensong paragraph 21)

Importance: Emily's life has been full in some ways. She is an accomplished journalist and her daughter Lottie is her best friend. But Emily has never been in love or married. Like some of the other women of the story, she longs for something she doesn't have but she can't name that thing.

Find yourself a girlfriend for crying out loud. Who's to say I don't already?
-- Lottie/Thomas (1978: Darkdown paragraph 27)

Importance: The first sentence is Lottie's comment and the response is her grandson, Thomas. Lottie worries that Thomas is too serious and that he's missing out on the fun of youth. She later tells Ambrose that Thomas "might" have a girlfriend. After Thomas's death, Lottie takes comfort in the fact that he might have had one.

Unopened the letter is even less effective of course, except for its preservation of possibility, the slight chance that it contains a startling fact, or an insight into some



forgotten beauty.”

-- Hannah (2011: The Garden of Remembrance paragraph 5)

Importance: Hannah is talking about the famous letter written by Emily that was included unofficially in the first transatlantic flight. No one has opened the letter and Emily is the only one who really knows what it says, which means that it's a mystery. At this point, Hannah considers that the letter is filled with possibility.

The newspapers made it ever so simple: a young man out armed with a gun, besieged by men out armed with more guns. How far from real the truth is.”

-- Hannah (2011: The Garden of Remembrance paragraph 30)

Importance: Hannah is talking about the reports of Thomas's death. The media and/or military spun the story to make it seem that Thomas was a threat when he was actually just setting out the day's decoys.