

Tuesdays with Morrie Study Guide

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

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



Contents

Tuesdays with Morrie Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
The Curriculum.....	6
The Syllabus.....	7
The Student.....	9
The Audiovisual.....	10
The Orientation.....	12
The Classroom.....	13
Taking Attendance.....	15
The First Tuesday We Talk About the World.....	17
The Second Tuesday We Talk About Feeling Sorry for Yourself.....	19
The Third Tuesday We Talk About Regrets.....	21
The Audiovisual, Part 2.....	22
The Professor.....	23
The Fourth Tuesday We Talk About Death.....	24
The Fifth Tuesday We Talk About Family.....	26
The Sixth Tuesday We Talk About Emotions.....	28
The Professor, Part 2.....	30
The Seventh Tuesday We Talk About the Fear of Aging.....	32
The Eighth Tuesday We Talk About Money.....	34
The Ninth Tuesday We Talk About How Love Goes On.....	36
The Tenth Tuesday We Talk About Marriage.....	39
The Eleventh Tuesday We Talk About Our Culture.....	41
The Audiovisual, Part 3.....	43



[The Twelfth Tuesday We Talk About Forgiveness.....](#) 44

[The Thirteenth Tuesday We Talk About the Perfect Day.....](#) 46

[The Fourteenth Tuesday We Say Goodbye.....](#) 48

[Graduation.....](#) 49

[The Conclusion.....](#) 50

[Characters.....](#) 51

[Objects/Places.....](#) 54

[Themes.....](#) 55

[Style.....](#) 58

[Quotes.....](#) 59

[Topics for Discussion.....](#) 62



Plot Summary

Tuesdays with Morrie is a true story about sportswriter Mitch Albom and his favorite college professor Morrie Schwartz. During Albom's undergraduate years at Brandeis University, when he takes every class taught by his mentor, he and Schwartz form a bond that goes beyond the typical student/teacher relationship.

After graduation, Albom promises to stay in touch with his professor and moves to New York City with the intention of pursuing a career as a professional musician. He spends several frustrating years working odd jobs and wondering what he is doing wrong. He loses touch with all of his college friends and with Schwartz. His musical dreams are dying a frustrating death, and he feels like a failure for the first time in his life.

Around that time, a favorite uncle passes away from cancer at the age of forty-four. This frightens Albom into action. He returns to school and earns graduate degrees in journalism and business administration from Columbia University in New York. Albom accepts a job as a sports writer and begins working long, grueling hours, determined not to end up at a corporate job he hates like his uncle did. He bounces around the country working for different newspapers and magazines before finally settling at *The Detroit Free Press*, where his career really begins to take off.

As Albom's career grows, so do his income and his material possessions. The more he gets, the more he wants and the harder he works. During this time, he also gets married. His wife wants to start a family, and he promises her "someday." One evening while flipping channels on the television, Albom catches the introduction to *Nightline* and hears the name Morrie Schwartz. His long-forgotten favorite professor is the subject of a Ted Koppel interview. Albom watches in shock as he learns Schwartz is dying of ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease.

Shortly after learning the diagnosis, Schwartz makes an important decision. He isn't going to hide behind his illness. He isn't going to be ashamed or afraid of dying. He's been a teacher all his life and decides he'll teach one final class, teaching his students how to die. That's where Schwartz's old student and friend Mitch Albom comes in. After seeing the *Nightline* interview, Albom visits Schwartz and makes another promise to keep in touch.

A few weeks later, Albom's newspaper goes on strike, and he is out of a job. Left with too much time on his hands and too many unsettling thoughts in his head, he returns to Massachusetts to see Schwartz. In fact, he returns to Massachusetts every Tuesday until the end of Schwartz's life.

After a couple of visits, Albom begins recording their talks, with Schwartz's permission and his encouragement. He wants to share this journey with the world and knows that Albom can help him reach beyond the walls to which his disease has confined him. For the next fourteen weeks, Schwartz and Albom discuss everything from regrets and death to money and marriage, from family to forgiveness. Their conversations and the

insights they give into the way Schwartz has lived his life and accepts his death become the foundation around which *Tuesdays with Morrie* is written.



The Curriculum

The Curriculum Summary

Albom describes "the last class of my old professor's life." There are oral exams, and extra credit is received for kissing the professor goodbye. There are no grades and no graduation, only a funeral. There is only one student, and at the end of the class, he is required to produce one long paper. *Tuesday's with Morrie* is the paper, and Mitch Albom is the student.

The narrator flashes back to Albom's graduation from Brandeis University in Massachusetts. After the ceremony, he searches out Morrie Schwartz, his favorite professor. He introduces the professor to his parents, and Schwartz is effusive in his praise of their son. Albom presents Schwartz with a gift, a leather briefcase. Even as Schwartz thanks him, Albom wonders whether his gift is to help him remember Schwartz or help Schwartz remember him. After a hug, which is awkward for Albom, he promises to stay in touch. As they say goodbye, Albom notices Schwartz is crying.

The Curriculum Analysis

This short chapter serves as an introduction to the unusual format of the book. Instead of the chapters being numbered, most are titled with an appropriate academic term. The first part of the chapter is a long analogy comparing the weekly meetings between Albom and Schwartz to a college class.

The flashback emphasizes the emotional differences between Schwartz and Albom. While Schwartz is effusive in his praise of Albom and cries at their goodbye, Albom can only stare at his feet and suffer through an awkward hug. Albom does present his mentor with a gift but mentally acknowledges that it may represent a selfish desire to ensure he is remembered.



The Syllabus

The Syllabus Summary

Schwartz learns he is dying in the summer of 1994. It is only a confirmation of what he began to suspect years earlier. Schwartz loves to dance and spends every Wednesday night dancing at a local church. Not caring what music is playing or how many other people are watching, Schwartz dances to his own drummer. "No one there knew his was a prominent doctor of sociology, with years of experience as a college professor and several well-respected books. They just thought he was some old nut (pg. 5-6)." A highlight of Schwartz's life is the night that he gets them to play the tango. He takes over the dance floor and earns the applause of everyone in attendance. The dancing stops, though, when his health begins to deteriorate.

Schwartz begins suffering from asthma, and then it is difficulty walking. He intuitively knows it is more than just old age. He has trouble sleeping and dreams of dying. The doctors begin running test after test. Finally, in August 1994, the diagnosis comes in. It is ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease. The doctor confirms Schwartz's suspicions. There is no cure, and it is terminal.

When Schwartz and his wife Charlotte leave the doctor's office, Charlotte wonders how much time is left and how the bills will be paid. Schwartz, however, is simply shocked that the world is still turning and that other people are still going about their day despite the devastating news he has just received.

The disease continues to progress. Schwartz can no longer drive or walk without a cane. He can no longer dress himself. Rather than give up his regular swim, and despite the stares of the other swimmers, he simply has his home-care worker help him in and out of his bathing suit, just as he helps Schwartz in and out of the pool.

That fall, Schwartz returns to Brandeis to teach one more college course. He totters into the classroom and addresses his students, announcing that he has a fatal disease and may not live to finish teaching the course. He jokes that he will understand if anyone wants to drop the course. Though Schwartz's doctors have given him two years to live, Schwartz knows it is less and decides to make the most of the time he has left. Rather than be ashamed of dying, he plans to make a project of the journey. He will become the research and textbook of a lesson that everyone will have to learn eventually.

Schwartz's health fails even further as the semester passes. The cane is replaced with a walker, and trips to the bathroom become too difficult. He is now unable to even urinate into a beaker without assistance. Rather than being embarrassed by this, Morrie simply asks his many visitors if they mind helping him. Most of them are surprised to realize that they don't mind at all. Schwartz begins hosting a steady stream of visitors, and he discusses death, dying and how he doesn't want their sympathy, just their companionship.



The New Year sees Schwartz in a wheelchair. He knows that he is in the last year of his life and is fighting for time to say all he wants to say to those he loves. After the death of a colleague, Schwartz declares it is a waste that the colleague never got to hear all the wonderful things people said at the funeral. He throws himself a "living funeral." He invites his friends and family. They all pay tribute to Schwartz, and he, in return, makes sure they all know his love for them.

The Syllabus Analysis

This chapter is vital to understanding the character of Morrie Schwartz. Rather than give up his small pleasures, he bravely endures what most of us would consider completely mortifying. Asking friends to help with his personal chores illustrates his determination not to give in to the embarrassment of dying.



The Student

The Student Summary

After graduation, Albom moves to New York City, determined set the world on fire with a career as a professional musician. He quickly loses touch with his college friends and, despite his promise, with Schwartz. He spends several years chasing his music dreams, but he is getting nowhere and growing more disillusioned by the day. For the first time in his life, Albom is failing. Around this time, a favorite uncle is stricken with and dies of cancer.

Albom's uncle's death galvanizes Albom into action. He gives up his musical dreams and goes back to school, earning graduate degrees in journalism and business administration from Columbia University. He takes a job as a sports writer and eventually lands a spot as a sports columnist at *The Detroit Free Press*.

Albom becomes driven by an intense desire to not end up like his uncle, stuck in a corporate job and hating the day-in and day-out sameness. He works at a feverish pace, writing both for his newspaper and magazines. He also writes books and adds radio and then TV appearances to his schedule. He lays claim to being part of the media storm racing across the country and is pleased to be in demand.

As Albom's professional success grows, he throws himself into amassing his own fortune. He buys fast cars and big houses. He has a stock portfolio and more money than he ever expected to make. He meets and marries his wife, Janine, and he promises that they will start a family.

That never happens, though. He continues racking up professional accomplishments and mistaking them for happiness. He occasionally thinks about his old professor but never gets in touch with him and never reads the mail from his alma mater. As a result, Albom is unaware of Schwartz's illness.

The Student Analysis

This chapter illustrates the change in Albom from a carefree, confident college student, who still believes dreams can come true, to a cynical, disillusioned, type-A adult. The suffering and death of his uncle push him along that road. Albom is careful to point out he believed his professional success gave him some measure of control over his life and how much happiness he could achieve before his own death.

The Audiovisual

The Audiovisual Summary

By March of 1995, Schwartz is in a wheelchair and knows he will never walk again. His body continues to weaken, but his mind is going a hundred miles an hour. He begins writing down little snippets about his philosophy on dying. He shares some of them with a friend, who forwards them to a reporter at the *Boston Globe*. The subsequent interview and article come to the attention of a producer at *Nightline*, and soon Ted Koppel himself arrives at Schwartz's home for an on-camera interview.

The interview begins unusually, with Schwartz interviewing Koppel before deciding if he'll agree to being interviewed himself. Instead of kowtowing to the famous journalist, Schwartz admits he's only seen *Nightline* twice, and his impression was that Koppel is a narcissist. The televised interview shows Schwartz explaining he's decided to die as he has lived, with dignity, courage, humor and composure. He admits to short bouts of self-pity but says he merely has to remind himself that he still wants to live.

Koppel asks Schwartz what he dreads most about the sure progression of his disease. Schwartz answers as only Schwartz would. "Morrie looked straight into the eyes of the most famous interviewer in America. 'Well, Ted, one day soon, someone's gonna have to wipe my ass.' (pg. 22)"

In Detroit, Albom is at home watching TV when the interview airs. He's flipping through the channels when he hears his mentor's name. Albom flashes back to spring of 1976, when he walks into his first class with Schwartz. Albom's first thought is that it's a small class and that it won't be easy to skip without drawing the professor's attention. He wonders if he should drop the class. Schwartz takes attendance, stopping to ask Albom if he prefers to be call Mitch or Mitchell. Surprised and caught off-guard, Albom replies that his friends call him Mitch. Schwartz responds that he hopes to be his friend one day, so he will call him Mitch as well.

The Audiovisual Analysis

This chapter illustrates Schwartz's very real desire to be himself through the ordeal of dying. Being interviewed by one of the nation's foremost journalists would make most people nervous, quiet and self-conscious, but Schwartz is none of these things. He takes charge of the interview and immediately lets Koppel and his audience know he's not looking for, and doesn't want, their sympathy. He just wants to be himself.

Schwartz mentions dreading the time that others will be needed to take care of even his most intimate personal chores. However, he approaches the issue with bluntness, showing his determination and ability to face the upcoming indignities instead of succumbing to them. This is the first of several times Schwartz will mention the embarrassing aspects of the disease's progression in the months to come. It will

become a metaphor for the progress of his journey towards death and Schwartz's attitude towards it.

The flashback sets the tone for the relationship that develops between Schwartz and Albom. Schwartz is friendly and open, confident in their budding friendship. Albom is more cautious, surprised and even reluctant.



The Orientation

The Orientation Summary

Albom talks via cell phone with one of his producers while driving a rental car down Schwartz's street. He manages to chat on the phone, watch for house numbers and check the time of his return flight simultaneously. When he spots the correct house, he spies Schwartz in his wheelchair, waiting for him in the driveway. Albom parks the car, and rather than jumping out and running to greet his mentor, he suddenly feels unprepared for the reunion. He slumps down in his seat, as if searching for something on the floor, and finishes his phone conversation.

Schwartz is very emotional at his reunion with Albom, and Albom is surprised at the affection. Then, he realizes he's forgotten how close they used to be. He feels sorrow that he is no longer the person he knows Schwartz remembers him to be. Once Schwartz and Albom are settled inside the house, one of Schwartz's home-care workers brings his medication. Schwartz sighs over the pills and asks Albom if he knows he is dying. When Albom admits he does, Schwartz asks if he should tell Albom what it's like to die.

Albom again flashes back to his college days. Younger than most of his classmates, he resorts to trying to look and act tough. Schwartz, however, sees and appreciates Albom for what he really is, and Albom is drawn to him as a result. Albom begins calling Schwartz "coach," and Schwartz enjoys the nickname. They often eat lunch together, and Schwartz eats with abandon, laughing with his mouth open and full of food. Albom reflects that he's always had two overwhelming desires when it came to Schwartz. One is to hug him. The other is to give him a napkin.

The Orientation Analysis

This chapter illustrates again the differences between Albom and Schwartz. Just as in the beginning of their relationship, Albom is hesitant and unsure of himself. Schwartz, however, easily and gratefully welcomes Albom back into his life, just as if he'd never left. Albom doesn't feel quite worthy of Schwartz's affection, and it makes him slightly uncomfortable.

The flashback is designed to explain the growth of the relationship between Albom, as a college student, and Schwartz, his professor. Although Albom feels he must put on a pretense among his peers, with Schwartz he can be completely himself and know that Schwartz completely accepts him.



The Classroom

The Classroom Summary

Albom and Schwartz visit for several hours. During that time, the phone rings again and again with people wanting to talk with Schwartz. He simply has his nurse take messages so that his time with Albom is not interrupted. Albom is envious of all the friends Schwartz seems to have and wonders what's become of his own college friends.

Schwartz claims that people find him more interesting now that he is dying. Albom protests that's not the case, but Schwartz insists. "I'm on the last great journey here - and people want me to tell them what to pack (pg. 33)." Throughout the entire visit, Albom is astonished that Schwartz has managed, despite his illness, to remain the same person Albom so fondly remembers, especially when Albom himself has changed so drastically from the person he wanted to be. His youthful promises to himself are mostly forgotten, remembered only now with Schwartz's help.

Albom never joined the Peace Corps or climbed mountains in Tibet. Instead he's lived in Detroit for ten years without even changing barbers. He's handcuffed to cell phones and modems, making a living writing about people who don't even care about him. He's surprised to realize that, although he's successful and busy, he's mostly unsatisfied and unfulfilled.

Albom watches Schwartz struggle to eat and is embarrassed at the silence between them, although it doesn't bother Schwartz. Schwartz suddenly announces to Albom that living unhappily is just as sad as dying. He says most people are unable to create their own happiness. To Albom's surprise, Schwartz claims, even though he is dying, he is still happier than most people. He urges Albom not to be afraid of Schwartz's death.

Then Schwartz explains to Albom that he will eventually suffocate to death. His disease will continue to progress up his body until it reaches his lungs, which have been weakened by asthma. He guesses that he has only four or five months left to live. When Schwartz and Albom finally say goodbye, Schwartz asks Albom to come back and see him again. Albom agrees, although he remembers the last time he made that promise and failed to keep it.

Albom again reflects back to his college days. Schwartz opens up new thought and ideas for Albom. They often have serious talks after class. On one occasion, Albom talks about being younger than most of his classmates and therefore having less expected of him, but wanting himself to succeed even higher.

Schwartz explains to Albom that life is a tension of opposites. People are pulled in two directions: what they know versus what they feel and what they need versus what they want. Most people, says Schwartz, just live somewhere in the middle. Albom asks which side wins. Schwartz answers with a grin that love wins. Love always wins.



The Classroom Analysis

The single most important thing in this chapter is that the visit with Schwartz forces Albom to look closely at his own life. He's not dying, but is he happier than Schwartz? He realizes that he's not even close to achieving what Schwartz has. He's not fulfilled the early goals he set for himself. Instead, he gave up his early dreams for material success. Even though he has achieved much, he knows, were he the one who was dying, there would not be lines of people he loved lining up outside his door. Instead, he's devoted his life to exactly the opposite kind of people: rich, egotistical athletes who probably don't even know his name. Amazingly, Schwartz seems to understand this without Albom having to mention it. Schwartz suddenly announcing that living unhappily is just as sad as dying seems to indicate that he has a very good insight into the thoughts of his past pupil.

Schwartz explaining exactly how he's going to die is another example of Schwartz's insight. Albom, like a lot of people, mostly lives in a state of denial. Telling Schwartz that "you never know" and "nobody can say..." indicates that he's trying to convince himself Schwartz isn't really dying, or that a miracle cure could be right around the corner. Schwartz seems to understand this, and he forces Albom to understand and accept the reality of his imminent death.

When Schwartz asks Albom to promise to return and see him again, it almost seems as if Schwartz is once again testing his old pupil. Sensing that Albom just spent several hours thinking about all the promises he's broken in the past, Schwartz asks him to make one more, perhaps to see for himself what kind of man Albom has become.



Taking Attendance

Taking Attendance Summary

Albom flies to London to cover Wimbledon. His workload is staggering as usual. What is unusual is his inability to get caught up the craziness of the British tabloid press. On previous trips, he'd become caught up in their steamy gossip and semi-news events, as did everyone. This time, every time he reads something silly or frivolous, he thinks of Schwartz and wonders why people get so caught up in things that don't involve them. Why are people so addicted to news of Charles and Diana's latest split? Why are they giving up hours of their own life to watch the OJ Simpson trial? Albom realizes that Schwartz doesn't bother with any of that nonsense. He devotes all his time to the things and people he loves.

Albom, on the other hand, is devoting himself to work and nothing but work. While in London, he juggles four or five different jobs in different areas of the media. He eats all his meals in his little cubical and thinks nothing of it. One day, Albom is knocked to the ground by a crush of reporters trying to chase down Andre Agassi and Brooke Shields. The incident brings Schwartz's words to mind. "So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half asleep, even when they're busy doing things they think are important. This is because they're chasing the wrong things. The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning (pg. 43)." Although Albom understands the truth in these words, he does nothing about them.

When the tennis tournament is over, Albom returns to Detroit and discovers the unions at his newspaper have gone on strike. Suddenly, he is out of a job, confused and depressed. He realizes, despite the TV and radio jobs, that his newspaper work is his foundation. He has begun to equate seeing his columns in print each morning with knowing he is alive and perhaps making a difference.

The strike drags on, with rumors it could go on for months. Albom watches sporting events on TV that he usually would have covered in person. He believed somehow his readers needed his column, and he is shocked to find out how easily they are managing without it. After a week of feeling confused and depressed, Albom calls Schwartz, who seems to know what is coming. They agree that Albom will visit on Tuesday.

Albom recalls his sophomore year in college, a time when his relationship with Schwartz continues to grow. Albom reflects that he had never just sat and talked before with an adult who was not a relative. Yet he feels completely comfortable doing so with Schwartz, who also seems to enjoy it.

Albom and Schwartz's conversations usually involve Albom rambling for a while with Schwartz trying to impart some life lesson. Albom understands some of them, but he



doesn't understand many. He doesn't care. The conversations are almost fatherly in nature, and yet they are conversations he can't have with his own father. His father wants him to be a lawyer. Schwartz, on the other hand, believes Albom can make his dream of being a musician come true.

Taking Attendance Analysis

Albom's trip to London represents the final stage of life as he's been living it. He now recognizes the absurdity of it all. He's comfortable where he is, and he's not quite ready to make the changes necessary to repair and reinvent his life. However, when Albom returns home to the newspaper strike, he discovers that his comfort zone is completely turned upside down. Life as he knew it is over and so are many of the illusions he has employed to get himself through the days. Like he's done in previous times of turmoil, he turns to the father figure of Schwartz, who like a father, has sensed that his offspring is in need.

The flashback further reinforces the idea of Schwartz as a father figure. That Albom is unashamed and unafraid to share with Schwartz ideas he would never share with his own father is an indication of just how far their relationship has traveled beyond the typical student-teacher scenario. It's also an indication of how Albom's guarded relationship with his father has affected his relationship with Schwartz. When Schwartz is so encouraging regarding Albom's career in music, Albom wants to hug Schwartz, but instead, he only nods.



The First Tuesday We Talk About the World

The First Tuesday We Talk About the World Summary

Albom arrives at Schwartz's house bearing bags of food. He remembers how Schwartz loves to eat and feels, while he can't help in many ways, bringing food is at least a little something he can do. They settle in at the kitchen table, this time quickly falling into their familiar routines. Schwartz asks questions and then peppers Albom's answers with observations and insights.

Albom's visit with Schwartz is interrupted several times by Schwartz's need to go to the bathroom. It is a cumbersome and tiring chore. Schwartz reminds Albom of the time he told Ted Koppel that he worried about the day someone would have to wipe his ass. Schwartz reveals that the day is getting closer, and despite the other ravages of his disease, this is the one thing that bothers him. He sees it as the ultimate sign of dependency. Yet, he also tells Albom he's "working on it," determined to find a way to enjoy it. He plans to enjoy getting to be a baby again, in a state of not being able to do anything but sit and enjoy the fact that he has both the time and motivation to think about the things he believes are important to him and his life.

Albom is surprised to find out Schwartz is still following the news. Schwartz explains that he actually feels closer now to people he sees suffering on the news. He cries at their pain. Albom wonders if perhaps death is the one thing that finally brings people together and makes them shed a tear for one another.

Schwartz asks if Albom is okay with men crying. Albom says that he is, but Schwartz knows he is lying. Schwartz makes Albom a promise that he's made numerous times before, that some day he'll get Albom to loosen up enough to cry. Schwartz and Albom realize as Albom is leaving that most of their campus conversations occurred on Tuesdays. Now, here it is a Tuesday again.

Schwartz tells Albom that the most important thing his disease has taught him is the importance of both giving love out and letting it come in. Albom hugs and, very unlike himself, even kisses Schwartz goodbye. Then, Schwartz asks if Albom will return next Tuesday.

Albom flashes back to one of Schwartz's classes. The professor walks into the room, sits down and doesn't say a thing. He allows fifteen minutes of total silence to pass before asking his students what they think is happening. This is his way of introducing the subject of how silence affects human relations.

Albom claims he is not bothered by silence. He says he prefers it to talking about his feelings. After class, Schwartz mentions that Albom didn't have much to say during the



class. Algom responds that he didn't have much to contribute. Schwartz disagrees and says Algom reminds him of someone else who liked to keep things to himself when he was younger: himself.

The First Tuesday We Talk About the World Analysis

In a bit of foreshadowing, Algom's gift of food sets a precedent that he will later come to regret. Schwartz also brings up again that he's worried about the coming day when someone else will have to clean up after his most personal hygiene needs. There's a new twist, though. He says he's working on seeing it from a different perspective, one in which he gets to be a baby again, to be taken care of in his dusk as he was in his infancy. This demonstrates Schwartz's determination not to be embarrassed by the progress of his disease and to, in fact, view it in the best possible light. Schwartz further explains this in terms of not focusing on the fact that he can no longer take out the garbage or go shopping. Instead, he focuses on the fact that he can use this time to concentrate on the things and people that are really important to him.

Algom proceeds to show that he's still not quite ready to hear the lessons Schwartz is trying to teach by making a sarcastic remark about the key to happiness being to stop taking out the garbage. To Algom's relief, Schwartz laughs, and the subject is dropped. Algom wonders if death is the one thing that allows people to care about each other, and this is another piece of foreshadowing. Readers start to wonder if any of Schwartz's lessons will sink into Algom before Schwartz's death or if it will take the ultimate grief for Algom to see the light.

The man who is openly crying not only while watching the news, but while remembering watching the news, is a revealing contrast to the man in the flashback, revealing that he also was once more comfortable keeping his emotions hidden. Knowing that Schwartz has made the long journey from a person similar to Algom today gives the reader hope that Algom will complete that journey as well.



The Second Tuesday We Talk About Feeling Sorry for Yourself

The Second Tuesday We Talk About Feeling Sorry for Yourself Summary

The strike in Detroit continues and becomes increasingly hostile. In comparison, flying more than 700 miles to visit with a dying man every week seems refreshing, and Albom looks forward to their visits. He quits bringing a cellular phone along on his trips, realizing there's nothing that can't wait until his visit ends. When Albom arrives for his third visit, he again brings food. While he and Schwartz eat, Albom takes stock of Schwartz's condition, seeing how it's deteriorated just since the previous week. He asks Schwartz if he feels sorry for himself.

Schwartz answers that he allows himself a brief time every morning for self-pity and a few tears. He takes a few minutes to grieve for all that he's lost. Then, he reminds himself he's still alive and still has good things in his life. He moves on with his day. Albom thinks the world might be a better place if everyone were able to put such a limit on his or her self-pity. If Schwartz can do it with his horrible disease, surely everyone else can as well.

Schwartz disagrees. The horror of his disease is all in how you look at it, he says. Yes, the way his body is slowly betraying him is horrible. However, the slow progression of the disease is also giving him plenty of time to say goodbye. He feels lucky to have that time. Albom is astonished by Schwartz's use of the word lucky.

While Schwartz uses the bathroom, Albom scans through a newspaper, reading several stories about horrific crimes and intolerable cruelty. When Schwartz returns, Albom surprises himself, and everyone else, by offering to help move Schwartz from the wheelchair to his recliner. After doing so, he realizes that his selfless act has touched him and made him truly realize time is running out.

The story flashes back to Albom's junior year in college and a class studying the ways humans interact with and react to each other. Schwartz performs an experiment in which one student stands facing away from the other students and falls back, trusting other students to catch them. Most of the students are unable to let themselves fall. Finally, one young woman steps up, closes her eyes and falls back. A classmate catches her just before she hits the floor. Schwartz is pleased. She closed her eyes, which, he claims, made all the difference. Sometimes you have to quit believing in what you see, he says, and believe in what you feel. You have to feel you can trust others.



The Second Tuesday We Talk About Feeling Sorry for Yourself Analysis

This chapter demonstrates the beginnings of Algom's shift from the kind of man he is to the kind of man he wants to be. It starts with Algom leaving his cell phone behind on his visits to Schwartz. Finally, he's found someone or something more important than his work, for a couple of hours each week, anyway.

Then, after reading about humans' cruelty towards each other, the jaded and cynical Algom is moved to perform a kindness. By offering to move Schwartz from his wheelchair, Algom is removing both a physical and emotional barrier between himself and Schwartz. Algom is also slowly beginning to see the disease through Schwartz's eyes. Though he is amazed at Schwartz's lack of self-pity and ability to count himself as lucky despite the disease's ravages, Algom is finally forced to accept the rushing inevitability of Schwartz's demise.



The Third Tuesday We Talk About Regrets

The Third Tuesday We Talk About Regrets Summary

Albom says that he wants to remember Schwartz's voice, and he brings a tape recorder on his next visit. At first, he is unsure if Schwartz is comfortable with the idea and offers to put it away. Schwartz interrupts him. He insists that he wants to tell his story while he still has a chance. He wants Albom to be the one to hear it.

Albom admits that the recorder is about more than just nostalgia. He realizes that he, and everybody else, is losing Schwartz, losing his unique perspective on the world. Albom knows that if there is some epiphany to be had in the time before death, Schwartz will want to share it with the world. Albom will want to remember it forever.

Albom asks Schwartz about regrets, and in the question, Schwartz senses some ambivalence in Albom about his own choices. Schwartz replies that today's society doesn't encourage people to take an accounting of their life until it's too late. He says that Albom needs someone to push him to examine his life now, before it's too late for regrets. Albom knows that Schwartz wants to be that person.

Albom decides to take Schwartz up on his offer. Flying home later that day, he makes a list of questions that he and others seem to wrestle with and that seem to take up such valuable time in life. Albom knows that Schwartz, with his death so imminent, is very clear about what is important, and Albom wants to have that knowledge. His list includes death, fear, aging, greed, marriage, family, society, forgiveness and a meaningful life.

Albom recalls his senior year in college. At Schwartz's urging, he undertakes an honor's thesis. They choose the subject to be how football has become almost a religion in America. At that time, Albom has no idea that sports will eventually become his career. He merely sees the thesis as an opportunity to spend more time with Schwartz. When the thesis is finally completed, Albom proudly gives it to Schwartz and wanders around the office while Schwartz reads it. Finally, Schwartz remarks the work is so good, Albom should consider extending his schooling with graduate school. Albom is tempted. As much as he's ready to leave school, part of him is afraid of what's to be found outside ivy-covered walls.

The Third Tuesday We Talk About Regrets Analysis

This chapter is important in that it represents both Schwartz and Albom accepting once again their roles of student and teacher. The subject matter is different and more important than ever in their relationship. Both seem somewhat desperate to give and receive the information that must be imparted.

The Audiovisual, Part 2

The Audiovisual, Part 2 Summary

Nightline and Ted Koppel return to do a follow-up story on Schwartz. As the interview progresses, it's easy to see how the disease has affected Schwartz physically. Schwartz tells Koppel that he worries about the time when he can no longer use his hands or speak. They are essential to who he is because he talks with his voice and with his hands. That is how he gives to people, he says.

Schwartz tells of an old friend who is going deaf. He imagines that when he can no longer speak and his friend can no longer hear, they will simply sit together and hold hands. He tells Koppel that after thirty-five years of friendship, they don't need words to feel each other's love.

Schwartz reads to Koppel from the many letters he's received from the first show. One is from a woman who teaches a class to children who've lost a parent. He reads his reply and loses his composure as he tells the woman of his loneliness after his own mother passed away when he was a child. Koppel is surprised that the subject is still so painful to Schwartz after seventy years.

The Audiovisual, Part 2 Analysis

This chapter reveals one of the few regrets or worries Schwartz has about the progression of his disease. While he has seemingly become accepting of the fact that someone will eventually have to wipe him, he isn't as sure of how he will handle it when he is no longer able to talk with and share his wisdom with others. His idea that he will simply hold hands with his deaf friend at the end foreshadows the last Tuesday meeting between Schwartz and Albom, when they will comfort each other by holding hands.



The Professor

The Professor Summary

Schwartz is just eight years old when a telegram arrives notifying him of his mother's death. Since his father, a mostly unemployed and unemotional man, cannot read English, Schwartz must read the missive and then break the tragic news.

Schwartz's mother operated a candy store until she got sick. After that, she would sit by the window, watching her sons play in the street. When she called down to him asking him to get her medicine, he pretended not to hear her. In his child's mind, if he ignored the fact she was ill, she would get better.

The family lived in poverty, but after his mother's death, family members send Schwartz and his younger brother, David, to the country. They thrive in the fresh air and greenery. Suddenly, though, David is stricken with polio, and Schwartz blames himself. The brothers return to the city where Schwartz attends synagogue by himself to pray for his mother and brother. He spends his afternoons working to earn money to feed his family and his evenings wishing for some sign of affection from his father. He is nine years old.

Schwartz's father remarries the next year, and his new stepmother, Eva, becomes his saving grace. She gives the boys the love and affection that is so sorely missing in their lives. She also instills in him his love for education by insisting on excellence in school.

During this time, Schwartz is forbidden by his father to speak of his mother. His father wants David to believe that Eva is his real mother. To help keep his mother's memory alive, Schwartz goes to the synagogue every day and prays the memorial prayer for the dead. He also keeps the telegram announcing her death hidden away. He keeps it for the rest of his life.

When Schwartz is a teenager, his father takes him to find work in the fur factory. It is a horrible place, with horrendous working conditions. Luckily for Schwartz, there is no work available. He vows never to work in such a place. He also knows he'll never be a lawyer or a doctor. Albom muses that the best teacher he ever had became a teacher through default.

The Professor Analysis

This chapter takes the reader back to Schwartz's childhood and explains how the guilt-ridden and poverty-stricken boy comes to be a wise man, rich with friendships and love. It's safe to say the death of his mother and the introduction of Eva into his life are two of the most significant events of his young life. Without his mother's death, he would have never known Eva, and without Eva, he may have never made the move from the inner city poverty of his father's life.



The Fourth Tuesday We Talk About Death

The Fourth Tuesday We Talk About Death Summary

When Albom returns the next Tuesday, a portable oxygen machine has been added to Schwartz's collection of medical equipment. Albom is uncomfortable with it and tries not to look at it. Schwartz begins the conversation about death by saying that although everyone knows they're going to die, no one really believes it. If they did believe it, they would do things differently.

Schwartz asserts that the better way to live is to know you will die and to be prepared for it at any time. He uses the Buddhists as an example. Each day, they have a bird on their shoulder that asks them, "Is today the day?" Schwartz then states that you don't learn how to live until you learn how to die.

Schwartz admits that he didn't think much about dying before he got sick. Like everyone else, he was sleepwalking through life, not truly experiencing the world. Facing death strips away all the "stuff" and allows one to see everything differently. Albom helps Schwartz adjust his glasses, and his touch brings a smile to Schwartz's face. Schwartz tells Albom that if he accepted he could die any day, he would probably not be as ambitious as he is. The work he spends so much time on might not seem so important, and he might be more willing to make room for the things most people take for granted. Schwartz points to the window. He allows that Albom can go outside and run and enjoy the weather, but Schwartz, watching the world from behind glass, appreciates it more.

Schwartz continues to receive mail after his *Nightline* appearances. He often gathers friends and family around him to read and respond to the letters. He signs all of them, "Thank you, Morrie." Albom asks Schwartz if he remembers Lou Gehrig, the man whose name graces Schwartz's disease. Schwartz does remember the scene in the stadium when Gehrig said goodbye to his fans. Albom does an imitation of the speech, ending with the line, "Today, I feel like the luckiest man on the face of the earth." Schwartz replies that he doesn't say that.

The Fourth Tuesday We Talk About Death Analysis

This chapter goes far in explaining how Schwartz believes everyone could live a better life. In accepting eventual death, people can learn to fully experience every single day, instead of spending each day, nose to the grindstone, never stopping to look up at the wonderful world around them.

The comment about not feeling as lucky as Lou Gehrig is just one of a few instances where Schwartz outwardly shows a small amount of self-pity. He talks about allowing himself a few minutes a day to grieve and feel sorry for himself, but on occasion his

grief seeps through into his conversation. This is one of the only times this happens in front of Albom.



The Fifth Tuesday We Talk About Family

The Fifth Tuesday We Talk About Family Summary

The next Tuesday coincides with the start of classes at the university. For the first time in thirty-five years, Schwartz does not have a class to teach. As his disease progresses further, Schwartz has to switch from a handheld microphone for their recorded sessions to a mic that clips to the front of his shirt. Algom frequently has to reach over and readjust it as it slips on his now bony frame. Instead of being embarrassed by this, Schwartz simply enjoys the physical contact.

Algom announces that the topic for the week is family. Schwartz looks around him at the numerous photos of his own family and tells Algom that family is the foundation of everything. Without family, there is almost nothing to life. Schwartz tells Algom that he doesn't believe he could handle his disease if it were not for the love and support of his family. Visits from friends and colleagues are simply not the same as love from someone who doesn't leave at the end of the day. Knowing they are always there and always watching over you is the very definition of family. Schwartz says that this is what he missed most when his mother died.

Schwartz tells Algom that nothing else can give that to a person, not money, fame or even work. Algom tells Schwartz about the dilemma facing today's generation about having children. People have a fear of being tied down, making them into things, parents, that they didn't want to be. Algom wonders now, if he were in Schwartz's shoes, if his lack of children would make the loneliness unbearable.

Schwartz, who has refused to allow his children to stop living their lives because of his disease, tells Algom that he never tells people whether or not they should have children. He simply tells them there is no experience in the world like having children. Algom asks if he would have children again, if he could go back. Schwartz replies he wouldn't have missed the experience for anything, even though he is now faced with the pain of leaving them. At the thought, a tear rolls down Schwartz's face.

Schwartz asks Algom about his own family. He has an older sister and a younger brother, whom they used to torture mercilessly when they were younger. The younger brother was the antithesis to Algom's good-boy youth, always getting into trouble and experimenting with drugs and alcohol.

Algom always believed the cancer that had taken his favorite uncle would strike him as well. He worked feverishly, always awaiting the day the cancer would strike. Instead, it struck his younger brother. Living in Europe, he had access to treatments not available in the United States. After five years, the disease finally went into remission, but he withdrew from his family during this time. He refused to allow his family to visit and didn't return phone calls or letters.



Albom feels guilty for not helping his brother through this horrible time. He is also angry at his brother for not allowing him to help. As usual, Albom hides behind his work to avoid dealing with these feelings. He wonders if perhaps he is drawn back to Schwartz because he allows him to assist in all the ways his brother does not. He suspects Schwartz has known this all along.

One winter, when Albom and his brother were children, they were sledding in their neighborhood. As they flew down the hill, a car turned onto their street. They tried to steer away from the street, but the sled did not turn. The driver slammed on his brakes, and the boys jumped off the sled, sliding and rolling to a stop. Everyone was safe. The driver continued on, and the boys' friends congratulated them on their near miss. Albom and his brother walked away, feeling they had faced death, and it wasn't so hard. They thought they were ready to take it on again.

The Fifth Tuesday We Talk About Family Analysis

Having a family is something Albom has wrestled with. When he and his wife first married, he promised they would have children someday. That day has not yet come. He seems slightly embarrassed by the obvious fact he is not sure he actually wants children. When he tells Schwartz all the reasons people his age decide not have children, he only admits to "some" of those feelings himself.

Interestingly, Albom has always feared dying young and of the same disease that took his uncle at only forty-four. The fact that he's spent his life fearing an early death perhaps explains his renewed connection to Schwartz and why he is so committed to spreading Schwartz's message about impending death. It's information he's looking for himself.

The flashback to Albom's childhood brush with death reveals the innocence with which children face such things. It stands in stark contrast to how much more complicated things become as adults. Rather than facing his cancer with his brother at his side, Albom's younger brother withdraws and denies Albom the opportunity to high-five the victory over the disease.



The Sixth Tuesday We Talk About Emotions

The Sixth Tuesday We Talk About Emotions Summary

When Algom arrives for his next Tuesday visit, Schwartz's wife Charlotte answers the door. She usually is not home. At Schwartz's insistence, she is continuing to teach at MIT. She tells Algom that her husband is having a difficult day, but he will be glad to see Algom nevertheless.

Algom produces his weekly offering of food, and Charlotte opens the refrigerator to reveal that it is packed full of food, all provided by Algom but never eaten by Schwartz. Charlotte tells him that Schwartz can no longer chew, and he must eat only soft foods and liquids. Algom protests that Schwartz has never mentioned this, and Charlotte says that he didn't want to hurt Algom's feelings by refusing his gifts. Algom insists it wouldn't have hurt his feelings. He was merely trying to do something, anything, for his old professor. Charlotte tells him he is doing something. Her husband looks forward to Algom's visits and to working on their project together. She says it has given Schwartz a sense of purpose.

Schwartz's nights are getting difficult, and often he's up all night coughing. This means, of course, that Charlotte is up as well. During the day, there is an endless parade of visitors all vying for Schwartz's remaining time, time that rightfully belongs to Charlotte. Yet she manages everything with a calm air of patience. Charlotte leaves the room to see if Schwartz is ready for his visitor. Algom looks again at the food he brought and is ashamed.

When Algom finally sits down with Schwartz, he realizes that Schwartz's cough is worse than usual. After one severe spasm, Schwartz tells Algom he is detaching himself from the coughing spell. He says that it is an important lesson to learn, even for the healthy. Algom questions Schwartz's meaning. Hasn't he always said you should experience all life's emotions, good and bad? Of course, Schwartz replies. Detaching yourself doesn't mean you don't let the experience penetrate you, though. In fact, you must let it completely consume you before you can remove yourself from it.

Algom confesses that he doesn't understand. Schwartz explains, with no emotion, that if you don't allow yourself to feel an experience, to recognize it for what it is, you will never be able to detach yourself from it. By throwing yourself into the emotion, whether it be love, fear, pain or grief, you are then able to recognize it, know you've been there before and, like then, will be able to move through it again. Only then can you remove yourself from it.

Schwartz talks about his scariest moments, when he's not sure he'll be able to take another breath. In the beginning, these episodes inspired horror, fear and anxiety. Now



that he has fully experienced these feelings, he is able to recognize them, meet them head on and then step away from them.

Schwartz begins to cough, half choking on the congestion in his lungs. He gags and hacks and violently shakes his hands in front of himself. Albom panics and smacks Schwartz on the back, releasing the phlegm that is choking him. The coughing stops, and both men sink back in their chairs to recover. Albom tries to hide his own fear.

Schwartz says then that he knows how he wants to die. He wants it to be peacefully, not in a violent fit like the one he just experienced. Still, he says, this is where the detachment comes in. If he does die as a result of a coughing spell, he will be able to step away from the violence and fright of the moment and step into a place that's peaceful and accepting and be able to let go.

Albom asks if Schwartz believes in reincarnation. Schwartz says he does and would like to come back as a gazelle. Albom looks at Schwartz's ravaged frame, his cushioned and wrapped feet, unable to move. He says he thinks a gazelle is not such a strange choice.

The Sixth Tuesday We Talk About Emotions Analysis

Schwartz is getting worse. His death could come at anytime. Yet even at this point in his life, he is still unwilling to do anything to hurt his friend's feeling, even over something as simple as food he can no longer eat or enjoy. Schwartz's wife makes an appearance in this chapter. Her purpose seems to be that of the person who tells Albom the things Schwartz is unwilling to.

The violent coughing spell is yet another indication Albom is unable to ignore. Schwartz is dying quickly. The incident scares him, but he is unwilling to share that fear with Schwartz despite Schwartz's admonishments that he must immerse himself in all emotions. Instead, Albom just sits quietly and waits for things to return to normal.

Schwartz's use of detachment is another way he's ensuring that he dies on his own terms. Even if he goes under frightening conditions, he's determined to be able to leave this earth his way, on his terms. Learning to accept that he may actually go under horrifying and frightening conditions is simply his way to ensure that he is still able to go on his terms.



The Professor, Part 2

The Professor, Part 2 Summary

After receiving a master's degree and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, one of Schwartz's first jobs is at a mental institution outside Washington DC. He decides research is a way of earning a living without exploiting anyone else. Schwartz receives a grant to observe mental patients and record their treatments. Though his job is simply to observe, being Schwartz, he can't help but get involved in some way and befriends many of the patients when no one else will. He observes that many of the patients come from well-to-do families. When all is said and done, the greatest lesson he learns is that their money has not bought them happiness or contentment.

Schwartz leaves the mental institute after five years and begins teaching at Brandeis in the late 1950s. Soon after, the college becomes known as a hotbed for cultural activism. Famous radicals like Abbie Hoffman and several others attend Brandeis. The sociology department is heavily involved in the antiwar movement. When the department learns that male students who don't keep their grades up could lose their draft deferment, Schwartz simply proposes giving them all A's.

During Schwartz's tenure, the department evolves from a traditional classroom lecture to discussions and experiences. Teachers involve students in various movements and encourage them to become active. At one point, a group of black students stages a protest by taking over the chemistry building. While administration officials worry they are making bombs in the labs, Schwartz knows they simply want to be recognized as human beings who matter. Weeks into the siege, Schwartz walks by the building and is recognized by one of the protesters. The student calls out to Schwartz, who crawls into the building through a window. An hour later, he crawls back out with a list of demands. The siege ends shortly thereafter.

The sociology department at Brandeis may not have produced lawyers or high-powered businessman, Albon reflects, but it did produce a generation of students who truly cared about Schwartz. Hundreds of them called, sent letter and visited Schwartz in his final days, all of them proclaiming they'd never had another teacher like Schwartz.

Albon begins reading about death and how it is viewed in other cultures. He tells of an Arctic tribe that believes everything on earth has a soul existing inside of itself in miniature form. When the body dies, the miniature form that is the soul lives on. It can either merge into another form during birth or go to a temporary place in the sky until the moon sends it back to earth. They believe the nights when the moon is absent from the sky, it is busy placing old souls into new bodies.

The Professor, Part 2 Analysis

This chapter gives more insight into Schwartz and how he has come to be the person readers meet in the interviews. Schwartz is able to relate to his students in a manner that defies the traditional bounds of the teacher/student relationship. His efforts in that endeavor pay off in big dividends as his students journey to be with him again before he dies, filling his house and surrounding him with love in his final days.



The Seventh Tuesday We Talk About the Fear of Aging

The Seventh Tuesday We Talk About the Fear of Aging Summary

By Alбом's next visit, Schwartz's condition has deteriorated. He has finally lost one of the only battles he dreaded. He can no longer reach behind himself to cleanse after using the bathroom. Typically, he asks if his home-care worker would mind doing it for him, even though it's her job.

Schwartz tells Alбом that he was initially embarrassed by it, but only until he realized he was embarrassed simply because culture told him he should be. He decided to ignore culture and not be ashamed. In doing so, he began to enjoy his dependency. He can now enjoy being treated, once again, like a baby, cherished and pampered and looked after by its mother. No one ever gets enough of that, he says. This is his chance to get a little more, and he's determined to enjoy it.

Schwartz and Alбом begin to discuss aging and the fear of aging experienced by Alбом's generation. He confesses that he's already feeling over the hill, despite being not yet forty. He also admits to fighting aging every step of the way. He works out, watches his diet and checks his hairline.

Schwartz, as always, has a different take on things. His years of teaching have put him in contact with thousands of young men and women, many of them miserable and some of them even suicidal. Not only are they miserable, he says, but they don't understand much about life, making it easy for them to be manipulated by others people and corporations.

Alбом asks Schwartz if he was ever afraid to grow old. Schwartz replies that he actually embraced aging. "As you grow, you learn more. If you stayed 22, you'd always be as ignorant as you were at 22. Aging is not just decay, you know. It's growth. It's more than the negative that you're going to die, it's also the positive that you understand you're going to die, and that you live a better life because of it (pg. 118)."

Alбом then asks Schwartz why so many people always wish they were young again. Schwartz says that it's a sign of an unfulfilled life. He tells Alбом that young people need to know that if they're always fighting aging, they are always going to be unhappy. It's a battle they can't win. Alбом looks at Schwartz's withered body and wonders how he can not be envious of the young and healthy. Schwartz admits that he does envy young people's ability to go for a swim or go dancing, especially dancing. When he recognizes the emotion, though, he lets it go. He detaches from it, as he explained earlier.



Albom is embarrassed to think about how much healthier and stronger he is than Schwartz because he doesn't feel superior to Schwartz in any other way. He asks how Schwartz can help but envy him. Schwartz laughs and replies that the answer is to accept where you are and enjoy it. This is Albom's time to be in his thirties. Schwartz's time to be in his thirties has come and gone. Why be envious of where you are, he asks, when I've already been there?

The Seventh Tuesday We Talk About the Fear of Aging Analysis

Again in this chapter, Schwartz takes an issue that most believe to be a complex matter, full of opinions, and reduces it to its simplest form. Everyone will get old and die. Neither exercise, diet, vitamins nor pills will stop the inevitable. Everyone will get old and die. Fighting it is an exercise in futility because no one will win this fight. All they will do is guarantee themselves a lifetime of unhappiness.



The Eighth Tuesday We Talk About Money

The Eighth Tuesday We Talk About Money Summary

The next Tuesday, Algom shows Schwartz an article about media king Ted Turner. A quote from Turner reads, "I don't want my tombstone to read 'I never owned a network.'" Algom wonders if Turner were in Schwartz's position, whether he would still care that he never owned a TV network. Schwartz laughs and says that it's all part of the same problem. People value the wrong things, and as a result, they lead disillusioned lives.

Schwartz claims that brainwashing is taking place all over the country. The media repeats things over and over until everyone simply believes it is true. More is good: more money, more property and more things. Average people are simply overwhelmed by it all until they no longer understand what is truly important.

Schwartz talks about people he's met who only always ever wanted something new. "Guess what I got," they'd ask. Schwartz says he always took that to mean these people were so hungry for love they were using things as a replacement for that love. "They were embracing material things and expecting a sort of hug back. But it never works. You can't substitute material things for love or for gentleness or for tenderness or for a sense of comradeship (pg. 125)." Schwartz insists that money is not a substitute. He says, as he's dying, that money will not buy what he's looking for.

Algom looks around Schwartz's study. He realizes that nothing new, except medical equipment, has been added to the room for a long time, probably years. Yet since Schwartz's illness was diagnosed, the house has become a very wealthy home, filled with friends, students, honesty, tears, teaching and love.

Schwartz says that people confuse what they need with what they want. In the end, they derive no satisfaction from their "things." True satisfaction, he insists, comes from giving what you have. Schwartz doesn't mean money, but time or a skill or even just an ear to someone who wants to talk. That's how a person begins to earn respect, he says, by offering what you have.

Algom focuses on his pad and paper, jotting things down. He's not doing this because he needed to. After all, the tape recorder is on. He just doesn't want Schwartz to read his face and to see the truth in his eyes. He is guilty of exactly what Schwartz is discussing. Working among the rich and famous, Algom has convinced himself that the bigger house he wants is reasonable because it isn't as big as the ones owned by the people he interviews. Schwartz says that showing off is pointless. The people at the top will still look down on you, and the people at the bottom will only envy you. Only an open heart will allow a person to be on the same level as everyone else.



Albom asks Schwartz why he needs to hear other people's problems. He's dying and has plenty of pain and suffering in his own life. Why does he still want to hear about other people's problems? He says that's what makes him feel alive. His car or his house can't make him feel alive, but seeing someone smile after they were feeling sad can. Schwartz tells Albom that if he does the things he finds in his heart, he won't be unsatisfied or envious. Instead, he'll be overwhelmed by all that he has.

The Eighth Tuesday We Talk About Money Analysis

Schwartz continues with his life lessons, insisting that people's obsession with having more is the root of their unhappiness. What people don't realize is that happiness comes, not from what they get, but rather from what they give. Giving actually pays them back with the kind of wealth that money can't buy.



The Ninth Tuesday We Talk About How Love Goes On

The Ninth Tuesday We Talk About How Love Goes On Summary

Fall arrives at Schwartz's home. At Albom's home, the labor strike continues. Around the world, depressing news abounds. Albom tries calling his brother in Spain several times. After a few weeks, he gets a message back. His brother says that he didn't want to talk. Meanwhile, Schwartz's condition is rapidly deteriorating. He can't move his own head and is no longer able to use the bathroom on his own. Yet every morning he still insists on being lifted from his bed and moved to his study, where he can sit among his books and papers. His new saying is "when you're in bed, you're dead."

Schwartz tells Albom that *Nightline* wants to do another show on him, but they want to wait. This angers Albom, who thinks they're exploiting Schwartz, wanting him to be at his worst before they do the show. Schwartz says that is okay. Maybe they are using him. He's also using them, though, to get his message out to millions who would otherwise never hear it. He calls it a compromise.

Schwartz says that he told *Nightline* not to wait too long. He knows the disease will soon hit his lungs, making talking impossible. He says he already cannot talk long without tiring. He tells Albom he's cancelled visits with many of the people who want to see him. He can't help them if he's too tired to talk to them.

Albom asks if they should skip their weekly recorded conversation, but Schwartz insists on going on, saying it is their last thesis together. They want to get it right. Schwartz tells Albom that he was asked an interesting question. Someone asked if he worries about being forgotten after his death. He doesn't think he will be. There are too many people he is close to. Love is the way you stay alive after you're gone.

Schwartz asks Albom if he ever hears Schwartz's voice when he's alone. Albom admits that he does, and Schwartz says then he will not forget him. He will just have to think of his voice, and Schwartz will be there. Schwartz continues, it'll be okay if he wants to cry a little. Albom recalls that Schwartz has wanted to make him cry since he was a freshman. He always promised one day he would do it. Schwartz tells Albom he's decided he wants his tombstone to read, "A teacher to the last."

Albom narrates how he loves the way Schwartz lights up when Albom walks into the room for a visit. He realizes that Schwartz lights up for many people, but he still always feels as if that smile is just for him. Schwartz also has the ability to truly listen when someone is talking, as if he or she is the only person in the world. Albom wonders how much better the world would be if everyone had someone who listened this way.



Albom remembers Schwartz teaching this in a class at Brandeis. Albom had thought it silly to take a class on how to pay attention. Today, he thinks it is more important than anything else he learned in college. Albom feels some guilt that this man who has so much to bear on his shoulders is capable of this when so many others, with such minor problems, are unable to have a thirty-second conversation without their thoughts drifting away.

Schwartz says the problem is that people are in too much of a hurry. They haven't found meaning in their life, so they're too busy running around looking for it. Perhaps it's in the next car or in the bigger house. If not, maybe it's in the house after that.

Albom confesses that once you start running, it's hard to slow down. Schwartz insists that it's not. He gives an example from when he was still able to drive. He says when another driver, in a hurry, would try to cut him off, he'd raise his hand, not to give them the finger and a dirty look, but to wave them on and smile. Mostly they smiled back. Schwartz says he didn't need to be in a hurry in his car. He preferred to save his energy for other people. Albom tells Schwartz he is the father everyone wishes they had. Schwartz admits he has some experience in that area.

The last time Schwartz saw his father was in the morgue. When Schwartz was a child, his father would take his evening paper outside and read it on a bench under the streetlight. Schwartz and his brother watched him out the window, wishing he would come in and talk to them, tuck them in or kiss them goodnight. He never did. Schwartz made a promise to himself that he would do these things for his own children, and it was a promise he kept.

Schwartz moved away and was raising his own family, and his father was still taking that walk and reading his paper outside. One night, he was mugged, and in running from his assailants, he collapsed and died from a heart attack. Schwartz was summoned to New York to identify the body. He didn't cry until days later. Schwartz knew his own death would be different. There would be no telegrams or trips to the morgue. Instead there would be hugs and kisses, conversation and laughter. Most of all there would be no goodbyes left unsaid.

Albom reflects about a South American tribe that believes there is a fixed amount of energy in the world. If one dies, another must be born. If one is born, one must die to keep the energy constant. Albom and Schwartz both like this idea. What is taken must be replenished, Schwartz says. It's only fair.

The Ninth Tuesday We Talk About How Love Goes On Analysis

This chapter again shows how the deaths of Schwartz's parents affected Schwartz and shaped his views on his own death. It's interesting to note that his father's death occurred during the nightly ritual he and his brother so resented. It took him away from them as children and, as adults, it took him away from them permanently.



This chapter has yet more foreshadowing about Schwartz's desire to see Albom cry. This desire is not malicious, but it is as if he desires to, just once, see Albom let his guard down far enough for real emotion to leak out.

Albom shares another insight into how death is viewed in various parts of the world. His research into this subject perhaps can be viewed as a way of trying to find some solace in an event which, in Albom's culture, will be considered tragic. Perhaps if he can convince himself of the truth in the beliefs of some remote Amazon tribe, he won't be as grief-stricken and horrified at the end as he's afraid he might be.



The Tenth Tuesday We Talk About Marriage

The Tenth Tuesday We Talk About Marriage Summary

Albom calls Schwartz between visits to see how he is doing. He's having a good day. Someone has to hold the phone for him, but Schwartz asks to speak to Albom's wife, Janine. Albom hands her the phone and watches as Schwartz works his magic on her. After a few minutes, Janine hangs up and announces she's coming along on the next visit.

All three of them sit together in Schwartz's den. Schwartz and Janine engage in flirty banter and reminisce about the time Schwartz spent teaching in Janine's hometown of Detroit. This is the first time in weeks that Albom has seen Schwartz telling stories. He seems to have found some new energy reserves for his visit with Janine.

Schwartz's nurse brings in his lunch. It is not the food Mitch continues to bring with him on each visit. Although he shops for the softest foods he can find, they are still beyond Schwartz's capabilities. He can only eat what can be pureed enough to drink through a straw. Albom continues to shop every week, partly to see the joy on Schwartz's face when he walks in with his gifts and partly in the foolish hope that one day they will again be able to share a meal like they have in the past, Schwartz laughing and talking with his mouth full.

Schwartz asks Janine, a professional singer, if she will sing for him. To Albom's surprise she does. Albom watches Schwartz as he listens to the song. He closes his eyes and smiles. Although his body is stiff and immobile, Albom thinks he can almost see him dancing inside. Tears roll down Schwartz's face as the song ends, and Albom realizes, as many times as he's heard his wife sing, he's never heard her like Schwartz just heard her.

The topic for this Tuesday is marriage. Albom asks Schwartz why there are so many problems in marriages today. He confesses that he waited seven years to propose to Janine and wonders if he, like others his age, was just more careful or more selfish than those who married younger.

Schwartz says he feels pity for Albom's generation. It's important to build a loving relationship with someone, he says, but today people are either too selfish to get into a relationship at all or they rush in and end up divorced six months later. It's sad, Schwartz says, because you realize when you're in his situation, while friends are wonderful, they're not the same as someone who will sit up all night with you, try to comfort you and be helpful in the early hours of the morning.



Schwartz met his wife, Charlotte, as students. They have been married for forty-four years. Albom often watches them together and marvels at how they seem to work as a team, often without a single word passing between them. She is a much more private person than Schwartz, although her husband respects that about her. Albom notes the only time Schwartz ever holds anything back is when he thinks Charlotte might be uncomfortable with him talking about it.

Schwartz claims that marriage is a test, and you find out a lot about yourself and your partner as a result. He says there is no simple quiz to find out which marriages will work, but there are a few rules that must be followed if a marriage is to survive. There must be respect and compromise. There must be open communication, and your values must be alike. The most important of those values, Schwartz says, is your belief in the importance of marriage.

Albom reminds Schwartz of the Book of Job from the Bible. To test Job's faith, God takes away everything Job has, including his health. Albom asks Schwartz what he thinks about that. Schwartz smiles and says he thinks God overdid it.

The Tenth Tuesday We Talk About Marriage Analysis

In this chapter, Albom reveals the real reason he has continued to bring food each week even after he learned Schwartz is unable to eat any of it. In a form of denial, he continues to bring his edible gifts in a vain hope that, maybe this week, Schwartz will be able to eat with him as they used to eat in the cafeteria back at Brandeis. Albom is reluctant to accept that the progression of Schwartz's disease has only one direction. Even at this point, when it's obvious to everyone how rapidly Schwartz is heading towards death, Albom is still harboring hope Schwartz will one day get better.

At Schwartz's invitation, Albom's wife, Janine, accompanies him on this trip. Schwartz issues the invitation to her himself, not waiting for Albom to take it upon himself to invite her. During their visit, Schwartz's emotional reaction to her singing suddenly makes Albom realize, as often as he's heard her sing, he's never really listened to her sing before. It's as if Schwartz invited Janine to visit solely because he wanted to make sure Albom appreciated her as he should.

Schwartz's views on marriage are not surprising. As someone who so deeply believes in the importance of personal relationships, Schwartz's deep belief in the importance of marriage and in the things that hold marriages together is not surprising.



The Eleventh Tuesday We Talk About Our Culture

The Eleventh Tuesday We Talk About Our Culture Summary

Unlike Algom and Schwartz's earlier visits, when Algom would excuse himself from the room whenever Schwartz needed medical attention, he now not only stays but finds himself getting involved. After watching the physical therapist work to loosen the congestion in Schwartz's lungs, Algom asks if he can help. After being shown the proper technique, he begins pounding on Schwartz's back and shoulders. Schwartz jokes that he always knew Algom wanted to hit him. Algom agrees, smacking him one more time and claiming it's for the B he got his sophomore year. They all laugh, but it is an uncomfortable laugh because they all realize the act is only postponing the inevitable.

Algom is now considerably less self-conscious about the things that society says should be embarrassing. Society and culture and their expectations become the topics of the day. Schwartz claims people are basically good. When they are threatened, though, for instance with the prospect of being unemployed, they begin to change and look out for themselves. That is when society starts to go bad.

Algom and Schwartz hold hands while they talk. Algom acknowledges that this is something else he would not have been comfortable with just a few weeks earlier. Similarly, the catheter bag that rests near his feet and the fact that Schwartz now performs his bodily functions in his chair, with all the smells associated with them, are now inconsequential to him instead of disgusting.

Schwartz explains the need to build a culture separate from traditional society. This culture would not be based on disregarding rules, but rather based on disregarding opinions. A person would get to choose what he or she thinks and values. Schwartz's illness is a perfect example, he says. Society says that grown men who cry or need someone else to perform intimate functions should be embarrassed. It's the same manner in which a society says women can't be too thin or men too rich.

Schwartz says that even though society would have you believe those things, you don't have to buy into them. You can choose not to. He says that each culture has its own problems, and the solution is not to run away from those particular problems but to create your own culture. "...the biggest defect we human being have is our shortsightedness. We don't see what we could be. We should be looking at our potential, stretching ourselves into everything we can become. But if you're surrounded by people who say 'I want mine now,' you end up with a few people with everything and a military to keep the poor ones from rising up and stealing it (pg. 156)."



Schwartz claims a major problem in society is that people are quicker to see their differences than their similarities. Perhaps if they looked closer at the similarities, they'd be more willing to see everyone as one large human family and to care about that family as they do their own. Schwartz tells Albom to invest in that larger family and to build a community of those he loves and those who love him.

Albom and Connie slip away to watch the OJ Simpson verdict on television. When the not guilty verdict is announced, Connie shrieks and leaves the room. Albom hears rustlings from the next room and smiles when he realizes that while the rest of the world is watching the conclusion of the "trial of the century," his beloved friend is sitting on the toilet. In a flashback to 1979, Brandeis University is winning a basketball game. The student section begins to chant "we're number one." Schwartz stands up and yells back, "What's wrong with number two?"

The Eleventh Tuesday We Talk About Our Culture Analysis

This chapter is interesting in that Albom's own actions are already paralleling the comments Schwartz has yet to make. Despite society's view of illness and the physical side effects that come with it, Albom has begun to disregard those views and become more at ease with his proximity to Schwartz's illness. Things that would have horrified him just weeks ago are now commonplace. Society would also frown upon two men showing genuine affection through the act of holding hands, and yet Albom has moved past that and actually enjoys the sign of affection.

Only after all of this is revealed does Schwartz impart his wisdom about deciding for yourself what is important, what you should value and what you should and shouldn't be embarrassed about. The chapter seems designed to show that Schwartz's messages are slowly but definitively penetrating Albom's attitudes and actions. He is finally becoming the man he wanted to be.



The Audiovisual, Part 3

The Audiovisual, Part 3 Summary

Nightline returns for a third and final time. Koppel asks Schwartz if he's up to it, and Schwartz admits that he doesn't know. Schwartz is too weak at this point to change clothes daily, instead doing it just every other day. He sees no reason to break his routine and, as a result, for the interview wears the same shirt he wore the day before.

Koppel asks Schwartz if, as he gets closer to dying, he is more afraid. Schwartz denies that is the case and insists the opposite is actually true. He admits to withdrawing from parts of the outside world. He watches less news, reads less mail and instead listens to more music and watches the leaves turn colors outside his window.

Schwartz tells Koppel that he admires the way some people live with ALS, such as Stephen Hawking, the famed physicist, talking through a voice synthesizer and blinking words onto a typewriter, but it is not the way he has chosen. For Schwartz, once the ability to respond to someone, to show his emotions, is gone, he will be gone. Schwartz shares his latest saying with Koppel. "Don't let go too soon, but don't hold on too long."

Perhaps hoping to interject some humor in this dark interview, Koppel asks Schwartz about his previous comments about someone having to wipe his ass for him. Instead of humor, he gets the bleak truth. Schwartz tells him that not only does someone have to wipe his bottom for him, but he's progressed to the point where he is unable to even just sit on the commode without assistance. Someone has to hold him up even before needing to wipe him.

At the end of the interview, Koppel asks if there is anything Schwartz would like to say to the millions of people watching. He tells them to show compassion and take responsibility for one another. Most of all, he tells people to love one another.

After the interview, Schwartz tells Koppel that the disease is trying to take his spirit. It can have his body, but he refuses to let it get his spirit. Schwartz tells Koppel he's bargaining these days, asking if he gets to be one of the angels. Albom notes this is the first time Schwartz has admitted talking to God.

The Audiovisual, Part 3 Analysis

This chapter is meant to reveal the decline Schwartz has undergone since the time of the first interview. Instead of conducting the interview in the relative comfort of Schwartz's living room, Koppel and crew must all squeeze into the cramped and cluttered study. Instead of Schwartz's vivid gesturing with his hands as he talks, he is barely able to lift his hands at all. Even the running joke about wiping Schwartz's ass is no longer funny.



The Twelfth Tuesday We Talk About Forgiveness

The Twelfth Tuesday We Talk About Forgiveness Summary

During Albom's next visit with Schwartz, Albom massages Schwartz's feet with lotion. One of the horrors of ALS is that even though he can no longer move his toes, Schwartz can still feel pain in them. The massages help. This day, they are talking about forgiveness.

The few things Schwartz regrets in his life are vengeance and stubbornness, pride and vanity. He tells the story of a very good friend who moved away just before Charlotte underwent a very serious surgery. Schwartz and his wife were hurt that the friend never got in touch with them during this time. When the friend later tried to reconcile, Schwartz refused. He was too hurt and prideful to forgive the slight. Then, when the friend eventually died of cancer, Schwartz deeply regretted not forgiving him. It still pains him so much, he begins to cry.

When Schwartz is able to talk again, he tells Albom that people also need to forgive themselves, for the things they didn't do and for the things they should have done. He admits he always wished he'd done more with his career and published more books. Now he realizes that beating himself up was pointless. In the end, none of it matters. Again, he states that he is lucky to be given the time to set things right before he dies. He tells Albom not to wait to forgive. He says to do it now, because not everyone will get the time he has.

Schwartz again brings up the tension of opposites, stating while he grieves for his dwindling time, he's also grateful for the chance to use it to set things right. Then, Schwartz proceeds to set things right with Albom by confessing that if he'd had another son, he would have wanted Albom to be him. For a moment, Albom feels fear and thinks it's a fear of betraying his own father by accepting these words from Schwartz. Then he quickly realizes that he's simply afraid of saying good-bye.

Schwartz tells Albom that he's picked a gravesite and asks that Albom come to visit it after he's gone, come and tell him his problems. Albom says it won't be the same, not being able to hear Schwartz's voice. Schwartz says that after he's dead, Albom can talk. He'll listen.



The Twelfth Tuesday We Talk About Forgiveness Analysis

In this chapter, Schwartz confesses some of the few regrets in his life, including his decision to not forgive a friend until it was too late and time wasted wishing he had done this or that. In much of the book, Schwartz seems to be far above things like petty squabbles with friends or career disappointments. The realization that he is not, and that it was through experiencing these things that Schwartz gained his profound wisdom, draws the reader in and makes him or her, like Albom, realize that everyone does have the power to change his or her life for the better.



The Thirteenth Tuesday We Talk About the Perfect Day

The Thirteenth Tuesday We Talk About the Perfect Day Summary

Schwartz tells Albom that he wants to be cremated. He and Charlotte have discussed it with the rabbi at the university who will preside over Schwartz's memorial service. The rabbi is shocked when Schwartz makes a joke about being overcooked, but Schwartz, as he gets closer to death, realizes his body is simply a shell, a container for the soul.

Schwartz tells Albom that people are afraid of even the sight of death. He read a book that said when someone dies in a hospital, they immediately cover him or her with a sheet and quickly remove the body, as if death is somehow contagious. Schwartz then tells Albom that he had a terrible coughing spell the night before. It was so bad that it went on for hours, and he was unsure he would make it through. He started to get dizzy from the lack of oxygen. Then, suddenly, he felt at peace, like he was ready to die. He tells Albom it was an amazing feeling, being able to accept death and being ready to move on to whatever came next.

Schwartz didn't move on, though. The coughing ended, and he recovered. Still, he says it's important to know he felt he could have moved on because once a person makes peace with dying, only then can he make peace with living. Death is natural, Schwartz continues. The only reason people make such a big deal out of it is because they like to think they're different than the rest of nature, above it somehow. Yet, the truth is, everything that is born must eventually die.

In another way, humans do have one advantage over the rest of nature. The ability to love and be loved means humans can die without ever really going away. The love still exists after death, and the human lives on in the hearts of loved ones. Death ends a life, he says, not a relationship.

A new drug has been developed which slows the progress of ALS. Schwartz has heard of it, but he knows he is beyond its help. It will not be available for another several months, and Schwartz is realistic enough to know he will be gone by then. Albom asks Schwartz, if he were suddenly cured, could he go back to being the man he was before? Schwartz says he could not. Lessons, once learned, cannot be unlearned. Once you understand the important issues, you cannot just let go of them. Albom asks what those important issues are, and Schwartz says that in his opinion, they are love, responsibility, spirituality and awareness. He says if he were to suddenly get healthy, those would still be his issues, because they should have been his issues all along.

Next, Albom asks what Schwartz would do if he could be granted one more perfectly healthy day. Expecting to hear some grandiose plan, he is shocked at the simplicity of



Schwartz's answer. Schwartz would get up, do his exercises and eat breakfast. He would go for a swim and then talk and walk with his friends. He'd go out to dinner and spend the rest of the night dancing. Albom wonders, after all he's gone through in the last months, how Schwartz could see perfection in such an ordinary day. Then Albom realizes that is Schwartz's whole point.

Before Albom leaves for the day, Schwartz asks about his brother. Albom has been trying to reach him for several weeks and has finally learned he has been flying back and forth from Spain to Amsterdam to receive treatment. Schwartz tells Albom he must accept his brother's decisions. For whatever reasons, his brother has decided to carry his burdens alone, and Albom needs to make peace with that.

Albom asks Schwartz why his brother doesn't want to see him. Schwartz replies that there are no magic formulas to relationships. They must allow room for the needs of both parties, and Albom must allow for his brother's need to be alone. Schwartz tells Albom he will eventually find a way back to a relationship with his brother. After all, Albom found his way back to Schwartz.

Schwartz tells Albom a story about a wave heading towards the coast. When the wave sees the other waves crashing against the shore, he is devastated. He doesn't want that to happen to him. Another wave sees that the first wave is distraught and asks why. When the first wave explains, the second wave replies that they are more than just waves. They are part of the ocean.

The Thirteenth Tuesday We Talk About the Perfect Day Analysis

This chapter again emphasizes that despite the exemplary life Schwartz has led, marching to the tune of his own drummer, he is not exempt from the lessons to be learned as death approaches. He knows now exactly what the important things are, and given a chance to go back to a healthy time, he would live his life with those things first and foremost in his thoughts.



The Fourteenth Tuesday We Say Goodbye

The Fourteenth Tuesday We Say Goodbye Summary

Schwartz's wife Charlotte calls Albom the next Monday. She tells him they still want him to visit the next day but that Schwartz is very weak. Albom reads between the lines and realizes that she is saying the end is very near. When Albom arrives the next morning, Schwartz is still asleep. Connie, the nurse, is upset. He's a sweet man, she says, and she doesn't like to think about it.

Albom has again brought food, although he knows Schwartz hasn't eaten real food in months. He apologizes to Charlotte for bringing it, but it has become a tradition, he says. Sometimes tradition is all you can hang on to. When Schwartz finally wakes and is ready to see Albom, Albom is surprised to find him in bed, rather than in his study, in his chair. In his head, he hears Schwartz saying, "When you're in bed, you're dead."

Schwartz is very weak and can barely talk. He calls Albom his dear friend, says he's not doing well and struggles to reach for Albom so that they can hold hands. Albom's coach tells him a final time that he is a good soul who touched his heart. Albom tells him that he doesn't know how to say goodbye. Schwartz pats Albom's hand and replies that this is how. Schwartz tells Albom he loves him, and Albom replies in kind. Schwartz says he knows and also knows that Albom always has loved him. Schwartz then cries while Albom holds him. When Albom leaves, he gives Schwartz one last hug and the satisfaction of knowing he has finally made his long-time student cry.

The Fourteenth Tuesday We Say Goodbye Analysis

As Schwartz slips ever closer to death, Albom grows ever stronger into the man he knows Schwartz would like him to be. Albom completely puts aside his own uneasiness with the situation in his attempts to give his mentor just a few fleeting seconds of pleasure.

Graduation

Graduation Summary

Schwartz lapses into a coma two days later. His family gathers at his bedside, sleeping in shifts so that, for two straight days, someone is always with him. Then, the first time that Schwartz is completely alone since falling into the coma, he stops breathing. Albom believes Schwartz wanted it that way. He wanted no witnesses who would be forever haunted by his last breath.

Hundreds of people want to attend Schwartz's funeral. Charlotte keeps it small, though, inviting only family and a few good friends. As Albom stands at the gravesite, he looks around and remembers Schwartz telling him that if he talked, Schwartz would listen. Albom tries out an imaginary conversation in his head and is happy to realize how natural it feels. He looks at his watch. Of course, he thinks. It is Tuesday.

Graduation Analysis

This chapter reveals that in the end, Schwartz gets everything he wants out of his death. He spends his last days surrounded by family, and when the time comes, he goes peacefully, with no traumatizing effects to his survivors. He is buried in a pretty place, and even after he is gone, his Tuesday relationship with Albom continues on.



The Conclusion

The Conclusion Summary

Albom looks back at the person he used to be before getting reacquainted with his old professor. He wishes that he could talk to his old self and tell him the many things Schwartz taught his older self. Mostly, he wishes he could tell his young self to go visit Schwartz before he gets sick and before he loses his ability to dance.

Albom finally reaches his brother. He tells him that he respects his desire to keep his distance. All he wants is to keep in touch. He tells his brother that he loves him and doesn't want to lose him. This is the first time Albom has ever said such a thing to his little brother. A few days later, Albom's brother sends him a fax. It contains small stories about what he's done that week, tells a few jokes and reveals an uncomfortable medical condition or two. Albom laughs until he cries.

Albom narrates that the book was mostly Schwartz's idea, their "final thesis" together. Not only does it bring them closer together, but it gives Schwartz a small amount of joy when publishers begin expressing interest. In the end, the advance on the book pays Schwartz's enormous medical bills.

After Schwartz's death, Albom goes through some of Schwartz's papers and finds a twenty-year-old paper he wrote for one of Schwartz's classes. In the margins are notes they scribbled to each other. "Dear Coach" some read, while others started "Dear Player." Albom says he misses Schwartz the most when he reads those words.

Albom asks if the reader has ever had such a teacher. "One who saw you as a raw but precious thing, a jewel that, with wisdom, could be polished to a proud shine? (pg. 192)" He says if you're ever that lucky to find such a teacher, you will always find your way back to them. The teaching will go on.

The Conclusion Analysis

The final chapter wraps up the saga of Schwartz and Albom. It lets the reader know Albom has not forgotten his teacher or his lessons. It also expresses the hope that any reader lucky enough to have a Schwartz in his life will never forget him.



Characters

Morrie Schwartz

The title character grows up in Brooklyn, the son of poor immigrants. Morrie Schwartz's mother dies when he is very young, and soon after, his younger brother develops polio. He is forced to go to work at a very young age to help support his family. His father remarries, and his stepmother fosters in him a great love of learning.

After vowing never to work in a job that exploits another or make money off the sweat of another, Schwartz takes up research as his chosen profession. His first job after college is in a mental hospital in Washington DC. He receives a grant to observe patients and record their treatments. He is unable, though, to simply watch from the sidelines. He soon befriends many of the patients and is even able to reach some that hospital staff has simply given up on.

After the mental hospital, in the late 1950s Schwartz moves to Boston to teach sociology at Brandeis University. He quickly becomes a campus favorite. A small man with blue-green eyes and thinning, white hair, he loves to dance and usually does so to the beat of his own drummer. In the summer of 1994, Schwartz is diagnosed with ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease. After recovering from the initial shock of the diagnosis, Schwartz makes the brave decision to live what's left of his life on his terms. Rather than hide behind his disease and society's view of death and dying, he decides to share his journey with all who will listen.

Schwartz teaches his last class in the fall of 1994, and the disease quickly progresses. There are certain stages of his disease that cause him distress. Some he deals with easily, while others take some getting used to. Still others he knows he won't deal with at all. For instance, when he is no longer able to dress himself in the locker room after his daily swim, he simply brings someone to dress him. The stares of others have no impact on him. He'd rather endure them than give up swimming.

Schwartz has a much harder time dealing with the inevitable fact someone will eventually have to perform his most intimate chores, such as cleaning him after he uses the toilet. He announces in front of millions of people that this is what he most dreads. Nonetheless, he knows it is coming. He begins conditioning his thoughts against the idea that it should be embarrassing or humiliating. After all, it is only society that decrees that this should cause embarrassment in the first place.

Schwartz goes beyond training himself to not be embarrassed by his condition. He actually frames the dilemma in such a way that he can actually enjoy it. He insists that there is no better time of life than when one is an infant, totally dependent upon another and totally loved and cared for. Most people don't get enough of that love and devotion as a child. Schwartz begins to view his disease as his second chance to enjoy that dependency.



However, Schwartz knows there is one consequence of his disease he will never be able to accept. He knows it will eventually take his voice, his method of communicating with those he loves. He tells Ted Koppel that once that's gone, he will be gone.

Schwartz also struggles with his sometimes-violent coughing spells. He tells Albom that he doesn't want to die that way. He wants to go peacefully. Yet, he is forced to accept that he may very well choke to death once the disease hits his lungs. He works at detaching himself from the fear caused by the spells in hopes that, when the time comes, he will be able to accept what is happening despite the horrific way it may happen.

Finally, a spell comes which is so bad that Schwartz thinks he may not live through it. He finds that he is able to step away from the spell and calmly and willingly face his death. Ultimately, Schwartz survives that attack, but knowing he was able to successfully detach himself from the spell, he puts to rest his final fear. Schwartz passes away on November 4, 1995.

Mitch Albom

Mitch Albom is born on May 23, 1958 in Passaic, New Jersey. He spends most of his childhood in Philadelphia before moving to Waltham, Massachusetts to attend Brandeis University. After graduating from Brandeis in 1979, Albom moves to New York City and spends several years working odd jobs while trying to make a career in the music industry. He spends time as an amateur boxer, does stand-up comedy as the warm-up act to Gabe Kaplan, plays a lead character on TV's *Welcome Back, Kotter* and works in nightclubs, singing and playing piano.

The death of a favorite uncle, however, galvanizes Albom out of his fantasy job and into reality. He returns to school and earns graduate degrees in journalism and business administration from Columbia University in New York. He then accepts what he claims was the first job offered to him, that of a sports writer. He works for several newspapers all over the country, freelances for various sports magazines and, in 1985, lands the job of sports columnist at *The Detroit Free Press*. Albom's popular column quickly becomes nationally syndicated, and he writes several best-selling sports books.

Morrie Schwartz comes back into Albom's life in the spring of 1995 when he sees a *Nightline* story about Schwartz and his illness. Albom returns to Massachusetts to see Schwartz. Schwartz and Albom continue to meet each Tuesday for the next several months. During this time, as Schwartz's disease progresses, so does Albom's growth. During their early meetings, Albom is embarrassed by the changes in himself since he last saw Schwartz and ashamed at how he's been living his life. He is embarrassed by Schwartz's disease and uncomfortable discussing it or even remaining in the room while Schwartz undergoes treatments.

As time passes, however, and as Schwartz shares with Albom his secrets to living happily, Albom recognizes the pitfalls and stereotypes he's fallen into. He gradually



undergoes a transformation. He begins focusing more on Schwartz and less on his own life and busy career. He becomes more accepting of the signs of the disease's progression. Not only does Albom stop leaving the room during treatments, he begins performing them himself. New medical equipment no longer makes him uncomfortable.

Most of all, Albom begins opening himself and his emotions to Schwartz and to the reader. In the end, he is no longer afraid to admit his fears and weaknesses and no longer afraid to share and show his love. As a final act of love, on their final visit together, Albom opens himself up and, for the first time, allows his mentor to see him cry.



Objects/Places

Brandeis University

Located in Waltham, Massachusetts, near Boston, Brandeis University is where Albom and Schwartz first meet and spend the first portion of their relationship together. It was known as a radical university whose students included several well-known sixties radicals, including Abbie Hoffman.

Schwartz's Home

Located in the Boston suburb of West Newton, Schwartz's home is the setting for most of the novel. Although their early visit takes place in the dining room or kitchen and their last in the bedroom, the majority of their visits take place in Schwartz's study, a room lined with shelves full of books and family photos.



Themes

Coach and Player

During Algom's college years, he began calling Schwartz "coach," the same nickname he used for his high school track coach. Schwartz decides he likes the name and replies that Algom can be his player, playing "all the lovely parts of life that I'm too old for now (pg. 31)." This is exactly how the relationship progresses. During Algom's college years, Schwartz teaches or coaches Algom through studies on subjects Algom never knew existed. He teaches Algom about sociology scholars and the study of life. Algom is an open receptacle, and Schwartz fills his mind with new thoughts and ideas.

Schwartz also coaches Algom through an honors thesis. Interestingly, the subject is sports, a subject decided upon long after the player/coach nicknames are instituted. Even more interesting is the fact that years later, long after his "coach" has disappeared from his life, Algom makes a career out of writing about sports. In the end, Schwartz coaches Algom through life's important lessons. He imparts wisdom to his young protygy about games he's already played while Algom is still going through warm-ups.

Maturation

A recurring theme in the book is the many ways in which Algom grows and matures as Schwartz's illness progresses. Their visits start with Algom slouching down in his car, pretending to look for his keys and talking on his cell phone while the man he hasn't seen for more than sixteen years watches and waits for their reunion. Within a few weeks, the man who is always connected and doing five things at once begins leaving his cell phone at home.

Throughout Schwartz and Algom's first meeting, Algom is uncomfortable and uneasy. He is glad when the visit comes to an end. By the next meeting, the discomfort is gone, and while Algom is still uncomfortable with Schwartz's disease, he is once again comfortable with the man himself.

In the beginning, Algom leaves the room whenever a nurse or aide needs to tend to a medical matter. After some time passes, he stays in the room, and finally, he begins assisting Schwartz of his own violation. He goes from being uncomfortable merely at the sight of the newly added oxygen tank to barely even noticing the catheter bag sitting at his feet.

As Schwartz and Algom's visits and talks progress, Schwartz's words seem to have great impact of Algom's attitudes, even without him seeming to realize it. The previously self-absorbed Algom gradually becomes less and less concerned with his own feelings and insecurities and begins to focus more on Schwartz's needs and pleasures. In the end, on the last visit, Algom has grown enough to openly admit to Schwartz that he



doesn't know how to tell him goodbye. He openly admits his love for Schwartz and cries at their final goodbye.

Ignoring Mainstream Culture

Schwartz repeatedly talks of the fact that current culture works against people having happy lives. He says that in order to be happy, you must make your own culture. It starts with his love of dancing. Albom describes how Schwartz would do the lindy to Jimi Hendrix, "looking like a conductor on amphetamines." He doesn't care what people think when he dances. He simply enjoys it.

This theme occurs again when Schwartz gets sick and is no longer able to dress himself in the locker room for his daily swim. Rather than give up the pleasure swimming brings him, he ignores the stares of others and has an assistant dress him. Schwartz says that the culture we live in is not designed to make people feel good about themselves. It teaches the wrong things, and in order to be happy, you have to be strong enough to not buy into it.

For instance, companies spend millions of dollars to convince people they need this perfume to be sexy, that car to be happy or some other item to be respected and admired. Advertisers beat these messages into the heads of consumers until it's hard to not believe them. If you do believe them, though, you'll never be happy because along will come another perfume that will make you even sexier or a bigger car to make you more respected. It's a vicious cycle that's hard to break. In a manner speaking, Schwartz creates his own anti-culture. He creates a world of conversation, interaction and affection, and his life is lived to the fullest.

Schwartz also believes mainstream culture does not encourage people to think about the important things until they're ready to die. Instead of thinking about whether a life is being lived to its fullest potential, people are too wrapped up in making the mortgage, buying a new car and getting that next promotion. Again, today's culture has convinced people they need the new job to make more money to pay for the new car and the bigger mortgage.

As Schwartz's disease progresses, his ability to throw popular convention to the wind becomes an even greater asset. Though culture tells us that a grown man should be embarrassed by the fact someone has to hold him up to use the toilet and then wipe his behind, Schwartz, in typical fashion, decides to ignore these popular beliefs as he has much of his life. As a result, he actually begins to enjoy the dependency that would so horrify others.

Schwartz also claims our mainstream culture is disintegrating the inherent goodness of people. He insists people are only mean when they're threatened. Our culture and our economy are built to threaten people. People start worrying about losing their job, and they start looking out only for themselves. Money becomes the most important thing in life. Schwartz encourages Albom to disregard mainstream culture, to choose his own

values and to decide for himself what is important. He encourages all people to build their own community of people they love and people who love them back.

Style

Point of View

Albom's *Tuesday's with Morrie* is a true story told mostly in a first person narrative by Albom, the author and one of the two main characters. There are several flashbacks to Albom's college days, but they are still related in Albom's first person voice. The style of this work, told as conversations between a teacher and student, is reminiscent of philosophical works like Plato's conversations with Socrates as well as eastern philosophical conversations with gurus. The exceptions to the first person voice in the story are details about Schwartz's early life, which give a more biographical and human tone to the work. While the reader gets the sense that Albom is still the narrative voice, the sections are told in the third person narrative style.

Setting

The conversations that comprise the majority of the book take place between the spring of 1995 and November of that year, when Schwartz passes away. The relationship between Schwartz and Albom dates back sixteen years earlier, and the book frequently flashes back to those early years. The conversations themselves seem sometimes timeless, but Albom's life in the fast lane is a central idea of the story. Modern life is contrasted with Schwartz's philosophies, and culture becomes a central theme.

Language and Meaning

Tuesdays with Morrie is essentially made up almost entirely of two men talking to each other. Conversational language, therefore, while more casual and less rigidly structured, is extremely important to this book. The language sets a personal and intimate tone, as the reader witnesses a discussion between friends.

Structure

Tuesdays with Morrie is unusual in that the chapters are not numbered. Rather, they are titled. Some take on academic terms, including The Student, The Professor, Graduation and The Syllabus. Others are titled by the Tuesday visit they cover and what Albom and Schwartz talk about on that particular day. This book tells the stories of the two main characters in the academically named chapters, interspersed with philosophical conversations in the "Tuesday" chapters, where Schwartz takes on the role of guru. In addition, many of the chapters have an aside at the end. On a separate page and written in italics, some of these asides are flashbacks to Albom's college days and others are simply meaningful fragments of real-time conversations between Albom and Schwartz.



Quotes

"The last class of my old professor's life took place once a week in his house, by a window in the study where he could watch a small hibiscus plant shed its pink leaves. The class met on Tuesdays. It began after breakfast. The subject was The Meaning of Life. It was taught from experience." Pg. 1

"He would make death his final project, the center point of his days. Since everyone was going to die, he could be of great value, right? He could be research. A human textbook. Study me in my slow and patient demise. Watch what happens to me. Learn with me. Morrie would walk that final bridge between life and death, and narrate the trip." Pg. 10

"Soon the cameras were rolling in front of the living room fireplace, with Koppel in his crisp blue suit and Morrie in his shaggy gray sweater. He had refused fancy clothes or makeup for this interview. His philosophy was that death should not be embarrassing; he was not about to powder its nose." Pg. 21

"I did what I had become best at doing: I tended to my work, even while my dying professor waited on his front lawn. I am not proud of this, but that is what I did." Pg. 27

"What happened to me? The eighties happened. The nineties happened. Death and sickness and getting fat and going bald happened. I traded lots of dreams for a bigger paycheck, and I never even realized I was doing it." Pg. 33

"The most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love and to let it come in.' His voice dropped to a whisper. 'Let it come in. We think we don't deserve love, we think if we let it in we'll become too soft. But a wise man named Levine said it right. He said "Love is the only rational act.'" Pg. 52

"Holding him like that moved me in a way I cannot describe, except to say I felt the seeds of death inside his shriveling frame, and as I laid him in his chair, adjusting his head on the pillows, I had the coldest realization that our time was running out. And I had to do something." Pg. 59

"The culture doesn't encourage you to think about such things until you're about to die. We're do wrapped up with egotistical things, career, family, having enough money, meeting the mortgage, getting a new car, fixing the radiator when it breaks - we're involved in trillions of little acts just to keep going. So we don't get into the habit of standing back and looking at our lives and saying, Is this all? Is this all I want? Is something missing?" Pg. 65

"But there are days when I am depressed. Let me not deceive you. I see certain things going and I feel a sense of dread. What am I going to do without my hands? What happens when I can't speak? Swallowing, I don't care so much about - so they feed me through a tube, so what? But my voice? My hands? They're such an essential part of me. I talk with my voice. I gesture with my hands. This is how I give to people." Pg. 70



"There is no experience like having children. That's all. There is no substitute for it. You cannot do it with a friend. You cannot do it with a lover. If you want the experience of having complete responsibility for another human being, and to learn how to love and bond in the deepest way, then you should have children." Pg. 93

"It's like going back to being a child again. Someone to bathe you. Someone to lift you. Someone to wipe you. We all know how to be a child. It's inside all of us. For me, it's just remembering how to enjoy it. The truth is, when our mothers held us, rocked us, stroked our heads - none of us ever got enough of that. We all yearn in some way to return to those days when we were completely taken care of - unconditional love, unconditional attention. Most of us didn't get enough." Pg. 116

"If you're trying to show off for people at the top, forget it. They will look down on you anyhow. And if you're trying to show off for people at the bottom, forget it. They will only envy you. Status will get you nowhere. Only an open heart will allow you to float equally between everyone." Pg. 43

"...everyone is in such a hurry...People haven't found meaning in their lives, so they're running all the time looking for it. They think the next car, the next house, the next job. Then they find those things are empty too, and they keep running." Pg. 136

"Morrie closed his eyes to absorb the notes. As my wife's loving voice filled the room, a crescent smile appeared on his face. And while he body was stiff as a sandbag, you could almost see him dancing inside it. When she finished, Morrie opened his eyes and tears rolled down his cheeks. In all the years I have listened to my wife sing, I never heard her the easy he did at that moment." Pg. 146-147

"I've learned this much about marriage.... You get tested. You find out who you are, who the other person is, and how you accommodate or don't." pg. 149

"Don't let go too soon. Don't hang on too long." Pg. 162

"...this disease is knocking at my spirit. But it will not get my spirit. It'll get my body. It will not get my spirit." Pg. 163

"I mourn my dwindling time, but I cherish the chance it gives me to make things right." Pg. 167

"Death ends a life, not a relationship." Pg. 174

"It was the first time I had seen him unshaven, the small white whiskers looking so out of place, as if someone had shaken salt neatly across his cheeks and chin. How could there be new life in his beard when it was draining every where else?" Pg. 184

"I look back sometimes at the person I was before I rediscovered my old professor. I want to talk to that person. I want to tell him what to look out for, what mistakes to avoid. I want to tell him to be more open, to ignore the lure of advertised values, to pay



attention when your loved ones are speaking, as if it were the last time you might hear them." Pg. 190

"Have you ever really had a teacher? One who saw you as a raw but precious thing, a jewel that, with wisdom, could be polished to a proud shine? If you are lucky enough to find your way to such teachers, you will always find your way back. Sometimes it is only in your head. Sometimes it is right alongside their beds." Pg. 192



Topics for Discussion

If Albom had not gotten in touch with Schwartz, would Schwartz have contacted Albom before he died? Do you think Schwartz followed Albom's career? Why didn't Schwartz contact Albom in the sixteen years before he got sick?

Do Schwartz's illness and death really have an impact on Albom? He's still writing, hosting radio shows and appearing on TV. His career has reached new heights, and he still has not had children. Do you really think he's taken Schwartz's life lessons to heart?

Why does Schwartz invite Janine to visit? Why doesn't Albom invite her earlier?

If Albom had not gotten in touch with Schwartz before his death, would Schwartz have picked another student to complete this project with him, or was it a project only meant for Albom?

What do you think became of Albom's relationship with his younger brother?

Do you think there is any truth to Schwartz's assertions that today's culture is an impediment to living a happy and fulfilled life?

Discuss Schwartz's theory of the tension of opposites. Are there such tensions in your life? What are they? How do you work to resolve them?