

# **Turtle in Paradise Study Guide**

**Turtle in Paradise by Jennifer L. Holm**

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# Plot Summary

Turtle is an eleven-year-old girl who is being forced to move from New Jersey to Key West due to her mother's work. The only catch is that she is moving without her mother to live with her Aunt Minerva ("Aunt Minnie"). She heads on a road trip with Mr. Edgit, who is doing a favor for her mother's lover, Archie, down to Key West. On the way there Turtle thinks about all of the rotten things kids have done to her, such as get her mother fired with lies or set her cat Smokey's tail on fire. Turtle doesn't fare much better when she arrives in Key West. Finding Curry Lane where her Aunt Minnie lives Turtle meets her cousins Beans, Kermit, and Buddy. While Kermit and Buddy get along well enough with her Beans does not. Kermit is perhaps the most welcoming, and it's found out that he has a weak heart because of having Rheumatic fever when he was younger.

Aunt Minnie ends up throwing the four out of the house when they get to be too much and Turtle learns that they, along with their friend Ira, are running a babysitting business for candy called the Diaper Gang. They pull around a cart with the words "Will Wurf for Candy" and have only four basic rules: No girls allowed, keep your cloth clean, always duck, and never reveal the secret diaper rash formula. The first baby they pick up is Pudding and after showing they know what they are doing Beans tells Turtle that because she is a girl she can't join the Diaper Gang. As they go by the waterfront Turtle meets Slow Poke, who is returning from harvesting sponges. He is Turtle's biological father but at the time Turtle is not aware of this.

The next day Turtle is invited by Kermit to go out with the Diaper gang rather than stay at the house with Buddy. The day ends with the kids sitting on the porch as the ice cream man comes along. Beans tells them that he is going to trick the ice cream man into getting her some ice cream for free but in the end fails. Turtle goes up to the ice cream man and tricks him into giving her ice cream for free. She goes back to the porch and taunts Beans about not getting ice cream and when he asks for some she lets Smokey the cat have some ice cream to get back at him for feeding the candy Kermit was going to give her to Termite the dog.

A few days later Turtle is on the porch playing with her paper dolls with Buddy when Aunt Minnie comes out. She sees the dolls and starts yelling at Turtle talking about how they are her dolls that Sadiebelle stole from her when they were children. Turtle hands the dolls to Aunt Minnie, who snatches them away from her and goes inside. Later on, the Diaper Gang is playing Klee-klee, a game of tag, when Aunt Minnie comes out yelling at Kermit for running around and stressing out his heart. As she goes inside Kermit turns to Turtle and asks if she wants to go to Duval Street before the two run the entire way there. As they get to Duval street Turtle wants to look for a job. Kermit takes her to Johnny Cakes, who is a rumrunner, who turns her down. Next, Slow Poke offers to let her work for him collecting sponges the next day. He tells her to look for his boat the Lost Love before they go back home.

The next day Turtle arrives to work with Slow Poke. He asks her if she can swim, and she lies. They board the Lost Love where she meets Ollie, the new first mate. She asks



what happened to the old one and Slow Poke says that he got bitten by a shark and left. In reality he means that his first mate fell in love. Turtle starts to ask Slow Poke how well he knew her mother and he is very withdrawn about the subject. However he still asks a fair amount about Turtle's mother. He still loves her and yet is reluctant to tell Turtle anything about it, probably because of the pain over being too late to marry her. As they get to the site for sponges they spend a good part of the day pulling them up. Slow Poke asks if Turtle would like to pull the last one up when she falls into the ocean, nearly drowning. Slow Poke pulls her up from the boat telling her that the incident took ten years off of his life.

Some time later Turtle is going around with the Diaper Gang again as they go back to Pork Chop's house. After lunch Pork Chop's mother sends them on an errand, to bring Nana Philly her lunch. As Turtle meets Nana Philly the woman is less than hospitable, barely saying two words to her before going back to her magazine. It's only after they leave that Turtle learns that Nana Philly is her grandmother. Turtle remembers her mother telling her that her grandmother was dead and says that is impossible only to realize that her mother was in fact lying.

Later on while the gang is swimming down at the beach Ira arrives. He is the mastermind behind the Diaper Gang and was away in Miami because his brother needed medical attention due to an injury with firecrackers. He brings back with him a way to scare people, Tick-tocking; which is where a rock is tied to a long string and thrown over a house to the opposite side by a window, making it look like there is a ghost haunting the place. The first person they test this out on is Miss Sugarapple, Pork Chop and Beans's old teacher who punished them for taking test answers. Successfully scaring her the Diaper Gang sets out to terrorize everyone else they had an issue with in the past. The end up doing it so much that they shirk their duties with the children, needing Turtle to help out at one point. They also start up a rumor about Key West being haunted by the weeping ghost, something Pork Chop is enraged about.

Uncle Vernon—Aunt Minnie's husband—arrives back soon. It's noted by Turtle that with him around everyone is a little bit happier. She then starts to think about his homecoming versus Archie's homecoming. Archie is her mother Sadiebelle's current boyfriend who is a salesman who sells people "dreams" and encyclopedias. When he arrives home Turtle describes it as christmas as he showers the two of them with extravagant gifts. However with Vernon home there is a nice meal with everyone together. After that he and Turtle are in the living room sewing clothes back when he starts to ask her about how she likes Archie, who Sadiebelle is looking to marry. Turtle tells him that she likes him before the two get on to other topics.

Turtle takes an interest in Nana Philly as she agrees to take the old woman the lunch that Aunt Minnie has prepared. When she arrives to give Miss Bea a break Turtle serves Nana Philly her food only for the old woman to knock it to the floor. She does this over and over until Turtle starts to eat her own portion of the lunch in front of her. Three days it's like this before Nana Philly gains a respect for Turtle and starts to eat the lunch prepared. It's then that the two remark on their dislike of Shirley Temple as their relationship starts to improve.



August rolls around with the rain as Uncle Vernon has to return back to Matecumbe. Everyone is upset about it but Turtle is having a rough time as well. Someone stole her shoes in the middle of the night, making her think about how she got them. Her mother was trying to stretch out a pair of her old shoes for her when Archie took the pair to buy her some new shoes. She talks about how that was something a father would do and how it felt like they were a family. Her thoughts are interrupted however when Aunt Minnie is beyond upset over Smokey who has ruined Mrs. Felton's slip. She says if it happens again then the cat goes.

A few days later Turtle bumps into Slow Poke at a bar with a few of his sailor friends. He asks how things are going and she complains about missing her shoes to him as the sailors compare Turtle to her mother. She is upset about the comparison but soon asks how well he knew her mother. Slow Poke's friends start to choke on their drinks and before he can really answer Kermit comes running up to warn Turtle that Aunt Minnie is upset because Smokey ruined more clothing of a client. The two race back to the house to see Aunt Minnie on the porch waving the skirt around beyond furious. Later on in the day Turtle is lying on the bed with Smokey attempting to figure out what to do about the situation. The boys offer their sympathies in their own way and try to help her come up with solutions when they hear Aunt Minnie scream from downstairs. They go down to see her flailing around screaming before she races out of the house and collapses in the street, a scorpion falling out of her nightgown.

Smokey kills the scorpion as they get Aunt Minnie to see a doctor. He tells them that she needs to take it easy and Turtle and the boys help keep everything together. At one point Aunt Minnie is hallucinating thinking that Turtle is her mother Sadiebelle before dropping off to sleep again. The next time Aunt Minnie wakes up she asks about who took care of everything while she was out to which the children all inform her of what they've done to keep everything together. Buddy tells his mother that it was Smokey who killed the scorpion but she still says the cat has to go.

Turtle is at Nana Philly's house sometime later and is cleaning up lunch when Smokey, who Nana Philly took in, falls into the piano. As Turtle helps her out of it she finds a cigar box containing the map to Black Caesar's treasure. Turtle puts the things back but after some time away from the map she takes it and goes to see if she can find Slow Poke since he told her about Black Caesar originally. He's out working with Johnny Cakes for Labor day and so Turtle takes the map to the Diaper Gang. They then decide to go and find the treasure to become rich.

The children tell their families that they are going fishing for conch as they steal Johnny Cakes's boat and head out to search for the treasure. After a few issues the children make it onto the key and go searching around for the treasure. Just when they are about to give up around noon Turtle trips over a stone with the letter 'C' carved in it. The children dig up the treasure and when they return to the beach they find the boat is gone, leaving them stranded.

For a whole day the children are stranded on the island and Pork Chop and Beans get into a fight over whose fault it was that the boat was lost. In the end the children go into



the shack that is on the island to stay out of the weather from by the storm coming through. It's a horrible storm and all of the children are scared, prompting Turtle to sing a Shirley Temple song to keep them from crying any longer. The next morning the storm has passed over and a rescue team consisting of Ollie, Slow Poke, and Johnny Cakes arrives. They tell them that Too Bad and Killie the horse told them more or less where they have gone and they came to rescue them.

The children return back and are given \$20,000 to split between them and Nana Philly after the money is taken out to buy Johnny Cakes a new boat. Turtle is then informed by Aunt Minnie that her mother is on her way. Turtle finds out that Archie is there too and married her mother Sadiebelle. As Slow Poke arrives he gets the news as he's introduced to Archie and leaves, saddened to know that he's missed out on his chance to marry her yet again. Sadiebelle tells Turtle that they are going to be moving to Georgia and will be getting the Bellewood.

It's later on that night that Turtle is lying in bed in a hotel wondering what it's going to be like to leave seeing as she is reluctant now to go. The next morning Archie tells the girls he has everything together and they can go and say their goodbyes. Turtle and Sadiebelle head to Nana Phillie's where goodbyes are said and Sadiebelle and Nana Philly reconcile their relationship. In the end though Pork Chop comes bearing bad news, Archie is gone on a boat to Cuba and stole Turtle's share of the treasure while he was at it. Sadiebelle breaks down at the news and it's in the end there as everyone is trying to cheer her and Turtle up that Turtle decides to stay in Key West with them. The book ends with her commenting about how lucky she was to have these people as her family.



# Chapters 1-2

## Summary

### Chapter 1

The book begins with a girl, Turtle, riding with Mr. Edgit, a friend of her mother's lover, Archie, in his Ford Model A on her way to Key West to go and live with her aunt Minerva. Turtle has to deal with the nasty kids shooting spit balls at her from the truck in front. Seeing the kids—boys and a girl around her age with a baby—brings back memories. Kids were often being mean to her in the past such as lying and getting her mother fired or even setting her cat, Smokey, on fire.

She then goes on to lament about how 'real life' children are different from Shirley Temple and Annie that Mr. Edgit talks to her about. She mentions the fact that her mother worked as a housemaid and how free room and board would've been great had it not been for the children. Turtle then thought about the house her mother was going to get them one day but in order to do that she had a new job with Mrs. Budnick, who was not fond of children, prompting Turtle's mother to have to send her away.

### Chapter 2

Chapter 2 begins with Turtle lamenting about Easton, Pennsylvania. Mr. Edgit keeps going on and on about it but she can't help but feel that he's just talking it up because that was where he came from. Her thoughts then turn to Key West and what her mother has said about it, the fact that she made it out to sound like paradise; something Turtle isn't convinced of. After a ferry ride, which was late to pick them up, she arrives at Key West. The image she is greeted with is far from the 'paradise' her mother made it out to be.

The part of Key West Turtle is in is reminiscent of a "broken chair" in her opinion. However amid the shabby buildings is a world of nature that intrigues her. The two then start looking for Minerva's house on Curry Lane. Of course, Mr. Edgit managed to get the two of them lost, prompting them to stop so he can consult a map. Turtle wishes Archie was there to help them when Mr. Edgit asks for directions from a kid, to which he replies that they are on Curry Lane. As the two head out in search of their destination Turtle spies a message painted on a wagon in someone's front lawn 'Will Work for Candy.'

It's here that a boy on the front porch and Mr. Edgit start to talk. The man attempts to sell the child some of his 'Hair today' product but the boy isn't impressed. However upon further conversation, a woman arrives on the porch, Turtle's aunt. At their first meeting Minerva is more than welcoming of her niece until she learns Turtle is here to stay. She comments on how this was just like her sister before telling her son, Beans, to help



Turtle with her things, to which he dumps them on the porch and leaves her to pick up her things.

## Analysis

### Chapter 1

In the first chapter of "Turtle in Paradise" it's immediately apparent that Turtle is not like most girls her age. From the way the first few sentences are set up it's shown that Turtle is not overly fond of people, especially children, and past experiences with them have not made her opinion on them any better. For instance, when the Curly boys, Melvin and Marvin, set her cat's tail on fire. From the way she speaks and acts differently from the children that were mentioned in the first chapter it's already apparent that Turtle doesn't really identify well with her age group.

Turtle's opinion on adults doesn't seem to be much better. A good example of this is how she speaks with Mr. Edgit. Most of her answers are clipped and to the point, no extra flair. It's obvious she's disgruntled about having to be separated from her mother to go and live with her aunt. She mentions Archie, her mother's current boyfriend, and compares him with the previous ones. She mentions that since he had "big dreams" he seemed to stand apart from the previous boyfriends, making it apparent that her mother's taste in men hasn't been the best.

There is mention of the iconic "American Dream" and "American Girl" in the first chapter as well. There is first the mention of Annie and her dog Sandy and then later on Shirley Temple. Both girls are a representation of what most girls were expected to try and become during this era. However as it's seen, Turtle wants nothing to do with this, further setting her apart and making her account of details more reliable.

Furthermore she mentioned the Sears mail-in order house that her mother had picked out for them. She always mentioned her mother looked in on the "brighter side" of life and how she blamed Hollywood for her mother's disposition in life. This shows how down-to-earth Turtle is for a pre-teen girl, which is unusual. She sees things for what they are and refuses to look toward the ideals of what she should be. Though at the same time it shows Turtle as a cynical and pessimistic person who is unable to try and see the brighter side to life.

There is also a repetition on the mention of how the United States is deteriorating. In combination with the earlier mention of Hollywood and the "iconic American girl" it shows the author's attitude on the United States during this time period. It makes mention to the fact that they seemed more preoccupied with keeping their heads in the clouds than looking at the facts of life.

### Chapter 2

Chapter 2 picks up again on the theme of expectations versus reality. Once more Turtle is faced with the disappointing reality of Key West, which is vastly different than what





her mother described to her. Instead of a paradise, she encounters a trash heap, hence the title of the chapter "Paradise Lost." Which can be in correlation to the era of the time when people were trying to recover from the Great Depression and as such looked towards making things seem better than they were.

This further alludes the idea that Turtle's mother, Sadiebelle, lives in the clouds and tends to try and make things out to be better than they are. This is also further indicated by the fact that Aunt Minnie (Minerva) comments on how irresponsible her sister is to shove Turtle off on her when she already has three children to take care of. There is also the comparison of her mother's description of Key West to that of a Shirley Temple song.

Poverty is another theme explored here. The Great Depression was mentioned in the first chapter of the book but it's here in the second chapter that an example is shown. Turtle experiences poverty as she looks around at the dump heap that is Key West. She made note of the shabby look and the trash that was piled up. However at the same time she doesn't fail to notice the beauty of the nature that is around her, which can serve as a reminder that there still is beauty even among such sadness.

The new children Turtle meets again serve as a comparison to show how she fits in with her peers. Already the difference between Turtle and her cousin Bean shows. While Turtle is as polite as she can manage, Bean has no problem mocking Mr. Edgit and even going so far as to toss Turtle's things all over the porch. He then refers to Turtle as 'Tortoise' as though to try and get under her skin before disappearing inside. It serves to show once more that Turtle is not like other children, even those she is related to by blood.

Family comparison comes up in Chapter 2 as well. Minerva, Turtle's aunt, is introduced in this chapter. As Turtle makes mental comparisons between her and her aunt, it's abundant that while they are similar there are a whole lot of differences. As Minerva starts to question why Turtle is here it's obvious that Turtle's mother has not sent a letter as was previously thought. As such it's seen that Minerva has her hands full working to take care of her family while Turtle's mother has just shoved her daughter into the mix.

It shows how different from her sister Minerva is and yet how alike she and Turtle are. Both Minerva and Turtle seem to look at things for what they are and live in reality while Sadiebelle lives in her own fantasies. Turtle makes a point similar to this with her talk on how eyes say a lot about a person.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Poverty as exemplified in Chapter 2.

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss Turtle's character. How is she similar to and dissimilar to girls her age?



## Discussion Question 3

Compare Turtle to her cousin, Bean.

## Vocabulary

rumbles, eternity, sandwiched, bloomers, fraying, serum, pomade, dimpled, abide, swerving



# Chapters 3-4

## Summary

### Chapter 3

Turtle experiences the craziness that is to be her new home. As she manages to get all of her belongings together she is directed by Aunt Minnie to go and stay in Beans's room as he will go and double up with the other boys. She goes into the room and sets her things down, taking a mental note of what it looks like and how it seems to remind her of the one time she and her mother stayed in the pantry in one house.

Here Turtle ends up meeting everyone as they show up. Buddy is the first to arrive, a four year old blonde who isn't wearing pants. He and Turtle talk a bit about Smokey and the fact that she was new here when Kermit arrives; he is around ten with glasses that are crooked. He contracted Rheumatic fever earlier in his life and has a weak heart now. He is supposed to take things easy but when Aunt Minnie comes in and starts yelling at her two boys things start going downhill. Beans comes in last with Termite the dog and starts up a fight about where he would be staying as well as Smokey. All chaos ensues as Termite start to chase Smokey and no one is doing with Aunt Minnie asks. In the end they are all thrown out of the house.

Outside, Turtle is introduced to Pork Chop, the last of the so called "Diaper Gang" who also does not wear shoes. Pork Chop, Buddy, Kermit, and Beans all band together to take care of 'bad' babies. When Turtle expresses interest in their little gang it's apparent they are loath to include her as they have four basic rules: No girls allowed, keep your rag clean, always duck, and never tell anyone their secret diaper rash formula.

The last new person she meets is Jelly, an apparent cousin to Beans. He has the letter that Turtle's mother sent. Mr. Gardener apparently sent it to the wrong person considering most of them have the same last name. He asks for some of that diaper rash formula for a nick he got shaving but Beans isn't about to give it up without money, something Jelly remarks on.

### Chapter 4

It's the next day and Turtle is inspecting breakfast, alligator pear on top of toast. However she knows them as avocados, something that she and her cousins argue over. Aunt Minnie also told her during breakfast that the letter her mother sent was to inform her that she was getting married to Archie. She began to ask Turtle what Archie was like and what he did, to which Turtle explained that he was a salesman who sold encyclopedias and bought her shoes. Aunt Minnie is unimpressed telling Turtle she hoped she had more sense than her mother.

With breakfast over Turtle is tossed out with the diaper gang as they go and pick up their first kid, Pudding Lowe. Mrs. Lowe gives the child over before greeting Turtle and



leaving. The child is throwing a fit as he's teething and it's then that the guys wrap the child up, getting the movements down to a science. Turtle is impressed with the gang as they take care of the child. When they encounter a few new faces such as Mr. Roberts and Mrs. Alvarez both of them greet Turtle, immediately knowing who she is. Beans explains that the Conch Telegraph is how everyone here pretty much knows who Turtle is and that makes Turtle think back to what her mother told her about her cousins.

The diaper gang arrives at the waterfront where the boats are working with cargo. Buddy and Turtle look at the turtle kraals, which are kept in a holding space until they are butchered. Beans then greets a man named Slow Poke, who works gathering sponges. Beans asks to be hired by Slow Poke who has just lost his first mate but is turned down because the man already hired someone called Ollie. Slow Poke talks with Turtle and asks all about her mother and after asking about Pudding then goes about his work.

## Analysis

### Chapter 3

A common reoccurring symbol as seen in the past few chapters is that of Shirley Temple or Annie. Turtle often remarks about the two just before going back to reality. This serves to show the true difference between reality and fantasy. It also shows the difference between the two types of lives led in the United States. There were those who were infinitely wealthy and able to have their happily ever afters like those associated with Annie and Shirley Temple and then there are those who live down in reality struggling for everything they have.

By mentioning Annie, who lives a fairy-tale, being adopted into wealth and then talking about what she is encountering in Aunt Minnie's house shows the stark difference. It also underlines a clear message, life is not a fairytale and miracles like with Annie are few and far between. If you want something you will have to work for it, work for the dream.

Family is a large part of this chapter. Here is where Turtle meets the rest of Aunt Minnie's children, her cousins. While the other two, Kermit and Buddy, seem to take to her well enough it's obvious that Beans does not. From the way he talks about their differences and how he is unwilling to share his room touches on the fact that he is still immature and unwelcoming of her.

There is also the fact that the chaos from Termite chasing Smokey and Buddy accidentally getting hurt sets up to show the discord among the family. Aunt Minnie has trouble getting everyone to calm down and in the end throws the four of them outside of the house just to get some peace. It shows that there are a lot of problems with this family, especially since it's mentioned the father hardly comes home and that Aunt Minnie seems to regret marrying and having a family with him.



Once more the theme of conformity comes up. Throughout the book it has been shown that Turtle does not readily identify with the people around her. It's even more apparent that she is different when people point these differences out. It's shown that people can pick out that she is not from around Key West because she wears shoes. Also Turtle has problems fitting in with the diaper gang because she is a girl and they don't allow girls in their club. While Turtle is an only child now she is interacting with Beans and his brothers and having to learn how to share.

All around Turtle is shown to have problems fitting in, which can also be attributed to the fact that she is a pre-teen and this is around the time that people find themselves having problems of where to belong. The only issue is that now that Turtle is in a new place these problems are exacerbated. Anyone Turtle was familiar with is left behind and she has come to an unfamiliar place where everyone seems to know everyone. It proves to be an added challenge to an already complicated time in a young girl's life.

#### Chapter 4

Chapter 4 is primarily about seeing life as it is in Key West. Turtle experiences a different way of life from her own and here the reader sees the difference in perspectives. An example of this is the avocados. While Aunt Minnie and the boys refer to them as Alligator Pears, Turtle knows them as avocados. On the same note of breakfast she thinks back to the fact that her mother often worked for rich people and how they had it better than most before she went back to looking at what Minnie cooks up for breakfast. It shows just how spoiled she was in comparison to her cousins and aunt, bringing focus back to the fact that she talks about how other, well off children were snotty and yet she could in some ways fit right in with them.

It's ironic that adults are leaving young children in charge of their own, even younger, children as they run about to deal with the everyday stresses of their lives. It is also ironic in the way that the boys are so adept at taking care of the children they are entrusted with, while Turtle despises children of all ages, due to the fact that most people see women as the ones who are more adept at taking care of babies.

Within this chapter once more Aunt Minnie and Turtle's mother Sadiebelle are compared. It was revealed that he is working in another place and this is why he doesn't come home often. This can be a direct foil to Sadiebelle's multiple men that have come in and out of her life. There is also the fact that Aunt Minnie spent much of her childhood taking care of Sadiebelle and now here she is taking care of Turtle, referring to the fact that Sadiebelle still is a child incapable of taking care of herself or her own daughter.

Closeness is also explored in this chapter. As Turtle goes through the island with the Diaper Gang it's clear that everyone knows everyone. People greet the children and even know Turtle despite the fact that it's only her second day on the island. This shows it's a tight-knit community and contrasts to the lifestyle that Turtle used to live in with her mother. People up in New Jersey where Turtle was were very self-centered and only helped one another out because of debts owed. Yet down in Key West, despite the



lower quartile living conditions everyone shows that they care for one another and know each other well.

The reader starts to see how illness is present within chapters three and four as well. The first mention of it is Kermit and the Rheumatic fever he contracted as a young child. It was mentioned that he has a weak heart because of it now and is a cause of worry for Minnie. In Chapter 4 the reader is introduced to Mr. Alvarez who has a mental condition. Both of these conditions are serious and yet it seems as though people in the book are taking the matter lightly as Kermit seems to downplay the need for rest for his heart just as Buddy laughs at the memory of Mr. Alvarez running down Duval street naked.

Consistent with the previous chapters Turtle takes the chance to put in a mention of Shirley Temple. Her fixation with the two icons Shirley and Annie seems to be the fact that she understands why people are obsessed with the iconic American image of what a little girl should be and rather than aspiring to be like them, rejects the entire idea altogether. Turtle is a child who seems to see the world for what it is and is content with who she is rather than trying to fit into an image of something that is truly just a pretense.

## Discussion Question 1

What is the author's purpose in using Shirley Temple and Little Orphan Annie as symbols in this novel?

## Discussion Question 2

What is Turtle's family like?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the character Aunt Minnie.

## Vocabulary

braided, harried, peer, shuttered, tuft, tirade, interjects, wailing, hollers, rheumatic fever, waddles



# Chapters 5-6

## Summary

### Chapter 5

It's the next day as Turtle listens to Aunt Minnie and Buddy yelling back and forth about lost pants and how he wants her to put his shirt on for him because he's tired. Kermit comes into the room and invites her out with the Diaper Gang again to get her out of the house and from having to watch after Buddy. As the gang sets out to go and pick up their babies for the day kids begin to call out to them asking if they needed any help. As Pudding starts crying again the boys must quickly change the diaper and Turtle hears them use different slang words than she's used to as well as sees the special diaper formula they use.

Another boy Too Bad, shows up to see if he can be a part of the Diaper Gang again despite failing before. Once more he's given a chance but fails once more and heads on his way. Later on in the day the gang is back on Aunt Minnie's front porch eating the candy they've earned, except for Turtle. Kermit offers her some candy but Beans tosses it to Termite saying that she wasn't a part of the Diaper Gang and therefore shouldn't eat what they've earned.

As the ice cream truck comes around Beans boasts that he's going to get some for free only to be turned away. Turtle takes her own shot at the ice cream man and is victorious. As Beans asks in a roundabout way if he can have some Turtle allows Smokey to lick some and then replies that he can't have any because she isn't part of the Diaper Gang.

### Chapter 6

The chapter begins with Turtle and Buddy playing with paper dolls on the porch. Aunt Minnie comes out to talk to Buddy when she sees the paper dolls and creates a scene stating the dolls were hers and that Sadiebelle stole them from her a long time ago. She ends the conversation with Turtle by taking the dolls from her and then walking back into the house with them.

A day later Turtle is watching as the Diaper Gang runs around playing klee-klee, a form of tag. She feels very lonely and thinks on the father she never knew and how she hardly ever hears from her mother any more. However Aunt Minnie comes bearing down on Kermit who isn't supposed to be running around. As she reprimands him, Kermit then takes Turtle to Duval street with him. It's noted that Duval street is nicer than most of Key West. Here Turtle asks Kermit to help her get a job, to which he recommends Johnny Cakes, a rumrunner. When he turns her down Slow Poke ends up hiring her to help him get sponges for the sponge auction coming up and tells her where to find his boat The Lost Love and when to show up.



## Analysis

### Chapter 5

Chapter 5 is the first chapter where the reader can see that Turtle is slowly beginning to be accepted in the household as Kermit asks if she wants to come along with them again. This shows the fact that in time Turtle will be able to fit in with the group and slowly find some friends other than Smokey the cat. Furthermore Turtle reveals to the reader that while she is different from many of the children of her age group she can fit in with them if she so chose. For instance when Beans decides to try his luck with the ice cream man only to fail, Turtle, who essentially did the same trick, left victorious only to later taunt Beans in the same way that he had her only minutes earlier.

Within the beginning of the chapter age is shown to be a running motif. Buddy is fighting with his mother because he wants her to help him put on his clothes, reminding the reader that he is, in fact, a four year old despite how he seems other times in the earlier chapters. Also the reader is reminded of how young Turtle is when she taunts Beans at the end of the chapter with her ice cream. For all the time the reader spends in Turtle's thoughts it is easy to forget sometimes that she is a preteen who will act like a child.

The close ties between people in Key West is also shown again with everyone asking the Diaper Gang if they need any help. It not only serves to show the popularity of the Diaper Gang but also how Beans probably developed the attitude that he displays toward Turtle. This is further reiterated when the children allow Beans to cut them in line for ice cream as though he were the king of Key West. Furthermore it is shown that these ties don't merely extend to people who have lived on Key West for a long period of time. This is exemplified with Kermit who was willing to share the candy he earned with Turtle, even though she did nothing because she wasn't allowed to help. He also shows a willingness to include her in their activities as he asks her if she would like to go with the Diaper Gang.

This chapter further explores poverty when Turtle brings up a conversation on money. She asks the Diaper Gang why they simply don't work for money. Beans once more offers his own way of explaining by stating most of the island is on relief and so no one would pay them in cash. This is the direct opposite of what Turtle seems to be used to seeing as Archie and her mother always had work and before she left, Archie slipped her a five dollar bill for "emergencies." It serves to show the difference once more between not only Turtle and her cousins but the lifestyle of her mother and Archie from most of the people on Key West.

Finally, Turtle laments in the beginning of the chapter about children in literature and the lives they lead. A pattern begins to emerge in the book with how Turtle will often talk about fictional characters, always children, before comparing their lives to the life she leads. Just after Turtle mentions how Annie and then Terry Lee both lead interesting lives and have adventures she then turns right around to say how boring her own life is in comparison.





## Chapter 6

In Chapter 6 Turtle makes comparisons between children and adults. She mentioned the difference between adults lying and children lying. However as it's seen with the paper dolls Aunt Minnie took from Turtle there doesn't seem to be much difference between the actions of adults and children. Rather than explaining to Turtle about how her mother lied and stole her dolls in a calm manner Aunt Minnie acted just like a child, making a big deal out of them and snatching them away from Turtle despite not having any children that are interested in playing with them.

In a way this was Aunt Minnie's way of getting back at her sister for stealing her dolls all those years ago and rather than giving the dolls back to Turtle who will play with them she takes them for her own to probably go and sit on a shelf. It shows the fact that despite Aunt Minnie always talking about how irresponsible and childlike Turtle's mother was, she can sometimes be the same way herself.

Loss is expressed more plainly in this chapter. Turtle talks of how she misses her mother but to the reader it is obvious that her mother seems to have almost forgotten about her. There is also the fact that Turtle thinks about the father she has never met either. However the story so far seems to point to Slow Poke being her father, taking into account of the way he inquired about her mother more than most and the name of his boat is "The Lost Love." Furthermore there is also the fact that Turtle loses one of the only things her mother has given to her, the paper dolls, when Aunt Minnie takes them back from her.

Duality is a large theme running throughout the book. Not only are there dualities between characters but also lifestyles. There is a constant comparison of how New Jersey is in a better financial state than Key West. However there is also comparison of different parts of Key West, such as Duval Street being much nicer than Curry Lane. It serves to show the difference between the life Turtle once led to the one she has now as well as the mindset of the time. Rather than improving the whole of Key West, only certain parts are made nicer in hopes of attracting tourists.

Within Chapter 6 more of Key West's culture is expressed. Turtle refers to the Diaper Gang's game Klee-Klee as looking exactly like tag. Already the reader is shown that there are small eccentricities to people in Key West, such as having different names for certain objects like avocado. It is also noted by Turtle that Spanish has a large influence over Key West as many people speak it, something she was not familiar with before coming to Key West. The wording choices used when she is describing people drinking leche also serve to show how Turtle is slowly beginning to adapt to living in Key West as leche means milk in Spanish, a popular ingredient in their Cuban coffee. There is also the fact that everyone seems to have their own set nickname, to which Kermit can recall every one of them, denoting the close ties between people in this culture.



## **Discussion Question 1**

What is Turtle's perspective about children, both fictional and real?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the number of dualities that exist and are explored in Chapters 5-6.

## **Discussion Question 3**

What are some of the cultural differences that Turtle is noticing about people that live in Key West?

## **Vocabulary**

Kewpie dolls, poinciana, shipwrights, striding, midstep, interrogating, halo, mischievous



# Chapters 7-8

## Summary

### Chapter 7

It's Turtle's first day working for Slow Poke and when he asks if she can swim she lies. She arrives on the boat and meets Ollie, the new first mate and they sail out to the spot they're looking for sponges. On the way there Turtle pretends she's Terry Lee and Slow Poke goes along with the fun. During this time Turtle starts asking questions to Slow Poke about topics ranging from where he's been to what happened to his old first mate. Slow Poke asks a few questions of his own, mostly about Turtle's mother.

As they arrive to the spot they are searching for sponges Turtle is given Slow Poke's hat as he wants to keep the sun from burning her and they go out on a small dingy to search for sponges. As they get a good amount of them Slow Poke allows Turtle to try for the last sponge. She goes to spear it when she falls overboard and nearly drowns. Slow Poke pulls her out in time and reprimands her lightly for lying. The three arrive back to the waterfront and Slow Poke shows Turtle the cistern for washing sponges and starts telling her tales of people from around Key West. As they get onto the subject of nicknames Turtle asks how Slow Poke came by his. When he explains he takes his time, Turtle makes a joke that she doesn't care as long as she gets paid soon. He laughs and hands over the money.

### Chapter 8

Chapter 8 starts with Turtle talking about family and wondering why it's so great to have a large family. The view then expands to show that Turtle is once again with the Diaper Gang and Buddy. She comments on how much of a pain Buddy is with his constant complaining, especially of him being hungry. In the end it's decided to go to Pork Chop's house where his mother makes them food and talks of how she will win the lottery this week. With the conclusion of lunch she gives the kids a bowl of flan to take to Nana Philly. Despite the children protesting having to go deliver the bowl they go anyways.

At the arrival of an old, decrepit house Turtle begins to ask them what is so bad about this woman. As they go inside she sees a frail woman sitting there and the boys ask for Miss Bea. A nicer woman comes out to take the flan and tells Nana Philly that Turtle was Sadiebelle's daughter and for her to look at the resemblance between them. After talking for a moment the gang makes their exit and Turtle asks why they are so bothered by her and how they can talk of their grandmother like that, to which they reply she is Turtle's grandmother, too, and Sadiebelle's mother. Turtle is shocked by the revelation because her mother said that her grandmother was dead. The chapter ends with Turtle wondering why her mother lied to her.



## Analysis

### Chapter 7

By now the book starts to point toward the fact that Slow Poke is Turtle's father. There is a similarity between their names, the fact that turtles are often associated with being very slow individuals. There is also a hint when Slow Poke talks about his old first mate falling for a woman and getting 'bitten' by her that when Turtle asks if he ever was he replies it was a long time ago. Furthermore the author makes a subtle suggestion when Turtle asks Slow Poke directly if they are related, to which Slow Poke replies that he's not sure but the language surrounding this exchange suggests that he has a few ideas about if they are related or not.

Once more fiction enters into the chapter with the mention of Terry Lee and Pat. Once more there is a similarity between Slow Poke and Turtle as they both like this comic as well. It serves to show the relationship that is building between Slow Poke and Turtle, as Slow Poke is happy to go along pretending with Turtle that they are on an adventure just like the fictional characters. Also the fact that the two travel together in the fictitious work denotes that they must have some sort of relationship that will most likely mirror the one between Turtle and Slow Poke further on in the book.

History is something that is heavily played upon in Chapter 7. Not only is the reader privy to what happened to Slow Poke's old first mate but also about the history of Key West and a little on himself. It serves to add more detail about the people living in Key West and how it came to be like it is today but there is an even more important feature to including history and that is to build up the relation between Slow Poke and Turtle. Already the reader sees how fond Turtle is of Archie, her supposed soon-to-be father which suggests Turtle's desire to have a father figure in her life. With Slow Poke it's obvious that he is slowly turning into the person who will fill this role.

Lies and truth once more come into play in this chapter. Throughout previous chapters the reader has seen how lies, new and old, have come undone as the truth settles in and consequences are enacted. One example was Aunt Minnie taking away the paper dolls stolen from her by Sadiebelle and given to Turtle. However while that was of small consequence in this chapter it's seen that lies are starting to have even larger stakes. The lie Turtle told Slow Poke about being able to swim is small enough but with even higher consequences which come to roost as she nearly drowns when going overboard. This is the author's way of showing how even the smallest of lies can in fact present the opportunity to take away the most precious and important things.

### Chapter 8

Lies make another appearance in this chapter, this time serving to undermine what is left of the credibility of Sadiebelle, Turtle's mother. She told Turtle that her grandmother was dead and yet there she was alive. It serves to show the reader how untrustworthy Sadiebelle really is and it makes the accusations and memories of Aunt Minnie that much more believable. Already the reader can see how irresponsible Sadiebelle is but



this only confirms the fact that anything she has told Turtle has a good chance of being false.

With the previously mentioned theme of Lies also comes ignorance. As Turtle continues living in Key West it is apparent that there is a lot she doesn't know ranging from simple words or foods all the way to family relations. The best example is of Nana Philly, who is actually Turtle's maternal grandmother, to whom she thought was dead. There is also the fact that she does not know who her father or grandfather was. All of this serves to open Turtle's eyes as she comes across the truth and constantly has to decide what to believe now that the previous notions have been overturned. She mentioned earlier of how she saw reality but this serves to show how childish that thought is when she doesn't even know who her grandmother is when she meets her.

Family is the main focus of chapter eight because not only does the reader get to meet Pork Chop's mother, who is entirely unlike her son, but it is also revealed that Turtle's grandmother is alive and well. There is mention of Nana Philly's father and what he did before the reveal of Turtle's relation to the man. The possible reasons for explaining who they are first and the relations second is to make the feeling of shock just as great for the reader as it is for Turtle, to find out that her mother came from such a wealthy background and yet never mentioned it to Turtle. It also shows the reader that perhaps from just hearing about the family's past that perhaps there was a good reason for Sadiebelle never to tell her daughter about her history. Either way the fact that Turtle had to find out about her grandmother's existence from someone other than her mother, who lied to her, severely damages the familial bond between the two, putting doubt into Turtle's head.

This could be attributed to the fact that this chapter has a suckerpunch to it at the end with Turtle finding out her grandmother is alive. This contrasts the beginning of the chapter where Turtle was wondering about why people like having big families because now her own family of two just got a little bit bigger. It also seems to indicate that since her mother has lied about this family member there could be others too, lightly foreshadowing the fact that perhaps her small family is going to get a little bit bigger. The point is further driven home when Beans welcomes Turtle to the family sarcastically at the end of the chapter.

So far this is also the first chapter where fictional characters like Annie, Shirley Temple, or Terry Lee are not mentioned. This could be because the author has packed chapter eight with so much important information that she didn't feel the need to contrast it with fictional characters. However it could also be the fact that perhaps the usual characters Turtle likes to speak of can't be used for comparison in this situation. Many have small, tight-knit families or perhaps no families at all.

## Discussion Question 1

How does the author suggest that Slow Poke and Turtle are related?



## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Lies in Chapter 8.

## Discussion Question 3

How does the revelation about Turtle's grandmother affect her and how she now perceives her mother?

## Vocabulary

gestures, combination, scrapes, crinkle, mutiny, prong, dinghy, cistern, shackle, ice box,



# Chapters 9-10

## Summary

### Chapter 9

Turtle and the rest of the Diaper Gang are swimming around in beach just at the end of Duval Street when Ira, one of the Diaper Gang, joins back up with them. He just got back from Miami because his younger brother, Eggy, needs medical attention from blowing his fingers off with firecrackers. Beans then tells him that they need to get a new wagon soon, and they think about ways to do that, quoting the Shadow, a popular radio show of the time. During this time Miss Sugarapple, Beans and Pork Chop's teacher, stops to see how the boys are doing. Both boys were punished by her for stealing an answer sheet to a test and as such harbor a grudge.

As Miss Sugarapple leaves the kids finish up swimming and start to have a cut-up. This is where they take any fruits or vegetables they can find, cut them to pieces, put Old sour sauce on it, and then pass the bowl around to share. As the gang and Turtle are eating out of the bowl Ira explains a way to get back at Miss Sugarapple. He met a kid named Lester who taught him how to scare people into thinking they were being haunted by using a rock tied to a piece of string and called it Tick-Tocking.

During the first night the boys scare Miss Sugarapple, Turtle thinks back to Archie and the conversation they had on people's dreams and how he sells dreams to people rather than goods. Just as Turtle is about to fall asleep she hears Miss Sugarapple's scream and knows the boys are successful. Over the next few nights Beans and the boys go out at night and start to scare everyone they have taken a disliking to. The boys are all tired from their antics and as such begin to neglect the children they are taking care of. In fact Ira tells Turtle to help out with Pudding again at one point to get the child to be quiet. Turtle picks up the baby and he falls silent, prompting Turtle to understand why the mother would never put him down if he always became this quiet.

Turtle then sees Pork Chop coming down the way with a scraped up knee. He hurt it when he tripped over Too Bad, who tagged along with them the night before. Then the afternoon after that Kermit shows them a newspaper about the 'hauntings' in which they have been dubbed the "weeping ghost," something Pork Chop is outraged about. He becomes even more angry reading the article talking about Mrs. Higgen's experience with it and her interpretation of the ghost trying to communicate with her. The chapter ends with Turtle teasing him about the name and how he should be called the "Crybaby."

### Chapter 10

In this chapter it's a lazy day as Turtle contemplates the stock market crash for a second before seeing Termite chase Smokey around the porch. Turtle asks Beans why



he named his dog Termite to which he explains that no matter how hard he tried to get rid of the dog it just kept coming back, just like termites do. Turtle soon gets a letter from her mother talking about work and how she is thinking of becoming an actress. When Kermit asks the contents of the letter she tells them but any thoughts on the matter are pushed back when the boys go to torment Killie the horse, who supposedly killed a horse.

Aunt Minnie tells the boys to cut it out and just when they are trying to figure out what else they should do a new character shows up, Uncle Vernon. Beans sees his father coming down the way and jumps right into his arms. Vernon happily greets his family and meets Turtle for the first time. In the time that Vernon is back that first night Turtle compares it to when Archie comes home and all of the things they did versus what Aunt Minnie's family does. While Archie makes grand gestures to show his affection Aunt Minnie simply makes "beef" stew to celebrate Vernon's return.

Afterwards it's her and Uncle Vernon sitting in the living room mending holes in clothes. Turtle expresses interest in the fact that he can sew and helps him mend a few holes in things as he turns on Orphan Annie for her to listen to on the radio. He then asks on how Turtle is adjusting and the topic comes to dinner only for Turtle to find out that the "beef" she ate was turtle meat. She makes a bit of a fuss but Vernon is interested in how she came by her name. After she tells him it's because of her "hard exterior," Vernon mentions that even turtles have their soft spots. Vernon asks about Archie and what Turtle thinks about him. She tells Vernon that she likes Archie and explains how he was different from Mr. Leonard, who proposed to two housemaids before her mother, something Vernon makes a joke about as they spend more time together.

## Analysis

### Chapter 9

The reader once more is reminded of the age of the characters. With the Diaper Gang taking care of children like they do and the way they run their "business" it's often easy to forget that they are still preteen children. By Tick-Tocking people this is the author's way of reminding the reader that these characters are still children and will be immature, even to the point of shirking their responsibilities. The choice of who they choose to enact their little scheme is also very telling. The boys always choose people who they had negative past dealings with to go ahead and prank

With the introduction of Ira once more Turtle is stuck with yet another person to have to get along with. As it is, Turtle is starting to fit in with the Diaper Gang whether they want to admit it or not. This can be seen clearly when Turtle is down at the beach with the gang swimming around and partaking in the cut-up. Another example of her starting to meld with the group is when Ira tells her to help them out with taking care of Pudding. In the beginning she wasn't allowed to really touch any of the babies and now here she is helping out with them, even if it's just because they're too tired to deal with him.





The Shadow, a popular radio show at the time, is introduced in this chapter. This once more keeps with the pattern of having some reference to 1930's pop culture. Like most of the time a reference to pop culture usually sets the tone for the chapter. The Shadow was a crime-type show where the man was a vigilante with psychic powers. Within the context of the book the boys twisted this in their own childish way to play the pranks often making jokes of the famous line "Who knows? The Shadow knows." Once again this can link back to the fact that the author is reminding the reader of the age range of the characters.

There is also the mention of the popular character Annie in this chapter and the likeness Ira has to her. It should be noted too that Ira is one of the few who doesn't seem to have a strange nickname associate with his name. It's possible that the way Turtle claims he is an Annie look-alike is her own way of assigning a nickname to him, despite not actually giving him one aloud. It's also interesting to find out that Ira was the one who started the Diaper Gang, making him the "brains" of the operation. This can come as a bit of a surprise considering in the beginning Turtle figured Beans was more of the boss and Pork Chop was his right hand man. With the introduction of Ira this changes the previous perception Turtle had and also shows that first impressions aren't always correct.

Duality shows up once more with the return of Ira as well. While he claims to be the "brains" of the Diaper Gang operation he also has a little brother who Beans claims suffers from "dumbness" for injuring himself with firecrackers. It seems for a moment while the contrast between Beans and Turtle has taken a backseat it is just as easily replaced with Ira and the mention of his brother Eggy. This shows that differences between family members is universal, and it's not just Turtle's family that has issues with one another. It's just another way to draw a connection and likeness between Turtle and the others she's around.

## Chapter 10

With the arrival of Vernon it's obvious that he is very loving toward his family despite the hard work that often takes him away from them. It shows that while things are hard at least Aunt Minnie has a man that loves her and their children. He also serves as a buffer in the house with getting all of his children to behave better, signaling that better times are coming. Also he acts as a bit of a father to Turtle as well. Despite the fact that he has a quiet way about him he expresses interest in how Turtle was doing here and about how her mother was.

Once more the theme of fantasy versus reality shows up. With Sadiebelle's letter to Turtle, once more Turtle is thrown into a situation where she assumes the role of being the "mother." She mentioned that she had no idea of what her mother would do without her there to take care of her. Her mother represents this whimsical mind-set that has carried over from the rip-roaring 1920s where flights of fancy were a dime a dozen while Turtle, who has mainly grown up in the Thirties, represents the practicality of the times, trying to come out of the Great Depression and get things back on track. Her frustration



with her mother's ways is clearly shown here when she worries about her mother being up there alone.

Living with Aunt Minnie and Uncle Vernon also serves to show how much Turtle identifies with them rather than her mother. Both of them are very practical people who do their best to get everything done and keep their heads above water. This is shown when Turtle makes a small fuss about eating turtle meat when she's named after the animal when Vernon tells her there is nothing wrong with filling her stomach with it.

There is also the comparison between the celebrations of men coming home. As shown when Archie comes home he makes a big deal out of it with presents and fancy displays as though he is trying to win their affections. When Vernon arrives home the family has stew with turtle meat in it, which is not normal for them. It's a small gesture on Aunt Minnie's part but it means more because the family is able to eat together and enjoy one another's company, their feelings mutual and already assured. For Aunt Minnie's family there is no need to make flashy, expensive displays to show one's love.

Orphan Annie is mentioned again within this chapter. However this time the mention is different. Rather than comparing or contrasting the events of her life with Turtle's, Annie ends up being a point of conversation between Turtle and Vernon. It's a way for the two of them to have something to talk about to not only segue into more important topics but start to build a relationship that Turtle needs. It's a way for Vernon to probe out information on how Turtle feels about her mother and Archie but also a way for Turtle to feel like there is at least one adult that cares for her and has their head firmly on their shoulders.

## Discussion Question 1

What is "Tick-Tocking"?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the use of duality in Chapter 9.

## Discussion Question 3

How does Annie feel about Ira?

## Vocabulary

fraying, depression, Dust Bowl, serum, brochure, swerving



# Chapters 11-12

## Summary

### Chapter 11

Turtle begins to think that the Diaper Gang has something going on with that diaper-rash formula they have. A woman comes in worried about her son, Nathaniel, who has a horrible case of diaper rash. The woman asks for Bean's formula. He gives it to her with instructions and just a few days later she comes back with tickets for everyone to go see a Shirley Temple movie as thanks. As everyone is going to head out to the movie, Aunt Minnie comes in to ask one of the children to go and give Nana Philly her lunch. The boys outright refuse but Turtle agrees to go and help. As she arrives at the house Miss Bea welcomes her and gives her instructions on what to do before she heads out to go and run errands.

Turtle ask what she woman would like to eat but Nana Philly just ignores her. Figuring something out on her own Turtle comes into the room with a lunch of milk bread and leaves to go get a spoon. As she returns Turtle finds the bowl has fallen to the floor, making a mess. She cleans it up and tries twice more to feed her grandmother only to have the same result: Nana Philly keeps knocking the food to the floor. In the end Turtle makes a bowl for herself and then sits in front of Nana Philly and eats it in front of her. When Miss Bea returns the two are sitting in the parlor and Turtle tells her that she will be back tomorrow.

The next day Turtle arrives only for Miss Bea to tell her that she already made lunch and all she has to do is serve it. With that in mind Turtle serves Nana Philly and like expected she knocks the bowl to the floor. After making a snappy remark Turtle serves herself some food and sits down in front of her to eat it while the old woman reads her magazine upside-down. Turtle goes to serve dessert and when Nana Philly attempts to knock that to the floor Turtle catches the Guava Duff saying that she will not waste dessert and then eats it herself. She makes small talk with Nana Philly when the truth hits Turtle, Nana Philly ended up chasing off her mother with her vile attitude.

On the third day Turtle visits, she believes a miracle happens. According to Miss Bea, Nana Philly was looking forward to Turtle's visit as she asked Miss Bea to take out her fancy hat. When Turtle comes into the room Nana Philly actually pays attention to her this time. Turtle takes her the lunch for that day, Conch chowder, and sets it in front of her. Rather than knocking over the food Turtle serves Nana Philly takes up her silverware and starts to eat it. When lunch is over with Turtle tells her grandmother that the first day she showed up she had to miss Shirley Temple for this. However just after that she states that it is fine because she hates Shirley Temple, to which Nana Philly smiles and agrees with her granddaughter on the matter.

### Chapter 12



Uncle Vernon has returned to Matecumbe, and with his return the jovial mood the house had been evaporates. Turtle is having a rotten time because someone stole her shoes, a pair of Mary Janes that Archie had bought for her. She remembers the time that her mother was trying to stretch out a pair of her old shoes for her when Archie took them and got her new shoes. She talks about how that was something a father would do and how it felt like they were a family.

It's now August and with it the rain comes. Turtle is on the porch with Smokey and Termite when Aunt Minnie comes out furious. She accuses Smokey of ruining the slip for her client, Mrs. Felton, and threatens to take the cat out of the house should she find the cat doing something like that again. It's a few days later when Turtle is walking down Grinnell Street that she bumps into Slow Poke. He's at the bar with a few other sailors when she comes up and greets him. He asks how things are going and she complains about missing her shoes. When Slow Poke asks why she would need them she replies "to walk."

One of the other sailors talk about how Turtle is just like her mother, something that Turtle vehemently rejects. Turtle asks Slow Poke just how well he knew her mother. Slow Poke's friends start choking on their drinks at the question just when Kermit runs up to warn Turtle that Smokey has done it again and Aunt Minnie is "burning mad." The two race back to the house to see Aunt Minnie on the porch waving the skirt around practically foaming at the mouth.

Later on in the day Turtle is lying on the bed with Smokey attempting to figure out what to do about the situation. She has always had Smokey with her and the thought of giving up her cat is beyond her comprehension. The boys offer their sympathies in their own way and try to help her come up with solutions when they hear Aunt Minnie scream from downstairs. They go down to see her flailing around screaming for them to get something off of her. Eventually she races out of the house and collapses in the street, a scorpion falling out of her nightgown.

Smokey ends up killing it and the kids take Aunt Minnie to the doctors. The doctor tells them she will be fine and that they should take care of her until she is up on her feet. As they take care of her it's late at night when Turtle returns from the outhouse to see Aunt Minnie awake. She is hallucinating, calling Turtle by her mother's name and asking why she stole her dolls way back when. Turtle tells her to go back to sleep before going to sleep herself.

The next time Aunt Minnie wakes up she asks about who took care of everything while she was out to which the children all inform her of what they've done to keep everything together. Buddy tells Aunt Minnie that it was even Smokey who killed the scorpion that stung her but Aunt Minnie is still unwilling to let the cat stay. The chapter ends with Aunt Minnie telling the children that the cat would still be leaving.



## Analysis

### Chapter 11

Chapter 11 showcases the stubborn, unrelenting spirit that Turtle has. Despite the fact that her grandmother is being a problem she refuses to give up. In many ways she and her grandmother are very similar, not only are the stubborn but both of them like to push the others buttons and they both dislike Shirley Temple. In many ways this chapter showcases the likeness between the two of them but also the similarities between Nana Philly and Turtle's mother Sadiebelle.

The interactions with Nana Philly also add another element to Sadiebelle's character development. Despite the initial shock Turtle has at learning her mother lied to her about the status of her grandmother this chapter seems to validate the reason behind the lies Sadiebelle told. This is the author's way of adding a bit of sympathy for Turtle's mother into the book. It doesn't excuse the actions but rather seeks to show the reader the reasoning behind them.

This chapter also can be a explanation to why Sadiebelle acts like she does. It's shown that Nana Philly doesn't like Shirley Temple and it can be inferred anything to do with Hollywood or fiction of the like. As such in an act of rebellion Sadiebelle takes to having her head in the clouds in order to not be like her mother. The irony of the situation however is that she has become her mother in a few ways such as driving off her daughter. It was not Turtle's decision to have to leave but rather it was her mother's. Still there seems to be a cycle in which mothers have driven off their daughters far away from them.

In many ways this chapter shows a different side of the grandmother as well. Initially Nana Philly is seen to be a very rude, crotchety old woman with no remorse for anything she does. Yet at the mention of how she drove off her daughter there is a second where remorse registers on her face suggesting that she does in fact feel bad for what she has does but knows she can't fix it. Yet with Turtle visiting every day to give her lunch it serves as a way of redemption. While it seems Nana Philly can't fix the relationship she had with her daughter she can have a good relationship with her granddaughter, something she seeks an active interest in when she recognizes the stubbornness in Turtle and gains an ounce of respect for her because of it.

The small conversation at the end of the chapter between Nana Philly and Turtle is a way to show another connection between the two. Throughout the book so far it has been hard to see where Turtle got her attitude traits from. From what the reader has learned about Sadiebelle from Turtle and Aunt Minnie it is easy to tell that Turtle does not get her personality from her mother. Without Turtle's father being around it was difficult to see from whom Turtle inherited her personality and character traits.

Throughout the chapter but especially in the last conversation between the two it's obvious that Turtle takes after her grandmother in many ways. The way in which they both dislike Shirley Temple shows that their unwillingness to be taken with fiction or



iconic symbols that delude people into thinking their lives can be like the movies. It's the starting point to what could be a very close relationship between the two.

## Chapter 12

It's shown how much the family cares for one another. With Vernon leaving, the good times Turtle experiences with the family takes a plummet. Everyone is unhappy with his departure which shows the depth of the family's relationship. As such it also shows how much Turtle has come to identify with her Aunt's family because even she is unhappy about his departure. It also reminds Turtle of the fact that she doesn't have her own family like this, one with a father, siblings and a mother who are all so close.

Once more hints to the relationship between Slow Poke and Turtle arise. Already Turtle likes Slow Poke and it's seen in this chapter how she wishes for a father and a family. Thinking about Archie, who Turtle wishes to be her father, sets up a perfect place to put in Slow Poke, who the reader can presume is Turtle's actual father. Once more personal questions come up when Slow Poke mentions how much Turtle is like her mother and the reactions of the sailors gives way to probable thinking that Slow Poke is Turtle's biological father.

In this chapter the theme of loss is very prevalent. Not only did Turtle's shoes get stolen but she must also give up Smokey the cat. One by one she is beginning to lose all of the ties she has with her old life. When Turtle is thinking about Archie once more and how he bought her the shoes that were stolen what really upsets her is what the shoes represented. Those shoes were the first thing that marked the three of them being a family. Without those shoes it is as though she has no tie to Archie or the family that they represented.

Also with losing Smokey the cat it is as though she's losing a family member. Smokey was her cat because her mother got it for them to keep rats away. However Smokey no longer has that purpose and as such by having to give Smokey away it further emphasizes the fact that Turtle does not fit in with her old life anymore. This can also go along with the theme of coming of age. During the preteen to adolescent years many things change and this can be a representation of one part of many changes that are going to start happening.

Going along with the previous paragraph, Change is a central theme in this story. From the first page Change has been present from changing states to changing lifestyles. In this chapter especially it hits home that Turtle is going through massive amounts of change. She is no longer the person she was when she first arrived. The first few chapters focused on the changes Turtle herself had to make in order to make her new lifestyle work. In this chapter the reader is seeing a sort of end to this. By losing her shoes and her cat, the two things that are the most representative of her old life, Turtle can no longer identify with the life she led before coming to Key West.



## **Discussion Question 1**

How are Turtle and her Grandmother alike?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss Turtle's loss of Smokey.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the how change affects the characters and in particular Turtle in Chapter 12.

## **Vocabulary**

prohibition, twining, stingiest, furtively, satisfied, grimy



# Chapters 13-14

## Summary

### Chapter 13

As with every chapter in this book Turtle is contemplating something, this time it happens to be Hollywood and how movie makers are really just salesmen. While she says that she will never believe in what they are trying to sell her the boys are not as skeptical. They are on the porch having another cut-up and Ira asks about who would win in a fight: Dracula or Frankenstein. Kermit says Dracula because he would suck all of the blood from Frankenstein to which Beans refutes saying Frankenstein is already dead and has no blood.

Aunt Minnie interrupts the moment and hands Turtle Nana Philly's lunch. Turtle heads off to Nana Philly's home and Smokey is there on the porch to greet her. Miss Bea was only too happy to take Smokey in when she heard the situation and Nana Philly has taken a shine to the cat as well. Turtle makes a joke that the two have a lot in common since both of them hate kids and then she goes inside. Nana Philly and Turtle both have lunch again and Turtle is starting to believe that Nana Philly has started to take a liking to her as well, at least a little bit. She reminisces on the families that her mother has worked for and their eccentricities during lunch, such as Mrs. Stark and her Waldorf toilet paper and Mr. Barry who pretended to go to work even after he was fired.

When lunch is over Turtle helps Nana Philly to bed for her nap and starts to clean up. She hears a commotion and realizes that Smokey is the culprit. The cat has managed to get herself stuck inside the piano. As Turtle helps Smokey out of the piano she finds a cigar box that has been hidden in there. She opens it up to find a map to Black Caesar's treasure and gold coin nestled underneath seashells. Turtle puts the objects back and tries to forget about it. Sometime later however Turtle can't forget it and takes the map and coin, going to look for Slow Poke only to find that he has left on a job.

Returning back to Curry Lane she finds the boys playing marbles and declaring that they will be taking Labor Day off from the business. Pork Chop then mentions that a circus was said to be showing up before long and they wonder what animals will be there. Aunt Minnie returns back with unhappy news; Uncle Vernon would not be returning home for Labor Day. She takes Buddy inside to go and put some pants on and the rest of the boys are about to go and challenge the White Street boys to a game of marbles. Turtle says that she has a better idea and produces the map.

At first there are mixed reviews on the map's authenticity but soon enough Turtle convinces them that they need to go and try to find the treasure. The boys are excited and start to make plans on how they are planning to follow the map to find the treasure. The chapter ends with Turtle thinking back on Hollywood again and how when they made history the director would probably cast Shirley Temple to play her.





## Chapter 14

The children arrive at the waterfront to get the boat they are going to take to follow the map. Pork Chop shows up with a bag full of food for their "fishing trip" for conch as they told their parents. The children steal Johnny Cakes' boat and start to head out to try and find Black Caesar's treasure. Later on into the trip Turtle wishes that she had waited for Slow Poke and Ollie so they could come with her. She is the only one without a hat and feels her skin baking. As she looks around she compares all of her companions to various characters.

It's shown that no one has any idea of how to work together to navigate the boat and Turtle begins to wonder if they really will end up in China at the rate they were going. In the end they make it to the little key with the shack in sight and toss in the hook to secure the boat in place. Getting onto the island and take a look at the map. They must first find a tree that looks like a "Y" but then realize that there is a problem with that, the map is old, and it's possible that the tree no longer exists. Undaunted, Pork Chop picks up a shovel and leads the way.

It's late afternoon when the group decided to just take a break. By now they haven't found any treasure and everyone is beginning to doubt if they will find it at all. They start to fight with one another as Kermit helps himself to another bollo and Pork Chop gets fed up with no treasure for his hard work. They begin to doubt the authenticity of the map and start to pack up, though Kermit, Ira, and Turtle are reluctant to give up. As everyone starts to leave Turtle ends up tripping over what turns out to be a rock with the letter 'C' carved in it for Black Caesar.

## Analysis

### Chapter 13

In conjunction with Chapter 12, here in Chapter 13 the language in the beginning of the chapter further emphasizes the fact that Turtle has assimilated to the culture in Key West. Rather than saying the word "avocado" she uses the term they have in Key West, Alligator Pear. She also mentions that they are eating it because they are having another cut-up, a popular thing to do in Key West.

Hollywood is mentioned early on in the chapter and Turtle makes mention of how she isn't a sucker who will get caught up in Hollywood's scheme. However, irony lies in that statement for the fact that when Turtle finds that map to Black Caesar's treasure she believes that it is real and will make her rich if she and the boys manage to find the treasure. In some ways this chapter shows Turtle as being like her mother in the fact that she is betting on an unlikely source to bring her wealth, just like her mother with her dreams of being an actress.

Turtle's obsession with finding the treasure can also come back to connect with the theme of fantasy versus reality but also it can connect with themes of age and family. She is putting her faith in the idea that this treasure map is real and will make her rich



enough that she can buy the Bellewood house for her mother. This is not only childish but can be traced back to Turtle's underlying wish to have a family and believing that finding this treasure and buying the Bellewood is the way to accomplish this. It is a childish notion but at the same time it's a reflection of the cognitive stage at which Turtle is at further forcing the reader to remember that Turtle is a child.

Slow Poke, while being sought out and mentioned, is absent from this chapter. In a way this is just like how Vernon is mentioned yet absent in this chapter as well. It draws a connection between the two since both are away making money on what is considered a holiday. It can also be tied to the fact that both of them are father-figures who are absent when their families need them, a common motif throughout the story.

Turtle and Nana Philly's relationship has definitely improved with her daily visits at lunch and both now have common ground in their love for Smokey. As the two are there eating lunch Turtle hopes Nana Philly has taken a liking to her, if even just a bit. This is representative of the mindset of the age that Turtle is in. The need to belong and to be loved is especially prevalent in preteens. With the holidays as well it makes the need to be loved and have family near even more poignant and to Turtle, some of her closest family would be Nana Philly.

## Chapter 14

Already the theme of Lies/Truth is present within the beginning of the chapter. As the children lie to their parents about what they are doing the author is setting up a possible foreshadowing effect. The first sentence of the chapter reiterates the idea that children lie and most of the time if they're nice they're up to no good, which in this case is true.

By stealing Johnny Cakes's boat they are already setting the trip up for being a disaster considering the fact that none of the children have any idea of how to really navigate the seas. This lack in foresight frequently belongs to children, another nod to the fact that children will make mistakes and get themselves hurt. It is also on the parents to know if their children are telling lies or not but as it's seen parenting in the keys is lax, allowing for the children to get themselves into a mess and thinking they are ready to grow up and take on responsibilities that they aren't ready for.

Everyone is so hopeful that they will find the treasure that they forget to look at the facts of the situation. Not only are they not sure if the map will work out but in the end they are also leaving their island for another one without any adults knowing what they are really up to. It shows their lack of maturity but also their willingness to believe in this treasure hunt to get them out of this poverty. However, at the same time all of them lack a clear understanding of what they will really do with their share. An example of this is when Kermit says he will buy ice cream with his share of the treasure.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Lies in Chapter 14.



## Discussion Question 2

Why does Turtle hope that Nana Philly likes her?

## Discussion Question 3

Compare Slowpoke to Vernon.

## Vocabulary

suppose, crooked, interjects, exasperated, whizzing



# Chapters 15-16

## Summary

### Chapter 15

At this present moment in time Turtle believes that perhaps her mother is right and that happily-ever-afters do exist. The children are over the moon about finding the treasure despite the fact that it took a while to dig up. Turtle brings up mention that this was what Little Orphan Annie must've felt like when Daddy Warbucks adopted her and that all of her problems were over with. Everyone starts to comment on how much they think the treasure will be worth when Beans tells them that they need to get going because it is getting dark. Turtle has to go to the bathroom and tells the boys that she will meet them back at the boat after she finishes.

The only problem is that when Turtle gets there, there is no boat. Pork Chop didn't throw in the hook and so the boat has drifted off, stranding them there. Everyone is scared that they will be lost forever but Ira tells them that boats come through all the time and they will buy Johnny Cakes a new boat for losing his old one. In the end everyone ends up having to camp out. They have some food left from Mrs. Soldano and water in the cistern. Everyone gathers together to sleep there, yelling at one another for space and talking of what they will do with their money. Turtle says she will buy new shoes with her money and when asked why she would need them around the keys she explains that she never said she would stick around forever. In the dream she's having Turtle is walking around in Bellewood in new shoes with her mother and Smokey waiting for her. In reality, she's still stranded with the boys.

### Chapter 16

It's the next morning and so far no one had shown up to rescue the children. Turtle wonders what Shirley Temple would do in such a situation as she asks for some of that diaper rash formula for her face and mosquito bites. Tensions are running high as everyone starts to get hungry and panicky. Kermit asks what are they going to do if they run out of food as Pork Chop snaps at him that they'll starve to death then.

They go in search of food only to find that there was little to be had, something Ira is quick to point out as they look at everything. Pork Chop and Beans go at each other's throats when they try to decide if they should build a raft out of wood from the shack or not. In the end their argument dissolves in a fight. Beans shoves Pork Chop to the ground and the two fight for a while, Kermit trying to help his brother but getting smacked away. Bean gets a good punch in on Pork Chop when Turtle, tired of the two, breaks up the fight by lying about seeing a boat.

In the end the two aren't speaking to one another and rains start falling in, battering the keys. Everyone is hungry and miserable as they keep their eyes out for any ships. They



lament on if anyone is looking for them and what punishment awaits them when they get back. A horrible storm starts to pick up and Kermit tells them that perhaps Nana Philly was smart to keep those shutters on her windows. Pork Chop is still outside and Beans refuses to get him. In the end Turtle opens the door to the shack and gets him to come inside.

Once she gets him inside they realize that now they are holed up with rats who are trying to get out of the mess as well and stay dry. With everyone scared and miserable Turtle can't help but wonder if they're going to make it out of there alive. The boys start to break down and cry and so to calm them Turtle begins to sing the one Shirley Temple song she knows.

## Analysis

### Chapter 15

The mention of fairy-tales and happily-ever-afters appear in the fact that now that they are stuck in a horrifying reality that the children want more than ever to escape. Turtle often talked about how she would not be deluded into the falsities of Hollywood and yet there she was stranded on an island after finding buried treasure, just like a Hollywood film. The only difference is that their problems won't be solved in a matter of hours or even a day.

Once more Turtle talks of Orphan Annie and laments on if this is what she felt like as they uncover the treasure. The only problem is that Turtle's life is not a fairy-tale and not everything will always work out perfectly. It should be noted as well that for a child who doesn't want to be caught up in the realm of fantasy spends a good amount of time lamenting on prominent figures from such a world.

Yet again Turtle thought about the fact that she was the only girl on this trip stranded with all of the boys. Her feelings are made clear when she lumps both the insects and boys together in the category of pest. Despite how far Turtle has come in her time on Key West she still manages to retain some of her old characteristics as she reverts back to the person she was when she first arrived. This could be because of the stress of the situation causing her character to regress, and this is how the author chooses to show it.

Turtle's dream of being with her Mother and Smokey in the Bellewood and new shoes is Turtle's comfort blanket, a way to try and cling to the past where she thought she was happiest. Back then she was never eaten by bugs and she had her mother there alongside her. As it is now, she is on her own with the boys, no adults to help them out of this mess. She must truly become an adult like she is always saying she is to find a way to get out of the mess they've created.

### Chapter 16



Companionship and cooperation start to fall apart yet again as the children find themselves in dire straits. No one wants to think about the fact that they are stranded and the stresses of having to deal with a situation they are not physically or mentally prepared for ends up momentarily tearing the team apart, as seen with the fight between Pork Chop and Beans. It shows the extent to which they can handle themselves as they end up resorting to fighting one another rather than trying to find a way out of this mess. This is also seen when Beans would have let Pork Chop stay out in that storm.

Turtle shows how strong she is in this chapter by not only refusing to cry when the others break down but also to try and calm them down when they do. The author is reminding the reader that despite just how much Turtle has come to fit in with them that she still retains certain traits that will stand her out from the rest. It also shows that out of all of them who boast about their strength Turtle is still perhaps one of the most level headed and strongest of the whole group.

Once more the reader is made aware that Turtle thinks to what Shirley Temple or some other fictional character would do in this situation or how this would've ended had she been in a Hollywood film. At this point in the book, thinking about what these characters would do seems to be a security blanket for Turtle. She looks at how these fictional characters always make it out and then reaffirms to herself that she is a stronger individual than that and therefore will make it until the situation is over.

At the end of the chapter the companionship between everyone has started to come back together as they sing along with Turtle. This tends to frame the whole chapter and show another duality. In the beginning of the chapter none of them seem to be getting along but by the end they are all together if for no other reason than to try and drown out the fact that there is a storm, probably a hurricane, blowing over them just outside.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Describe the very dire situation in Chapter 15 that the children find themselves in.

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does Turtle show her leadership abilities and maturity in Chapter 16?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does Shirley Temple figure in to Turtle's thought process?

## **Vocabulary**

scraps, scuttle, avocado, dawdles, racket, butchered, grubby



# Chapters 17-18

## Summary

### Chapter 17

It's the next morning and still no one has come to rescue the children. They begin to lose hope and Turtle tells the reader that despite the fact that Terry Lee and Shirley Temple manage to always make it out okay that this is reality, not fantasy. As day transitions into night Turtle dreams she is next to Shirley Temple and it's an awards show, to which she wins the award for being the only girl stranded on an island with a group of boys with no chance for a rescue.

Though the light of the next morning wakes Turtle up. They hear voices yelling for them and go out to find Slow Poke, Ollie, and Johnny Cakes there looking for them. Slow Poke rushes past Ollie, who had been calling them, and picks Turtle off of the ground in a hug. She asks what took him so long but he told them that no one could come out to search until the hurricane that blew in had passed. Pork Chop asks about home to which Slow Poke tells them that the Upper Keys were what got hit hard.

Kermit and his brothers worry for their father but he came back when he heard that they were missing and so he was alright. Johnny Cakes laments about the fact that he no longer has a boat and when the kids try to deny it was them he says that he heard from Killie that he saw them take it. The boys try to discredit the man's words but Johnny said he'd believe almost anyone over them. They also ask how they knew where to look when it is revealed that Too Bad had overheard what they were doing and told the adults when they went out to search.

The adults ask why the kids were out here, and the children show them the treasure they found. In the end they go back and despite not wanting to share the treasure Johnny Cakes makes sure he gets enough to buy himself a new boat. A little later Kermit comes back with a paper where all of them have made headlines for finding twenty-thousand dollars worth of buried treasure. All of them start to comment on the paper about how it should've been called them the Diaper Gang rather than just a gang. Jelly comes down the road and asks if that's a new wagon they have, which of course it is.

When everyone came back with the treasure it was split into six ways, some going to Turtle, the Diaper Gang, and also to Nana Philly since it was originally her map. While others used theirs to buy new things and fix up a few things like the piano in Nana Philly's house, Turtle put her money in the bank after buying herself some new shoes. Though now she finds it hard to wear the shoes. It's then that she finds out the secret ingredient in the diaper-rash formula is actually cornstarch. Turtle asks if they're serious to which Beans said no one would believe them even if they told them.



Aunt Minnie comes down the way and asks to see Turtle alone for a moment. When she gets her alone Aunt Minnie shakes her hard and tells her to never scare her like that again and that Turtle was supposed to be the one with common sense. Afterwards Aunt Minnie informs Turtle that her mother will be on Key West tomorrow when she catches a ferry in from Miami. She also says that Smokey can come back to living in the house because it was truly another cat that was causing problems in the house. Turtle says she's not sure Nana Philly is willing to give the cat back considering the fact that she's so taken with it. Aunt Minnie jokes and says that she thinks they can probably trade Buddy for the cat.

Later on Turtle is with Johnny Cakes and a writer and she starts to tell the tale of them on the island yet again. Though the girl tends to embellish the story a bit with saying hundreds of rats were crawling on them. Slow Poke shows up again and plops a hat down on her head to keep her from getting burned right about the time Kermit does. He tells Turtle that her mother is at the house waiting for her.

Turtle takes off running down Curry Lane right to where her mother is waiting for her and on the way she lost her hat. It's after they hug that Archie steps into the room for a greeting. Turtle is over the moon as she hugs him and even more so to hear that the two of them got married while she was away. Slow Poke finally shows up and is happy to see Sadiebelle. As he greets her, Sadiebelle stiffens up, obviously worried and shocked. Turtle tells her that it was Slow Poke that rescued her. Archie introduces himself to Slow Poke as Sadiebelle's husband as he thanks Slow Poke for rescuing Turtle, pulling her under his arm.

Slow Poke mentions about being too late again as he then walks away. Archie comments on how strange he is before Sadiebelle takes him and Turtle down Duval Street. Turtle mentions how the moment is like a Hollywood film as they walk hand-in-hand down the street and talk about a plot of land in Georgia that they plan on putting a house down on. In the very last part of the book Archie mentions now that he told her they'd make it. Turtle asks 'Duval Street?' to which Archie replies 'Easy street'.

## Chapter 18

Turtle lays in her bed in a hotel in Key West thinking about if Annie ever missed the orphanage she came from, much like how Turtle is missing Curry Lane. She thinks of all of the people she will be leaving behind when her family moves to Georgia. In the morning Archie asks if they are packed when Turtle asks Sadiebelle if they are going to say goodbye to everyone at least.

Archie tells them he will put everything in order and that he will meet them at Aunt Minnie's house at noon. Sadiebelle tells Archie not to forget to stop by the bank as she and Turtle head out to say farewells. Turtle asks how well her mother knows Slow Poke, something her mother tries to downplay. In that moment Turtle knows that Slow Poke is her father and Turtle says she wishes to go say goodbye to Smokey at Nana Philly's house. When she says that Sadiebelle should talk to Nana Philly, her mother responds that she isn't her daughter anymore.





As the two arrive Turtle says goodbyes to Smokey and Nana Philly before calling her mother in to talk with Nana Philly. The two have a teary reunion and Turtle remarks that Hollywood couldn't have imagined a sappier scene. Some time later Turtle is on the porch with Kermit, Beans, Buddy, and Ira with Aunt Minnie and Sadiebelle in the kitchen talking. Kermit asks if she will visit as Beans tells him to shut up as he just got his room back. Pork Chop comes hurrying down to the porch to tell Turtle that Archie has left without her or Sadiebelle.

Turtle realizes that Archie has just scammed the two of them as she remembers him telling her that everybody has a dream and realizes that she isn't as tough and down to earth as she thought she was. Kermit asks if Pork Chop knows where the boat was headed, to which the boy only shakes his head. Ira says it will be easy enough to figure out as Turtle takes out the five dollar bill Archie gave her and crumples it. She tells the gang that she needs to know where the boat is headed. Beans lowers the cap on his head and tells her to leave it to the boys.

Turtle heads into the kitchen with the boys an hour later to tell her mother the bad news. Sadiebelle asks if Archie is outside, to which Turtle tells her the truth, he's not coming. Her mother is disbelieving but Aunt Minnie knows right away that it's the truth. She tries to comfort her sister but Sadiebelle simply believes that Archie has died. Pork Chop makes the scene worse as he throws in his own sassy comment letting Sadiebelle know that Archie is headed to Cuba.

Beans tells Sadiebelle that Archie is a crook and stole Turtle's share of the money as he hopped a boat to Cuba, making the situation even worse. Sadiebelle starts to break down and goes rushing out the door, Turtle not far behind. Turtle catches up to her and her mother breaks down fully, falling to her knees in the streets and sobbing about how he lied saying everything would be fine.

Turtle finds that her Uncle Vernon is right, she does have a weakness and that is her mother. For the first time in a long time Turtle begins to cry along with her mother. Beans calls Turtle's name to break her out of her own induced sadness as everyone tries to get them to cheer up. Pork Chop asks if she would like to join the Diaper Gang and even Aunt Minnie says Turtle can play with the paper dolls she took earlier in the book but she will have to stay to play with them.

Looking back at the house Turtle accepts that while it isn't the Bellewood it is still good enough to call a home. Kermit tells her to quit playing around and say she'll stay already and Turtle agrees for both her and her mother saying they will stay. She laments that while this isn't a Hollywood ending she also isn't Shirley Temple as Buddy asks if she will play marbles with him now. In the end Beans, in his own way, tells Turtle that she belongs with them as her name is as dumb as the rest of them. The book ends with Turtle saying that not all kids are rotten and some adults are sweet and that if you were as lucky as Annie, you could end up with some of them for a family.



## Analysis

### Chapter 17

Once more Turtle references Shirley Temple and Annie while she is stranded on the Sponger's Key. As with many of the other times Turtle refers to these fictional characters when her own life is often times at its worst. In a way this seems to be Turtle's way of coping with the reality of situation and attempting to lighten it, such as imagining winning an award over Shirley Temple for being the only girl stranded on this island with boys and no chance at rescue.

Loose ends are beginning to get tied up as the story draws to a close. For once it seems as though a happy ending is in sight for Turtle as they make it home, she becomes rich, and her mother is on her way to take her home. It seems as though everything is going to work out just fine, something Turtle keeps reiterating over and over again throughout the chapter. Most of the problems that are presented at the beginning of the book are starting to be resolved. Turtle finds not all children are bad, she indeed has a family, and she is now able to buy a house for her and her mother to live in, the Bellewood.

Love and wealth are brought up as not only are the children together again with their own mini fortunes and families back together. With Vernon still around the Curry family seems to be whole and with Archie and Sadiebelle there Turtle feels as though her own family is now made complete despite the fact that the author hints that there is something else on the horizon, some unrest that still needs to be addressed.

The constant mention to Hollywood however depicts that there is something going on in the background. Every time that Turtle mentions Hollywood it is accompanied by a negative event. Often times this is to set up the fact that in Turtle's mind Hollywood is what she would like her life to be like but in reality that can't happen. In this chapter though this is the closest Turtle can get to being in a Hollywood film but unlike in a film, her story doesn't end here and the author hints that it doesn't end well either.

All along Turtle has been mentioning the fact that Archie is better than all of her mother's other boyfriends. She even makes specific reference to the fact that at times he is like a father to her, such as when he buys her shoes. In this chapter the reader is introduced to Archie and experiences his character in a more direct sense. From this, it's obvious that Archie is not a good guy, from the way he interacts with Slow Poke to the end of the chapter where he tells Turtle that they all have made it to easy street.

### Chapter 18

Once more Turtle is found mentioning Orphan Annie but this time wondering if she ever missed her old life. It's apparent that despite getting the means to make her dream a reality Turtle is reluctant to leave behind the life she has come to know in Key West. The author shows that she has made real attachments in Key West and is reluctant to just abandon it, unlike her mild annoyance at having to leave New Jersey in the beginning of



the book. It shows that she has grown out of the shell she was once in by allowing herself to make ties with these people.

The mention of Annie segues right into the theme of family and acceptance. This chapter encompasses many scenes of realization and reconciliation in the family front. As shown by the way that Turtle asks about Slow Poke, finally coming to the realization that he is her father and the way in which Nana Philly and Sadiebelle mend their broken relationship. This section also shows how Sadiebelle didn't accept him as much in her book to probably mask the pain, something that comes to roost later as the man she did accept ends up leaving her. With the pain of Archie's betrayal the Curry family steps up, showing that even if Archie wasn't willing to spend his life with the two, they were.

By shedding tears Turtle has truly come into herself. She is finally in a place in her life that she can fully let her emotions show, rather than keeping them locked away. It also shows just how deeply Turtle cares for her mother and the love she has for her despite the lies her mother has told her. The Curry Family, Beans included, also show their love in reminding the two that they don't have to leave and they will always have a place to belong.

When Turtle agrees to stay for the both of them it's then that she realizes that even though Archie left the two of them high and dry they would be okay. Her previous notions that she has to be tough because children are rotten and adults are mean are overturned at that moment. She realizes that these people care for her and that they break the mental notions Turtle has of people.

The final mention of being as lucky as an orphan is also symbolic of the fact that Turtle is letting go of the comparison between herself and these fictional characters. She recognizes the fact that she will never be like these girls, but in her own way Turtle can identify with certain parts of their lives, especially Annie. Just like the orphan girl, Turtle has found her family and her place in the world, indirectly and not without challenges.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What suggests that Archie might not be an honest guy?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of Family in Chapter 18.

## **Discussion Question 3**

What does Turtle mean when she says that she is lucky as an orphan?

## Vocabulary

interrogating, laughingly, merit, deceit, delicious



# Characters

## Turtle

Turtle is an eleven year-old girl who is sent to live with her Aunt Minnie and her family in Key West when her mother's employer, Mrs. Budnick, says she cannot live with them in the house. Sassy and quick to return any jab thrown at her, Turtle does not fit in well with children her own age, especially with the Diaper Gang early on. She shows an extreme dislike for children, babies, and many adults, especially her mother's ex-boyfriends. Like most children Turtle wishes for a family, a father who loves her and her mother, and a chance to live in the Bellewood, the house her mother picked out from a mail-in Sears catalog.

She is often level headed. Turtle tags along with the Diaper Gang and enjoys outsmarting her cousin Beans like when she manages to outwit Beans and return with ice cream in hand. For a preteen Turtle is surprisingly tough and states that she doesn't cry, as seen when trapped on the sponger's key with the Diaper Gang during a hurricane and is the only one who doesn't cry. Though it's shown that for all of her maturity that Turtle is still a child underneath and a stubborn one at that.

When visiting her grandmother, who is very unwilling to see her at first, she eats her lunch in front of Nana Philly who has refused to eat whatever Turtle has cooked. It takes three days of stubbornness before her grandmother takes a liking to her. For all of her guts however, Turtle does have a weakness and that's her mother. When her mother breaks down after Archie leaves them so does she. Turtle cannot stand to see her mother so upset and broken. Though by the end of the book it's shown that many of Turtle's previous issues are remedied; she has a family, she's back with her mother, and she found a place where she can fit in.

## Sadiebelle

Sadiebelle is the daughter of Nana Philly, sister to Minerva, and mother to Turtle. Not much is seen of her except for what the reader learns from Turtle as she talks about her. She is a very head-in-the-clouds person with large dreams. As such Sadiebelle is naive and so impatiently desperate to have a husband that she attracts the wrong kind of man in the end. She used to have a man who loved her and still loves her, Slow Poke, whom she only waited on for a week before leaving when he didn't pop the question to her. It's possible that Sadiebelle still has feelings for Slow Poke but most of the time she seems reluctant to talk about anything to do with him, especially when Turtle asks about it. She's known to be a liar when it comes to uncomfortable situations like the relationship with her mother. She is very much a child who doesn't want to deal with the problem at hand or bring them up. Sadiebelle is a fragile person too, very easily hurt. When Archie runs off without her and Turtle, Sadiebelle breaks down in tears and doesn't want to



believe that this could be real, leaving her daughter to make the decision about if they stay or go.

## Aunt Minnie

Aunt Minerva, or Aunt "Minnie," is the more responsible, practical sister of Sadiebelle. While unhappy about her sister dropping Turtle off on her doorstep Aunt Minnie still takes her in. It's obvious that Aunt Minnie is at her wits end trying to deal with three boys on her own while her husband is away and she often has a hard time effectively dealing with them. It's shown that she's childish at times, such as snatching the paper dolls away from Turtle with accusations about her mother stealing her dolls to give to Turtle. Though she does love all of the children in her house deeply as when they came back from the sponger's key she shakes Turtle for being stupid but hugs her in the end to tell her not to scare her like that again. Aunt Minnie isn't one to hold grudges as she seems to forgive her sister pretty easily when Sadiebelle comes back to town and even is willing to let her and Turtle stay with her until they can get back on their feet and get their own house.

## Kermit

The middle Curry boy. Kermit has a weak heart due to Rheumatic fever. Despite this Kermit is happy to run around and be just like anyone else. He is a dreamer and often will go out of his way to include Turtle into their little group. As part of the Diaper Gang he helps take care of babies. He is nice and often mischievous such as when he gets scolded for running down the lane and takes Turtle to Duval Street, running as soon as they get there. However he is still very much a child as he breaks down crying when the hurricane comes as they are on Sponger's key. Most of the time Kermit is the one that comes bearing the newspapers for everyone, running even when his mother tells him not to.

## Beans

The eldest Curry boy. Beans is 11 years old and has a large mouth on him. From the very first introduction it's shown that Beans is a spitfire with a stern dislike for Turtle. He is also very selfish, not wanting to share anything with her from his room to the Diaper Gang. In the beginning he takes every opportunity to point out how Turtle is not one of them and an outsider. Beans is very serious about his babysitting business however, making sure that everything is just so and even coming up with a "miracle diaper-rash formula" that he is happy to sell to people.

At the same time he is a hot head who will throw a punch or two when he loses it, such as fighting with Pork Chop on Sponger's Key. It's even shown that he is stubborn to a fault as he will let Pork Chop stay out in the hurricane rather than break down and fetch him. Though toward the end of the book it's shown that Beans becomes a more mature person. He values Turtle as a member of their gang telling Turtle to let the boys find out



where Archie was headed off to. Furthermore he has his moments where he will tell Turtle, in his own way, something nice. For example at the end of the book he says she belongs in Key West because of her strange name.

## Slow Poke

Turtle's biological father. He is a kind man that shares similarities with Turtle such as liking Terry Lee and the funny pages. Slow Poke is willing to play along with Turtle to appease her and loves her very much. He is one of the people that rescues Turtle and the Diaper gang from the Sponger's Key and is quick to pick her up into his arms, though worried about her well-being. He harbors a deep love for Turtle and Sadiebelle but it's also seen that he likes to do things on his own time and because of such often loses out on the important things in his life, like not marrying Sadiebelle when he had the chance.

## Ollie

Slow Poke's new first mate on the Love Lost. He is a nice young man that is easy to get along with. He seems easy going and gets along well with Turtle and helps Slow Poke save her from drowning. Ollie also is the one who the kids hear calling for them on the sponger's key after the hurricane has blown through and people are coming to look for them.

## Archie

Archie is initially the boyfriend and later the husband of Sadiebelle and a new father to Turtle. Most of what is heard of him is from Turtle, which paints a picture that he cares very much for Sadiebelle and Turtle. One such example is when he buys Turtle new shoes to replace the ones she had grown out of. However in reality Archie is a salesman who is underhanded and willing to do anything to make a sale to get closer to his dreams like steal Turtle's share of the treasure and hop on a boat to Cuba without her or Sadiebelle.

## Uncle Vernon

The husband to Minerva and the father of Buddy, Beans, and Kermit. Not much is seen on him until he comes back from Matecumbe. His presence makes everything around the house better as Aunt Minnie is happier and the boys are better behaved. Vernon is described to be a quiet sort of man with a shot of humor but Turtle likes him none the less. He seems to be a hardworking individual who loves his family and is easy to get along with. Uncle Vernon enjoys spending time with Turtle, mending clothes and listening to Orphan Annie on the radio. In some ways he steps in as the father-figure for Turtle, thus helping show that there is a possibility of a good father figure for the two.



## Buddy

The youngest Curry boy, Buddy is four years old and very childish, often forgetting where his pants are and fighting with his mother about wearing clothing and having accidents in his pants. Like most young children he is a whiner when things get uncomfortable, like complaining about being hungry or hot or bored when going around with the Diaper gang. Buddy is very happy-go-lucky and is willing to get along with Turtle despite her being a girl.

## Pork Chop

Pork Chop is the best friend of Beans and is a member of the Diaper gang. He is Beans's right hand man when working with the children and he's seen to have no problem causing trouble. Like most of the boys in the Diaper Gang he is critical of Turtle and doesn't get along with her in the beginning. It's also shown that he does have a temper as he gets into a physical fight with Beans at the latter's accusation of forgetting to drop the anchor and losing the boat. He is equally stubborn too as he sits outside the small shack as the hurricane starts coming over the key until Turtle gets him inside. Pork Chop is capable of compassion as he tries to make Turtle feel better toward the end of the book saying that Turtle can join the Diaper Gang if she wants.

## Ira

The last and founding member of the Diaper gang. For a good part of the book, Ira is in Miami so his little brother can get help from doctors for blowing off a few of his fingers. He is very much like Beans in personality. He is quick to think up mouthy remarks and will make fun of people he doesn't like. Ira is the one that starts up the rumors about a ghost in Key West when he teaches the Diaper Gang about Tick-Tocking to scare people. Though he does take his business with the Diaper Gang just as serious as the rest of them do.

## Nana Philly

Turtle's maternal grandmother who is a very tough individual. She does not like children at all and is very good at making enemies out of them. No one wants to go and spend time with her because of this fact and so Nana Philly is often on her own same Miss Bea who takes care of her. Though it's shown that despite her chilly demeanor that Nana Philly does have a soft spot for Turtle. Once Turtle is shown to be as stubborn as her a mutual respect forms between the two, aiding Turtle in her growing process because she now has an extra family member to support her.





## Too Bad

A kid who failed four times at being accepted in the Diaper Gang. It's shown that he is envious of the boys and wants to be a part of the group. He is often excitable and trails after the group, much to their annoyance. In the end though it pays off as he is the one who tells the adults where Turtle and the Diaper Gang are based on what he overheard them talking about before they left. In the end his dreams are realized as he is allowed to join the Diaper Gang.

## Pudding

Pudding is known as the "worst" baby on Key West. Teething, the child constantly cries and provides business for the Diaper Gang. He is the first baby that Turtle meets and is the first one that she helps the Diaper Gang with.

## Killie

An old man in Key West that drives an old cart with horses. Word around the island is that he whipped his horse to death and so the boys of the Diaper Gang have a good time picking on him. It's obvious that he is not very fond of children and will rat them out to people as he did telling Johnny Cakes that they stole his boat when they went to find Black Caesar's treasure.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Shirley Temple/Annie

The actress Shirley Temple and the character of Little Orphan Annie are implied to be two iconic American girls, "America's darlings." Whenever the author uses them in the text it denotes impossible ideals of the era that Turtle can never live up to.

## Hollywood

Hollywood is representative of false happiness within the story. The author often puts mentions of Hollywood into the text before adding in a negative element. Hollywood can also be connected as a direct cause to the issues of the people of this time and how delusional they can be about their lives.

## Five dollar bill

The five dollar bill is used as not only foreshadowing but as a representation of the tie between Turtle and Archie. He tells her to keep it for emergencies and yet he is the one who causes the emergency by stealing all of Turtle's share of treasure, thus leaving her with only the five dollar bill.

## Diaper formula

The diaper-rash formula is considered a closely kept secret all throughout the book, yet in the end it turns out to be corn starch. This is a symbolic message of how ordinary things can often work miracles if one knows how to use it right and how it can bring people together.

## The Bellewood

The Bellewood is symbolic of the life that Turtle wishes for her and her mother to have. As it is a mail-order house in a Sears catalog it serves to be motivation for Turtle to go and find Black Caesar's treasure.

## Sharks

Sharks are symbolic of women whom men fall in love with only to get hurt in the end. It leaves them hurting for years to come, much like how a real shark will leave permanent scars of their victims.



## Dreams

Dreams are symbolic of false hope and realities. Each time a dream is mentioned in the book there is a negative aftereffect. An example is Archie, who "sells dreams" to people and in the end these people realize they don't have a dream but a grim reminder of the reality they live in.

## The Lost Love

The Lost Love is symbolic of Turtle's family. Slow Poke names the boat after Sadiebelle, Turtle's mother, whom he lost. However while he lost her mother he gains her back in the way that his and Turtle's relationship as father and daughter starts while Turtle is working on the boat with him.

## Shoes

Turtle's shoes are symbolic in the way that they are a representation of her old life. They are common in New Jersey and those who have wealth can afford them. By losing her shoes and being uncomfortable in new ones the author is symbolizing the change in Turtle's perspective.

## Smokey

Smokey the cat is symbolic of Turtle's old life as well. She is the only part of Turtle's family that comes with her as she moves from New Jersey to Key West. As it is, Smokey also helps to tie Turtle down to Key West when Nana Philly takes a liking to her.

## Black Caesar's Map

Black Caesar's map is symbolic of hope and the future. When the children find the map that can lead them to the treasure each one of them is willing to put faith in the treasure being real so they can make a better future for themselves.



# Settings

## New Jersey

New Jersey is where the story first takes place. While Turtle does not spend much time in New Jersey where the book starts it is symbolic of the life and the memories she tries to hold onto in the beginning half of the book. Many times Turtle will experience something in Key West to which she will immediately think back and compare to an experience she had in New Jersey. Turtle's mother also still resides in New Jersey working as a housemaid until the last two chapters of the book only occasionally sending letters or making a call to her daughter. This setting serves as a security blanket of sorts and represents the known for Turtle. Back here Turtle had her mother to rely on for support and the lifestyle was considerably easier in New Jersey than it is in Key West.

## Key West

Key West is where the majority of the story takes place. Not only does Turtle get uprooted to living with her Aunt Minnie and her boys in Key West but she must learn how to get along with living in a new environment. Throughout the course of the book Key West serves to support the major themes and motifs. Places such as Duval street and Curry Lane serve as social settings in which Turtle is constantly introduced into situations where she must adapt and learn from in order to solve the problem and grow from the experience. Such as when Turtle is thrown out of the house with the Diaper gang by Aunt Minnie. As she goes around and explores Key West, Turtle's perspective begins to broaden as she is enriched by the culture and people around her.

Work environments like The Lost Love and in some respects Nana Philly's house serve as a way for Turtle to interact with her family members, of which she is oblivious to their connections initially. By working alongside Slow Poke and Nana Philly for lengths of time Turtle begins to see that her previous notion that adults can be just as rotten as children is overturned.

## The Lost Love

The Lost Love is the boat that belongs to Slow Poke. When Turtle is initially introduced to the boat she is unaware of the familial connection between her and Slow Poke. As Turtle speaks with Slow Poke throughout the novel the Lost Love begins to make more sense. It helps connect the relation between Slow Poke and Sadiebelle as well as to help alter Turtle's mindset on adults and provide the reader with details showing the similarity between Turtle and Slow Poke, helping to connect the dots on their relationship. An example of this is when Slow Poke mentions he likes Terry Lee and Pat as much as Turtle and is willing to play along with her as she pretends they are the



swashbuckling duo and are headed out on a grander adventure than just going to look for sponges.

## **Nana Philly's house**

Nana Philly's house is where Turtle first learns that this cranky old woman is her grandmother, thus finding out her mother lied to her. This provides her with a place to spend time with her grandmother without anyone else around as Turtle eats lunch with her every day. It also serves as another perspective on why Sadiebelle most likely told her daughter that her mother was dead when Nana Philly turns out to be quite a handful. It also provides a new home for Smokey when the cat is tossed out, allowing for Turtle to find an alternate solution to keeping her cat which by the end she ends up leaving over there despite being able to take the cat back simply because Turtle sees how much her grandmother enjoys Smokey's company. It serves as a way to mature and look out for someone else's interests rather than just her own.

## **Sponger's Key**

This is the key where Black Caesar buried his treasure. It's not that far away from Key West as the children get to the island pretty early on in the day. As it is, it's important to the story for a few reasons. The first reason is that by finding the treasure here the children now have the means to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. Another fact is that while the children are faced with the problem of what to do as they wait to go home and as such while initially breaking down the gang deals with their problems and inevitably grow up as they work through the problem. Furthermore when the kids are finally rescued it is Slow Poke that first embraces Turtle, showing that by coming to get them on Sponger's Key that they really do care.



# Themes and Motifs

## Love and Loss

Love and Loss is perhaps the largest theme within the book. In the beginning there is Turtle who not only is losing her old life by being uprooted to New Jersey but is emotionally closed off. Aside from the love she holds for her mother and Archie it's clear in chapter one that Turtle has little affection or tolerance for anyone else. She feels people are rotten, especially kids, who caused a great deal of hardship for her, even causing her mother to lose a job or two with their lies. Upon coming to Key West, Turtle feels loss even more acutely. She not only must find a way to live with the new life she is handed but ends up losing the security she found in her mother by being on her own in Aunt Minnie's house with the boys.

The author also combines love and loss in relation to Slow Poke. The author heavily hints to the fact that Slow Poke is Turtle's father and still in love with Sadiebelle. This is clearly shown in the way he acts at the mention of her and how he has even named his boat the Lost Love in commemoration to losing Sadiebelle. He also shows compassion for Turtle as he takes on a fatherly role with her, even if at the time neither knows the relation to the other. Though at the same time the author keeps the backstory of Slow Poke and Sadiebelle fairly ambiguous only understanding one thing, that he still lost her in the end. In chapter seventeen this can be seen as he mentions being too late again at hearing Sadiebelle is married to Archie.

With Archie leaving in Chapter 18 he introduces another loss to Turtle, this one much more heart wrenching and emotional than the previous ones. She loses the one man she thought would be a father to her but that isn't the worst part. It's far more upsetting to see the pain her mother is going through at the realization that the love she had for Archie was never reciprocated, and now he has left with Turtle's money and their hope for a new life. Yet amid the woes of unrequited love the family shows that there are people who love them as seen with Aunt Minnie attempting to cheer the two up by letting Turtle play with her paper dolls.

Not all loss is emotional however. Aunt Minnie sees her old paper dolls in Turtle's possession and takes them after fussing at the child. In Chapter 12 someone stole Turtle's shoes in the middle of the night. This is important because those shoes were a representation of Turtle's old life in New Jersey. Without them she has one less security blanket and must learn to cope without such comforts. In the same chapter Turtle also must get rid of Smokey when she is accused of making messes and interfering with Aunt Minnie's work. Once again this can be linked to the idea of losing another security blanket.



## Lies/Truth

The theme of Lies and Truth is prevalent throughout the book. It's shown that the lies range from harmless to gut-wrenching as the book progresses. In Chapter 7 Turtle tells a harmless lie about not being able to swim, with some disastrous consequences as she nearly drowns. While this isn't that large of a lie the implication is that even the smallest lies will come home to roost with harmful consequences.

Throughout the book it's seen that even the most harmless of lies at the time will have worse consequences and each time the truth comes out it's a cause for serious re-evaluation. In Chapter 8 Turtle finds out that her mother lied to her about the existence of her grandmother and is floored. It makes her question the reasons her mother must have for keeping the truth from her but it also what to do now that this revelation has come to pass.

In Chapter 11 Turtle experiences her grandmother's attitude and begins to understand just why her mother would leave. It also sets into motion the determination to see to it that her mother and grandmother make up, even going so far as to set the two of them up together just to talk.

Lies and their truths also start to escalate within the book. In the beginning small lies don't bring about lofty consequences but towards the end of the book the pattern shifts to more harmful ends. In Chapter 14 the children lie to their families about going fishing when in reality they are going to steal a boat and look for Black Caesar's treasure. Their lies bring about consequences in the fact that they are stranded on a key and could've been killed when the hurricane blew through. Yet still this isn't the worst lie in the whole book.

In Chapters 17 and 18 Archie and Sadiebelle arrive on Key West to come and see Turtle. From what has been told to the reader about Archie is from Turtle's memories and her perspective tends to skew his personality. At the end of Chapter 17 it's abundantly clear that Archie is a salesman through and through who has no qualms about lying to people in order to get what he wants. At the end of Chapter 18 the truth finally comes out as he leaves Sadiebelle and Turtle on Key West and goes to Cuba with Turtle's money. This is the biggest and most gut-wrenching truth to come out in the book, the result of which causes overwhelming despair and hurt to Sadiebelle as well as Turtle, going as far as to break her down. This is representative of the idea that any lies, serious or not, will have disastrous consequences that will hurt when the truth comes out.

## Coming of age

Coming of Age is important in this novel as well as change. At 11 years old Turtle is just around the age when puberty will hit. Not only is this a tumultuous time for children but it's even worse with her relocation to Key West away from her mother. Turtle must not



only learn how to fit in with the new culture she is thrust into but also will have to figure out what to do now that she is on her own away from her mother for the first time.

In Chapter 1 it's shown that Turtle does not get along with the children in her own age group. She doesn't socialize well and often times will get into verbal confrontations with those who she doesn't like. She is emotionally very stunted and very cynical for a child her age. However, through others reaching out to her, like Kermit inviting her to come along with the Diaper Gang in Chapter 5, Turtle starts to see that her previous notions on children and others is wrong. She gradually starts to become one of them as she even shows them Black Caesar's map so they can help her find the treasure and become rich.

When realizing that they are stuck on the island in Chapter 15, Turtle attempts to get everyone on the same page and to stop fighting in Pork Chop and Beans's case. However in Chapter 16 a different side to Turtle emerges. Turtle not only berates Beans for being stubborn enough to allow his best friend to stay out there in the hurricane force winds but she yanks him inside to keep him safe when Beans refuses to go out to get him. Further on, weary and emotionally exhausted, the Diaper Gang starts to cry as the hurricane beats against the shack and rather than break down with them Turtle starts to sing a Shirley Temple song in hopes to get everyone to focus on that rather than where they are.

In Chapter 7 Turtle spends time on the Lost Love with Slow Poke. She fits in with him, learning that they have many similarities and because of this sees that Slow Poke is a kind individual who does care about her. It is Slow Poke telling her about the history of Key West's pirates that eventually sends her on the hunt for his treasure that will set the tone for the last part of the book. However spending time around Key West allows for Turtle to start to assimilate to the culture, often using slang words to describe things such as "Alligator Pear" or "Cut-up." As such Turtle begins to come into who she is as a person and the realization that despite her initial dislike of Key West that she has essentially grown to be a part of it.

Turtle mentions in Chapter 17 how hard it is to get used to wearing shoes again, a clear sign that she will have a hard time readjusting to another place should she leave. Though with the departure of Archie the reader gets to see how much Turtle has changed. For the first time in the story Turtle sheds tears over the loss of her father-figure and the despair of her mother. However, looking back at the family she still has around her Turtle ends up making the decision for her and her mother to stay in Key West, thus signifying that she is capable of making decisions even in tough times.

## Art and Culture

Within the story Turtle makes constant references to iconic Hollywood figures like Shirley Temple, Orphan Annie, and Terry Lee. This is reference to the American dream and the fact that the movie industry is exploiting people by tricking them into believing that their lives can work out like just in the movies.





It's important to note the connection between Turtle and the mentions of these figures. Often times Turtle seeks to use them as a comparison of their lives versus hers as though to make the point that reality isn't like movies and so no one should put their faith into it. As in Chapter 1 when Turtle talks of Shirley Temple and the fact that she is a fake because children are not sweethearts but rotten brats.

However for a girl who claims to be down-to-earth she spends a noteworthy amount of time making references to these fictitious characters and Hollywood as well. It plays an important role throughout the book because in a way it helps Turtle forget the reality of the situation if only for a moment. In Chapter 16 Turtle sings a Shirley Temple song in an attempt to calm everyone down as they cry. Then in Chapter 17 Turtle dreams of winning an award over Shirley Temple as she is trapped on the sponger's key with the Diaper Gang during a hurricane.

Turtle's fixation with Hollywood is also a way of foreshadowing events with her family. Chapter 17 is titled "A Hollywood Ending" and shows everything working out, for Turtle as she becomes rich from the treasure and her mother and Archie arrive in Key West. However in Chapter 18 the happy ending is pulled right out from underneath Turtle's nose as Archie ends up leaving the two of them behind and stealing her money, thus reaffirming that there are no Hollywood endings, only reality and that is what you make of it.

## Family

Family is a prominent theme throughout Turtle in Paradise. From the early pages in the story it's shown that Turtle is in a broken family with only her mother and her many boyfriends. Like most children, Turtle expresses her desire to have a complete family and throughout the book feels that Archie, her mother's current boyfriend, is how she will achieve this dream.

Turtle often mentions how Archie is much better than the previous boyfriends her mother has had and paints a biased picture for the reader because of this. However in Turtle's search for a family she ends up with one she never expected. Despite the fact that Turtle does not want to move in with her Aunt Minnie and be away from her mother in the end it serves her well. By living with Aunt Minnie and her boys Turtle experiences a different version of family life.

Turtle spends time with the boys and interacting with people her own age as well as learning she has quite a few other family members along the way. Through them Turtle is able to see that they do love her and they do accept her, even if it took a bit to warm up to the idea. Turtle however learns that not only does she have a grandmother she never knew about but finds her biological father too, with no help from her mother. All through the book Turtle laments on Archie and how she wants him to be her father, to help make her dream of a complete family possible when in reality she already has one.



This is exemplified when Archie leaves in chapter eighteen, taking everything with him, and crushing Turtle's dream of the three of them being a family together. However it's then in she realizes that she and her mother aren't alone, they have family in Key West and they are standing right beside them ready to help in any way necessary. The acceptance that she has been looking for is standing right there with them and that influences Turtle's need to stay in Key West in the end.

## Dreams

Dreams are one of the main themes throughout the book. As stated by Archie, everybody has a dream, even Turtle who considers herself to be a very sensible person. The earliest mention of a dream is with the Bellewood, the mail-order house that Turtle keeps with her saying that one day she and her mother will be living there in the lap of luxury. Often times the author will mention dreams but also the failure of these dreams to come true.

Archie is a crucial part to the theme of dreams. He is a salesman who speaks about dreams to Turtle but also foreshadows his involvement in destroying Turtle and Sadiebelle's dreams. It's clear that while he claims to sell dreams that is what they seldom are. Each time Turtle imagines what her life will be like as a family, just the three of them living in the Bellewood. Yet in Chapter 18 it's all a lie as Archie steals her money and makes off with it. Turtle realizes then that he played her and Sadiebelle just like everyone else.

Archie exploits the dreams of people, and by choosing Archie as the character closely associated with dreams the author is relaying a central message: you can never depend on others to help you realize your dreams. Turtle relies on Archie, indirectly, to marry her mother and be a good father to her that she misses out on all of the signs that he is crooked until it's too late. It's only Turtle's realization that she did have a dream to be a family and he took advantage of that, that prompts her to make her next choice, to stay in Key West where she truly does have a family that loves them.

Often times the author makes use of dreams as a way to further emphasize the difference between fact and fiction. In Chapter 15 Turtle, amid the boys of the Diaper Gang and a brewing hurricane, dreams about being in the Bellewood with new shoes, her mother, and Smokey. The dream is sweet and shows the dream that Turtle has for herself, even if she doesn't directly admits it until later. However just a few sentences later a mosquito bites her on the arm, forcing her back into reality. This is representative of the idea that while dreams are all well and good, that's all they are: fiction and not fact. In the end reality may not be as sweet as dreams but it's where everything counts.

## Wealth/Poverty

"Turtle in Paradise" has a motif of wealth and poverty throughout the book. This serves as a baseline for showing the change in Turtle as she adjusts from one lifestyle to the other. In Chapter 1 Turtle often talks about how the children of the women her mother



works for in New Jersey are spoiled brats. However as the book progresses it is easy enough to say that Turtle was one of those spoiled brats as well.

In Chapter 2, Turtle arrives in Key West lamenting about how it looks like an old wornout chair with piles of trash everywhere. It can be inferred that Turtle is unused to experiencing poverty like it is in the Florida Keys. Furthermore as she goes along in the book certain situations she experiences will bring up memories she has of her life in New Jersey with her mother and Archie. In Chapter 3 Kermit mentions that Turtle isn't around here because she wears shoes, another difference in wealth. Most children in Key West go around barefoot considering they are probably too poor to afford shoes. As Beans says in chapter five, most of the island is on relief, hence why they ask to be paid in candy rather than nickels.

With Chapter 4 Turtle's spoiled background shows up again as she asks what her breakfast is, not happy with avocado spread over toast. It implies that Turtle, despite working with her mother in what she considers hard conditions, still led an easy life compared to those in the keys. The most overwhelming disparagement between the wealthier people and the impoverished ones is in Chapter 10 when Uncle Vernon is introduced into the story.

Turtle is comparing Uncle Vernon's homecoming to that of Archie's homecoming. She mentions the fact that everything is like Christmas when Archie returns as he showers her and Sadiebelle with gifts, fancy dinners, and time out on the town. Whereas with Vernon it is simply quality time at home with a good meal. She mentions a mother of pearl comb and brush set, which costs a lot of money back then and yet this is during the time of the Great Depression, implying that they are not as bad off as they seem.

Furthermore there is the change for Turtle in terms of wealth. In Chapter 15 when they find the treasure and then in Chapter 16 when everything is divided up into shares Turtle becomes rich. The idea of purchasing the Bellewood is no longer such a farfetched dream. However by Chapter 18 Turtle is worse off than even her cousins at this point because Archie not only steals all of her share but by leaving the two of them, all of the gifts and such he used to spend on the two will now stop, leaving them even further impoverished than her cousins in Key West.

# Styles

## Point of View

The book is written from the first person perspective of an eleven-year-old girl, living during the 1930s. She is a somewhat unreliable narrator because the reader is given only the information from Turtle's viewpoint, which have been shaped by the movies, books, and popular entertainment of the day and time. Her mother, quite immature and lacking common sense, is less mature than her daughter and seems to constantly be seeking approval and acceptance from any man that comes along. Thus, the narrator, Turtle, has had her opinions shaped by her life experiences and assumptions, which turn out to be false, as she finds out later on in the book.

## Language and Meaning

Since the novel is set during the 1930s in Key West, Florida, many of the terms and language used are indicative of the time and place in which the characters live. Books, magazines, movie stars, and music all play a prominent role in defining the characters as well as provide a context for the perceptions and beliefs of the characters. For example, Turtle believes that the ideal image of a young girl is Shirley Temple or Little Orphan Annie. She constantly refers back to them.

Likewise, the flavors and mannerisms, customs and language of Key West are offered for the reader. Such terms as "bollos" or "bungys" are used, but the reader can easily decipher their meaning with the context clues, or through the reader asking for a definition.

## Structure

The book is organized into 18 chapters, with each being no more than 10 pages in length. Most are shorter than that and contain a lot of dialogue with some figurative language to describe Turtle's surroundings and feelings.



## Quotes

He says he doesn't think President Roosevelt will get us out of this Depression and that if you give someone money for not working why would they ever bother to get a job?

-- Turtle (Chapter 1 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** Turtle is reflecting on what Mr. Edgit is telling her on the way to Florida. This is a significant quote because it sets the tone, tells the reader what the time period is, and offers understanding as far as why a parent would ship off her child to live with other relatives.

Lots of folks go to bed hungry these days. I've heard of men fighting over scraps in garbage cans and about that lady who taught her kids to steal milk.

-- Turtle (Chapter 4 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** Turtle tells the reader that she understands what poverty means because she's felt it. She also indicates that there are people in worse conditions that she and her mother. She understands that to give up is to die.

Kids lie. We have to or we'd never get anything. But grown-ups lie, too— they just do it differently. They leave things out; they don't give you the whole story.

-- Turtle (Chapter 6 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This indicates a key theme in the novel, which is that people lie, but children and adults often lie for different reasons.

Now I know why those eyes looked so familiar— they're the exact same shade of blue as Mama's. But why did Mama lie? And what am I supposed to do with a grandmother?

-- Turtle (Chapter 8 paragraph 89)

**Importance:** This shows how much Turtle's mother has kept from her, as Turtle always thought that her grandmother was dead.

All I do is sell her that dream, bottled up nice and tidy in a cream, or maybe a new hat, or some brushes.

-- Archie (Chapter 9 paragraph 31)

**Importance:** This shows the reader—if not Turtle—that Archie is a con man. He figures out what it is that his customers want for themselves and then convinces them that he has what will help them get it.

They say that when the stock market crashed, men were so upset at losing their fortunes that they threw themselves off buildings. I can't imagine killing myself over something like that, but then again I've never had a fortune to lose.

-- Turtle (Chapter 10 paragraph 1)



**Importance:** This not only gives insight into the time period for the book, but indicates, once again, Turtle's mindset.

Mama's head is so high in the clouds, I'm surprised she doesn't bump into Amelia Earhart.

-- Turtle (Chapter 10 paragraph 11)

**Importance:** This shows that Turtle is well aware of her mother's naivety when it comes to life and common sense. It also includes a reference to Amelia Earhart, a pilot and adventurer, which ground the novel in 1930s America.

You'd think when a dream comes true you'd scream until your heart gives out, but the reality is you just turn dumb from the wonder of it.

-- Turtle (Chapter 15 paragraph 6)

**Importance:** This is when Turtle and her friends find the pirate's treasure. This is where she realizes that real life isn't like the movies.

Little Orphan Annie and Terry Lee get into scrapes, but they always get rescued. Everything ends up okay in the end. But it turns out that real life's not like the funny pages.

-- Turtle (Chapter 17 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This quote shows that Turtle is growing up. Because of the close call that they have on Sponger's Key, she realizes that life does not imitate art or movies.

Honey!" he says, swooping me up in his arms. I bury my face in his warm, solid chest and I know everything's going to be okay.

-- Slow Poke (Chapter 17 paragraph 19)

**Importance:** When Turtle is rescued by SlowPoke she realizes that she considers him her father and hopes secretly that it is true. Later of course, it does turn out to be true.

I would've gotten stranded on an island a whole lot sooner if I'd known that would make her come get me!

-- Turtle (Chapter 17 paragraph 69)

**Importance:** This shows how much Turtle has needed to see her mother. She misses her so much that she would willingly risk her safety just to see her again.

Archie sold me a dream— Mama happy, a home, a family at last— and I bought it hook, line, and sinker.

-- Turtle (Chapter 18 paragraph 51)

**Importance:** This is a poignant moment when Turtle realizes that she and her mother have been swindled out of their money. Archie has taken it and run away, leaving them without a dime.