

Underworld Study Guide

Underworld by Don DeLillo

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Plot Summary

Underworld by Don DeLillo is a book about two people from the Bronx who have a brief affair and then go their separate ways. One becomes a famous artist and the other becomes a respected executive in the field of waste management. Forty years later, their paths cross again in the middle of the Arizona desert where they briefly meet and talk for a few minutes. The years between their meetings are the years of the Cold War and there are many social changes in society that DeLillo expertly captures.

The Prologue opens on October 3, 1951 when a young boy named Cotter Martin jumps the turnstiles at the Polo Grounds and gains admittance to the Dodgers-Giants game. The Giants win the pennant on Bobby Thomson's home run and Cotter leaves with the ball. He wants to keep the ball as a souvenir but his father, Manx, steals the ball while he is asleep and sells it to Charles Wainwright, who is standing in line at Yankee Stadium waiting to buy tickets. Another event occurs on this day. The Soviets successfully complete a test of the atomic bomb, intensifying the Cold War.

Just as the events in the game between the two teams are played out in the ballpark, the events in the lives of the various characters are played out in the ballpark of the world. The two main characters, Nick and Klara, are born and raised in the Bronx. Nick's father is a numbers runner who disappears one day and never returns. Nick is basically a good kid but he is somewhat of a street kid who eventually does time in a juvenile facility for negligent homicide. He is a hard working kid who meets Klara one day and has a quick affair. After their second meeting, she breaks it off and they each go their separate ways.

Both Nick and Klara wage their own battles during their lives. Klara is striving for independence and Nick is trying to put some distance between his present life and his early life. They do this while they and the rest of society live under the threat of nuclear annihilation.

The Cold War affects the lives of everyone because it results in a mentality of paranoia and fear of the unknown. FBI Director Hoover has dossiers on thousands of people, including the rich and famous. The paranoia of the era is portrayed by comedian Lenny Bruce in his nightclub routines along with other social changes that are occurring in society, such as sexual permissiveness, the drug culture and the civil rights movement. DeLillo does a good job of capturing all of this, especially in Part Five, which consists of a series of fragments from different times in the 1950s and 1960s.

Underworld is a lengthy book but a very interesting one, especially for anyone who lived through the Cold War era. Readers will find it easy to relate to many of the characters and events in the book.



Prologue, pgs. 11-60

Prologue, pgs. 11-60 Summary

Underworld by Don DeLillo is a book about two people from the Bronx who have a brief affair and then go their separate ways. One becomes a famous artist and the other becomes a respected executive in the field of waste management. Forty years later, their paths cross again in the middle of the Arizona desert where they briefly meet and talk for a few minutes. The years between their meetings are the years of the Cold War and there are many social changes in society that DeLillo expertly captures.

Groups of kids wait outside the ball park watching the people enter. One of the group shouts and they storm the four turnstiles. Not all of them are stopped by the ticket takers. Cotter Martin is the youngest and one of the few to succeed. He blends into the crowd there to see the Giants and Dodgers. There are 20,000 empty seats at the Polo Grounds that day.

The game is broadcast by Russ Hodges, the voice of the Giants. Leo Durocher is the Giant's manager. J. Edgar Hoover is at the game with Frank Sinatra, Jackie Gleason and Toots Shor. Walter Winchell is sitting with the Dodger management.

Cotter Martin is sitting in the left field stands. He is startled when the arc lights come on. The man next to him asks if he wants a bag of peanuts and he says no. They talk. The man's name is Bill Waterson and he owns a small construction firm. The peanut vendor winks at Cotter and throws him a bag of peanuts, which he shares with Bill.

Special Agent Rafferty arrives with a message for Hoover. The Russians have tested an atomic bomb. The date is October 3, 1951. The White House will announce this in an hour. Hoover sees no reason to leave the game and returns to his seat, saying nothing to the people in his group.

During the seventh inning stretch, Cotter notices that Bill does his own brand of stretches. The Giants are losing, but Cotter and Bill hope their luck will change. Brooklyn is leading four to two. Then in the ninth, with two men on, Bobby Thomson hits a home run and the Giants win the pennant.

There is pandemonium in the ballpark with people wildly cheering. Thomson is carried off the field on the shoulders of his teammates. Cotter is fighting other fans for the baseball. Cotter wins. Hoover is looking at a crumpled page of a magazine that lands on him. It is a picture of the Triumph of Death by Flemish painter Dieter Bruegel. As he looks at it, he thinks of the bomb.

Cotter walks out with Bill. Bill wants to buy the ball from Cotter, but Cotter wants to keep the ball.



Russ Hodges interviews players in the clubhouse. He knows that history has been made and that nobody will ever forget this day.

Prologue, pgs. 11-60 Analysis

Baseball is the great American pastime, as the Prologue indicates. People from all walks of life enjoy the game, from the kids like Cotter from the slums, who jump the turnstiles to get in the stadium, to movie stars like Frank Sinatra and Jackie Gleason who are there with restaurant owner Toots Shor and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. The afternoon at the ballpark allows all of them to relax and put their problems on hold for a few hours. As Russ Hodges says at the end of the Prologue, the game somehow binds people together. History is made that day when the Giants win the pennant.



Part I, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 63-100

Part I, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 63-100 Summary

The time is now spring-summer of 1992 and the driver of the Lexus is driving the car across the desert. The driver wants to see Klara Sax. He stops where there is a group of people and the project control center. The man, who is 57 years of age, has not seen Klara Sax since he was 17. Klara is a celebrity artist.

Klara is being interviewed when he first sees her. She explains how her people are painting old aircraft. She is creating art in the desert.

The Lexus driver, Nick Shay, knows Klara from when he lived in New York. They sit and talk. They had been lovers in the Bronx many years ago. She tells him that her former husband, Albert, has recently died. They discuss the Soviet threat and bombs.

After they talk, Nick walks back to his rented Lexus. He meets a woman in a taxi who is working on the project. Nick is attracted to the girl and stays and talks to her. He finally leaves and goes to his motel room.

Nick returns to the site at sunrise. He counts 230 planes.

Chapter Two reveals that Nick travels a lot in his job with a waste management company. His mother has recently moved in with him and his wife Marian. Their daughter Lainie and husband Dex live in Tucson and are awaiting the birth of their first child.

Chapter Three takes place in the Stadium Club at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles. Nick is there with people from his firm—Brian Glassic and Simeon Biggs. They are explaining the game of baseball to Jane Farish who is a BBC producer. The Dodgers are playing the Giants. Both were New York teams until the 1950s.

Glassic says Nick is the one who has the baseball from the Bobby Thomson homerun and Nick says no. Glassic says Nick bought the ball from a dealer. They tell baseball stories, sit in the company box seats and then leave.

Part I, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 63-100 Analysis

This section takes place in 1992. Nick Shay is driving a rented Lexus through the desert, looking for the location where artist Klara Sax and her group are painting airplanes. He and Klara grew up in the Bronx and had briefly been lovers many years ago.

In addition to the introduction of these two characters, this section informs the reader about Nick's job in Phoenix with a waste management company. In Los Angeles, Nick

and his business associates attend a Dodgers game. Apparently, Nick had purchased the famous Bobby Thomson homerun ball. They discuss company business during an afternoon at the ball game.



Part 1, Chapters 4-7, pgs. 101-134

Part 1, Chapters 4-7, pgs. 101-134 Summary

Nick's mother has total recall and Marian likes to hear stories from Nick's childhood. He uses his mother's name of Shay since his parents are separated when he is born. His mother likes to watch the Honeymooners with Jackie Gleason and Nick remembers this from his childhood. He likes driving his mother to mass and sometimes stays with her at the church.

In Chapter Five, Brian Glassic calls Nick at home and tells him to meet him at a place called Condomology in Phoenix. The store sells every kind of condom. There is music and booths where people can order ice cream. Brian buys a box of condoms for his son and the men leave.

When Nick arrives home, he tells Marian about Condomology. She is watching a movie in Jeff's room and is upset with his interruption.

In Chapter Six, Nick rambles about different things like his son's style of dressing and work. He switches back and forth between present thoughts and thoughts from his childhood. Lainie has a baby girl. Since Nick is in the waste management business, he views things, such as items on a store shelf, in terms of the kind of garbage they will make. He thinks of the nuclear waste that he and his company are involved in storing.

In Chapter Seven, Nick and Marian enjoy a hot air balloon ride. They travel over the site where Klara is painting the planes. Both are impressed with the experience of the balloon ride. That night they have friends over for dinner. They have a long but enjoyable day. After talking for a while, they go to sleep. Nick awakens from a dream and sits in a chair looking at the baseball. He remembers Russ Hodges who has been dead for years. He thinks of the Polo Grounds. Marian wakes up and tells him to come back to bed.

Part 1, Chapters 4-7, pgs. 101-134 Analysis

This section concerns Nick, his family and his work associates. He thinks about his childhood a lot, with his thoughts rambling between the past and present, as in Chapter Six. This may be because his mother is now living with them and that is stimulating his memories. Marian likes to hear her mother-in-law tell stories about Nick's childhood.

After a long day of recreation, consisting of the hot air balloon ride over Klara's painting site and dinner with friends, Nick awakens from a dream in the middle of the night. He picks up the baseball and sits holding it, remembering the Polo Grounds and the voice of Russ Hodges. He has not been a baseball fan in years but is now remembering his younger days as an avid Dodger fan. This may be due to having his mother in the house and hearing her stories of his childhood.



Manx Martin 1, Part 2, Chapters 1-4, pgs. 137-193

Manx Martin 1, Part 2, Chapters 1-4, pgs. 137-193 Summary

When Cotter arrives home, his sister accuses him of skipping school. He shows her the baseball and knows she will not tattle on him. They and their mother talk about the man preaching in the street and the fact that the Russians have tested an atomic bomb. His father, Manx Martin, arrives home and Cotter tells him that the super wants to talk to him.

Cotter tells his father that he needs a note excusing him from school and that he had gone to the baseball game. He shows him the baseball. Manx wants to see the baseball but Cotter wants to keep it. Cotter falls asleep thinking about the game. While he is sleeping, Manx takes the baseball.

Part Two covers the time span from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s. In Chapter One, a child riding in a car playing with a video camera records a homicide. The tape shows a man driving a Dodge and there is another car. The child tapes the man being shot. This is a tape of the Texas Highway Killer.

Chapter Two has Marian driving to Prescott on business. She unexpectedly meets Brian Glassic. They meet for lunch and she tells him about the job interview she has just had. Brian is there to look at cars. After lunch, they look at some of the cars in the car show and then say their goodbyes.

Brian travels north of Manhattan in Chapter Three. He goes to the house of Marvin Lundy to view his baseball memorabilia. Brian wants to talk about baseball, but Marvin talks about the Cold War. Finally, Marvin talks about the October 3, 1951 Dodgers-Giants game, the day the Russians exploded an atomic bomb. He says that there are 20,000 empty seats at the game that day because people sense that something is going to happen on the other side of the world. Marvin tells Brian how he has searched for the baseball from that game. He has hired people to examine photos of the left-field stands and has placed ads in sports magazines. He has traveled around the country seeing different people all the time wondering why he wants the baseball. He thinks he has the baseball. He has traced its line of ownership but cannot link it to the game itself.

Brian drives toward Manhattan. He finds the French Kills landfill on Staten Island where his meeting is the next morning.

In Chapter Four, Marvin parks his car on the lower east side. He buys some goods at the bakery, eats at a Chinese restaurant, and then drives home. He will soon be moving to his daughter's apartment. When he arrives home, he receives a call from Phoenix



reminding him of a visit from a man named Brian Glassic almost a year ago. The man is interested in buying the baseball. Marvin, who is dying of cancer, is interested in selling.

Manx Martin 1, Part 2, Chapters 1-4, pgs. 137-193

Analysis

Cotter tells his father, Manx, about the baseball he had retrieved at the ballgame. Manx does not think of it as a souvenir or something that might mean something to his son. He views it as something he can sell for money and takes it while the boy is sleeping. He is not concerned with the effect this will have on his son.

This begins the lineage of ownership of the baseball. A collector named Marvin Lundy spends years trying to find the baseball after the game. While in Manhattan on business, Brian Glassic visits Lundy to view his collection. Almost a year later, Lundy receives a call from Phoenix from a man interested in buying the ball.



Part 2, Chapters 5-7, pgs. 194-236

Part 2, Chapters 5-7, pgs. 194-236 Summary

Nick is in New York and visits his brother Matt, who lives with their mother. Nick will be staying for two nights. Nick wants his mother to move to Phoenix. After their mother, Rosemary, retires to her bedroom, Nick and Matt discuss the pros and cons of moving her to Phoenix. Then they talk about their father and work. Nick calls a taxi when he is ready to leave.

Chapter Six discusses some of Nick and Matt's childhood activities. Matt is interested in the game of chess and is six when his father disappears.

Matt watches the tape of the Texas Highway Killer again. It is constantly on television. They are broadcasting a phone conversation with someone claiming to be the killer. He makes dinner for himself and Rosemary. When he mentions Arizona, she says she wants to stay in the Bronx. She asks if Nick mentioned anything and when he says no, she says that he has erased it but does not say what.

In Chapter Seven, Matt's old science teacher, Mr. Albert Bronzini, has a visit from a man named Eddie. They are both chess enthusiasts and Eddie has come for a haircut even though Albert does not know how to cut hair. When Eddie dies, Albert sits in the church thinking of him and how devastated he had been at Klara's departure.

Part 2, Chapters 5-7, pgs. 194-236 Analysis

This section focuses more on Nick and Matt's childhood years in the Bronx and begins to reveal information about Klara Sax. Matt has a science teacher named Albert Bronzini who is a chess enthusiast. He is married to Klara Sax and they have a daughter named Teresa. Albert does not fit into Klara's future and she leaves him. Even though he is devastated by her departure, he still raises their daughter. He lives with his sister and remains bitter about Klara.

At this point, Rosemary is not ready to move to Phoenix. She has her own life and friends in the Bronx and does not want to move.



Part 2, Chapters 8-10, pgs. 237 - 272

Part 2, Chapters 8-10, pgs. 237 - 272 Summary

Sister Alma Edgar is an aged nun. She used to teach but now is too old to. She still wears the old habit even though the younger nuns do not. One of the younger nuns, named Grace Fahey, drives her to the friary to help out with the food distribution. They also work for a man named Ismael Munoz. The money the nuns earn is given to the friary.

The nuns wear latex gloves when they work with the indigent. Edgar thinks that Ismael has AIDS and warns Gracie to be careful. The nuns find deserted cars for him. After talking with him, they begin to distribute the food.

A week later, Edgar reads a Time magazine and recognizes the name of Klara Sax.

In Chapter Nine, Nick is looking for a Time magazine that he wants to read on his flight to Houston. There is an article on Klara Sax in which he is interested. He leaves in the company car.

Marian meets Brian at the apartment of her assistant. She likes her affair with Brian but says that she thinks her husband knows about it. He says that this will be their last time. Marian prepares and offers him some heroin. He refuses and asks if Nick knows about her drug use.

In Chapter Ten, Richard gives his father his medication and then drives to his friend's house. Bud Whaling lives forty miles away in the middle of nowhere. Bud is working on the house when he arrives and his wife is at work. They talk while Bud works. They talk about stress, driving and head trauma and how to shoot a gun while driving. Richard says to tell his wife that he is sorry he missed her and leaves.

Richard breaks into a house and calls Sue Ann Corcoran, a television anchor woman, but cannot get through.

Part 2, Chapters 8-10, pgs. 237 - 272 Analysis

This section reveals that Marian is having an affair with Brian. Since Brian is a business associate of her husband, this could turn into a very volatile situation for both of them. When she says that she thinks that Brian knows about them, he says that this is their last meeting. Both of them are married with families. Brian has to work with Nick.

This section also introduces the Texas Highway Killer. He is a young man named Richard who is a check out clerk at a grocery store. He lives with his parents and must help care for his ailing father. He feels that he only comes alive in his victims and the

publicity his killings bring. He is upset about the copycat killer because he does not know who he is and this bothers him.



Part 3, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 275-345

Part 3, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 275-345 Summary

Part Three takes place in Spring 1978. Nick is in Los Angeles. Matt thinks their father lives in Los Angeles under an assumed name but Nick says he is dead.

Nick and Big Simms are at Mohave Spring. Nick has just begun working for Waste Containment at this time. Big Simms tells him that Waste Containment is owned by the mob. The company, known as Whiz Co, is the leader in the field. They talk about a rumored cargo ship with toxic waste that has been sailing for two years and is not allowed to dock because no one wants its cargo.

Nick, Simms and Jesse Detwiler drive to a nearby landfill. They discuss the technology and how they develop the system to deal with the garbage society creates. Back at the conference center, Nick sees Donna. She is with the group of wife swappers meeting at the center. They go to his room. He later feels guilty when he returns to Phoenix.

Chapter Two has Marvin Lundy in San Francisco trying to locate the baseball. He is looking for Chuckie Wainwright who is a crewman on a tramp steamer. Lundy waits for the ship's arrival and his wife, Eleanor, is with him. When the ship arrives, they find that Wainwright got off in Vancouver. They stop by a baseball souvenir shop and Lundy buys a souvenir baseball. Then they return to their hotel where they dance in the lounge until after midnight.

In Chapter Three, Nick and Simms are bar hopping in California. They still talk about the rumored ship that cannot dock. Now the rumor is that the ship is carrying heroin to finance a CIA covert operation. Simms has had a fight with his wife and Nick keeps telling him to go home and make up with her. He does before Nick leaves for Phoenix.

When Nick returns to Phoenix, he tells Marian about Donna and how it was just a casual fling. That weekend, they take the kids on an outing and Marian begins to cry while she is driving. She says it is the second anniversary of her mother's death. Nick is relieved that it is not because of him.

Part 3, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 275-345 Analysis

This chapter reveals more about Nick's background and character. He kills a man when he is a youth and spends some time in a juvenile detention facility. He has never told Marian about this, figuring that there is no need for her to know, yet he tells Donna, the woman he has the brief fling with at the company conference. Nick feels guilty about the fling and confesses to Marian when he arrives home. She says she understands it was nothing but a brief fling. He probably would have hurt her less if he had said nothing but he seems to have a need to confess, first to Donna and then to Marian.



Manx Martin, pgs. 349-366

Manx Martin, pgs. 349-366 Summary

The super wants to know if Manx knows anything about two missing snow shovels. He calls Manx a klepto. The super walks away. Manx decides that he needs a drink. He walks to the bar with the baseball in his pocket. People are talking about the ball game. Manx talks with some friends about the employment situation. Then he places the baseball on the table and says it is from the home run. Manx says the ball must be worth something. One of the men says that he cannot prove that the ball is the home run ball. Manx puts it back in his pocket. Manx leaves with the man named Antoine who has a car. They leave the super's stolen shovels in the bar.

Manx gets out of the car at Broadway and walks to the Polo Grounds. Since it is night, the ball park is closed. He walks to Yankee Stadium where a lot of fans are waiting to buy tickets.

Manx Martin, pgs. 349-366 Analysis

Manx sidelines in stealing items and selling them. This is why the super of his building asks him about the missing snow shovels. He and Antoine have them hidden at the bar. Manx is out trying to sell the baseball that he took from Cotter. He has no idea what it is worth, if anything, and is just looking for fast money. Antoine is right about one thing—he cannot prove that the ball is the home run ball.



Part 4, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 371-445

Part 4, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 371-445 Summary

Part Four takes place in summer of 1974. Klara Sax is 54 and in between projects. She has celebrity status but does not like being recognized.

When her daughter comes to town, they have lunch and walk around in the Village. Teresa is 25 years of age at the time. Klara finds it difficult to talk with her daughter. Teresa wants Klara to visit her father but Klara says that it is not a good idea.

Miles Lightman is a friend of Klara's and is eight or nine years younger than she is. He produces documentaries and works for a film distributor. They play cards in the evening at her loft.

Klara and Miles attend a film viewing. Klara's friend Acey Greene is there. She attends rooftop parties during the summer and at one of them meets a European named Carlo Strasser. She talks to him about art until Miles appears.

Klara and Esther take a subway ride to find a graffiti artist known as Moonman, but they cannot find him.

In Chapter Two, Matt Shay is working on a project called Pocket in southern New Mexico. None of them knows exactly what the project is about and whether or not it involves weapons. Matt feels that it does.

Matt is six years of age when his father walks out. He is thinking of this in New Mexico. His friend at the site is Eric Deming and they talk about other government projects and the effects of nuclear testing. Eric has just given a talk to some local school children. There are always protesters at the entrance to the installation. One day Matt tries to talk to one of them, but she will not talk to him.

Matt leaves and drives through southern Arizona.

In Chapter Three, Miles and Klara are at Radio City Music hall to attend the screening of a film. The film was found in an underground vault in East Berlin.

Ismael Munoz is riding a subway train to the Bronx. He is thinking about the Moonman who is invading his turf with graffiti. He meets his group of writers who have their spray paint cans and his sketches.

Part 4, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 371-445 Analysis

This section provides the first glimpse into the life of Klara Sax. Klara lives and works in a loft in the Bronx. She has a casual lover named Miles Lightman and spends her



summers attending rooftop parties. Her relationship with her daughter Teresa is rather strained. They see each other occasionally but find it difficult to talk. Most of her friends are from the world of art.

Matt works on secret government projects. This is the time of the Cold War and the health effects of radiation are becoming known. They make a lot of jokes about this because this is their way of dealing with stress. The Cold War and the threat of nuclear annihilation affect everyone during this time. It is also portrayed in different forms of art.



Part 4, Chapters 4-5, pgs. 446- 498

Part 4, Chapters 4-5, pgs. 446- 498 Summary

Matt is at the Tucson airport waiting for Janet's plane. They are going on a camping trip and spend the night in a lodge near an Indian reservation. The next morning they drive to their destination at a refuge that borders on a weapons testing range. This excites Matt. Matt tells Janet that they are going to such a deserted place so they can talk and make decisions about their future.

They talk about his work. He tells her that he makes weapons safer to handle. He talks about the secret installations and the hollowed out mountains where nuclear weapons are stored. They talk about conscience and she says that if he quits, the next person might not be as good at making weapons safe and there might be an accident.

They hike to a concrete bunker and decide to spend the night there. Matt figures that he wants Janet to tell him to leave his job and to return to Boston with her to get married but she does not. She wants him to stay at his job for another year.

In Chapter Five, Esther is still looking for the Moonman. Klara sees Carlo Strasser at a party and learns that he works in electronics. Klara travels to Sagaponack with Esther to visit local artists.

Back in the city, Miles and Klara talk about their trips. He is filming a documentary in Normal, Illinois while Klara is in Sagaponack. They attend a viewing of the Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination. Klara accompanies Miles on a trip to Los Angeles where he is trying to find funding for his documentary. She visits a place called the Watts Towers while Miles meets with an Israeli gangster.

Klara marries Carlo Strasser in his Park Avenue apartment. Their daughters are present for the ceremony.

Part 4, Chapters 4-5, pgs. 446- 498 Analysis

Janet and Matt are camping in a refuge that is near the weapons testing range. Matt tells her a little about his work making weapons safer to handle. He talks about secret government programs and installations. He wants Janet to tell him to get out of the line of work. Matt does not feel comfortable with what he is doing but cannot take the responsibility for making his own decision. Janet tells him to stay at his job for another year.

Klara spends her time with Miles but marries Carlo Strasser in the summer of 1974. Even though Miles acts as her escort and casual lover, she tells Acey that he is not someone with whom she would want a permanent relationship. She has met Carlo at several of the rooftop parties she frequently attends and he is interested in her.



Part 5, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 501-554

Part 5, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 501-554 Summary

Part Five consists of fragments that take place in the 1950s and 1960s. The first selection is from November 1952 when Nick is at Staatsburg for the criminally negligent homicide he committed. He is a model prisoner there and does what he is supposed to do.

The second selection deals with the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Nick is at the Troubadour Club in West Hollywood for the comedy routine. This seems to minimize the extent of the crisis.

The third selection is from July 1953 and is about Staatsburg and the psychologist who keeps trying to get Nick to talk about the murder. He likes being in Dr. Lindblad's office but will not talk to her about anything.

The first selection in Chapter Two is in October 1951 and has to do with Eric Deming. He is fantasizing with a picture of Jayne Mansfield.

The next selection is from August 1964 and is about a civil rights demonstration. One of the women is Rose Martin who is in the bus terminal in Jackson, Mississippi. People begin throwing bottles and the police use gas. Rosie runs.

December 1961 is the time of the third selection and Charles Wainwright is talking to a client in the Fred F. French Building in New York. He works for an ad agency. Charlie has the Bobby Thomson home run ball that he has purchased. He is not the only one who claims to have that baseball.

The first Chapter Three selection is from January 1955 and about Pope Pius having mystical visions. Nick tells of naming the parts of a shoe with a priest.

October 1962 is the date of the second selection with performer Lenny Bruce giving a live performance. He does a routine about the Cold War and Beatniks. He tells a story about a discussion between Castro and an angel.

The last selection is dated June 1957 and it talks about Nick driving around Arizona with a girl named Amy. They stay with her family in different places.

Part 5, Chapters 1-3, pgs. 501-554 Analysis

This section contains short fragments of things that happened in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of these fragments provide information about Nick's life that do not fit in other places, such as the time he spends at Staatsburg for committing the homicide. There are also short excerpts pertaining to Eric and Rose as well as some nightclub routines.

These fragments basically portray the mood of the time. This is the era of the Beatnik, the beginning of the civil rights movement and the Cold War. This is the mood that these fragments portray.



Part 5, Chapters 4-5, pgs. 555 - 595

Part 5, Chapters 4-5, pgs. 555 - 595 Summary

November 1966 is the date of the first selection. J. Edgar Hoover is in a suite at the Waldorf Hotel in New York. He is there for a party but he and his aide are discussing planned war protest demonstrations. He and the aide, Clyde Tolson, discuss analyzing the garbage of organized crime figures. They talk about their days in the Bureau and how things have changed.

The second selection is dated January 1967 and concerns Janet Urbaniak. She is in nursing school. After her day at the hospital is finished, she jogs to her apartment. Another student calls to see that she made it home safely.

The third selection is dated November 1966 and concerns Hoover and Tolson. They have been companions and co-workers for many years. The protest march is growing louder so they are late for the party. They have a long leisurely dinner and arrive at the Plaza after the protests die down. They mingle with the guests, most of whom have dossiers in Hoover's files. They are introduced to Jason Varover and his wife Klara Sax. The party ends at five in the morning and Tolson and Hoover return to the Waldorf.

The first selection of Chapter Five is in October 1962. Lenny Bruce is performing his show at Mister Kelly's in Chicago. He talks about using Saran Wrap as condoms. The club is crowded and the crowd includes Hugh Hefner. Some people are offended by his routine with a condom and walk out. Lenny heckles them. He parodies the drug culture and the Cold War.

The second selection is from July 1959. Amy and Nick cross the Mexican border and go to an abortion clinic. Nick is 24 years old at the time. After the abortion, they go back to the United States.

The third selection is in October 1962 and takes place in Miami Beach where Lenny Bruce is performing. He talks about the Cuban missiles being right over his shoulder. He does a routine about the names of different public figures. He talks about the bomb shelters and the blockade of Cuba.

Part 5, Chapters 4-5, pgs. 555 - 595 Analysis

The fragments of this section also indicate the times. Society is changing. There are protests of the war in Vietnam in which Hoover and Tolson are caught at the Plaza. The streets are not as safe as they once were, as indicated by the jogging student nurses checking on each other to make sure they arrive home safely. The drug culture and loosening morals are becoming more prominent. FBI Director Hoover has dossiers on many important people. The paranoia of the time is parodied by Lenny Bruce in his nightclub routine.



Part 5, Chapters 6-7, Martin 3, pgs. 596 - 656

Part 5, Chapters 6-7, Martin 3, pgs. 596 - 656 Summary

The first selection of Chapter Six is in October 1967. Marian is talking to her mother in their home in Madison, Wisconsin. She is telling her mother about a man named Nick in whom she is interested. Marian is working in Chicago and is 25 years of age. It is noisy outside because of student protests at the university. She listens to reports of the events on the radio. The students are protesting the presence of Dow Chemical recruiters on campus. At dinner, her parents ask her about Nick.

The second selection is dated February 1953. Nick is at Staatsburg and Matt's mother does not want Matt playing cards and gambling.

The third selection is dated December 1969 and is about Louis T. Bakey, a B52 pilot. He and his crew are preparing for a mission. There is a picture in the cockpit of a woman called Long Tail Sally. The navigator is Chuckie Wainwright. They reach their target and drop their bombs. Chuckie is beginning to question the bombings. He no longer likes what he is doing. The plane heads back to Guam.

Chapter Seven's first selection is set in November 1965. Nick is visiting his mother and working on a project. He is looking up an old acquaintance in the neighborhood and talks to Jerry, a bartender with whom he had gone to grade school. They talk about various people.

The second selection is dated October 1962. Lenny Bruce is doing a show in New York. The audience includes people from all walks of life. In his routine, he ridicules dinner parties. He talks about Christianity and things from everyday life. He makes the audience laugh with his different routines.

The third selection is dated November 1965. Nick walks around Times Square. There is a blackout in New York City and he has dinner by candlelight in a restaurant. He learns the extent of the power failure from a taxi driver who drives him back to his hotel. He wants to call Marian.

In Manx Martin 3, Manx is walking by the stadium trying to sell the baseball to one of the fans. He sizes up the various fans and selects the ones he will offer the ball. As he talks to the first group, he realizes how implausible his story sounds. Then he talks to Charlie and Chuckie Wainwright. Chuckie goes to sleep on the sidewalk and Charlie and Manx drink Irish whiskey from a flask. Charlie buys the baseball for 32 dollars and change, which is all of the money he is carrying. Manx heads for home thinking of the letter he has to write for Cotter.



Part 5, Chapters 6-7, Martin 3, pgs. 596 - 656 Analysis

This section of fragments relates more to Marian and Nick. Nick meets Marian in Chicago when he is working on a research project. She is from Madison, Wisconsin and is there when a protest demonstration is taking place. The war in Vietnam continues and Chuckie Wainwright, who is a B52 navigator, is becoming disillusioned about dropping bombs. This is the time of the big East Coast power failure. Nick is in New York at the time. This section fills in some of the blanks in the background of the various characters.

Manx sells the baseball to Charles Wainwright. His selling point is how happy young Chuckie will be with the ball. He does not think of what he had done by stealing the ball from his son and how disappointed Cotter would be.



Part 6, Chapters 1-6, pgs. 661-752

Part 6, Chapters 1-6, pgs. 661-752 Summary

Part Six takes place from fall 1951 to summer of 1952. Bronzini is shopping and walking around the Bronx watching the children play games. He talks to different people in the neighborhood. He buys a newspaper and sits at the pastry shop to read it. The front page carries the news that the Giants won the pennant and the Russians exploded an atomic bomb. He is concerned about the bomb. Father Andrew Paulus arrives and is more interested in the Giants than the bomb. They meet to talk about the Shay boys. Albert wants the priest to talk to Matt about attending Fordham University. Albert walks home after their meeting.

Nick walks to the butcher to pick up the meat his mother wants. He is thinking of the Giants game as he walks. He is also doing numbers games in his head.

At home, Albert is lounging in a hot bath with Klara and two year old Teresa in the doorway. He is telling Klara about his meeting with Father Paulus.

In Chapter Two, Nick is talking to JuJu about the benefits of having a regular job rather than working in the numbers racket. Nick and JuJu have a stolen Chevy parked by the hospital. They drive it to the poolroom.

Klara is tidying up for company while talking to Rochelle. She teaches at a community center.

In Chapter Three, Rosemary is beading a sweater while talking to Matt. They are waiting for the knife grinder. Albert Bronzini arrives to play chess with Matt. Rosemary thinks of her missing husband, Jimmy.

At school, Nick and his classmates talk about numbers running. Nick goes for a walk alone after school. He is angry but does not say about what.

Matt likes to win at chess and he beats Albert.

In Chapter Four, Nick is almost 17. He gives most of the money he earns to his mother to help out with the bills. Klara takes Teresa to the babysitter when she paints. She finds it relaxing to paint.

Matt stops playing chess because he cannot cope with losing. He attends Catholic school and Sister Edgar is his teacher. The children all have to wear identity tags so they can be identified in case of a nuclear attack.

Nick works at a packing plant at this time. George the Waiter tells him about a delivery job for a soft drink company that pays better.



In Chapter Five, Klara meets a soft drink delivery boy and has an affair with him. Nick spends a lot of time with his friend JuJu. He slowly ascertains that the woman he had a physical relationship with is Mr. Bronzini's wife. He has gone by the building several times but never sees her again.

In Chapter Six, Matt injures his hand in a game. He tells Nick what happened and Nick tells him to be careful in the lots, the area where he is playing.

Klara is on the roof doing laundry and sees Nick across the street looking at her building. It begins to rain so she goes inside. At dinner, she and Albert talk about her artwork. He promises a trip that summer to wherever she wants to go.

Nick and Klara meet on the street and he visits her again. She tells him that they cannot meet again.

Part 6, Chapters 1-6, pgs. 661-752 Analysis

This section reveals the kind of life Nick and Matt have when they are growing up. Life is difficult financially after their father walks out. Nick gives whatever money he can to his mother to help cover the bills. He spends a lot of time in pool halls and on the streets as he is growing up.

When he works as a soft drink delivery man, he meets Klara but does not know that she is Albert Bronzini's wife. They meet twice at her home and then she tells him they cannot meet again. It does not bother him that he knows her husband or that she knows Matt. He is just 17 and is attracted to an older woman.



Part 6, Chapters 7-8, Epilogue, pgs. 753-827

Part 6, Chapters 7-8, Epilogue, pgs. 753-827 Summary

Rosemary works for Mr. Imperato the lawyer. He hires a private detective to try to find her husband. When she cannot pay, she goes to work for him and stays working for him. After work, she has coffee with her neighbor Carmela. Carmela says that Nick needs to be watched. She says she does not worry about Nick. He is responsible, gets up and goes to work and gives her his money.

One night Nick is shooting pool with George the Waiter and he asks about a man who is in the pool hall. George tells him the man's name is Mario Badalato and he is a member of the Mafia. A month later, the man asks to talk to Nick. Mario knew his father and tells him that he knows that Nick thinks that they had Jimmy killed. Mario says that it is not true. If that had happened, he would have known about it. Nick thanks him for the information.

In Chapter Eight, Nick and his friends go to the beach on his day off. He is still delivering soft drinks. Some of his friends are getting married. He visits George one evening and George shows him a squared off shotgun. They look at the gun and George says it is not loaded. He squeezes the trigger and the gun fires. George is killed.

The Epilogue is entitled Das Kapital. Nick is sitting in a pub with Brian Glassic. They are in Russia. They board a military transport plane with Viktor Mattsev who owns a trading company called Tchaika. They have proposed a deal for the disposal of nuclear waste. They are flying to Kazakhstan to see the test site called the Polygon. There are many venture capitalists at the test site. While they are there, Nick asks how long he had been seeing Marian. Nick says that Marian told him everything. While they are talking, the test blast takes place.

Viktor takes them sightseeing in Semipalatinsk. He takes them to a museum showing deformed fetuses from the effects of radiation. He shows them some of the living people who have been affected. Both Nick and Brian are very affected by what they see.

Nick mostly gives speeches and travels for Waste Containment, even though he still goes to the office. He still wonders about his father. His mother has died and Matt and his two kids fly out for the funeral.

Part 6, Chapters 7-8, Epilogue, pgs. 753-827 Analysis

The two chapters basically complete the story of Nick's childhood. He is a hard worker who gives his mother his paychecks. This is why she does not worry about him. He gets



into trouble by goofing around with George the Waiter who shows him a sawed off shotgun. George says it is not loaded, but it is. When Nick pulls the trigger, George is killed and Nick is arrested and charged. This is a part of his life about which Marian does not know.

The first part of the Epilogue focuses on modern times. Nick and Brian are working on a deal with a Russian trading company and are at a Kazakhstan test site where Nick confronts Brian about his affair with Marian. Their marriage survives.

The Prologue begins with J. Edgar Hoover at the ball game. The Cold War is now over. Due to technology, it is now possible to look at nuclear blasts on the Internet but the world has achieved peace.



Characters

Nick Shay

Nick Shay is 57 years old. He currently lives near Phoenix. He used to live in New York near Klara Sax. When he learns that Klara is painting old airplanes in the desert, he drives out to see her. Nick is married to Marian with two grown children, Jeff and Lainie. His mother lives with them. Nick works for a firm that is involved with waste management and travels a lot in his work. His daughter Lainie is married to Dex and lives in Tucson. She is pregnant and he and Marian are looking forward to the birth of their first grandchild. Nick had been a Dodgers fan as a child in New York. One of his business associates claims he purchased the Bobby Thomson homerun ball from a dealer. His father's name is James Constanza but since his parents are separated when he is born, Nick uses his mother's name of Shay. He grows up in the Bronx and has a brother named Matt. Their father, a bookmaker who lived with the family periodically, went out for a pack of cigarettes and never returned. Nick begins working for Waste Containment in 1978. Before this, he works as a speech writer and high school teacher. In Phoenix, Nick teaches Latin at a local community college. In 1952, Nick is found guilty of criminally negligent homicide and sent to Staatsburg, which is located 75 miles from the Bronx. Nick is teaching high school in Arizona when he becomes engaged to Marian in 1967. They marry in 1968. Lainie is born in 1970 and Jeff is born in 1972. Nick stays with Waste Containment and rises through the ranks. At the end, he travels a lot attending conferences and giving speeches.

Klara Sax

Klara Sax is a celebrated artist. She is on location in the desert painting old airplanes. She is originally from the Bronx. She had been married to a man named Albert Bronzini there and has a daughter named Teresa. Her second husband, Jason, is a securities dealer and yachtsman. Klara's first husband is the man who had been Matt Shay's science teacher and had played chess with him. Klara is Jewish and he is not and there is no place for him in her future. He raises their daughter. Klara visits with her daughter when she comes to town but finds it difficult to talk to her. Klara lives in a loft in the Bronx. She also works in the same loft, so it is cluttered with various items that she uses in her work. She swims daily at the Y. Her friend, Esther Winship, is an art dealer and they spend the summers attending rooftop parties. Klara used to be known as the Bag Lady because she used to collect junk to use in her art. Klara's mother worked for a social service agency. Klara is not looking for romantic involvement and Miles functions as her escort and casual lover and she is content with this kind of relationship. She does not view Miles as someone with whom she would want a permanent relationship. She confides this to Acey. Her name used to be spelled "Sachs" and her father began using the spelling "Sax" for business. Klara adopts the spelling Sax after her divorce from Albert Bronzini and this is how she signs her artwork. Klara marries Carlo Strasser



in the summer of 1974 with both of their daughters attending the wedding. Once Klara divorces Bronzini, her succeeding husbands are very wealthy.

Cotter Martin

Cotter Martin is a young boy who jumps the turnstiles at the Polo Grounds on October 3, 1951. Not only does he see the Giants win the pennant, he also gets Bobby Thomson's game winning home run ball. He has a sister Rosie, who is sixteen, and two older brothers. His father is a furniture mover when he works and they live in Harlem.

Matt Shay

Matt Shay is the younger brother of Nick. He lives in New York and works in the systems business and often works on government projects. He works on a six month project called Pocket at a secret installation in New Mexico involving weapons. He has a girlfriend, Janet Urbaniak, whom he eventually marries. Matt attends City College.

Marian Shay

Marian Shay is the wife of Nick and mother of Lainie and Jeff. She also has one granddaughter. She lives with her husband, son and mother-in-law and works for the arts commission. She has a brief affair with Brian Glassic.

Manx Martin

Manx Martin is the father of Cotter Martin. He lives in Harlem with his wife, Rose, and two children. He takes the Bobby Thomson baseball from his sleeping son's room and sells it to Charlie Wainwright.

Rosemary Shay

Rosemary Shay is the mother of Nick and Matt. She lives her life in the Bronx until she moves in with Marian and Nick in Phoenix, where she dies.

Brian Glassic

Brian Glassic is a business associate of Nick's at Waste Containment. He is married with children and has a brief affair with Marian Shay.



Lenny Bruce

Lenny Bruce is a stand up comic who performs around the country. His routines parody the Cold War mentality and the changing society of the 1950s and 1960s.

Lainie

Lainie is the daughter of Marian and Nick. She is married with a daughter and lives in Tucson.

Jeffrey

Jeffrey is the son of Marian and Nick. Born in 1972, he still lives at home with his parents in Phoenix.



Objects/Places

The Polo Grounds

The Polo Grounds is a ballpark in New York City that was the home of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Phoenix

Phoenix is the capital of Arizona located in the southwestern part of the United States.

Dodger Stadium

Dodger Stadium is the Los Angeles ballpark home of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Tucson

Tucson is a southern Arizona city located 100 miles south of Phoenix.

Prescott

Prescott is an Arizona town located approximately 100 miles north of Phoenix.

Harlem

Harlem is the area of New York where Cotter Martin and his family live.

Bronx

Bronx is the New York City borough where Nick and Matt are born and raised.

Madison

Madison is the college town in Wisconsin where Marian is born and raised.

New Mexico

New Mexico is a southwestern state located east of Arizona and is the site of a government installation where Matt works.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is a former central Asian country that used to be the site of Soviet nuclear testing.



Themes

Cold War

The Cold War is the backdrop for most of the action of the novel. All of the characters grow up under the threat of the bomb and there are many references to it throughout the novel. On the day the Giants win the pennant, October 3, 1951, the Soviets successfully test an atomic bomb. As Matt is growing up and attending Catholic grade schools, the students are trained in what to do if there is an air raid. They must crouch under their desks or against the walls without windows. All of the students must wear identification tags around their necks to help the authorities identify them after an attack. Sister Edgar regularly checks to make sure they are wearing their tags. As Matt grows up, he works on secret government projects. In New Mexico, the entrance to the installation is manned by protesters and he begins to question his work, even though it involves making weapons safer to handle. Chuckie Wainwright is a B52 navigator who begins to question his role in helping drop bombs on people in Southeast Asia. There are student protests during the 1960s and 1970s, such as the one that Marian witnesses when she visits her hometown of Madison, Wisconsin. The Cuban missile crisis brings the United States and Russia to the brink of nuclear war. Characters often meet and their discussion includes the nuclear threat, such as Bronzini's meeting with Father Paulus and Nick's meeting with Klara Sax in the desert. The development of nuclear weapons leads to the accumulation of nuclear waste. Nick's job at Waste Containment involves what to do with toxic wastes. The lives of all characters are affected by the Cold War in one way or another.

Satire

Satire is another recurring theme and occurs throughout the novel. The Cold War brings with it its own form of paranoia as everyone lives under the threat of the bomb. In addition, these are years of social change. The civil rights movement is in progress. Sexual behavior is becoming more promiscuous and the drug culture is becoming more prevalent. There is the Cuban Missile Crisis that brings the world to the brink of nuclear war. There is the Vietnam War and the era of demonstrations and student protests. The streets are not as safe as they used to be; Janet Urbaniak and other student nurses develop their own system for making sure the student nurses arrive home safely. The paranoia of J. Edgar Hoover results in personal dossiers on thousands of people. Sister Edgar regularly checks the identification tags that her grade school students are required to wear so they can be identified in the event of a nuclear attack. The atmosphere of the era is parodied by the comedy routines of Lenny Bruce. His performances are well attended by people from all walks of life, representing the society that is affected by the things about which he is talking. He parodies the various public officials and performs in Miami during the Cuban Missile Crisis and says that they are right over his shoulder. He talks about how law enforcement has agents in the audience



looking for any subversive remarks he makes. The use of satire is a very effective way of portraying the atmosphere of the time.

Relationships

A third theme of the book is relationships and there are many different kinds of relationships portrayed. There is the relationship between Nick and Marian Shay. They marry in the later 1960s and have two children. Nick travels a lot in his job. This results in a brief affair with a woman named Donna at a business conference in California. She is attending a meeting of wife swappers at the same conference center. Nick's encounter with Donna is purely a brief physical thing with no emotional involvement, but it leaves him feeling guilty. When he returns home to Phoenix, he confesses the affair to his wife. Marian is upset but says she understands. Soon Marian becomes romantically involved with Brian Glassic, a business associate of Nick's. Marian is afraid that Nick knows about them and they soon break off the affair. Marian eventually tells Nick about the relationship with Brian and Nick eventually confronts Brian with the fact while they are in Kazakhstan. Nick and Marian are both honest with each other. Even though they have both been unfaithful to one another, they are able to discuss and work out their problems. There is no talk of divorce and they accept each other's mistakes and limitations. Their relationship survives their mistakes. They are still able to enjoy each other's company and make their marriage work because of the strength of their relationship.



Style

Point of View

The points of view of the book are varied depending on the situation. The Prologue and Manx Martin sections are written in the third person point of view with the author, Don DeLillo, as the narrator. Other parts of the book are written in the first person point of view with Nick Shay functioning as the narrator. Both points of view work for the novel. The use of the first person point of view limits the knowledge of the reader to events that occur in the presence of the narrator. The reader learns the information when the narrator does. The use of the third person point of view overcomes this limitation by allowing the author to provide all of the necessary background information. The reader learns the information when the author reveals it. The use of both points of view contributes to the atmosphere of the book and the mood that the author wants to create.

Don DeLillo is a respected author and has written 14 books and is well qualified to write this kind of novel. He has won numerous awards, among them the Jerusalem Prize, the National Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner Award. This book was awarded the Howell's Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters award for being the outstanding fictional work of the past five years.

Setting

The novel takes place in different locations. Nick grows up in the Bronx and there are plenty of scenes there and in different places in New York City. The Polo Grounds is located there and Cotter Martin lives in Harlem. Both Nick and Brian make many business trips to New York and travel around the area. It is Brian who locates Marvin Lundy, the owner of the famous baseball that Nick purchases. Maria is from Madison, Wisconsin and meets Nick when both of them work in Chicago. When they marry, they live in Phoenix, Arizona. Their daughter, Lainie, is married and lives in Tucson. There are scenes in various places in Arizona. Marian travels to Prescott and meets Brian Glassic. Matt works at a government installation in southern New Mexico and vacations with Janet in Arizona. Janet is from Boston. Waste Containment has offices in California and there are many scenes in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas, as well as other areas. They attend a ball game at Dodger Stadium. After the end of the Cold War, Brian and Nick travel to Kazakhstan on business. Lenny Bruce performs his comedy routine in Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami Beach, New York and other places. The setting shifts from place to place.

Language and Meaning

Underworld is written in everyday language that is easy to understand. There is a great deal of dialogue between the different characters throughout the novel and the book is fast reading. The meaning of the content of the novel is found in the overall context of



the novel and its different sections. The different parts of the novel, especially the fragments section, portray the Cold War mentality and the social changes taking place in society. The section on Janet Urbaniak and the student nurses running to their residences and calling each other to make sure they arrive safely indicates the increased crime on the streets. The student protests of the times are indicated by Marian's visit to her parents' home in Madison, Wisconsin. Disillusionment with the Vietnam War is indicated by the scene of the B52 with Chuckie Wainwright. Matt's discussions with Eric Deming at the southern New Mexico installation and his discussions with Janet during their camping trip are representative of the questions being asked by many people involved in the industrial-military complex at the time. The FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover, attends a masked ball in New York City and, as one of the women tells Clyde Tolson, they are all members of the establishment. The Hoover dossiers are a sign of the paranoia of the time, as showcased in the routines of Lenny Bruce. The language used in the novel is everyday English and easy to understand but the language and meaning must be viewed in the overall context of the novel.

Structure

The structure of the novel is rather complicated. The book is divided into six parts with each part having its own chapters and chapter numbering. The chapters are untitled but the part divisions have titles along with the dates of the time period they cover. Interspersed among the parts are three Manx Martin sections that relate to the Prologue and October 3, 1951. This is the day that the Giants win the pennant and also the day that the Russians conduct a successful atomic bomb test. The Manx Martin sections and the part sections title page are on black pages giving distinct divisions to the novel.

There is no Table of Contents, Preface or Introduction to the novel. It begins with the Prologue without any section explaining the author's intentions, but no such section is required. DeLillo lets the novel speak for itself.

The complicated structure works well for the novel. It is brilliantly structured and written.



Quotes

It's not enough to hate your enemy. You have to understand how the two of you bring each other to deep completion. (Prologue, p.. 51)

Except no one seems sure it's a joke. We're painting these old planes as a celebration in a way but how do we know for sure the crisis is really over? Is the breakup of the USSR really happening? Or is the whole thing a plot to trick the West? (Part I, Chapter 1, p. 81)

That's where the Polo Grounds stood, west by southwest, and I imagined the field and the players, the crisp blues and elysian greens on that great somber-skied day—great and terrible, a day now gone to black and white in the file fade of memory. (Part 1, Chapter 7, pp. 133-134)

"The home run that won the pennant," Cotter says softly, a little reluctantly, because it is such an astounding thing to say and he is awed for the first time, saying it. (Martin 1, p. 144)

That was a curse of innocence that he carried with him. Against his brother, against the stature of danger and rage he could only pose the fact of his secondness, his meek freedom from guilt. (Part 2, Chapter 6, p. 221)

He came alive in them. He lived in their histories, in the photographs in the newspaper, he survived in the memories of the family, lived with the victims, lived on, merged, twinned, quadrupled, continued into double figures. (Part 2, Chapter 10, p. 271)

People say L.A. is only half there and maybe that's why I was thinking about my father. And also because my brother Matt—it was Matt's endless premise, his song of songs, that our old man Jimmy was living somewhere in southern California under the usual assumed name. (Part 3, Chapter 1, p. 275)

My youngest. He come home with the ball. This is the ball what's-his-name hit in the stands. The game winner. Win the pennant. (Martin 2, p. 359)

It's women, usually. Who take the lead in recovering lost careers. When you begin to hear about a writer reemergent or a painter lovingly disinterred, it's usually because women have shown extraordinary interest, even when the artist is a man. Usually the artist is a woman, but even a man—we specialize in forgotten lives, Klara said. (Part 4, Chapter 1, pp. 388-389)

But he didn't tell her why this excited him. He didn't say anything about this because he didn't understand it, the stark sort of shudder, the leveling out, the sense of knowing he was headed into remote Sonoran waste, where the interplay of terrain and weapons was a kind of neural process remapped in the world, a hollow sort of craving lifted out of



the brain stem, or wherever, and painted over with words and sky and diamondback desert. (Part 4, Chapter 4, p. 451)

And, third, a smudged baseball balanced on the rim of a coffee mug that sat on the credenza—a ball he'd bought from a guy who claimed it was the very object Branca had hurled and Thomson had heroically struck. (Part 5, Chapter 2, p. 529)

Let Junior devise his clever perceptions. He didn't understand that once you patronize the enemy, you begin the process of your own undoing. (Part 5, Chapter 4, p. 564)

Then she told him she wanted to get married. She wanted to marry him and live with him, anywhere, wherever he wanted, and not have kids and not have friends and never go to dinner with her parents. (Part 5, Chapter 6, p. 605)

The front page astonished him, a pair of three-column headlines dominating. To his left the Giants capture the pennant, beating the Dodgers on a dramatic home run in the ninth inning. And to the right, symmetrically mated, same typeface, same-size type, same number of lines, the USSR explodes an atomic bomb—kaboom—details kept secret. (Part 6, Chapter 1, p. 668)

Nick watched him take a bite of food. He could not help feeling grateful. The man stood there and talked to him. The man took time to tell him something he thought would settle the matter in Nick's own mind. (Part 6, Chapter 7, p. 765)



Topics for Discussion

Who is Klara Sax? What is the purpose of her project in the Arizona desert?

What does Marvin Lundy want the Bobby Thomson home run ball for? What does he do?

What kind of work does Matt Shay do? How does he feel about his work and why?

What is the picture of American life that is portrayed in the fragments of Part Five? Why is this a good way to portray the situation?

Why does Manx Martin take the baseball from his son? What does he do with it?

How do the Lenny Bruce skits portray the paranoia of the time?

What happened to Nick and Matt's father? Why does Nick often wonder about him?