

Walden Two Study Guide

Walden Two by B. F. Skinner

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Plot Summary

In *Walden Two*, B.F. Skinner makes a case for behaviorism and "social engineering" as the solution to many of the world's problems. Frazier, a psychologist interested in the practical applications of psychology to real-world problems, creates a communal social experiment called Walden Two. In the book, he leads his former colleague Professor Burris and Burris's friends through Walden Two, explaining how Frazier's theories have created a utopian society.

A former student of burnt-out college psychology instructor Professor Burris comes to visit after a tour in the Pacific during World War II. Dissatisfied with life in the U.S. after the war, the student and his army buddy want to know about a different kind of life, something Burris mentioned in one of his lectures. The ideas go back to Burris's former colleague named Frazier, and Burris tracks Frazier down to where he's putting his utopian ideas into practice: Walden Two, a communal society in the country in New England.

Burris, his former students, their girlfriends, and a philosophy professor at Burris's university go to visit Walden Two, which has been running for ten years. Frazier guides the group through the miniature society. Walden Two is run by a Board of Planners, who serve for ten years. By consensus, the Board of Planners chooses successors for retiring board members. The Planners oversee Managers, specialists who run departments such as education, food, and labor after working up to their positions.

All children are raised communally. Babies live in a nursery, sleeping in climate-controlled cubicles. Parents spend time with their children, but they also spend time with other children. Older children continue to live communally, and are educated in ethics through behavioral training. Education focuses on teaching thinking skills, and children are free to pursue studies that interest them.

Meals are served throughout the day, and cooks work to make the food produced by Walden Two appetizing. People pay their way with labor-credits, working an average of four hours a day. Walden Two has a dairy and farms and is able to take advantage of crops that outside farmers might be unable to harvest because of its surplus of available labor. Everyone in Walden Two has plenty of rest and free time, and the arts flourish. People marry early, and economic stresses are taken out of life. Walden Two is not a democracy, and no one votes. Running the commune is left to experts, who use experimentation to find the best forms of governing.

The professor of philosophy is appalled at the idea of Walden Two and happy to leave it behind. The two former soldiers both want to stay, but one of them is engaged to a wealthy, haughty woman who can't stand the commune, and he leaves with her. The other couple, who are lower-class, are glad to have a way out of an impossible economic situation. Professor Burris sees the success at Walden Two, but he plans to leave, not believing that he can leave his old life behind. At the last minute, he changes his mind and walks back to Walden Two and a new life.



Chapters 1-4

Chapters 1-4 Summary

In *Walden Two*, B.F. Skinner makes a case for behaviorism and "social engineering" as the solution to many of the world's problems. Frazier, a psychologist interested in the practical applications of psychology to real-world problems, creates a communal social experiment called Walden Two. In the book, he leads his former colleague Professor Burris and Burris's friends through Walden Two, explaining how Frazier's theories have created a utopian society.

Professor Burris, a professor of psychology, is the narrator of the story. As the story begins, Rogers, an old student of Burris's, and his friend Jamnik visit Burris's office. The two men have recently gotten out of the army after World War II. They're not sure what to do with themselves now that they're out of the service, and they're interested in trying to find a new kind of social system to live in. Rogers remembers Burris mentioning a utopia in his lectures. The originator of the idea was a colleague of Burris's named Frazier, who when last heard of, was at his own experimental society called Walden Two. Burris promises to write to Frazier at Walden Two.

Frazier writes back, saying that Walden Two is working well and inviting Burris and his friends to visit. Burris mentions the trip to another colleague, philosophy professor Augustine Castle, who decides to go along. Rogers invites his fiancée Barbara Macklin, and Jamnik invites his girlfriend Mary Grove. The party plans a ten-day trip to Walden Two right away. They travel to by train and bus about thirty miles outside the city, and Frazier meets them at the bus station and drives them to the rural compound. He doesn't answer their questions, but leads them to their simple but comfortable rooms to rest.

Frazier suggests beginning their tour slowly, with tea. As the party walks, they see a herd of sheep kept in place with a string between posts. The sheep are moved from place to place to keep the lawn mowed. Frazier explains how they started out with a portable electric fence, but trained the sheep to be afraid to cross the string, which is easier to move. The sheep now teach their babies the same behavior. They pass a pond and an outdoor school, and Frazier explains that most of the communal buildings are made of rammed earth. Frazier says the communal buildings, linked by covered passageways, are efficient for living and allow them to avoid bad weather. A passageway between the children's quarters and the main rooms called Jacob's Ladder is where the party will have their tea.

On the way to the tea rooms, the party passes a gallery of pictures, and Burris stops to admire the works. He gets caught up with a group of Walden Two members going to a performance and finally extricates himself to rejoin the party. When they reach the tea area, one of the members of Walden Two, Mrs. Meyerson, joins the party. Frazier shows



the party the efficiently designed tea glasses with holders and deep, square plates as they eat.

Chapters 1-4 Analysis

Walden Two is a utopia. B. F. Skinner outlines his idea for a perfect society, where everyone is happy and where everyone's needs are satisfied. He starts his story from outside the utopia. Burriss lives in the normal, real world, just like the reader. By using Burriss's first-person perspective, Skinner uses Burriss as a surrogate for the reader. Like Burriss, we are all outsiders, being introduced to Walden Two for the first time.

The party that visits Walden Two is made up of people from all walks of life so that the reader can see Walden Two from different perspectives and viewpoints. Castle, the philosopher, is critical of Walden Two and devoted to the ideas of democracy and morality. Burriss is a neutral outside viewer, an educator interested in people's welfare. Rogers and Barbara are upper-class, but Rogers' perspective has been changed by service in the war. Steve and Mary are lower-class and know what life is like in impoverished areas.

The incident with the sheep illustrates what most people think of as behaviorism. The sheep's reactions are controlled by a negative experience (shocks from an electric fence), until they learn to stay away from a fence, even if it's not electrified. The reader won't realize until later that the behaviorism governing the sheep's behavior is much different from the behaviorism that Skinner envisions using with people in Walden Two.



Chapters 5-8

Chapters 5-8 Summary

Burriss comments that the women seem extraordinarily beautiful, and Mrs. Meyerson explains that the women are merely dressed flatteringly instead of following fashion, which is designed to go out of style quickly to force women to buy new clothes. A group of well-behaved children passes on their way to supper. Mrs. Meyerson leaves to see her daughter's "coming out," her first meal in the main dining room, which takes place when a child turns seven. The whole party goes up to quietly watch the birthday party for a moment, complete with a birthday cake and candles. Frazier seems proud and happy for the little girl. Burriss things he sees a tear on Frazier's cheek.

At 7:00, the group goes to dinner. Many of the members of Walden Two are walking through a corridor called The Walk, and Frazier explains that because members are free to be outside whenever they want, they often choose to relax indoors. Walden Two never has crowds, because few people are interested in doing the same thing at the same time. Meals are served throughout the day, and so the dining area is never crowded and the kitchenware and dishes are used efficiently. The most that's needed to balance the crowds at mealtimes is to occasionally post notices stating at what times the dining area is least crowded.

The dining rooms are small and decorated in different styles to expose children to the types of decor found outside Walden Two. Dinner is self-served from buffets, using clear glass trays that make dishwashing more efficient. The cooks experiment with foods from around the world, and put as much into their dishes as possible to assure that the food Walden Two produces is eaten. After dinner, the party views the dishwashing, which is handled by four or five shifts of two people each. Leftover food is used for pigs, and much of the dishwashing is automated.

Frazier and his guests settle in a lounge, and Frazier explains labor-credits, which are ledger entries allotted for work. Members of Walden Two pay for their membership with labor-credits, and they owe approximately four hours of work a day. Different types of work are worth different amounts of labor credits, though, so that people will want to do even the least desirable tasks, which are worth more. For professions that are very desirable, like becoming a doctor, the administrators of Walden Two determine how many people are needed in the profession, and the potential applicants decide among themselves who will make a decision.

Walden Two is governed by a Board of Planners with ten-year terms, and Managers run various departments. New board members are chosen by the Planners, and Managers work up to their positions. The community also has scientists, who only investigate "pure" science in their spare time. Everyone is required to do some physical labor in addition to their professional jobs, which contributes to health and wellbeing as well as keeping everyone in touch with the workers. Frazier explains that the efficiency of



Walden Two's system and their utilization of all workers, including women and adolescents, allows them to only require four hours of work a day. Frazier tells the guests that they will be asked to pay their way with two hours of work a day during their stay.

Chapters 5-8 Analysis

By presenting Walden Two as an accomplished fact, Skinner avoids any debate about whether his ideas are feasible or desirable. Frazier is able to tell his guests, "Look around you. Walden Two is working." The Walden Two that is working, however, is fictional. Would such a society work in fact? The question is debatable. The women at Walden Two all seem beautiful to Burris, but would not dressing according to fashion really make women more attractive?

The women in Walden Two are still concerned with fashion and other "womanly" things. While Walden Two professes to bring the sexes onto a more equal footing by freeing women from housewife labor and splitting jobs evenly between the sexes, the women are still distinctly different in interests than the men, and Mrs. Meyerson is there to give a woman's perspective to the female visitors. From a modern perspective, women might easily not be more interested in fashion than men, as Skinner portrays them; however, Skinner attributes the difference, not to an inherent difference between the sexes, but to the distinction imposed on society before the women entered Walden Two.

Walden Two is distinctly not democratic, and Frazier makes a case for government by expertise and experimentation. The Planners choose their own successors. Skinner assumes that, by choosing successors cooperatively, by consensus, the Planners who are selected will be worthy and well-meaning. The system will work as long as the people are truly guided by the best possible motives, are competent, and have good information. Those are large assumptions to make. If the Board of Planners goes astray for any reason, there is nothing to correct the problem.



Chapters 9-12

Chapters 9-12 Summary

Burris awakes at 8:30 the next morning, and Castle is still asleep. Mary is also awake, and she and Burris go to breakfast together. They chat, and while Burris seems too intellectual for Mary, he finds her attractive. Mary implies that there is some trouble between Barbara and Rodger. The rest of the group joins Mary and Burris, and while everyone else serves themselves, Rodger serves Barbara her food. After breakfast, the group goes to the work desk and gets work washing the windows on the south side of the main building. They organize themselves and get through a good deal of the work in a couple of hours, though Barbara is an uncomfortable and inefficient cleaner.

Frazier explains that Walden Two is not about getting back to a "simpler time." Too much hard labor must be avoided, and Walden Two uses technology whenever possible. Frazier wants to create leisure among the members to start a Golden Age. Frazier is expecting Mrs. Meyerson to join the group and keeps looking for her. They tour the dairy and meet the Dairy Manager. Finally, Mrs. Meyerson joins them, and they go outside where they see young couples working on their new living quarters, a tradition at Walden Two. Mary exhibits a type of embroidery stitch to some women, who seem grateful but don't thank her. This is part of Walden Two's code. At 8:00, Mrs. Meyerson will be part of a chorus performing parts of Bach's B Minor Mass. Burris gets the impression Frazier is attracted to Mrs. Meyerson.

Performances and events are advertised as lists on bulletin boards, without splashy posters or advertising. Burris finds the Bach concert listing, and Frazier explains that there are always many events. Because concerts don't cost money, transportation, or trouble, short 50-minute concerts are the norm. Mary and Steve decide to opt out of the concert and go to a dance. Frazier leads the conversation to boredom and leisure time, explaining that the conditions at Walden Two are optimal for creating art. Walden Two has a burgeoning amateur music community, including performers and composers. Children growing up in this musical environment will fulfill their musical talents. As Burris listens to the concert, he is overcome with the idea of a Golden Age.

The next morning, the visitors have an early breakfast. Frazier tells them that they will visit the schools and earn some labor-credits later. They pass some children using strings and pegs to explore geometry and arrive at the nursery. Mrs. Nash is in charge of the nursery and explains that the babies have limited exposure to the outside world in the first year to prevent illness. The babies, naked except for diapers, live in climate-controlled cubicles with glass windows. The workers observe the babies' behavior and color to determine the best temperature. The babies sleep on easily cleaned stretched plastic, providing comfort and eliminating cleaning. Young babies are heavily protected and introduced to frustration and illness slowly, to build resistance. Castle asks about mother love, and Frazier explains that the babies get affection from the whole community.



Chapters 9-12 Analysis

Mary adapts well to Walden Two, but Barbara is a "lady," and she is above the life at Walden Two. While everyone else serves themselves at breakfast, Rogers must wait on his girlfriend. She is too important to server herself. Barbara personifies the upper-class mentality. She cannot pay her own way and becomes a drag on society. She shows her incompetence by her inability to wash windows well.

Walden Two focuses on using technology to work more efficiently. Walden Two is about finding the best ways to do things, whether that's through dishwashing machines or through mechanized cow milking. However, Walden Two also eliminates many of the parts of society that serve no useful functions. Advertising is one of those sectors. The use of a simple bulletin board takes the place of posters and gaudy advertisements, which use people's labor and talents for no useful purpose.

The nursery is the major societal change that the visitors encounter. Babies do not live with their mothers. Instead, they live in climate-controlled cubicles. Are the babies missing out on anything through this system? Frazier and Mrs. Nash are sure to emphasize that the children receive physical affection and protection. Even so, the idea of communally raised children is likely to raise emotional reactions. Parents want to control their children's environment and education, but is this truly best for the child?



Chapters 13-16

Chapters 13-16 Summary

Children from one to three have communal playrooms and sleeping quarters similar to those for babies. They also wear only diapers. As some children leave for a picnic, Castle asks if the other children get jealous. Mrs. Nash is confused, not understanding what he means. After they leave, Frazier explains that Mrs. Nash came to Walden Two at twelve and no longer experiences jealousy. Neither do the young children. Barbara and Castle object to the elimination of emotions, and Frazier says they only eliminate unnecessary, harmful emotions. Anger, jealousy, hate, and sorrow are unnecessary and unproductive. Frazier attributes this to "behavioral engineering."

Frazier explains his theory that society creates competition by enculturating children at a young age. Walden Two created a cooperative code of conduct. Through experimentation, Frazier developed means of educating children to internalize the ethics, including leaving a child with a sugar-covered lollipop with directions not to lick it, to teach the children to put the temptation out of sight. Castle calls the lesson "sadistic." In another lesson, hungry children must stand for five minutes in front of soup before eating it. In an advanced lesson, after half the children must wait another five minutes while the other half eats. Castle is horrified, but Frazier counters that he's administering controlled frustrations for good ends, instead of the random, uncontrolled difficulties children must normally face.

Older children move through their learning without divisions like grades, imitating older children and free to explore whatever subjects interest them. The environment is controlled to elicit specific behaviors, instead of controlling the children. Children become more and more independent and pursue independent learning. After showing the visitors the school, Frazier discusses how efficient the Walden Two education system is. It avoids administration and discipline, or a standardized curriculum. Learning and thinking skills are taught instead of subjects. There is no distinction between "high school" and "college." Frazier criticizes the traditional school system as overly bureaucratic and often pointless. Castle questions Frazier about freedom, but Frazier avoids the question.

Frazier and the visitors see two very young parents with their baby, and Burris is startled at their young age. At Walden Two, women give birth in their late teens. Frazier promises to explain more later, and the others return to their rooms. Rogers seems interested in Walden Two. Castle is critical, while Burris sees Walden Two as successful. They rejoin Frazier at lunch. He explains that in the economic conditions at Walden Two, there is no reason for young people to wait to get married and have children. The sexual problems of adolescence are avoided.

A woman in her mid-twenties is finished bearing children, with her full life ahead of her. Children have large families, with grandparents and great-grandparents. Barbara says



that young marriages can't be successful, but Frazier argues that their adolescents are more mature and have cultural and economic advantages. Frazier briefly answers that Walden Two does no genetic experiments, yet. There is more to tell about families at Walden Two, though.

Chapters 13-16 Analysis

Again, Skinner's ideas benefit from Skinner presenting them as accomplished facts. The educational system for the children is clearly successful, based on the performance and behavior of the children. In reality, how would Walden Two cope with disruptive behavior? Is there essential knowledge that children should learn but might not choose to learn? Can the behavioral engineering really eliminate jealousy, hatred, and anger?

Frazier tells the visitors that they don't know what basic, fundamental human nature is like, because all they can observe is the behavior that is produced by the social environment. The fictional character Frazier has the benefit of his experimentation to know more about human nature, but Skinner cannot truly know how ingrained jealousy is in human behavior. It's observable in cats and dogs, so perhaps it's too fundamental to remove. If so, could Walden Two still work?

In Walden Two, Skinner sees marriage (and sex) as something natural and something that nature times for adolescence. By encouraging early marriage, Skinner times marriage with the natural time of sexual awakening. Society is following natural inclinations instead of trying to enforce something unnatural. Women have babies when their bodies are ready for babies, and they have no economic burdens from children. Might this result in an overpopulation problem for Walden Two?



Chapters 17-20

Chapters 17-20 Summary

Frazier says that the family is weakening in the modern world, and the Walden Two community takes on traditional roles of the family. He does not know where this trend will lead. They've found, though experiment, that marriages work better when spouses have separate rooms. Walden Two encourages friendships between the sexes, and therefore there is little adultery. Children are less dependent on their parents, and people give time and attention to groups of children instead of just their own. Children identify with someone they relate to, instead of a parent. Women are freed from the necessity to be a housewife.

The visitors think that they'll be able to finish their window washing the next day, so they get different work assignments for the day. Rogers, Steve, and Burris stack wood behind the theater. Rogers and Steve are both impressed with Walden Two. In Rogers' experiences during the war, he realized the problematic nature of his elite life in the States, but Barbara still doesn't understand. She can't imagine why anyone would want to live in Walden Two. Rogers is torn between Walden Two and his fiancée, who wants a home, children, and a maid.

After the heavy work of stacking wood, Burris feels refreshed. He views some of the artwork, but gets tired and falls asleep. When he arrives late to dinner, the rest of the party is giddy and joking about silly theories of where Burris has been. When Burris tries to ask Frazier about communal societies that have failed in the past, Frazier refuses to compare them, saying that he knows nothing about how they are run except bits and pieces of information that have survived history. Frazier refuses to consider history as an example to follow. Besides, past societies believed they knew a truth, either from God or from a vision of perfection. Unlike Walden Two, they did not do controlled experiments and weren't open to change.

After dinner, the group goes up to the roof, and Frazier gives his definition of the Good Life, including health, minimizing unpleasant work, the opportunity to utilize talents, having satisfying personal relationships, and relaxation. Walden Two fulfills all these criteria. Frazier explains that the second generation is raised in Walden Two's culture, but the first generation agrees to abide by the Walden Code, a set of rules of behavior including not gossiping or expressing public gratitude. The rules are discussed and reinforced at Sunday meetings.

Castle says he wouldn't be satisfied in Walden Two because he wouldn't be challenged. Frazier objects that there are plenty of opportunities for long-term goals and challenges. Walden Two does not offer fame or fortune, because both take away from others. That's why public gratitude is discouraged. One person's elevation diminishes others. Burris suggests that, without money or gratitude, people must be motivated by fear of failure. Frazier says people are not condemned for failure, just moved to different jobs.



Someone who consistently fails would be treated by a psychologist. Castle decries Walden Two's lack of moral law, but Frazier is a pragmatist, suggesting that all human behavior can be dealt with by experimentation social engineering.

Chapters 17-20 Analysis

Again, Skinner presents his ideas as accomplished facts. By experiment, Frazier has found that marriages work best with spouses in separate rooms. In reality, the outcome of this experiment would be debatable. Encouraging friendships between the sexes results in less adultery in Walden Two. Would this be the actual outcome? Without a real Walden Two, no one knows what the outcomes of these social experiments would be, but by presenting them as accomplished facts, Skinner lends credence to his ideas.

Steve's conundrum emerges in this section. He wants to stay at Walden Two. His service in World War II has shown him the unfairness of the world. However, Barbara is still part of the upper-class society that ignores the problems of people who are less lucky. Burriss equates Steve's problem with the children's dilemma with the lollipops. The solution for the children is to put the temptation out of sight. If Steve separated himself from Barbara, would he be able to see more clearly and perhaps be able to leave her altogether?

Castle finds another criticism of Walden Two. He believes that the intelligent, aggressive students he's seen would not find an outlet for their ambition. Frazier argues against certain types of ambition, like ambition for fame or fortune, saying that they hurt society by oppressing the people who are not famous or rich. Is it possible to eliminate fame or acclaim, as Walden Two claims to have done? Is it possible to suppress the desire for recognition?



Chapters 21-24

Chapters 21-24 Summary

Burriss finds that he smokes much less at Walden Two, where few people smoke. As he's smoking a cigarette in the gardens, Steve and Mary find him. They tell him they want to join Walden Two. They're excited about the opportunities compared with an impoverished life in the city and disbelieving that they can have all this for four labor credits a day. Burriss reassures them that it's the right choice and that Walden Two will accept them.

Meanwhile Castle has become convinced that the happy people at Walden Two are a false front presented by Frazier, who is secretly a tyrant. The next morning at breakfast, the party finds that Steve and Mary have talked to Frazier, and all they need is a physical to join Walden Two. Barbara doesn't understand the decision but pretends to be happy for them. After breakfast, the visitors finish their window washing, and then Steve and Mary go for their physicals with Mr. Meyerson, one of the doctors. The visitors tour the medical and dental facilities, where the emphasis is on preventative care.

As the group eats lunch, Frazier expresses his enthusiasm that Walden Two can exist in the modern time, in the real world. When Castle mentions government and politics, Frazier says nothing can be solved through them. People must act outside of politics. Governments are inherently corrupted by power. Castle and Burriss ask about Walden Two's relationship to the government, and Frazier explains that an expert Political Manager studies issues and puts together a "Walden Ticket" that all members vote. Through their joint vote, they've cleaned up many corrupt local politicians.

Walden Two is not religious, and most people's religious beliefs fade into the background. The Manager of Public Relations sometimes misrepresents Walden Two as more religious than it is. Castle disapproves and criticizes Walden Two's lack of politics. Frazier says that they're doing more for world peace and to be good citizens than Castle.

Burriss asks how they keep young people from leaving, and Frazier explains that they tell their children the whole truth about the world, and even give them assignments to track instances of wealth to poverty. For instance, students might go to see where the maid at a wealthy house lives. Burriss suggests that indoctrination might work just as well, but Frazier explains that to survive competing cultures, Walden Two must stay modern and competitive. It must provide for happiness and human needs. It must grow and change as the world changes, and it must avoid propaganda. Steve and Mary pass by. They've passed their physicals, and are ready to join Walden Two.



Chapters 21-24 Analysis

Skinner's portrayal of smoking simply fading away in the absence of stress and of others smoking shows the limitations of his ability to understand human behavior. Smoking can be a very strong physical addiction, and it would be unlikely to be so easily eliminated. Meanwhile, Steve and Mary's reaction to *Walden Two* is mostly disbelief that there could really be such an ideal society that they could be a part of. Steve and Mary personify the lower class. They know that they have little potential for a happy, fulfilling life, and that their children will be born into socio-economic oppression. For them, *Walden Two* is too good to be true.

Castle, too, is disbelieving. He wonders if Frazier is presenting a false front, but there is no evidence to support this idea. Frazier is amazed that *Walden Two* exists in the real world, but in fact, it doesn't. B.F. Skinner is presenting a false front, since *Walden Two* is entirely fictional. Without the accomplished fact in front of him, Castle would never accept the possibility of *Walden Two* being successful. Since that success is merely a fiction, is there any reason that the reader should accept the possibility that *Walden Two* could be successful?



Chapters 25-28

Chapters 25-28 Summary

Burriss decides to make sure the members of Walden Two are as happy as they seem and goes off by himself to eavesdrop on conversations. He finds a group of middle-aged members laughing over harmless gossip. Four men are discussing army discipline, a group is silently absorbed in watching a chess match, a woman is reading an unfinished book to three small girls, a man is complaining about poor planning in a strawberry garden who is diffused by humor, and three women are having tea who quiz him about the university system. Exploring further, he becomes absorbed in one of the libraries and then wanders into a room where a string quartet is playing with an amateur pianist, who turns out to be Frazier.

As Burriss walks back to his room, he runs across a housewife in her late fifties sitting outside. She is just the person Burriss wants to talk with, to find out more about Walden Two from the inside. He finds that she barely knows Frazier. She doesn't think about whether she's happy, seeming to take happiness for granted. A young man comes around once a year to see if she has any complaints or needs, and last time she teased the new boy that she wanted to look like Greta Garbo. She works as a baker, baking pies and cakes, and she has many hobbies. She's neither busy nor bored.

That evening, Frazier, Burriss, and Castle take a walk outside and see a group arriving. These members are starting Walden Six, a fledgling second community that will be run by the current Assistant Planners at Walden Two and peopled with half the members. Walden Three, Four, and Five are similar but unrelated communities. Frazier wants to introduce the architects, but he can't capture their attention. Burriss wonders how fast they can take on new members, and Frazier says it will be experimental, taken one step at a time. Burriss brings up an example of a sexually aggressive adolescent, and Frazier says that the culture of the other adolescents would cause him to conform.

Frazier anticipates Walden Two spreading over the whole country in thirty years and describes possibly forcing farmers off their farms to get the land. At Castle's criticism, Frazier admits having no belief in democracy but rejects the idea that he's a Fascist, claiming that the people in Walden Two have all the rights they need or want and that he's no figurehead in his community without heroes. He decries heroes and again decries the relevance or importance of history.

Castle is still dissatisfied with Walden Two and Frazier's philosophy. The group meets up for Sunday breakfast. Barbara flirts with Frazier, but Frazier responds awkwardly. After breakfast, the visitors go to one of the Sunday services, but Frazier and Burriss go off on their own. Burriss explains that Rogers is torn between Walden Two and Barbara. They go to Frazier's room, which is disorderly and dirty, and Frazier tries to get Burriss's opinion of Walden Two, asking if he's willing to join. Burriss is reluctant but doesn't know



why, and Frazier believes it's because Burris dislikes him personally. He insists that Walden Two should not be confused with its founder.

Chapters 25-28 Analysis

Burris's expedition to see what Walden Two is really like, outside of the guided tours, shows the reader what Skinner imagines, a society with varying interests, where complaints and problems are diffused with humor. However, it does not serve as a legitimate argument that Walden Two might actually function. On Burris's tour, Frazier himself is the odd note. He is the worst musician, and he seems socially awkward. Throughout the story, Frazier is an unpleasant person. Walden Two may be his idea, but he doesn't fit into it.

Walden Two is expanding, and Frazier anticipates the communal type of society taking over society in three decades. Within Walden Two, the people are all dealt with fairly, but Walden Two is not always fair in dealing with the outside world. With their surplus of labor, Walden Two is able to take advantage of local farmers, harvesting crops that would otherwise go to waste and leaning on the farmers for bargain deals. When Frazier talks about expanding, he describes forcing farmers out of their communities to get land. Walden Two uses political muscle and even propaganda in the outside world, something that's forbidden in Walden Two itself. Skinner seems to feel that, because society is broken, it requires unethical treatment to deal with it.



Chapters 29-31

Chapters 29-31 Summary

The party's afternoon plan of a walk is canceled due to rain, and Steve and Barbara join a group of musicians for an impromptu concert. Castle, Frazier, and Burris are alone, and Burris takes the opportunity to accuse Frazier of being a manipulator and despot. Through the design of Walden Two, Frazier controls all the members. Frazier does not deny that the design of Walden Two controls behavior, but he says that mankind has no course but to go down the path of Walden Two to find a better society. Castle says that a science of behavior leaves people without freedom, and Frazier counters that without it, people are only controlled by less beneficent forces, like politicians and salesmen. Castle refuses to deny personal freedom. He accuses Frazier of trying to control behavior, at the same time believing that true control is impossible.

Castle tries to demonstrate his personal freedom by saying he could drop or hold a book of matches, but Frazier manipulates him into dropping them by guessing that he'll hold them. They agree that force or threat of force can control behavior. Frazier adds a new kind of control, through positive reinforcement, by giving someone a positive experience or taking away a negative one when the person does what you want. He claims positive reinforcement, or reward, is more successful and permanently successful, than negative reinforcement, or punishment. He relates positive reinforcement to the teachings of Jesus to love one's enemies. In positive reinforcement, the person behaves as he or she desires and feels free. Control and freedom exist simultaneously.

Castle insists that democracy is necessary to prevent tyranny, but Frazier calls democracy a fraud, pointing out that elections are media campaigns and saying that a single vote doesn't truly matter. The majority can become a dictator, leaving minorities oppressed, and compromise is disallowed by competition. By leaving government to experts, using cooperation and planning, Walden Two achieves the greatest good. He argues that the Planners have no incentive to become despots in a cooperative society, and says that Russian communism is a failure because true experimentation is not possible for a government, and the use of propaganda and heroes is harmful. The storm lets up, and Frazier leads Burris and Castle through Walden Two. All the people are busy doing what they want, a concrete argument against Castle's accusation of despotism.

Castle believes that he's won the argument and is set in his beliefs. His arguments are all abstract, while Frazier's are concrete and practical. Burris is sick of Castle and suggests that they listen to orchestral music on Walden's radio network. As they listen, Castle grades some student papers, and Burris wrestles with his thoughts.



Chapters 29-31 Analysis

Castle talks about the general, while Frazier talks about the specific. Castle starts with general principles like democracy and freedom, while Frazier is concerned with practical solutions to human happiness that work. While Castle is concerned with "freedom," Frazier wonders what is meant by freedom. Certainly, some actions are predictable based on the environment. Does that mean these actions are free? What if all actions are predestined based on the situation? Does that mean that no actions are free? Ultimately, Frazier draws a line between control through force and control through designing an environment, arguing essentially that the type of control that exists at Walden Two is not dictatorial because behavior is not controlled by force.

The discussion between Frazier and Castle is weighted in Frazier's benefit. Although Castle believes that he's won the debate, it is clear to the reader, and to Burris, that Frazier is the victor. Castle's criticism merely serves as a starting point for Frazier to explain more fully the philosophy behind Walden Two and its focus on positive reinforcement, creating an environment where people want to behave cooperatively, instead of being forced to behave cooperatively. Frazier brings Castle and Burris on a short tour through Walden Two, where people are busy doing whatever they please, as proof that he is no dictator, but the reader must remember that Frazier's accomplished fact is actually a fiction. Walden Two is only a success in the writer's imagination.



Chapters 32-36

Chapters 32-36 Summary

The next day, Castle and Burris prepare to leave. Castle is self-satisfied and irritates Burris. Rogers has decided to leave with Barbara. Frazier, though, is in a good mood and invites Burris to accompany him on his work, cleaning the machine shop and setting aside saleable scrap, a contrast to Frazier's personal untidiness. Burris congratulates Frazier on Walden Two's success. Frazier denies that he's a genius, but admits to a personal desire for control and his own surprise that control could only truly be gained through altruism. Frazier says that there is much research and advancement to be done in the future, so that mankind can truly achieve greatness and so that a science of human behavior can develop.

After Frazier's work is done, he leads Burris up to a ledge called the "Throne" where you can see all of Walden Two. Frazier looks out over his creation. Frazier compares himself to God, and compares the debate of freedom versus control to free will versus predestination. He says that a competitive culture is self-destructive and dysfunctional, but ironically, Frazier and therefore Walden Two is a result of competitive culture. Frazier also admits that he enjoys playing God and confesses that he loves every member like a child.

On the way back to the main building, Frazier and Burris discover that a sheep has escaped the fold and is trapped between the sheepdog, Bishop, and the string fence. Frazier points out that this is the problem with negative reinforcement, or rule through force. Eventually, the curbed behavior resurfaces. The relationship between man and dog, where the sheepdog wants to do the job that man also wants, is a better model. Castle comes on the scene, and he takes the escape of the sheep as a failure of Frazier's behavioral engineering. Castle does not correct him.

The visitors say farewell, and a truck takes them to the bus station. Barbara and Rogers go to visit friends, and Castle and Burris head to the train station alone. Castle's conversation is filled with unfounded criticisms of Frazier and Walden Two, and Burris is irritated by it. When Frazier heads to the restroom, Burris checks his bag and goes for a walk. He reads a newspaper article filled with vague ideas about education and contrasts it with Walden Two's success.

Finally, Burris realizes that he must return to Walden Two. Burris sends his bag home, purchases a paperback of Walden, attempts but fails to send a telegram of resignation, and starts on a walking journey back to Walden Two. He wants to end the story there, but Frazier argues that he must finish and not be ambiguous. Burris is now a happy member of Walden Two, and he walked sixty miles in three days to get back there to find that Frazier had expected his return.



Chapters 32-36 Analysis

Frazier compares himself to God, and at the same time, he leads Burris up to a ledge that overlooks all of his creation. The height is a symbol of power, and Frazier, by his own admission, craves power and control. No one in Walden Two is above anyone else, but on the Throne, Frazier is literally if not figuratively above all others. He has found, though, that power and control cannot be achieved through force, but can only be achieved by giving the subject what he or she wants. By working for others, Frazier has found power. The situation is ironic.

The episode of the sheep's escape illustrates Frazier's point about positive reinforcement versus negative reinforcement. The sheepdog works cooperatively with man, and his behavior is controlled through controlling the nature of the sheepdog. The dog wants to herd sheep because he's been bred to herd sheep. The sheep, however, must be controlled through punishment, the equivalent of using force to keep human beings in line. Ultimately, force fails. Sheep still escape, and chaos results. Castle's reaction shows that he cannot distinguish between positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement, and therefore he cannot understand Walden Two.

Burris struggles with his decision to return to Walden Two, but ultimately he gives in. He knows that his attachment to his old way of life is illogical. Because Burris represents the reader, the reader should also now be convinced that Walden Two is the better way of life and a worthy pursuit for society.



Characters

Frazier

Frazier is the mind behind Walden Two. A psychologist, Frazier is interested in understanding human behavior through experimentation. He is cocky and unattractive as a person, and he tends to be smug. He also tends to lecture and control the conversation. When he acts as guide to Walden Two, he is in complete control of the tours, deciding what the guests will view and ignoring questions that he doesn't want to address yet.

Burriss suspects that Frazier has a god complex, and Frazier does compare himself to God. He wants to control human behavior and human society. Still, his creation quickly gets out of his hands. Many of the people at Walden Two don't really know Frazier, as becomes clear when Burriss speaks with Mrs. Olsen. Frazier is not popular. He is awkward, and he has no "pull" in the society. When he wants the architects who are working on Walden Six to come talk to him, they seem to be studiously avoiding him. Frazier just isn't important.

However, Frazier has the satisfaction of viewing Walden Two as his creation. He has no real role in the society, but he feels like a loving father whose son has gone on to bigger and better things, uncaringly forgetting about the father he left behind. He is proud, but he also knows he's not a part of the thing he created. Walden Two is independent and needs no further interference from its "father." In fact, Walden Two has grown completely out of the control of its creator.

Professor Burriss

Professor Burriss teaches psychology at a university. He is burnt out and vaguely dissatisfied with life. He believes that he's a failure as a teacher and that his students don't take away any of the interesting and important concepts that he's trying to teach. Burriss would never change his lifestyle on his own, though. He is set in his ways at the university. He is, essentially, an academic. He thinks about things without doing anything, and Walden Two is a call to action for him.

Burriss hardly knows how he ends up dropping everything to make a trip to Walden Two. He is impressed by the commune. He finds himself smoking less. Doing an hour or two of physical labor a day agrees with him. Everyone he sees is happy. What impresses him most is the accomplished fact of happy, relaxed people, and Burriss takes pains to investigate Walden Two to make sure that he's not just seeing a facade. He doesn't like Frazier, but he realizes that Frazier is not the same as Walden Two. The commune is now something very separate from its creator.

Burriss, however, can't commit himself to Walden Two. He can't pull himself away from his comfortable former life. While he's waiting for the train back to his former life, Castle



bombards him with constant criticisms of Frazier and Walden Two, criticisms that Burris knows are false. He realizes that he has no reason not to return to Walden Two except a fear of change. As a rite of passage marking his new life, Burris walks for three days from the train station to Walden Two. He is finally ready for change.

Rogers (Rodge)

Rogers is a former student of Professor Burris. He comes from an upper-class background, but his time in the Pacific during World War II changed him. Now, he's dissatisfied with life in the U.S. in its current state. He's seen how people suffer for the lifestyle of the upper class. Rogers is impressed with Walden Two, and he wants to stay there. His fiancée, Barbara, does not understand his position. She wants a big house, children, and servants. She can't understand or sympathize with the plight of the poor and can't imagine ever living the life of Walden Two. Rodge struggles to decide between Walden Two and Barbara, and finally, he decides to leave with Barbara. However, he plans to return to be Steve's best man, and Barbara won't be coming with him. Might he, in Barbara's absence, decide to stay?

Lieutenant Steve Jamnik

Steve Jamnik is a lower-class American who served in the Pacific in the U.S. army during World War II. When he comes back, he knows he won't be able to get a good job or have a good future. Jamnik and his girlfriend Mary are enthusiastic about moving to Walden Two, where they will be able to marry right away and put their economic worries behind them.

Professor Augustine Castle

Castle is a professor of philosophy. He accompanies his colleague Professor Burris to Walden Two to observe the experimental society. Castle is constantly critical of Walden Two, objecting to the fact that it's not democratic, calling the behavioral and ethical training cruel, and finally concluding that Frazier is a fascist.

Barbara Macklin

Barbara Macklin is Rogers' fiancée. She is from an upper-class background, and she does not understand the appeal of Walden Two. She wants a traditional life, with possessions, children, and servants. Rogers, however, has changed since he went to war and understands something about the unfairness of the world's economy that Barbara cannot see. This causes a rift in Barbara and Rodge's relationship. Barbara looks upon Walden Two with disdain and is more skilled at beautifying herself than at work. Both Burris and Frazier think Rodge should give up Barbara to come to Walden Two. Since Rodge promises to be Steve's best man at his wedding while Barbara



refuses to come back to Walden Two, Steve will visit Walden Two alone. Perhaps, with Barbara out of sight and out of mind, Steve will be able to stay.

Mary Grove

Mary Grove is Steve Jamnik's "girl." Mary comes from a lower-class background, and she knows that if she and Steve get married, they will end up living on the wrong side of the tracks and unable to escape poverty. She almost can't believe the opportunity provided by Walden Two, and she fits in there immediately. Mary is a good worker, and she and Steve decide to stay at Walden Two, where they can be married in a week, have children on equal economic footing with everyone else, and live happy lives free of economic oppression.

Mrs. Rachel Meyerson

Rachel Meyerson talks to the female visitors about Walden Two, acting as guide to events that may interest them. She also participates in a chorus that sings a concert of excerpts from the Mass in B Minor by Bach. Frazier seems to be attracted to Mrs. Meyerson.

Mrs. Nash

Mrs. Nash is in charge of the nursery at Walden Two and guides the tour of the young children's quarters.

Mr. Meyerson

Mr. Meyerson is one of Walden Two's doctors. He gives Steve and Mary their physicals prior to joining Walden Two.

Mrs. Olsen

Mrs. Olsen is a housewife in her late fifties who talks with Burris about Walden Two.



Objects/Places

Walden Two

Walden Two is a communal society built on farmland in rural New England. The society is based on Frazier's theories and a science of behavior. In Walden Two, everyone works to pay for their upkeep, at a rate of four labor-credits a day, one of which must be earned through physical labor. Children are raised communally in a nursery and a group school. No one is given fame or public gratitude, and no one has many possessions. The culture is structured for the good of the community.

Sheep

At the beginning of the book, the characters see a herd of sheep that has been trained not to touch a string, since the sheep relate the string to an electric fence. The string can then be used as an easy, portable fence to move the sheep around the lawn as "mowers." There is also a sheep dog named Bishop who guards the sheep, in case they get out. Near the end of the book, one of the sheep gets out and causes trouble. Frazier explains that this is the problem with negative reinforcement, or changing behavior through punishment, like an electric fence. Castle confuses the negative reinforcement used with the sheep with positive reinforcement, or changing behavior through reward, used in Walden Two. The sheep dog's name "Bishop" indicates that the sheep held in place by threat of punishment are an analogy for people held in place by religion.

Jacob's Ladder

Jacob's Ladder is a covered passageway between the children's quarters and the main buildings of Walden Two. It is equipped with tables and chairs for lounging and having tea.

The Walk

The members of Walden Two enjoy strolling through the Walk, a wide corridor in the main building near the dining areas.

Labor-Credits

The members of Walden Two pay for their membership with labor-credits, which they are allotted for doing work. Members owe labor-credits equal to about four hours of work a day.



Lollipops

One of the ethical exercises that Walden Two uses with young children is to give them lollipops covered in powdered sugar, so that it's easy to see if they have been licked. The children are told that if they can avoid licking the lollipops, they can have them at the end of the day. The teachers talk to the children about their feelings and their dilemma. The solution to the exercise is to put the lollipops out of sight, and therefore out of mind. Burriss uses the lollipops as a metaphor for how Steve should handle his dilemma with Barbara. He should put her out of sight, so he's not tempted by her.

Board of Planners

Walden Two is run by a Board of Planners. There are six Planners, three men and three women. The Planners can only stay on the board for ten years. After a Planner leaves, the Board of Planners chooses a replacement by consensus.

Managers

The practical, day-to-day decisions of Walden Two are made by Managers, trained administrators who run departments such as education, food, dentistry, and dairy.

The Walden Code

The members of Walden Two agree to abide by a series of rules and cultural norms that include not expressing gratitude, not talking about Walden Two to strangers, not gossiping about others' personal lives, and controlling harmful emotions like jealousy.

The Walden Ticket

The Walden Two Political Manager studies all political issues in local and national elections and puts together voting recommendations that all members of Walden Two follow, called the Walden Ticket.

The Throne

The Throne is a ledge that overlooks all of Walden Two. Frazier goes up to the ledge to overlook his creation.

Themes

Justice

The whole reason for Walden Two's existence is justice. The injustice of society is taught to the children of Walden Two as an incentive to get them to stay in Walden Two. They research the ways that wealth is related to poverty, including following a maid at a wealth house home to her impoverished neighborhood. Frazier declares that wealth for a few creates poverty for many and that fame for a few creates insignificance for many. Walden Two is created as a solution for these imbalances in society.

In Walden Two, everyone's contribution to society is equalized through a system of labor credits that is intended to create justice. No one is set above anyone else because of their talents. Instead, everyone contributes equally, and the desirability of different types of labor is balanced by a system of labor credits that gives a greater reward for less desirable labor. Justice is also served by having no heroes and setting no one above others. Whether this is possible is certainly debatable, but the goal is a just society for everyone.

The children are all raised equally and given equal chances at success and learning. All babies are housed in identical cubicles. Children are raised communally. They live cooperatively and learn independently, with the same resources at the disposal of all. This is one of the things that Mary and Steve find so attractive about Walden Two. Their children, instead of being downtrodden and given a second-rate education in a ghetto, will have the same high quality education as all the others. Mary and Steve personify the injustice of society. They face a life of socio-economic oppression that they won't be able to escape from, and Walden Two provides their own opportunity for escape and for justice.

Nature versus Nurture

Walden Two is predicated on the idea that environment shapes people. Human beings do have natural instincts and tendencies, but Frazier argues that much of what we understand of human behavior is due to the influences of society on people. In Walden Two, the influence of the environment, of nurture, makes the difference between a person who feels jealousy and a person who feels no jealousy. The children raised at Walden Two prove this. Because of their behavioral training and carefully controlled environment, children at Walden Two do not even know what jealousy is. Only the people who came to the commune as adults understand jealousy, and living in a society where jealousy (like cigarette smoke) is removed from day-to-day life, they cease to act and even feel jealous of each other.

Even something as basic as a mother desiring to constantly be with her new baby is controlled by environment, not by nature, in Walden Two. Because Skinner believes that



environment controls behavior, he also believes that changing someone's environment changes their behavior. By telling people to mention at least once a day when something is boring them, the Planners at Walden Two not only get people in the habit of saying that something is boring them but place people in an environment where others are constantly mentioning that something is boring to them. By removing something 'boring' when someone complains about it, they provide positive reinforcement for complaining something is boring. This is behaviorist training, controlling the environment to control behavior. In the controversy between how much of human behavior is determined by nature and how much is determined by nurture, Skinner comes down firmly on the side of nurture.

Cooperation versus Competition

Capitalist society operates on a principle of competition. Man competes against man to gain wealth, status, and the other benefits that society can offer. In Walden Two, Skinner points out the injustices that arise from competition. More than that, Skinner points out the unhappiness that arises in a society where people are constantly competing with each other and engaged in a constant battle against society itself. Society does not work for the betterment of individuals, and individuals do not work for the betterment of society. Competition leads the individual to fight for him- or herself, even for survival. Even the nature of democracy is about competition. Politicians compete for votes.

Skinner posits that cooperation is much more productive than competition. The fact that the Board of Planners does not vote for new members but decides on them by consensus shows that Skinner values cooperation more than competition. If the Planners must all come to a decision together, they must find a way to negotiate that decision through reasoning and other cooperative skills.

The entire society of Walden Two works on a theory of cooperation. Workers contribute their labor for the benefit of the society as a whole, knowing that what is good for the whole group is good for the individual as well. Frazier points out that the community of Walden Two leads to the cooperative development of art. Scripts, music, and art of all kinds can be developed cooperatively. On every level, Skinner propounds that cooperation is superior to competition.

Style

Point of View

Walden Two is written in the first person point of view, with Professor Burriss as the narrator. Burriss is chosen as narrator because he gives a neutral "everyman" perspective and acts as a surrogate for the reader as he experiences Walden Two firsthand. The reader is in the same boat as Burriss, living a normal life in the real world. Just as Burriss is whisked away on a tour of the utopian Walden Two, the reader also is whisked away in his reading and brought on the same tour. The reader follows along with Burriss's experiences and thoughts, and Burriss is intended to lead the reader to the same conclusion the character ends up at: that Walden Two is the best path to the "good life."

Although the book is told from Burriss's first-person point of view, much of the book is Frazier's dialogue. Frazier acts as a different kind of narrator, giving exposition on the theory and the practical workings of Walden Two. Frazier's exposition gives the reader Skinner's ideas about a perfect society, functioning as a kind of lecture. However, Frazier constantly falls back on the argument that Walden Two is already working to defend the validity of his ideas, and since the reader knows that Walden Two is fictional, this argument falls flat, to the detriment of Skinner's arguments.

Skinner's Walden Two is a behaviorist society. It is founded on the idea that all human behavior is a response to environment and that human behavior can be controlled by controlling the environment. Humans react predictably to stimulus, and positive reinforcement (giving a desired reward or removing an unpleasant situation) is the best way to manipulate behavior. Walden Two is completely sculpted using behaviorist theory.

Setting

Walden Two is set in the time of its writing, just after World War II, in rural New England. Unlike many utopian societies, Walden Two exists in the real world, in a modern time and place. Frazier points this out during the book that Walden Two exists in the actual world, "here and now." In other words, Walden Two is possible, not with some future knowledge, understanding, or technology, but with the current tools that humanity possesses.

Walden Two itself is rural without being backwards. It integrates living quarters with productive farming land to become self-sufficient. The buildings of Walden Two are made with rammed Earth, exemplifying Walden Two's connection with the land and with nature. Walden Two is not only connected to the land that grows crops, but it's also connected with human nature. The society builds on the natural inclinations and



tendencies of humanity, instead of imposing contradictory rules and incompatible environments on humanity.

While *Walden Two* utilizes nature, it also molds nature to its desires. By creating environments where people can be happy and completely avoid bad weather, it controls weather problems for society. Similarly, by modifying and molding the behavior of children, it controls the people in the society. Everything in *Walden Two* is carefully planned in detail. However, instead of forcing people into desired behavior, *Walden Two* is structured to create an environment that will naturally lead people to behave in a way that's best for society. Is this type of control possible? The number of variables to be controlled may be far vaster than Skinner imagines.

Language and Meaning

Skinner is not a literary writer. *Walden Two* is a treatise on behaviorism and society in the form of a novel, not a literary work. The plot is mainly a detailed description of how *Walden Two* works and how to structure a functioning, utopian society. Because of this, the language can be inelegant and even dry. Instead of true dialogue, much of the text is taken up with long monologues by Frazier giving exposition about how *Walden Two* is run and the theories behind it.

Skinner uses the technique of dialectics to make points about *Walden Two*. Castle serves as devil's advocate, asking Frazier pointed questions about how *Walden Two* works or criticizing the theory behind *Walden Two*. Castle's criticisms serve as a device to allow Frazier to expound on his theories and give new information about *Walden Two*. Castle is essentially passive. He is supposed to be the voice of criticism, but he fails to successfully argue against Frazier after his initial pointed question. Castle's failure to respond to Frazier's arguments belies Castle as a straw man, set up by the author for Frazier to easily knock down with his line of reasoning.

Language has a place in the behaviorist conditioning of *Walden Two*. Language is controlled by the commune's public relations manager, and the members are disallowed from talking about *Walden Two* for fear that a few poorly chosen words will cause untold harm. Language is powerful and must be controlled. People don't express gratitude or thank each other, and this control of language is supposed to control people's feelings of gratitude or admiration as well, so language is used as a tool of behaviorism.

Structure

Walden Two begins outside of the modern-day utopia, in the office of an old fogey of a professor on a college campus. In other words, it begins in the real world. By gathering the characters in the context of a real world and tracking them on their journey into *Walden Two*, a new world, it brings the readers along on the same journey. The experience of *Walden Two* is surrounded by "bookends" of the real world. In the beginning of the novel, the reader starts in the world they're used to and is slowly

introduced to a different society. In the end of the novel, the reader, like Burris, leaves Walden Two with new knowledge and is able to see the world with new eyes.

The novel is divided into thirty-six short chapters, and each explores a different aspect or experience of Walden Two. In one chapter, the characters visit the nursery and see how babies are cared for. In the next chapters, the characters see how young children are raised and how older children are taught. This leads to a discussion of family in Walden Two. Each chapter is a piece of the puzzle, giving a full picture of society at Walden Two. Though the chapters are supported by skeletal stories, some of them are almost wholly exposition by Frazier, or dialogue between Frazier and Castle, exploring the details of Walden Two.



Quotes

"I mean you've got to experiment, and experiment with your own life! Not just sit back—not just sit back in an ivory tower somewhere—as if your life weren't all mixed up in it.' He stopped again. Perhaps this was my Achilles heel." —Rogers talking to Burris, Chapter 1, page 5

"That's the virtue of Walden Two which pleases me most. I was never happy in being waited on. I could never enjoy the fleshpots for thinking of what might be going on below stairs.' It was obviously a borrowed expression, for Frazier's early life had not been affluent. But he suddenly continued in a loud, clear voice which could leave no doubt of his sincerity, 'Here a man can hold up his head and say, 'I've done my share!'" — Chapter 8. page 52

"I realized suddenly that Frazier, in a quite literal sense, seldom knew what he was talking about. He could not make a corn soufflé or clear a pond, he probably did not know when peas were ready to be picked or how they should be stored, and I doubted whether he could tell wheat from barley. In all the domestic and rural arts he loved so well, he was a rank amateur. I thought of Emerson at Brook Farm, tilling the soil for the love of it, and I felt a sudden sharp concern that Walden Two might have some fatal flaw. But the professional vigor of this young expert was reassuring. While Frazier dreamt of economic structure and cultural design, he would get out the milk." —Chapter 10, page 72

"'Very real,' said Frazier quietly. 'and we supply it in liberal doses. But we don't limit it to mothers. We go in for father love, too—for everybody's love—community love, if you wish. Our children are treated with affection by everyone—and thoughtful affection too, which isn't marred by fits of temper due to overwork or careless handling due to ignorance.'" —Chapter 12, page 92

"'Since our children remain happy, energetic, and curious, we don't need to teach "subjects" at all. We teach only the techniques of learning and thinking.'" —Frazier, Chapter 15, page 112

"'Those who stand to gain most are always the hardest to convince. That's true of the exploited worker, too—and for the same reason. They have both been kept in their places, not by external force, but much more subtly by a system of beliefs implanted within their skins.'" —Frazier, Chapter 17, page 139

"'Of course our children know about the outside world! We just make sure they know the whole truth! Nothing more is needed. We take them to the city from time to time, and they see the movie palaces, the churches, the museums, the fine residences. But they also see the other side of the tracks—the city hospital, the missions, the home for indigents, the saloons, the jails.'" —Frazier, Chapter 24, page 195



"'In thirty years,' he continued, with increasing determination, 'we could absorb the whole country many times over. Evidently you haven't thought through the dynamic of reform, Mr. Castle. Of course, limiting factors will appear. Predictions of that sort are always optimistic. But I see nothing to stop us in the long run.'" —Frazier, Chapter 27, page 217

"'You will, of course, do one or the other,' said Frazier. 'Linguistically or logically there seem to be two possibilities, but I submit that there's only one in fact. The determining forces may be subtle but they are inexorable. I suggest that as an orderly person you will probably hold—ah! you drop them! Well, you see, that's all part of your behavior with respect to me. You couldn't resist the temptation to prove me wrong. It was all lawful. You had no choice.'" —Chapter 29, pages 245-246

"'Usurpation of power is a threat only in a competitive culture,' Frazier continued. 'In Walden Two power is either destroyed or so diffused that usurpation is practically impossible. Personal ambition isn't essential in a good governor. As governmental technology advances, less and less is left to the decisions of governors, anyway. Eventually we shall have no use for Planners at all. The Managers will suffice.'" —Chapter 29, page 259

"'Do we know anything about the circumstances in the life of the child which give him a mathematical mind? Or make him musical? Almost nothing at all! These things are left to accident or blamed on heredity. I take a more optimistic view: we can analyze effective behavior and design experiments to discover how to generate it in our youth. Oh, our efforts will seem pretty crude a hundred years hence.'" —Frazier, Chapter 32, page 278

"'Punishment. Negative reinforcement. The threat of pain. It's a primitive principle of control. So long as we keep the fence electrified, we have no trouble—provided the needs of the sheep are satisfied. But if we relent, trouble is bound to arise sooner or later.'" —Frazier, Chapter 34, page 287

"'As I let the paper fall to the ground I relinquished my hold on my unrewarding past. It was all too clear that nothing could be made of it. I would go back to Walden Two.'" —Chapter 35, page 298



Topics for Discussion

Why is Barbara so reluctant to accept the type of life offered at Walden Two, while Mary and Steve are overjoyed by it?

Compare Frazier's pragmatic view of morals and ethics with Castle's philosophic view.

Would a real Walden Two be possible? Why or why not?

Frazier argues that the Board of Planners cannot become corrupt and turn into despots. Is his argument convincing? Why or why not?

Frazier's society gets rid of traditional democracy and puts government on a scientific basis. Would this idea be good or bad in real life? What problems does it pose?

Frazier believes that much of human behavior is not inherent but cultural, created by environment instead of genetics. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Frazier argues that the family is a weakening structure in the modern world, and Walden Two takes the place of the family in many ways by taking charge of raising children and providing a communal support structure. Do you agree with Frazier's assessment of the family? Would a communal "family" be better than the nuclear family? Why or why not?