

Watermelon Study Guide

Watermelon by Marian Keyes

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Plot Summary

Watermelon by Marian Keyes is a humorous and yet very dramatic story about love. The novel deals with marriage and a myriad of other relationships. The main character in the story is Claire Webster. Her thoughts, desires, and actions propel the story forward from the beginning. However, it is unfortunate circumstances that cause her initial decision, which is to move back home to Dublin to sort her life out.

Watermelon begins with Claire, twenty-nine, in hospital in London, England. She has given birth to a new baby girl. Within a few hours of that birth, her husband James enters the hospital room to inform her that he is leaving her for another woman. He is running out on Claire and their firstborn child for an older married woman who lives in the same apartment complex as they do. Claire makes the decision to head to her ancestral home in Dublin, Ireland, with her baby. This is where her parents and sisters live.

Once in Dublin, Claire must deal with a home environment she left more than six years ago when she married James. There's her father and mother, and her sisters Anna and Helen who still live at home. Claire once again experiences all the joys and troubles that go with being part of a lively and unique family. In Dublin, Claire initially wallows in deep despair. She cannot fathom why her husband left her for another woman and abandoned her child as well. She wonders if it was the lack of intimacy between them during the pregnancy. She wonders if maybe James didn't really want a child. She strives to understand what drove him into the arms of another woman.

Claire goes through different stages of emotions while in Dublin. All the while, her family lives their life around her. One day, her youngest sister, Helen, brings home a handsome young man from college, who will help her with her studies. His name is Adam and he's twenty-four. Upon meeting him, Claire has an immediate attraction to him. Through a series of maneuverings, meetings, discussions and such, they eventually, one day, end up at Adam's flat, where they make love.

Things become more complicated for Claire. James, her husband, shows up in Dublin to attempt a reconciliation with her. He shows up the day that Claire made love to Adam, and is staying at a hotel. Claire must decide whether she wants to pursue a relationship with Adam, or work things out with James. She feels she should try to patch things up with James for their daughter's sake. Claire has named her daughter Kate, after her grandmother on her mother's side.

Through meetings and discussions with James, and meetings and talks with Adam, Claire makes her decision. She decides she will leave James for good. She will work on building a love relationship with Adam. James will not accept responsibility for the affair he had. He says that Claire, through her demands on him and selfishness, drove him to have an affair. He won't admit that he was wrong. He turns the tables and makes it like he is a victim, and that Claire must change her ways if the marriage is to work. Claire does not fall for this line of reasoning. She knows she is not the devil James is making



her out to be. She knows that she cannot be with him if he cannot see what he did wrong.

Claire is set to move back to London now, with her daughter, and go back to work. Adam will go to London as well. He has secured a job in London and will have with him a child he had from a previous relationship. His ex-girlfriend is travelling for a year and Adam will take care of the child for the year. He and Claire are now free to grow their relationship as they embark on a new stage of life in London.



Prologue to Chapter 5

Prologue to Chapter 5 Summary

Watermelon by Marian Keyes opens with the protagonist Claire Webster, twenty-nine, talking about February 15. This is the day she gave birth to a baby girl, and the day her husband announced he was leaving her. She tells of how her husband witnessed the birth of their child. This prologue begins Claire Webster's story, with the events of February 15 the flashpoint for the rest of the story.

Chapter one begins by giving background information on Claire. Claire earned her English degree, then left a well-paid job in Dublin and moved to London to explore life. She garnered a waitressing job and met James when he was a patron where she waitressed. They dated, eventually moved into together, and then married. A couple of years later they decided to have a child. The second part of the chapter involves her husband James coming into her hospital room after the birth of their baby girl. He announces immediately to Claire that he is leaving her for an older woman. After James leaves, Claire learns from her friend Judy (who heard it through the grapevine) that the 'other' woman is Denise, a thirty-five year-old woman who lives two floors below Claire and James' flat. She also learns from Judy that James wants a divorce. Claire decides that she will leave London and go back to Dublin.

In chapter two, Claire Webster's best friend Judy brings her home from the hospital. Judy helps Claire pack for her flight to Dublin with her newborn. As Claire is leaving her flat to get into a taxi to go to the airport, she sees Mr. Andrucetti. He is the husband of Denise, the woman Claire's husband has left her for recently. Claire and he look at each other but do not say a word. Claire feels she's overweight and resembles a watermelon, hence the book's title. On the flight to Dublin, Claire ponders how she left Ireland six years ago - but is now returning. She thinks of how she had a dream life in London with James, but now it has come crashing down. She feels she does have one thing she would never change, however - her newborn daughter.

In chapter three, Claire wants to collect her baggage at the airport. She's paranoid that someone will steal her luggage off the baggage carousel. Her bags, not stolen, are temporarily lost - almost diverted to Boston. However, a porter recovers her luggage for her.

In chapter four, Claire's father and mother pick her up at the Dublin airport. Back at home, Claire discusses her situation with her mother. They sit and talk in Claire's bedroom that she shared in her younger years with her sister Margaret. As they talk, Claire's younger sister Helen enters the room. She's a talker and it's like a whirlwind when she enters a room. As the three of them talk, Claire decides on the name Kate for her baby girl. She is naming her after her grandmother on her mother's side. The father enters the room, and is slightly annoyed that the baby did not receive the name of his mother. Helen then cajoles her father into driving her to her friend's, even though her



father doesn't really want to. When Helen leaves, Claire says to her baby to pay attention to what Helen did; the way a woman can get a man to do what she wants. Claire's mother smiles knowingly.

In chapter five, Claire goes to bed and ponders how she must get James back. She wants to fly back to London and fight for him, as she still loves him deeply. She goes downstairs and dials her flat in London, hoping James will answer. There's no answer and she realizes that James is with Denise, sleeping with her somewhere. She knows she will not be going to London to fight for him. She decides she needs something to drink and makes her way to her sister Anna's room. She wakes Anna, who did not even know that Claire was back in Dublin. Anna has white wine and gives it to Claire. Anna is Claire's free-spirited hippie-type sister who doesn't hold down regular jobs and such. Claire and Anna talk, and Claire finds comfort in her situation from talking to Anna, who has a reassuring tone. Claire relates in this chapter how her parents always hide liquor in the house, as Claire used to siphon it for herself when she lived at home, and her sisters still do to this day. Claire cries as she goes back to bed at dawn, after talking to Anna.

Prologue to Chapter 5 Analysis

The theme of loss is prevalent in this first section of the novel. Claire Webster is experiencing emotions unlike any other in her life. She is losing her husband, her way of life in London, England, and great uncertainty about her future now grips her. The opening events of the book foreshadow a time of great turmoil for Claire. The reader senses that she will have to reconsider her life path due to her husband's affair and his leaving her.

Claire likens herself to a watermelon. This is because of feeling green with nausea in her pregnancy, and because she's heavier and rounder from the pregnancy. The reader gets a glimpse of Claire's self-image from her musings about this. The reader begins to see in this first section of the book how important Claire's newborn is to her. Claire's capacity for great love is evident in the way she cares for and worries about her baby daughter. Despite the terrible abandonment by her husband James, Claire realizes that her daughter is a great blessing and something wonderful that came out of her marriage and something that she would never regret or change.

The reader gains insight into Claire's fear of more loss at the airport. This is when Claire goes to retrieve her luggage. She's extremely paranoid that her luggage is gone - taken away from her - just as her husband is now gone, taken away from her by another woman. She finds comfort from a porter who informs her that her luggage was misplaced. He finds it for Claire, to her great relief. The reader can see that Claire fears anything else being taken away from her in her life.

Once in Dublin, Ireland, with her family, Claire proceeds to name her baby after her grandmother on her mother's side. The reader gets a glimpse of Claire's respect for traditions, and her love for her grandmother. The reader sees that family is very



important to Claire and that family will be the stabilizing force that will help Claire on her road to recovery. In this first section of the book, the reader also can see that Claire still has a deep love for her husband and that she is willing to reach out and try to rescue her marriage. The reader senses that Claire is capable of great forgiveness. This foreshadows coming meetings with her husband, James, and is a driving force that propels the story forward.



Chapter 6 to Chapter 10

Chapter 6 to Chapter 10 Summary

In chapter six, as Claire settles in at her parent's home, she becomes lethargic. She does not want to go out anywhere, not even into town for anything for her baby. Her mother takes care of those errands for her. She has also lost her appetite. Claire continues to miss her husband, James, dearly. At night, she still gets the urge to call him, but during the day, she doesn't. Claire now feels great humiliation over her situation. She wonders if everyone knew that her husband was having an affair all along, that she was the only one in the dark. Did everyone pity her, not wanting to tell her because she was pregnant? Claire is also experiencing jealousy. She can't bear the thought of her husband desiring another woman. Her head fills with pictures of what her husband and Denise are like together in bed. She has feelings of fury and feels like she could kill them both.

In chapter seven, Claire relates the story of The Great Terror. This is her name for the period of a couple of weeks when she was impossible to live with in her parent's home. She went from being sad, lonely, and miserable to instantly being full of rage and jealousy. She also exhibited a strong desire for revenge on Denise and James. She became impossible to live with during this time, throwing vases and other items around the room whenever a romantic story came on the television. She also began drinking more alcohol. To work off her emotions during this volatile period, Claire took up exercise, using old exercise equipment that she found lying around her sister Rachel's room. She cycled feverishly, as if to cycle away from the hurt of losing James. Therefore, she was exercising with passion, terrorizing her family with her outbursts of rage and anger, and drinking too much. Finding that she cannot leave the house, she continually borrows money from Anna and then sends Helen out to buy booze for her. Finally, her boorish, selfish behavior is too much. Claire's mother has Claire's father to talk to her one day, to let her know that the family is not impressed with her during this Great Terror period in her life.

In chapter eight, Claire is beginning to rebound from her unfortunate situation. She feels remorse for what she has put her family through, and resolves to begin living responsibly once again. She is still hurting, but feels she has to take control of her life. She thinks about her life and realizes she still has many blessings to be thankful for each day. She decides to stop drinking. She also decides to clean herself up, put on make-up, and put on some attractive clothes. All of this is courtesy of visiting Helen's room and helping herself to Helen's things. She tells her mother she wants to make supper for the family this evening. She then takes Kate with her, and goes down to the food mart to buy ingredients for tonight's "from-scratch" supper. She's feeling better about herself as she is now venturing out for the first time in a month or so. She feels some satisfaction that she will charge all her purchases to a credit card, and that James will get the credit card bill in London and have to pay for everything.



In chapter nine, Claire returns home from her shopping expedition and proceeds to get ready for cooking the family dinner. Her mother hovers over her as she sets about organizing the ingredients for the night's meal. Claire's mother is afraid that the family will expect good home-cooked meals all the time after tasting Claire's feast tonight. Her mother is a terrible cook and instead keeps a fresh supply of frozen, ready-to-go meals on hand for her family to microwave each day. As Claire starts preparing for supper, her father and Helen come home for the day. Helen has a new lad in tow with her, whose name is Adam. When Claire meets him, she blushes, as this is more a young man than a "boy", which is typically the kind of boyfriend's Helen brings home. Eighteen year-old Helen has convinced the new man of hers to write her college essay for her. Adam is staying for dinner tonight.

At dinner in chapter ten, everyone seems to love the chocolate mousse Claire bought more than the pasta and pesto sauce she concocted. Adam shows interest in Claire at the meal. He asks to see her baby Kate. He seems to be flirting with Kate and says to her that if they had a baby together it would definitely have blue eyes since both their eyes are blue. Claire is shocked at the statement and Adam is embarrassed he said it. He leaves immediately after saying it to go and help Helen with her essay. Claire is surprised at this reaction, feeling now that he thinks she is too old. She's wondering if he wasn't flirting at all, and cannot fathom the thought of being with a woman older than he is. Now Claire feels a bit upset that maybe he doesn't find her desirable.

Chapter 6 to Chapter 10 Analysis

In this next section of the book, Claire is lethargic and unmotivated to do anything to move forward with her life. The reader can see that she is going through the grief stage of losing her husband to another woman. Claire feels humiliated that her husband has left her and that he is making love to another woman. This section of the novel highlights the emotional damage that affairs cause. The author presents a compelling picture of the after effects of an affair on the victim of the affair, in this case Claire.

Revenge is a theme in this section of the novel. Claire has so much pent up anger and rage against her husband that she feels that she could murder him and his lover both, if she met up with them. She cannot bear that he desires someone other than her. To vent her frustrations, Claire lashes out irritably at her family. They are innocent bystanders so-to-speak, who bear the brunt of her rage and jealousy. The reader can see that Claire is experiencing a wide range of emotions and that she must work through these before she can be proactive and get her life back on a productive course. In this inner turmoil, Claire turns to drinking as a way of dulling her senses. She uses strong drink to lessen her emotional pain. She also has a spell where she works out on an exercise bike and the reader senses she is trying to pedal away from her difficulties instead of face them head on.

This foreshadows a time of reckoning for Claire. The reader knows she must face her problems and come up with solutions for them. It's apparent that Claire will have to make hard decisions to gain control back of her life. In this section of the novel, Claire

eventually does begin to make progress in this area. She realizes how terrible she has been to her family. She knows she must change her ways and she takes the first steps to do so. The reader begins to see the resilience in Claire. How, despite her situation she can adapt and make the changes necessary to improve.

Helen's friend Adam enters the story in this section. There is an immediate attraction to him from Claire. There is a foreshadowing of further interactions between Claire and Adam during the supper scene. The reader can sense that there is a spark igniting between the two and that it will combust into something in the scenes ahead.



Chapter 11 to Chapter 15

Chapter 11 to Chapter 15 Summary

In chapter eleven the evening is over and Adam leaves. Claire may be attracted to Adam. Her mother senses this and feels he may be a possibility for her. She feels Adam will be available once Helen uses him (as she does all her boyfriends) and tosses him by the wayside. Helen realizes that Claire fancies Adam (as does her mother) and she's upset with this. She accuses them of this while talking to them later, and storms out of the room. Claire's mother thinks Claire needs a fling in her life, after what she has gone through. She also feels Helen needs some humility and that a little hardship in life, like losing out on a handsome guy may do her some good. After being smitten with Adam, who is twenty-four years old, Claire, who is twenty-nine, realizes she has not thought about her husband James for approximately three hours this evening. This is amazing to her.

In chapter twelve, Claire feels she must start acting even more responsible. She realizes she has some life issues to deal with. There are the practicalities of splitting up with James to contend with - money, child custody, sharing of possessions. She decides she will not sell her share of their flat to him. Claire doesn't want James and Denise living in the flat that was her marital home. She begins to worry about money - how will she support Kate on her salary alone. Claire reminisces about the good times with James. Claire now knows it's time to call James. She's afraid that if she does, and they discuss practicalities of splitting up, then it truly means her marriage is over. She fears this, as she still loves James and wants him back, even though she is progressing through the healing process. Claire does call James at his London office. The receptionist informs her that James is away for a week. Claire fears he is away living it up in the Caribbean or something. She cries when she tells her mother the news that James is away, and her mother consoles her.

In chapter thirteen Claire decides it's time to meet up with her friend from college, Laura, who lives in Dublin. Laura, Judy, and Claire all attended college together and have remained friends. Claire and Laura meet at a pub in downtown Dublin. This is Claire's first social outing as a single woman in five years. She and Laura discuss James, Kate, and Claire's plans in life now. As they talk, Claire begins to feel depressed. She is losing her self-confidence that was beginning to build up once again. She feels like a jilted and desperate woman as she sits in the pub. Laura consoles and reassures her that this feeling will pass; that she experienced this a year ago when she broke up with her boyfriend Frank. Claire feels better and goes to the bar to get more drinks. At the bar, she runs into Adam, Helen's boyfriend. He joins her and Laura at their table. They talk and she learns more about his life as a twenty-four year old student among seventeen and eighteen year old students.

At the end of the night, Claire offers Adam a ride home. He accepts as he has missed the last bus. At his place, Adam invites Claire in for tea. She accepts. They talk over tea



and he invites her to go to the gym with him the next afternoon. She accepts this offer as well. Claire then leaves for the night, and as she drives home, she begins to feel guilty. She feels guilty that she neglected Kate this evening. She feels guilty that she has accepted an invitation to go out with her sister's boyfriend. She decides she will call James on Monday. She had a lovely evening with Laura and Adam, but Claire is now feeling depressed.

Claire is preparing to go and meet Adam at the gym in chapter fourteen. She knows she has to call her bank, as she needs money to live. She also knows that she needs to call a lawyer to get her affairs in order concerning her marriage with James and the disposition of property, custody of Kate, and all of that. However, her concern right now is meeting Adam and how she looks in her gym outfit that she took from her sister Rachel's old room. Claire feels guilty about meeting Adam. She arrives at the gym and proceeds to tell him that she can't go through with their meeting, as she's a married woman. Adam replies that he doesn't want to make moves on her - he wants to be her friend. Claire's embarrassed for having pre-conceived notions. Adam is a touch annoyed over her jumping to conclusions and he acts a little cold to her in the gym. Afterwards they meet at the cafe in the gym complex and the atmosphere is better. They laugh and talk, with no tension between them. Claire suddenly says she has to leave as she didn't realize it was after seven p.m. She speeds home to find out her mother has fed and changed Kate. Claire goes up to see her daughter and looks down upon Kate as she sleeps. Claire realizes that her marriage to James did produce a miracle.

In chapter fifteen Claire stays home on the Friday night and watches television with her mother. The phone rings and Claire leaves the room to answer it. It's Adam, who asks to see her again. Claire says she's going into town tomorrow to buy clothes and that he can meet her for a coffee. She will bring Kate as well. Adam is all for this and they agree to meet. Claire goes back to the room to watch television with her mother and is afraid to tell her who was on the phone when her mother asks.

Chapter 11 to Chapter 15 Analysis

There is further foreshadowing of Claire meeting up with Adam as the reader progresses through this section of *Watermelon*. Claire feels smitten with Adam. Her mother notices this and Helen does as well. Claire obviously has made this apparent. The reader can see that she is healing from the hurt of her husband abandoning her and her child. This is because Claire has not thought of James much since Adam arrived for supper. Her thoughts are now on another man, not her husband.

The fragility of Claire's healing is also apparent in this section of the story. She is taking concrete steps to move on with her life. She is even planning a meeting with James to go over the legalities of splitting up. However, she still loves James and wants him back, even as she senses that she may never get him back. Her fragile emotional state is evident when she rings James' office and a receptionist informs her that he is away. She feels he's away on an exotic trip with his lover. She cries over this and the reader senses that there is much healing still ahead for Claire.



The author conveys Claire's increasing desire for Adam in this section of the novel. Claire goes out with her friend Laura and meets Adam in a bar. She offers him a ride home and accepts his invitation up to his flat. Nothing sexual occurs, but Adam does invite her out the next day to go to the gym, and she accepts. There is foreshadowing here that future meetings may result in physical intimacy. However, the reader also gets a more vivid insight into Claire's state of mind. This is because she feels guilty for going out to a pub instead of being home with Kate. She also feels guilty about accepting an invitation from Adam, whom her sister Helen may be trying to develop a love relationship with as well.

Claire's ambivalence in pursuing other relationships is evident; as she knows that she must call her husband and discuss their situation. The reader can sense the moral arguments going on in Claire's mind. The reader sees that Claire does have moral underpinnings embedded into her psyche through her family and culture. Claire values marriage, and her oath to being faithful to James, as she is still a married woman. The reader can see that on the horizon, her feelings for Adam will conflict with her desire to uphold her wedding vows.



Chapter 16 to Chapter 20

Chapter 16 to Chapter 20 Summary

Chapter sixteen finds Claire heading out to shop for clothes with her daughter Kate in tow. She is looking for clothes so she can impress Adam - and, it was the excuse she used when he asked her the day before what she was doing today. Again, she charges everything on a credit card so James will have to pay. Claire admits to herself that she has a thing for Adam; she fancies him. She feels guilty because she still has feelings for her husband James, despite him dumping her for another woman. Claire meets Adam for coffee. They sit and eat buns and drink as Adam holds and plays with Kate. Three girls notice Adam and come over to talk to him. They pull up chairs and chat with Adam about a party held the night before. They chat, and Claire feels left out. She takes Kate from Adam and says she has to go. Adam's surprised at this. Claire feels she's acting spoiled and childish, but she wants Adam's undivided attention. As she leaves, Adam goes after her and tells her he's sorry. He says the three girls are nice and all, but he didn't really want to spend time talking to them. He says he didn't know how to get them to leave without sounding rude. He says to Claire that he will see her soon, as she decides she will leave right now. He kisses Claire gently on the forehead. She's ecstatic inside over this.

In chapter seventeen Laura visits Claire on a Sunday afternoon and they discuss their respective lives. Laura has a teenage lover who she's biding time with in between more serious relationships. Laura discusses Adam with Claire and suggests she pursue him. When Claire says she will, Laura expresses shock, as she feels it's something Claire could never really do as she's a one-woman man - and her man is still legally James. After Laura leaves, Claire receives a call from Adam. She questions him on whether Helen is his girlfriend. Adam expresses shock, wondering if Claire takes him for some immoral man who is trying to date two sisters at once - a two-timer. Adam lets her know that he's not that type of person. He explains to Claire that he called to suggest a good movie for her to watch tonight on TV. He also says that he will see her soon. Claire is now more anxious than ever to be with Adam, as she knows he has no designs on Helen, other than being a friend with her.

In chapter eighteen Claire makes a trip to the doctor to have her six-week post-natal check-up. Kate is having a check-up as well. The results for both of them are fine. Claire asks the doctor when she can have sex again. She blurts this out and is embarrassed for doing so. Back at home, Claire waits for Adam to call. The day goes by and he doesn't call. She's impatient for his call and snips at her mother who asks why's she's so gloomy. She forgets to call James this day as well, it being a Monday and he is due back at work in London. After supper, she goes to talk to Helen in her room. She's hoping Helen will talk about Adam. Claire is hoping Adam will call tonight now. Anna comes into Helen's room with numerous chocolate bars and they all proceed to munch away on them.



Chapter nineteen shows Claire waking up and going downstairs where an argument ensues between her mother and Helen. Helen is looking for lost clothing items as she's going to Belfast for two days on a college trip. She's blaming others for the missing items. Claire hopes that Helen will mention something about Adam before she heads out on her trip to Belfast. However, Helen doesn't say a word about him. Claire ponders how she finds it strange that she hasn't thought about James the last few days. Her thoughts are solely on Adam. Adam hasn't called her and she hasn't bothered to call her husband James either. She mopes around the house depressed this day.

In chapter twenty, Claire hasn't called James yet. She feels she's shirking her responsibilities concerning working out their affairs. She's feeling sad and alone. She finally calls his office, and again, he's not in. She decides to go shopping for clothes for Kate. When done she 'happens' by the coffee shop she went to previously with Adam. She lingers at the shop for an hour and a half and Adam does finally come in. Adam comes over to her to say hello to her. He then says he will go and get some coffee. He takes a long time to return so Claire thinks he's bolted on her.

He does return after a bit; there were problems with the cashier and her cash, not anything that involved Adam, though. Claire's angry now and gets up to leave. She thinks he really didn't want to talk to her. Adam gets upset that she's upset and trying to leave on him again, like the last time they were here. He compels Claire to sit down and talk to him. She relents. They discuss things and both of them conclude that they want to be with each other. Adam invites Claire to his place on Sunday evening for supper. He says he will cook for Claire, as his roommates will be away on the weekend.

Chapter 16 to Chapter 20 Analysis

This section of the novel highlights different aspects of Claire's mindset at this stage of her recovery from her marriage break up. She, as before, continues to charge any purchases she makes, like clothes for Kate and such, to the credit card that she and James have. He will get the bill in London and will have to pay the charges. This shows the reader one way that Claire is exacting revenge on James.

Claire's jealous streak is also evident again in this section of the story. While at a cafe with Adam, three college-age girls invade Claire and Adam's space and hijack the conversation away from Claire so that Adam talks to them. Claire is angry and jealous of them and cuts her visit at the cafe short with Adam. She desires Adam all for herself as she is looking for love in her life again. As she leaves, Adam kisses her forehead. Claire feels intense emotions over this, and the reader senses that Claire has a deep need for love and intimacy.

Claire learns from Adam that he has no interest in dating Helen. Claire is happy that she can pursue Adam for herself. The reader senses that she will take more actions to further her relationship with him. When Claire goes for a check-up at the Doctors she asks how soon she can have sex again. This gives the reader insight into her thought processes and how she is craving physical intimacy with Adam. This foreshadows future

sexual relations between the two. It also foreshadows how this will affect Claire wanting to reconcile with her husband.

Claire's impatience is also evident in this section of the novel. When Adam doesn't call her in the few days after their cafe meeting, she becomes restless and irritable. This shows the reader how important Adam is to her. In fact, Claire has not thought about James for days and the reader can see that she is getting on with her life, and that this life definitely may not include her husband. She has not tried to call him and her thoughts have been focusing on Adam. She feels depressed that Adam has not yet called her. She's still feeling unhappy over her marriage, even though she's prepared to face life without James.

Adam eventually meets up with Claire at the cafe again, and he invites Claire to his flat for a Sunday supper. They will be alone, he tells Claire. This foreshadows a soon-to-be sexual relationship between Adam and Claire. The reader can see that Claire's life is becoming more complicated as she deals with a marriage break-up and a new relationship at the same time.



Chapter 21 to Chapter 25

Chapter 21 to Chapter 25 Summary

Chapter twenty-one shows Claire preparing herself for her Sunday date/dinner with Adam. She leaves Kate in Anna's care. Laura calls her for last minute moral support and advice. Claire then heads out to Adam's place.

In chapter twenty-two Claire and Adam eat some of the supper Adam made. However, they are nervous with anticipation for one another in the physical sense. Therefore, both of them eat very little. They become amorous with each other at the dinner table. They decide to consummate their relationship and go upstairs to Adam's room, where they proceed to make love.

In chapter twenty-three, Claire returns home from Adam's and finds her parents are waiting up for her. They inform Claire that James rang. He's in Dublin, staying at a hotel. James wants to see Claire. Claire says she wants to see James -she owes it to Kate. Her mother asks where she was - getting home after 3 a.m., Claire says bluntly that she was having sex with Adam. Her mother stands there in shock, not knowing whether to believe her.

In chapter twenty-four, Claire considers her situation as she lies in bed. James will call this morning at 10 a.m. She wonders whether he wants to reconcile or tie up loose ends so he can move on with Denise. She thinks about Adam. In the morning, she dresses up Kate. She wants James to adore Kate and see what he's missing. She also wants James to want them both back. Anna gives her a crystal to put in her pocket for good luck for when Claire meets James. Claire calls her friend Laura for advice, but Laura's in tears because her nineteen-year-old lover dumped her. Laura can't talk, as she has to get to work, so Claire garners no advice from her. Then Helen, Anna, and Claire's mother proceed to fuss and fawn over Claire - to get her ready to meet James after he calls at 10 a.m. As the chapter closes, the phone rings.

Chapter twenty-five shows it is James on the phone. Claire and he tread their conversation with decorum. Claire is a touch icy with him. He asks if he can see her. She says yes, which surprises him. She wants to meet him on her turf, so she asks him to come out to her parent's place at 11:30 a.m. He agrees and the meeting is on.

Chapter 21 to Chapter 25 Analysis

This section of the novel deals with the themes of friendship, yearning, and quality of life. As Claire prepares for her dinner date with Adam, her friend Laura calls her to offer moral support. The reader sees that Claire values her longstanding friendships, and her close friends value them as well. Laura, even after Claire has been away for six years, is still close enough to Claire that she desires the best for her. Claire and she have



made a point of seeking each other out now that Claire's back in Dublin, and this shows the importance they place on keeping their relationship strong.

In this section of the story, Adam and Claire have supper together alone at Adam's apartment. The reader can feel the sexual tension in the air as Adam and Claire eat and talk. They do consummate their relationship upstairs in Adam's bedroom, and the yearning they each have for affection and physical intimacy is apparent. The reader senses that they both need companionship and that they yearn for a quality loving relationship.

In addition, this section of Watermelon conveys Claire's increasing confidence as a woman who is recovering from a deep emotional setback. When she returns home after lovemaking with Adam, her mother asks her where she was so late. Claire replies that she was out for the evening having sex with Adam. She then proceeds up the stairs to go to bed. Her bold and brash attitudes are apparent here and this is a departure from her previous feelings of humiliation.

In this section of the story, Claire also reveals her continuing ambivalent feelings towards James. She wants to reconcile with him. However, she wants to pursue an exciting relationship with the younger Adam as well. The reader can see that she has decisions to make as to what direction she will take her life. She cannot have the best of both worlds. She has to choose one or the other. Claire has a desire for a man who truly desires her.

The reader can also see that Claire's desire is for what's best for her daughter Kate as well. This is why Claire is still considering reconciliation with James. She wants Kate to know, and be with, her natural father. Claire wants the best quality of life for Kate and knows that a stable home environment with both parents around is best for her. Claire needs this home environment to be one where James and she are happy as they once were.



Chapter 26 to Chapter 30

Chapter 26 to Chapter 30 Summary

In chapter twenty-six, James comes to meet Claire at her parents home. They are civil to one another and James gets to see Kate for the first time. He recoils uncomfortably when she won't stop crying in his arms. Claire gets down to business, asking James if he came with all the proper documentation to begin to settle their affairs. He, seeming confused and unprepared, says "no." Claire's surprised as this as he's usually efficient. She tells him to go back to his hotel and have documents faxed over from London, concerning the deed to their flat and such. This is so they can begin settling their affairs for divorce proceedings. James says he will. He leaves, but seems bewildered.

In chapter twenty-seven, Claire's sisters, and her mother, come downstairs to get the details of Claire's meeting with James. Claire's crying because James did not suggest a reconciliation. She's not sure she wants one, but she at least wants the choice as to whether she will accept an offer of reconciliation from James. Claire goes to bed for a nap as she's exhausted from the meeting. In the afternoon, James rings. He says he can't find a place that will accept faxes for him for the deeds to their flat. However, they are going out by postal mail. He suggests that he and Claire meet in the evening for supper to talk further about their situation. Claire accepts the invitation and dresses to the nines, with her hair up, to go meet him.

In chapter twenty-eight, Claire meets James in a restaurant. He is taken aback somewhat by how ravishing she looks. They talk, and he proceeds to inform her that he's left Denise and is living back in his and Claire's flat in London. As their conversation progresses, Claire learns from James why he really left her. He says it was because he always had to be the responsible 'doer' in the marriage and that Claire looked upon life as one huge party and was so demanding. James says that she demanded constant attention and constant reinforcement. This tired him and he felt Claire never really cared about his needs. She is shocked at what James is saying to her. She feels they have traded places - that he's the victim now, not her. She leaves him at the restaurant, saying she has to go home and digest all this information conveyed to her by him.

In chapter twenty-nine, Claire arrives back home. At first, she's in tears, but then settles down a bit and relates the events of her meeting with James to Helen, Anna, and her mother. She explains how her selfishness, according to James, caused James to leave her. They try to console her, saying that she is not as bad as James is making her out to be. Claire ponders how James is probably right. She admits that she finds it difficult to admit she's wrong.

In chapter thirty James calls Claire. He converses in a friendlier tone to Claire. Claire informs him that the deed to their flat arrived by postal mail and that he should come over so they can proceed with dividing the spoils from their marriage. James, coldly, says he will come over, and he hangs up the phone abruptly. James arrives and as



Claire begins to go over the legalities of splitting up, James tells her to stop. He thinks she's putting on an act to show him how grown-up and responsible she is. He informs Claire that he still loves her, that he thought he loved Denise, but doesn't. He says he wants Claire to return to London with him to go back to their old way of life. He says that he knows Claire's trying to improve and that they can work things out. Claire says she needs time to think about all of this. She's not sure she wants to go back with him. She's torn. She doesn't want to lose him, but doesn't want to go back to him just yet. After he leaves, Claire's mother offers her advice. Her mother says that forgiveness must rule the day - that it can cause reconciliation and make for a stronger marriage.

Claire decides she will go back to James and try to make it work. It will also be best for Kate, she feels. She fears she will have to learn how to live with James all over again. She feels their roles are reversed and that she cannot be so carefree and funny and "the life-of-the-party" anymore. She also wonders if she will be able to lean on him, or will he feel uncared for when she does this. Claire phones James and informs him of her decision to return to him. He sounds pompous and self-righteous and almost lectures her on how she will try harder then and how there will be no more 'Denise's' or anyone else if things work out with Claire changing her behavior. Overall, Claire is resentful of his assuredness over her return, and his tone of voice.

Chapter 26 to Chapter 30 Analysis

As the novel progresses in this section, the reader sees further evidence of Claire's bold and confident manner. She meets up with James and is very calm, cool, collected, and businesslike. She presses James on issues concerning dividing their marital property. She is taking charge of her situation with James and the reader can see that Claire is not letting James control the meeting.

However, the reader still sees evidence of Claire's underlying ambivalence and fragility of emotions. She's upset, after meeting with James, because he did not suggest reconciliation. It's obvious Claire has not worked out all her issues concerning whether she wants to leave him for good and be with Adam, or be with James. She and James agree to meet for dinner later to discuss further their relationship and such.

They will meet in a restaurant. Claire decides to dress as sexy as she can. This shows that Claire understands the power of her femininity. She is not afraid to display her attractiveness to win her man back. She also presented herself as best she could to Adam, previously, on their date. Claire is confident in her attractiveness when she has a goal in mind. However, at other times, when her confidence is low, she conveys that she can sometimes have a poor self-image.

Claire's ping-ponging back and forth from confidence to second-guessing herself displays itself after her dinner meeting with James. At this meeting, James essentially blames her for his affair. He says her "way" caused him to run into the arms of another woman. He says she's demanding and selfish and that he's tired of this. Claire goes home and ponders this meeting. She begins to think that James may be right. She



second-guesses herself as a person because of what he said to her at the dinner meeting.

This foreshadows more turmoil ahead for Claire, as her marital break-up is not so black and white anymore in her mind. Her husband isn't the only villain in all of this, she feels now that she is too. This is a shock to her. The reader can sense that Claire is now confused and unsure of what course of action she should take concerning her relationship with James. James wants to reconcile, he finally admits this to Claire, but he wants to reconcile on his terms. Claire is unsure of whether she wants to acquiesce to his demands for her to change her "ways." Claire's mother chimes in at this juncture of the book and the theme of forgiveness is prevalent. Claire's mother says that forgiveness is of paramount importance and is the balm that will save Claire and James' marriage.



Chapter 31 to Chapter 35

Chapter 31 to Chapter 35 Summary

In chapter thirty-one Helen tells Claire that she's mental for going back to James. Claire does not feel happy about going back to him. She feels manipulated and as if James wouldn't take no for an answer. She feels he has her trapped now. She feels she has to be perfect all of the time for him now or he will leave her again. Claire's mother tells her that Adam rang several times. Claire's mother told Adam that Claire was out with her husband. Claire wants to talk to Adam before she leaves for London to thank him for being so nice and making her feel so beautiful. The James calls. He's back in London and asks whether Claire's decided what day she will return to London. Claire says she has not yet decided. They end their call and immediately thereafter Adam calls. He's not too happy that Claire's heading back to be with James in London, as Helen told him this news. He feels Claire isn't doing what's best for her. Claire doesn't want to go back to James the more she thinks about her situation. More and more she desires and wants to be with Adam. Adam asks Claire whether she has any self-respect. He's upset that she believed James' terrible explanation for what went wrong in their marriage and why he had an affair. Adam tells Claire he's ending it with her, that she cannot have his phone number and that they cannot even be friends.

Chapter thirty-two shows Claire trying to forget about Adam. She tries to convince herself that all will be well when she resumes her marriage in London with James. She ponders how she will miss her family, even though they drive her crazy. She phones James at his office in London, and his partner George answers. He seems to be laughing at Claire as he discusses her returning to patch things up with James. She feels she's a laughingstock. However, then she realizes that George is honestly relaying his discussions with James. He tells Claire how James felt destroyed without Claire and asked George for advice on how to win Claire back. Claire wonders why James didn't seem destroyed when he came to Dublin. He was sanctimonious and arrogant. George further relates that James felt he was too boring for Claire and that he felt threatened by her vitality. Claire wonders why James told George one thing, but in Dublin told her another, in effect blaming her, even though he really blamed himself.

In chapter thirty-three Claire calls her friend Judy to explain what's going on between her and James. Judy can't believe Claire fell for James' explanation. James told Michael, Judy's boyfriend, that he's crazy about Claire. James always thought he'd lose Claire. Claire wants James to apologize to her, not blame her. She knows she's not as bad as James is making her out to be. She phones him and says she wants to meet him tonight at 8 p.m. She will fly out to London from Dublin without Kate. Helen arrives home and informs Claire that Adam has reunited with an old girlfriend from awhile back. Adam and this woman have a child, a girl, from their previous liaison. Claire is jolted by this news. She must however bear down and head to the airport and on to London for her meeting with James.



In chapter thirty-four, Claire goes to her London flat and surprises James, who wasn't expecting her. He thought she would return to London the following Tuesday. She lays into him over his ruse of blaming her for his affair. They have it out and James turns on her in anger. He accuses her of the things he accused her of in Dublin. Claire realizes he will never admit he's wrong; he will never take responsibility for the affair and the harm it did to their marriage. She makes the final decision to end their marriage and he is shocked. He says she will never make it without him. She closes the door behind her and heads back to Dublin. He can't believe she's doing this.

Chapter thirty-five shows Claire, full of emotion and swirling thoughts as she takes the tube to Heathrow airport. She takes a flight back to Dublin. She arrives at her parents' place and everyone is asleep. She quietly takes Kate out of her father and mother's room and then goes to sleep with Kate in her arms.

Chapter 31 to Chapter 35 Analysis

As the novel moves into its final sections, the reader can see that Claire is at a crucial moment in her life. The quality of the rest of her life will hinge on the decisions she makes now. Claire really doesn't want to go back to James. Deep in her heart and psyche, she wants Adam. Claire feels that reconciliation with James is better for Kate, though. She understands the importance of a stable home life with both parents at home raising their child.

The theme of despair is a highlight of this section of *Watermelon*. Claire despairs she may have to sacrifice her relationship with Adam, who holds her in very high esteem. She despairs she will be entering an intolerable situation should she move back to London to be with James. She is not happy with James's explanation for his affair. She knows she is not the devil he is making her out to be. She wants James to admit he was wrong so they can move forward and try to heal their marriage. Claire's inner turmoil is on display even more in this section of the novel. This foreshadows the final decisions Claire must make as to what direction hers and Kate's life will take.

The power of family bonds is prevalent in this section of the novel as well. Claire knows she will miss her family when she moves back to London. They were all there for her, especially her mother. She realizes how much she loves her family and how important they are to her. In Claire's case, "You can always go home" rings true.

In addition, Claire's jealous streak rears its head again. Helen informs Claire that James is seeing his old girlfriend again and that he has a baby with her. Claire is in shock over this latest development and this is not what she wanted to hear concerning Adam. This foreshadows possibly more despair for Claire if she chooses not to go back and reconcile with James. She may not have Adam available to pursue a relationship with anyways, and she will be alone again.

This section does conclude finally, with Claire meeting James in London, where she makes the decision to end her marriage. She cannot live with a man who blames her for



his affair. James cannot admit he was wrong. Faith is a theme in this decision to end her marriage. Claire has faith in herself that she can look out for herself and her daughter, without James. She will let events take their course in her life, without James at her side. She is emotional about this decision, and still even wonders if she's doing the right thing.



Chapter 36 to Chapter 39

Chapter 36 to Chapter 39 Summary

In chapter thirty-six Claire is pestered all the next day with calls from James. Finally, her father pleads with her to talk to James. All day, Claire's mother has fielded the calls. Claire acquiesces and James tries all arguments to get Claire to change her mind and come back to him. He tells her he'll do anything to get her back. He tells her to think about it. She says she will. She is doing this out of concern for Kate's welfare. However, two days later she lets James know that she will not return to him. She doesn't love him anymore. Over the days, James continues to call and Claire answers and is nice and civil to him. She's sad, but knows their marriage is over.

Chapter thirty-seven has Claire moving on with her life. She asks for custody of Kate and James says he won't fight it if he has ample access to her. Claire is happy that Kate will have a relationship with her father. James will stay in their flat until they sell it. Judy helps Claire find a new place to live in London, as Claire will return to her job in the city once her maternity time is over.

In chapter thirty-eight Claire spends the ensuing days in thought, whenever she has a chance to lounge in her parent's backyard garden area. She thinks of the joys and experience of meeting and getting to know Adam. She is thankful for that. She begins to prepare for her return to London. She knows she will miss her family, especially her mother who's been a major help. The week before Claire is set to leave for London, James calls her. He informs her that he's involved with a new woman who is twenty-two years old. He's hoping Claire is jealous, but she is not. Claire ends the phone call. She goes outside to the garden where she and Anna are sunbathing with Kate. Then Helen appears shortly thereafter, with Adam. Adam's going to help Helen study for her exams. Adam and Claire act like polite strangers to one another, which Claire finds weird considering they were physically intimate with one another not too long ago. Claire leaves Helen and Adam and goes inside the house with Kate.

Chapter thirty-nine shows Adam going up to Claire's room where she is playing with Kate. He wants to explain to Claire about his girlfriend and their child. Hannah was a girl that Adam had a relationship with for approximately two years. They broke up. During meetings afterwards, they would end up having sex and Hannah in fact did get pregnant. Today, Adam is now friends with Hannah and has access to his child - a girl named Molly. He is now involved in Molly's life. He is not having a romantic relationship with Hannah again. He once again lets Claire know how wonderful he thinks she is. He tells Claire he's going to go to London as well. He has a job there as well now. He says he hopes they can meet each other there and babysit for one another, alluding smoothly to them being together in London. He will bring his daughter Molly to London and care for her as Hannah is taking a year off to travel. Hannah is letting Adam have Molly for a year. Adam tells Claire that he missed her. He bends to kiss her and at that moment, Helen walks into the room. She sees Adam holding Claire's hand and both of them



ready to kiss. She bursts out laughing - saying there's nothing wrong with Claire, but she's so old and also that she looks terrified as she prepares to kiss Adam. Helen continues to laugh as she goes out into the hallway, as she finds the whole situation funny. Claire instructs Adam to go and talk to Helen. Later Helen comes back and wishes the best for Claire and Adam. She expresses that she hopes the two of them are very happy together. This touches Claire and she gets teary. Helen, true to her personality, also informs Claire that it's a good thing she ended up with Adam, as Helen bet Melissa Saint that she wouldn't team up with Adam and have sex with him before the end of the summer. She will win a hundred quid now because Claire has Adam, and this will prevent Melissa Saint from having him. The novel ends on this note, with Helen satisfied that everything has worked out well.

Chapter 36 to Chapter 39 Analysis

Claire shows in this final section of the novel that her decision to leave James is in fact set in stone. She doesn't love him anymore. The theme of sadness is evident in this section of the book. She's sad that their marriage had to end, and end the way it did. Claire accepts the finality of the decision and the reader can see that although people desire perfect relationships, the reality does not always align with their dreams.

This section of the novel also shows Claire moving away from anger and feelings of vengeance against James. She is reasonable, civil, and dignified in her conversations with James. They do work out the property, and custodial issues concerning Kate. In addition, the value of true friends is apparent in this section. Judy, Claire's other best friend, helps Claire acquire an apartment in London, as Claire will eventually have to return there to work, when her maternity leave is up.

In this section of *Watermelon*, the themes of thankfulness and moving on are on display. Claire thinks about how she enjoyed her time with Adam, and is thankful that she met him, enjoyed friendship, and physical intimacy with him. She is thankful for this even though she understands that he is now with his old girlfriend. The theme of moving on with one's life is apparent when James calls to tell Claire he has a new twenty-two-year-old girlfriend. He wants Claire to be jealous. She is not jealous, however; she is beyond this emotion now, and does not let this news bother her. She has a new direction in life that she is embracing wholeheartedly.

Watermelon ends with Claire learning from Adam that he desires her and is only friends with his ex-girlfriend. Adam makes it apparent that he wants to pursue a deeper relationship with Claire. Themes of new life highlight the end of the novel. Claire will return to London and live in a new flat with Kate. Adam, who will move to London as well to pursue a job, will be able to spend time with her there. They will not move in together right now, but they will spend time together and see where their relationship goes. This foreshadows a point beyond the confines of the novel where Adam and Claire may end up living together or getting married. The theme of love ends the novel too. Claire and Adam see the potential of them having a loving relationship. In addition,

Claire at the very end of the novel sees the love her brash younger sister Helen really does have for her.



Characters

Claire Webster

Claire Webster is the main character in the novel *Watermelon*. The novel is her story, as she relates it to the reader from her point-of-view solely. She is a twenty-nine year old woman who lives in London, England with her husband James Webster. She works for a charity organization there and feels she has a wonderful life. She feels this way, even more so, now that she has given birth to a baby girl. However, she soon finds that her life is not so wonderful after all, when her husband informs her, a couple of hours after the birth of her child, that he is leaving her for another woman.

What ensues for the rest of the story is Claire learning more about herself, her husband, and relationships in general. She returns to her home town of Dublin, Ireland, and settles in with her family. She needs to sort out her situation, and needs the support of her family, as she now has a new baby to take care of, with no husband in sight. As Claire proceeds to recover from the shock of her marital breakup, she goes through a range of emotions. She experiences feelings of rage, anger, is depressed, lonely, sad, and more. She does renew her zest for life, and belief in the power of love, when she meets a young man named Adam, a friend of her younger sister Helen. All the while, she debates whether to rebuild her relationship with her husband.

Watermelon is a life lesson, through the novel's protagonist Claire.

Claire is a character who is resilient and who is willing to give people second chances. She is an idealist by nature and wants to try to save her marriage. She believes there was too much good in her and James' marriage to toss it away so easily. She also wants to give her daughter, who she has named Kate, a fair chance in life by having her know the love and security of having her natural father around.

The reader will come to know Claire as a woman who analyzes situations and alternatives. She's a fighter, willing to battle for what she believes in, while making life adjustments as are necessary to survive. In the end, she is nobody's fool. She desires true, reciprocal love and is willing to take risks to ensure she can fulfill this want and need.

James Webster

James is Claire's husband and another significant driving force in the novel. James is an accountant in London and supports his wife well. They live in a nice flat and have an upscale lifestyle that is befitting a couple of their dual income bracket, both with healthy careers. James is conservative by nature. He is very organized, somewhat of a perfectionist, and very responsible. He assumes his duties as a husband as is expected.



However, smoldering below the surface of his personality is a troubled man. James is not entirely happy in his marriage. He feels he shoulders all of the responsibilities of the marriage. He feels that he is the serious one and that Claire is too happy-go-lucky, and too much of a party person who only desires a good time...all the time. He feels she is too demanding and that he always has to worry about meeting her needs. He says he feels exhausted by this. He uses this as his excuse for having an affair.

James confides to others that he deeply loves Claire and wants her back. His close friends know that he never felt worthy of Claire; he always felt that she would be the one to have an affair and leave him. He always felt that he was too boring for Claire. He is the one who has an affair and blames Claire for it. James is a stubborn man. He will not admit that he is wrong. He tries to blame others for his actions. In the case of his affair, he says that if Claire changes her ways, then they can reconcile. He does not feel he has to change, and he makes it out that he is the victim, not Claire. James is a man who, while a reputable professional, is less than reputable in his personal life. He, right to the end of the novel, looks for ways to get Claire back. His attempts are more to meet his needs and wants, without any concern for Claire's.

Adam

Adam is a twenty-four year-old young man who attends college with Claire's eighteen year-old sister Helen. He is a strapping, handsome and very congenial and polite man. He immediately takes a liking to Claire the moment he meets her, the day Helen brings him home to help her with her college studies.

Adam, being a bit older than most of the students in his program, does not really involve himself with the typical college shenanigans of his classmates. He's not a "player" with the women, even though a myriad of them fawn over and compete for him at the college. In fact, Adam does have a baby from a previous long-term relationship. He is not with the woman anymore, but will take care of their child for a year as his ex-girlfriend takes a year off to travel.

Adam is a young man who is a one-woman man. He desires to pursue a relationship with Claire and he is a man who treats women with respect and tenderness. He has his own past to deal with and he is accepting his responsibilities as a father. He is striving to improve his lot in life by pursuing college studies. Adam is a man who is not arrogant, and he does not flaunt his good looks. He has genuine concern for others and is respectful to, and a good friend to, his younger classmates as well.

The only flaw that Adam exhibits is impatience with Claire whenever she is unsure of whether to continue to pursue a relationship with him. He gets upset with Claire when she will not stay still long enough for him to have involved conversations with her. He really wants to get to know her better and gets a little angry when she gets her feelings hurt easily and walks away from him.



Claire's Mother

Claire's mother is a caring woman, who also is nobody's fool. She has her husband under control, doing it in a subtle way, so that he's at her disposal, almost by rote, without even realizing it. Claire notices this skill of her mother. Her mother cares deeply for her family and will do anything to protect them. The one thing she will not, and cannot do properly, is cook. She always keeps an ample supply of frozen food on hand to satiate her family's hunger.

Claire's mother wants to see Claire reconcile with James. She believes that forgiveness is a major part of life and that forgiveness covers a host of problems. She believes that Claire forgiving James will strengthen their marriage in the end. The mother dotes after Claire's baby, and she is a great help to Claire, helping her get through this difficult time in her life. Her mother is also supportive of her other daughters who still live at home, even though they can be extremely trying at times.

Claire's mother is also adaptable when it comes to her opinions. Once she understands more about James' attitude towards Claire, she sympathizes more with Claire and understands her reasons why she may not go back to him. She is still an idealist, though; who believes a couple should do all they can to make their marriage work.

Claire's Father

Claire's father is a man who supports his family as the breadwinner of the household. He is a hard-working man who enjoys the simple pleasures of life. He enjoys watching his sports and other television programming and doesn't make demands on others in the family. His wife and daughters make demands on him, and he's the type of man who may grumble occasionally but always acquiesces to their demands. He is supportive of Claire and tends to favor her side of the story in her situation with James. He feels she doesn't have to agree to see James, just because he's in Dublin. He is protective of his daughter, whereas her mother is also, but feels she must meet James. Claire's father takes a matter-of-fact practical approach to life and its situations. He loves his family, and while they may take advantage of him, he typically puts aside his needs to ensure that he meets the needs of the females of the household first.

Helen

Helen is Claire's eighteen year-old sister. She still lives at home and attends a local college. She is a feisty and spirited young woman and very beautiful. She is the type of young woman who causes men to swoon and she uses this 'power' to her advantage. When Helen requires help at school, she has no trouble getting it. Numerous men, who see themselves as potential boyfriends, essentially fall over each other to get to her. She then accepts their offers of help and consequently has to do less work herself. Helen also has this effect on her father. Despite his protestations, she normally convinces him to do things, like go get takeout food when she wants it. She also



convinces him to drive her where she needs to go, whenever she needs to get there. Helen is bold, brash, and sassy. However, she is also, in her own way, very loving, and very concerned for her sister Claire. She does all she can to ensure Claire is looking her best for her meetings with James. She feels for Claire's plight and feels Claire should not reconcile with James because of his affair. Helen is a young woman who is not afraid of voicing her strong opinions on this and a variety of other subjects.

Anna

Anna is another younger sister of Claire, who lives a more non-traditional lifestyle. She uses alcohol and drugs and is involved with mysticism and the like. She doesn't hold down a regular job, but tends to move from job to job. She has more of an ethereal, flighty personality, and is a more 'back to nature' type person. Anna has artistic talents when it comes to crafts. She is often not at home, taking trips to music festivals and whatever for days at a time. Claire's mother never knows if Anna is coming or going. Anna is a woman who loves her family and she is a naive sort as well. She is not brash like Helen, and she looks to avoid controversy and confrontations. She cares for Claire and her well-being and offers Claire words of comfort during Claire's rough time. Claire appreciates these thoughtful kind words from Anna. Anna also devotes time, along with Helen, to helping Claire make herself look beautiful for her meetings with her husband James. Anna also loves Claire's baby and enjoys playing with her.

Judy

Judy is Claire's best friend, since they were both eighteen. Judy lives in London, England. She is the type of person who freely offers advice and support and practical help. She helps Claire with personal advice concerning her broken marriage. She also helps Claire pack up things at her flat and prepare for the trip back to Dublin with her baby daughter Kate. Judy is a friend who is there for other friends when they experience trouble.

Laura

Laura is Claire's other best friend. She still lives in Dublin and Claire confides in her when she returns to Dublin. Laura is a woman who engages in different relationships. Her current lover is a nineteen-year-old young man and Laura is eleven years older than he is. She's using him as a lover until she settles into a more long-term relationship with someone around her age. Laura is less conservative than Claire is. Laura also offers a sympathetic ear to Claire during her time of trouble. Laura meets up a few times with Claire to talk and discuss life with her.

Kate

Kate is Claire's baby daughter.



Denise

Denise is the woman James had an affair with in London. The reader does not meet her in the story, as there are only allusions and references made to her throughout the novel.

Mr. Andrucetti

Mr. Andrucetti is Denise's husband, also a victim of the affair between James and Denise. Claire meets him on the street as she gets into a cab to head to Heathrow and back to Dublin. They look at each other but say no words to one another.

George

George is James' professional partner. They work together as accountants, and he's a jovial sort. He is an open and forthright man. He tells Claire all about James' desire to reconcile with Claire. George is a friendly man who wants the best for James and Claire and he hopes they patch things up and can resume their lives together in happiness.



Objects/Places

London

Capital city of England.

Dublin

City in Ireland.

Tube

London subway system.

Heathrow

Airport in London, England.

Financial Times

British business newspaper.

Aer Lingus

Irish airline.

Flat

British term meaning apartment.

Cosmopolitan

Women's magazine.

Glastonbury

English town.



The Economist

News magazine.

Hello

British gossip magazine.

Trolley

Grocery buggy in a supermarket.

Grenada

Island in the Atlantic Ocean/Caribbean region.

Babygro

Baby clothes.

Knickers

Undergarments.

Jacuzzi

Jet-stream bath.

Beirut

City in Lebanon.

Cot

Baby's crib.

Belfast

City in Northern Ireland



Florence

City in Italy.

KitKat

Chocolate bar.

Deed

Legal document for land and property ownership.

Vatican

Roman Catholic Church headquarters.

Maldives

Tropical destination.

Pints

Beers.

Big Ben

Town clock in London.

Buckingham Palace

Where British Monarchy resides.

Nippon

Another name for Japan.

Carousels

Where baggage goes around on a conveyor belt at the airport.

Quid

Money.



Themes

Love

The major theme of *Watermelon* is love. Every major occurrence in the novel happens because of the search for love. Claire Webster loves her husband James, and though he abandoned her, her initial desire is to rekindle their relationship so they can continue in a loving relationship. James feels he is not getting the type of love he deserves in his relationship with Claire. He therefore pursues, what he thinks is love, in the arms of another woman.

Adam, Helen's college friend is also pursuing love. He is pursuing love with Claire, who in turn reciprocates, especially when she realizes her marriage is over. Adam also pursued love in a previous relationship whereby he had a child with another woman. He is now pursuing the love of his daughter through reconciling as a friend with his ex-girlfriend and agreeing to take care of their child for a year.

In *Watermelon*, love is the cause of the great joys and the lack of love is the cause of great anguish in characters' lives. Love is also exemplified by the way Claire's family rallies around her in her time of need. Her father, mother, and two sisters, support her in their own unique ways. Even brash and wily Helen, Claire's younger sister, exhibits her capacity for love to Claire by the end of the novel. She is happy Claire has ended up with Adam and wishes that they are happy together. Of course, Anna and Helen show their love for Claire by helping her get ready for her meetings with James. They desire for their sister to be happy and work to make her look her best. They do this out of sisterly love.

Claire's friend Judy shows her love for Claire by being a moral support to her, as does her friend Laura. In addition, Judy shows her love for her friend in practical ways, by helping Claire pack and get ready for her sojourn back home to Dublin, Ireland. No greater example of love occurs in the novel than Claire's immense love for her daughter Kate. Claire's motives and actions are always with the best interests of Kate in mind, throughout the novel. *Watermelon* is, in essence, a novel that concerns every individual's need for love, and the variety of ways that people seek love.

Getting Back to Our Roots in Difficult Times

This is a unique theme of the novel *Watermelon*. When her life comes crashing down due to her husband leaving her within a few hours after the birth of their daughter, Claire doesn't take too long afterward to decide that she will head back to her ancestral home in Dublin, Ireland. Claire, in her heart, knows that her family will help, comfort, and support her. She desires to deal with her situation on familiar ground - a sort of oasis away from the turmoil she is experiencing in London, England.



The novel seems to say to the reader that when times are tough, you can often tough it out with the help of family. You can also tough it out in surroundings where you formed many of your ideas, beliefs, and opinions as you matured into a young adult. Claire, although she loves London, her career there, her flat (apartment), and all, does not hesitate to head to Dublin to ponder her situation and heal emotionally.

The novel conveys to the reader that there is comfort in the familiar. This is even when the familiar can have its own set of issues. Back home in Dublin, Claire must put up with the peccadilloes of her parent's and her sisters. In addition, she has to deal with the issue of going back home and being treated like a child all over again by her parents, because of her vulnerable situation. However, once back home, Claire sees the value in having her family around her, especially her mother who helps her greatly.

The novel shows that going back to our roots can help center us so that we see our life situations in a new light. From the comfort of a birthplace location, a person can reacquaint themselves with their core beliefs and values and move on in renewing their life and improving their circumstances.

Resilience

Resilience is a theme in the novel *Watermelon*. It comes through subtly in the novel but is apparent nonetheless. Claire is resilient in the sense that she learns to accept her situation and eventually move on. She learns to accept her responsibilities as a now single parent. She learns to make the tough decisions concerning getting the legal proceedings going as applies to dividing up the marital property that she and James share. Claire is also resilient in exploring her feelings and thoughts and then taking the best course of action with the options she has. In other words, once the initial shock of her breakup and attendant trauma is past, she takes control of her life. Claire knows that she must now fend for herself and her child and that any decisions she makes must be with Kate's welfare at the forefront. Claire will not let fear of the future as a single mother keep her from doing what is best for her and her child. This is a new thought-process for Claire; one where she knows she cannot continually depend on others to make life easier for her.

Adam, whom Claire begins a relationship with in the novel, is also resilient. He is a young man who at a young age fathered a child and then afterward was shut out by his girlfriend and her family. This time in his life no doubt contributed to him abandoning school and career plans. However, now, a few years later, at the age of twenty-four, Adam is getting his act together. He is enrolled in college and working towards a diploma/degree so that he can secure a better job and future for himself. He is resilient in the sense that he knows he is of an age where he has to make something of his life. He makes the decisions and takes the actions necessary for accomplishing this.



Loss

Loss is a significant theme in the novel *Watermelon*. Claire experiences the loss of her husband and the breakup of her marriage. She also experiences the loss of a certain type of lifestyle in London, England. Even though she will return there, it will now be as a single mother in a new flat in a different area. Claire will no doubt lose other relationships she had in London, those that were because of her being married to James. As is typical in divorces, friends gained because of marriage to an individual are friends lost when a person separates from the individual. While this is not always the case, it does happen frequently. Claire will probably find that some friends she acquired through James will no longer keep in touch with her.

Loss was evident in Adam's life as well. He lost his relationship with his previous girlfriend, only to have it renewed in a platonic sense now. He lost access to the child he fathered, but is gaining her back now as well. Adam lost his youthful innocence through all of this. He was forced into maturing quickly. He also lost precious schooling years that he is now trying to make up.

James, Claire's husband, is experiencing loss due to his actions. He now realizes more than ever how important Claire is to him, but it's too late, the damage is irreparable. He must face life without her now, and he deals with this by running into the arms of another woman, a twenty-two year old. He has lost a way of life with Claire. He has also lost full-time access to his daughter Kate. James' loss is probably the most painful in the novel. It is loss that occurred because of his wrong actions - the affair he had with Denise.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in *Watermelon* is first person. All that the reader experiences in the novel is through the eyes of the protagonist Claire Webster. The reader has her unique vantage point on all that occurs. This is from the opening sequence where she learns of her husband leaving her, to the very end of the story when she and Adam agree to pursue their relationship further in London, England.

This viewpoint is vital to the story. *Watermelon* is Claire's story and no one else's, essentially. Any events that happen to other characters are strictly in relation to how they effect and intersect with Claire. The reader needs to experience what she is experiencing. The reader can only understand the strong emotions and feelings that she is experiencing by seeing events from her perspective. This first person narration gets the reader deep inside Claire's mind. The reader can feel and understand how she thinks and how she formulates ideas, plans, beliefs, and attitudes.

The author, through first person narration, combines descriptive exposition with dynamic dialog. She uses both of these elements to equal effect. The author presents passages that describe people, places, thoughts, and things with good detail so the reader feels they are part of the scene that is taking place. The dialog is alternatively serious and humorous, and often snappy and direct. This makes for a well-paced novel that is easy to read.

Setting

Watermelon takes place in two locations. These are London, England and Dublin, Ireland. The main action in the story takes place in Dublin. London is where the story begins. Claire Webster does make one trip back to London during the course of the novel. However, Dublin is where she works out her life situation and where she meets her new love interest.

What we learn and experience of London in the story is its hustle and bustle and cosmopolitan nature. There is the frenzied activity of Heathrow airport. The reader experiences the city through Claire describing her and her husband's lifestyle there. Claire also gives descriptions of their flat (apartment) in London. The reader also experiences London from Claire's days working as a server in a pub there. This is where she met James her husband for the first time.

The reader experiences Dublin mainly through Claire's ancestral home there. This is where she lives with her parents and sisters as she gets her life back in order. The reader experiences Dublin suburban life in these scenes that take place at her parent's home. There are a few scenes where Claire goes to places such as coffee houses,



supermarkets, clothing stores, and restaurants in the novel. These expeditions further give the reader a glimpse of Dublin everyday life.

The quieter, less hectic setting in the Dublin suburb is a contrast to London's faster pace. This is important in the novel. This setting matches Claire's demeanor and healing. She is on home turf, comfortable, and becoming at peace with herself and her decisions as she stays in Dublin more. The part of Dublin where her parents live, with their backyard garden and all, provides an oasis for Claire. This setting, along with family support, allows her to resolve her issues, grow as a person, and start living again after coming to terms with her husband abandoning her.

Language and Meaning

The language in *Watermelon* is light and breezy. Through Claire Webster's narration, the reader feels as if she is telling the story personally to someone over coffee at a kitchen table. The exposition portions and the dialog portions are equally reader-friendly. There are no overly long paragraphs and winding convoluted sentences that confuse more than enlighten.

The novel often employs a string of one-line 'paragraphs' so-to-speak. These allow for swift reading and contribute to that easy flow of the novel. The language of the dialog is everyday speech between typical citizens and family in Dublin and in London. There are words and phrases in the novel that are of the United Kingdom vernacular but they are by no means difficult to understand. They lend an air of authenticity to the novel. The reader feels they are in a London or Dublin locale when they experience these words. This adds to the charm and flavor of the story.

The meaning of the language is literal. Claire, her parents, her sisters, her husband, her lover, and her friends say what they are thinking plainly and clearly. The description of people, places, things, events, surroundings, and such is also plain and clear. The reader does not need to spend time trying to decipher what people are saying in this novel. Most readers will feel an affinity to the language and meaning in this novel. They will find it resembles their everyday talk with loved ones and with people they encounter in their everyday business dealings.

Structure

Watermelon is a novel that consists of thirty-nine chapters. The chapters do not have a title to describe what will ensue within in them - they are simply numbered. There are a few long chapters, and a mix of short and medium length chapters.

The novel takes place over a few months, not years, so each chapter deals with short time frames. Many deal with a morning, afternoon, or night's events. The author paces the novel well with exposition and lively dialog that prompts the author to continue reading to the end of each chapter. At no point does the structure of the novel, in terms of chapter length or exposition or dialog style hinder the flow of the read so that one

feels compelled to put the book down. It really is an effortless process to read a book of this structure and style.

The book takes place chronologically. Claire Webster begins with the story of Kate's birth first. This is her time spent at the hospital. She then proceeds to relate the story of her husband leaving her after the birth of Kate. She subsequently relates how she overcame her situation and renewed her life back in Dublin, Ireland.

Watermelon is an average length novel, but the chapter structure, writing style, well-paced exposition, and crisp dialog means it can be a very fast read for some people. It's the type of novel where one can move easily from chapter to chapter without going back to reread passages. The plain language ensures that when a person starts reading they just keep moving forward.

Quotes

"'Claire, listen to me,' he said, getting a bit agitated. 'I'm leaving you.'" Chap. 1, p. 13

"'But what about the baby?' I asked, stunned." Chap. 1, p. 14

"'It's you and me, sweetheart,' I whispered to her." Chap. 2, p. 23

"'I don't know,' I said. 'I thought everything was fine.'" Chap. 4, p.44

"'You've just got to live through it,' she said. 'That's all you can do.'" Chap. 4, p.44

"'Because I'm looking for a bloody drink?'" Chap. 5, p. 68

"'You're wrong! I thought I could trust my husband!'" Chap. 6, p. 87

"'This is serious. Claire is behaving like a monster.'" Chap. 7, p. 106

"'We know it's been awful for you. And we just want you to be happy.'" Chap. 8, p. 118

"'So, Claire, tell me about your job,' he said, 'Helen tells me that you've got a really important job working for a charity.'" Chap. 10, p. 145

"'You know, if you and I had a baby its eyes would definitely be blue.'" Chap. 10, p. 147

"'Hah!' she shouted back at me. 'So you do fancy him.'" Chap. 11, p. 151

"'Claire, Claire, Claire, listen to me. I am not now, or have ever in the past been, your sister Helen's boyfriend. And I don't want to be either.'" Chap. 17, p. 259

"'Er, when can I have sex again?' I suddenly blurted out." Chap. 18, p. 268



"I met you, I really liked you, I wanted to see you, what's wrong with that?' he said furiously." Chap. 20, p. 296

"You're always running away from me,' he said." Chap. 22, p. 330

"Of course she has to see him. How else are they going to sort anything out?" Chap. 23, p. 334

"Having sex with Adam,' I told them." Chap. 23, p. 336

"You have to look beautiful,' said Anna." Chap. 24, p. 343

"we need you to be in good health so that you can afford Kate's maintenance payments." Chap. 26, p. 360

"You lost the right to touch me when you left me." Chap. 28, p. 379

"How could you just have abandoned us? I needed you." Chap. 28, p. 381

"You demanded constant attention." Chap. 28, p. 383

"Of course, if you're going to hang onto grudges and grievances then there's no point in my being here, is there?" Chap. 30, p. 401

"I think you're mental." Chap. 31, p. 411

"I won't be here on Tuesday. Or any other day for that matter." Chap. 34, p. 460

"You'll never last without me." Chap. 34, p. 465

"Maybe I'm the stupid one here, but I thought I'd made it clear how much I like you and care for you. Don't you believe me?" Chap. 39, p. 515

"I hope you do love each other. I hope you'll be very happy together." Chap. 39, p. 520

"I must say this has all worked out very well. Very well indeed." Chap. 39, p. 520



Topics for Discussion

Consider infidelity, and the effect it has on the person who is a victim of a partner's infidelity. In addition, discuss the effect of infidelity on the person who commits the unfaithful actions.

Discuss jealousy. What do jealous thoughts lead to, and how can one rise above jealous thoughts and resolve to think and act with dignity?

Discuss Claire becoming involved in a sexual relationship while she is still legally married to James. Is she doing the exact same thing he was doing? Is there a significant difference in what she did compared to James, or is it a variation of his actions, with only subtle shadings of difference?

Discuss the implications, if any, of an older woman dating a much younger man, as in the case of Claire's friend Laura with her teenage lover. Discuss the implications, if any, of a younger man dating an older woman, as is the case with Adam and Claire.

Consider the effects of a person's background on their actions in the world. How does Claire's Irish nationality, family upbringing, and societal and cultural influences affect her beliefs, ideas, and decisions?

Discuss every human being's need for love; how a yearning for love drives our thoughts and actions, for better or for worse.

Consider the portrayal of Claire's anger and rage in the novel. Discuss the stages she went through in the book, from the shock of her husband leaving her, to her desiring to see him regret his decisions, and how these emotions shaped her actions.

Discuss family bonds. How do Claire's parents and her sisters Anna and Helen marshal the wagons so-to-speak to help Claire. Discuss how blood is thicker than water oftentimes, and how families can put aside their differences to help one another.

Discuss forgiveness and second chances. Consider how Claire's family forgives her abrasive and rude behavior during her rough time. Consider how Claire was ready to forgive James and rebuild their marriage.

Discuss stubbornness and James' unwillingness to admit error. How will James being stubborn affect his life in the end? Why is his unwillingness to admit error something that will be a thorn in his side the rest of his life unless he changes?