

We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves Study Guide

**We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves by Karen Joy
Fowler**

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Plot Summary

We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves, by Karen Fowler, follows Rosemary Cooke as she comes to terms with her past, her present, and her future. The story, as Rosemary states in the opening chapters, begins in the middle years of her life. Known as Rose in the book, she starts in the middle of stories because she finds those parts to be the most interesting. Rose has been attending college in Davis California for the last five years, still with no idea of what she wants to do with her future. Rose reflects on a strained relationship with her parents. She's on speaking terms with her mother, but she almost never talks to her father outside of family gatherings. When they do speak, things are always tense. Without giving many details, Rose also hints at two other siblings.

At the cafeteria, Rose watches another student named Harlow fight with her boyfriend, Reg. Harlow starts to make a scene, throwing everything off the tables and flipping chairs. Campus security is quickly called in, but they mistakenly arrest Rose and Harlow. Unsure of what else to do, Rose gets in touch with her father. Thanks to her father and testimony from one of the cafeteria workers, Rose is released. Her father makes her promise to come for Thanksgiving so they can talk more about the arrest.

At Thanksgiving, Rose reveals how tense things are with her family. Her mother's side of the family dislikes her father because he's an atheist, as well as a scientist. Rose talks about how her father had a drinking problem in the past. Although it has gotten better in recent years, it tends to come out during the holidays. She goes home with them and is surprised to find that they have moved into another house.

Rose talks with her mother, who ends up giving Rose her personal journals. Rose is surprised by this because their family almost never brings up the past. Unfortunately, she loses her mother's journals on the plane ride back to college. Much to her surprise, Harlow is waiting along with her roommate Todd. Harlow ends up leaving, but takes Rose out to the bar the next day to apologize. Rose calls the airline trying to get her lost luggage. They send the wrong luggage. An even more surprising event occurs when she goes to pick up the luggage from her landlord and she hears that her brother has been looking for her.

Rose has a very strained relationship with her brother, Lowell, whom she hasn't seen she was eleven. She ominously hints that the only reason she even came to college in California was because this was the spot the FBI had last seen Lowell. Rose begins to talk about her past, mentioning that she has left not only her brother behind, but a sister named Fern also. As the full story of her "left behind" sister is revealed, Rose explains that Fran was not a human sister. She was a chimpanzee the family had raised from birth as part of an experiment. Then, when Rose was five, the family moved, leaving Fern behind.

Rose recalls that when the family moved away and didn't take Fern, Lowell started to rebel and spent very little time with the family. He ran away during his senior year and



joined an animal activist group, which is why the FBI is still after him. Rose remembers that she had such a hard time growing up. When she was younger, she was constantly talking and outgoing, but that was because she was raised alongside Fern. Rose constantly referred to herself as monkey girl, and it took her years to become what she considered normal. Rose suppressed many of her memories about Fern. However, when she sees her brother, she begins to remember everything about the past.

Rose and Fern were incredibly close, but Rose was a jealous five year old who told her family that they had to choose between having her or having Fern. The family chose Rose, and Fern was sent off to a different lab. Lowell had tried to go and free her. With no experience to rely on in such a situation, he was caught and had to run away, leading to him becoming wanted by the FBI. During his short stay, Harlow falls for Lowell. She takes his sudden departure hard and becomes an animal activist herself.

Rose tells her family about meeting Lowell, and they go into greater detail about what happened with Fern. They tell Rose that it wasn't just her ultimatum, but it was also the fact that Fern was growing and getting stronger which forced them to leave her behind. While she wasn't malicious, she was beginning to accidentally hurt people. Rose's family agreed that it wouldn't be safe to have Fern around the children. So, when Rose made the ultimatum it just made sense to find a lab for Fern.

Rose remembers how much she loved Fern, and she still considers her a sister. It is 2012 when Rose becomes a kindergarten teacher. She moves closer to the lab where Fern is being kept. Using her mother's journals and pictures from the past, Rose and her mother start to write books about their experiences with Fern. They both visit Fern as often as possible, though the relationship isn't quite the same anymore. Lowell ends up finally getting arrested by the FBI and charged for all the crimes that he committed.

Rose reflects on how much Fern changed their lives and how their family had fallen apart without her. Rose has learned to embrace her monkey girl side and uses her experiences to become a better teacher, helping the students learn about the unique aspects of conversation and recognizing feelings that Rose learned from her time with Fern.



Part 1, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Part 1, Chapter 1

In Part 1, Chapter 1, the narrator, Rose, begins the story in the middle years of her life because she considers them to be the most interesting part of the story. It's the winter of 1996. Rose recounts how she's been attending the University of California for the last five years, drifting aimlessly much to the chagrin of their parents. She goes over her relationship with her parents. Her father, a college professor, barely speaks to her. She and her mother are on better terms, but her mother is frustrated with having to be the middleman between Rose and her father.

While sitting in the cafeteria, Rose witnesses a breakup between another student and their girlfriend. The girlfriend takes the breakup poorly and starts knocking over dishes and chairs, making a huge commotion. Rose is able to note that the girlfriend is seemingly communicating in her own nonverbal way through the destruction. The fight is interrupted by the arrival of campus security. Much to everyone's surprise, they approach Rose instead of the girl responsible for fighting, even though one of the staff members defends Rose. The officer tells her to remain calm, but is clearly on guard, threatening her when she drops her glass in surprise.

Part 1, Chapter 2

The narrator is officially identified as Rosemary (Rose). She is arrested alongside the other woman, Harlow. Rosemary eventually finds out that she has been given the same charges as Harlow. An assault of an officer charge has also been added to the list. While she is being held in jail, Rose focuses on the way that things feel and smell. She makes a point of examining whether or not it would be possible to climb the bars. In desperation, she calls her house hoping to get her mother, but instead her father answers. He mentions that if anyone was going to call from prison, he would expect it to be her brother. Rosemary is surprised to hear him mention her brother, hinting that things are strained between them. With the help of her father and one of the cafeteria staff she is able to get all of the charges dropped. She tells her father that she'll be coming home for Thanksgiving so they can discuss the matter in greater detail.

Analysis

Part 1, Chapter 1

The primary focus of the first chapter is the unique way that Rose intends to tell her story. She treats the story like she is having a direct conversation with the reader, informing them that she's going to begin her tale from the middle. Rose starts to give insight into her family life. She sets the stage for her strained family relations, hinting at



her mother's past depression as well as the problems that she has with her father. Despite the problems, she shares that it hasn't always been that way.

Rose's relationship with her family and the way that she communicates are both huge parts of the book. Harlow is introduced for the first time, and she ends up playing an important role later on as Rose's friend, as well as acting as a foil to Rose. Rose's arrest at the end of the chapter also hints that there is something more going on with either her or her family, as it's clear that the campus security automatically assumes that she is the source of disruption. Later, this is revealed to be the fact that her brother is wanted by the FBI.

Rose shows signs of understanding nonverbal communication when she's watching Harlow's tantrum in the cafeteria. This ends up being an important plot point later in the book when Rose starts to explore her childhood with Fern.

It should also be noted that each chapter opens up with a short quote from Kafka's short story, "A Report for an Academy." The narrator in Kafka's short story is an ape, who must act like a human in order to have a chance at freedom. This is an interesting parallel in that Rose must learn to also assume some alternate characteristics in order to win her own personal freedom. The art of communicating, one of the book's themes, is demonstrated by Kafka's quotes. There is an another tie-in to the theme, when Rose when she views the girlfriend's interaction with her ex-boyfriend.

Part 1, Chapter 2

Rose continues to reveal little details about herself and her family. She starts to make references to the way that she used to be when she was younger, especially in the way that she used to express herself. Her father displays the influence that he has in the way that he speaks with the officer. Rose's father also hints at the existence of her other siblings, although at the time he seems to be implying Lowell and not Fern. The gradual reveal of Rose's family is a huge changing point in the book.

Rose reveals to the audience that she has a habit of examining things based on the way that they smell and feel. At first, it just looks like she's giving extra details to the audience. However, in later chapters it becomes apparent that this is actually foreshadowing the communication she learned from Fern.

Discussion Question 1

What does the reader learn about Rosemary's family life?

Discussion Question 2

Compare Harlow and Rose.



Discussion Question 3

Describe the dynamics of Rose's family.

Vocabulary

Prerequisite, migratory, methodically, callow, guileless, exasperated, midst, circumspect.



Part 1, Chapters 3-4

Summary

Part 1, Chapter 3

Rosemary flies out to Indiana where her parents live and where she was raised. Every year her family alternates whom they will be with for Thanksgiving. This year they are visiting the family on her mother's side. Her mother's family doesn't get along well with her father because he's both a science professor as well as an atheist. Rose reflects on how tense things are with their family, as there are a number of forbidden subjects they can't bring up. Rose also mentions that she has not only a brother, but another sibling as well. She laments the fact that her family ignores the past, which includes the two missing siblings. At home, Rose's mother surprises her by giving her old journals that she had written. She also tells Rose that her father wishes they would talk more, and for a moment Rose feels like they are a normal family.

Rose discusses how when she was younger she had an imaginary friend. She named her Mary and the two constantly played together. When Rose had to start attending school, she was forced to leave Mary behind. This was difficult for Rose because she struggled to make any real friends.

Part 1, Chapter 4

Rose feels strange about accepting the journals, but she doesn't tell her mother that. On the flight home, her luggage is lost containing the journals. To her surprise, Harlow is staying at her apartment as she doesn't want to go back to the boyfriend she is fighting with. Harlow ends up leaving and Rose gets a call saying her missing luggage will be returned. She briefly speaks with her roommate, Todd, and his girlfriend, Kimmy. The missing luggage doesn't show up, but Rose does get a call from her mother saying how happy she is that Rose took the journals.

Analysis

Part 1, Chapter 3

Rose continues to explore the dysfunctional nature of her family. She explains how her mother's family can't tolerate her father. At the time she says this is because he's an atheist and a scientist, but as she learns more about what happened with her family it is also clearly because of Lowell and Fern. Rose also hints that things aren't the greatest with her father's work as he seems to be making a big deal about the fact that he's part of a new study.

This is also the first time that the audience really gets to learn that Rose's family doesn't linger on the past, and it's one of the many subjects that they aren't allowed to bring up.



Rose again hints at her siblings, making the first mention of Fern. The reader learns that Rose's family has moved again, which causes her to hint at the extreme events around the last time that the family moved, and that with each move the houses continued to get smaller. This clearly demonstrates the theme of Family, in that the moves and the smaller houses directly represent the fact that her family relations have become more confined and constrained, and each move reflects a loss.

Rose getting the journals is also an important point because it's what leads into her and her mother eventually becoming writers when Rose jumps ahead to the present. It also sets into motion Rose getting the wrong suitcase, which in turn leads to her friendship with Harlow.

This chapter also covers the introduction of Rose's invisible friend, Mary. Mary acted as a surrogate for Fern and is used repeatedly throughout the book as a symbol for everything that Rose lost by forgetting Fern.

Part 1, Chapter 4

Harlow shows up at Rose's apartment, something that will become a running theme with her in the future and is ultimately responsible for setting up their friendship. Rose begins her journey to try and get the journals back, which runs nearly parallel with her own journey in rediscovering the memories of her family. This is also the first look at the way that Rose interacts with her friends. She shows off her quieter, more reserved side in the way that she talks with Todd as well as the way she treats Harlow for having just shown up in her apartment without any warning. Rose's mother shows how important the journals are when she calls. This is a demonstration of the theme of Family and of how Rose's mother wants to reunite with her, something that happens near the end of the book when Rose jumps into the present. The significance of this is made even clearer later on when Rose learns why her mother was hesitant to talk about Fern.

Discussion Question 1

What does Rose's relief at the luggage, containing the journals from her past, being lost, suggest?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the journals?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of denial that is introduced in this chapter.

Vocabulary

Exuberant, unassailable, antagonism, refulgent, mortification, contrition, stolid.



Part 1, Chapters 5-6

Summary

Part 1, Chapter 5

Harlow takes Rose out to a bar as a peace offering for staying at her place. She asks Rose all sorts of questions, which catch her off guard. Rose regales her with a story about how when she was five she was sent to live with her grandparents for a few weeks. She was unhappy because there was nothing to do there. After a disastrous play date she decided that she was going to go back to her parents and started to walk home. She stopped at a stranger's house to ask for food. Fortunately, the man was kind to her and talked her out of trying to walk home. He called her grandparents who picked her up and returned her home, finding her too difficult to take care of. What Rose doesn't tell Harlow is that she had to leave because her mother was having a nervous breakdown. Rose's story ends when Harlow's boyfriend, Reg shows up. The discussion shifts to favorite super heroes, and without really thinking Rose tells Harlow that her favorite was Tarzan. Rose and Reg debate whether or not Tarzan is actually a super hero, which gives Rose a negative impression of Reg.

Part 1, Chapter 6

Rose is still waiting for her suitcase to show up. She speaks to her landlord about it, who mentions that someone claiming to be her brother stopped by the other day. Rose is surprised by this news as she hasn't heard from her brother since she was in high school, and he never speaks with the family. She reflects on how kind her brother had been to her growing up. He frequently played with her and was always teaching her new games, and keeping her from being bullied in school. She reveals that the main reason she decided to go to school in California was because the FBI told her family that the last place her brother had been seen was the town she went to college at. Rose is confused about how to feel when she hears the news. Part of her is frustrated in hearing that she has missed him. She worries that she's lost the one chance she might have had to talk to him, a possibility which is devastating to her.

Analysis

Part 1, Chapter 5

Rose delves into her past as her perspective shifts to when she was five, shortly after having lost Fern. There are many things that Rose leaves out about her past, but she begins to paint a picture of why things didn't work with her family. This is also one of the first times that Rose really shows how talkative she can be. Her grandparents were frequently trying to get her to quiet down, which is a stark contrast to the way that Rose acts later. Rose realizes that she must have started to show hints of her unique upbringing in the way that she played outside and interacted with other children. Since



she was used to interacting with Fern, she was much more physical than other children normally act at her age.

When Rose's family shows up she also talks about the first move that her family made and about how she's missing one of her siblings. At the time, Rose's mother makes it out to sound like her missing sibling had been lost and that Rose was somehow responsible for it. The stress that Rose's family is going through is shown, not just spoken about, during this chapter. Lastly, Rose continues to display her reserved nature in that there are details that she leaves out when she tells the story to Harlow in a rehearsed way.

The symbolism of Tarzan is significant in this section because of the debate that occurs surrounding the character. To Rose, Tarzan is a hero because of his championing and defense of apes. She seems to identify with Tarzan. He represents the idealized human being to Rose.

Part 1, Chapter 6

Rose reveals that the only reason she went to college in California was because it was the last state that her brother was seen in. Even though her family never says it, the reason that they pay for her to go to college in California is because they're hoping for her to run into him as well. This clearly represents how much Rose's parents want to be with their family again, and the theme of Family is demonstrated through this exchange. Lowell will later tell Rose that he shares this sentiment.

For the first time Rose brings up the way that she was bullied as a child, although she doesn't say it was because she had a chimp for a sister. The importance of her relationship with Lowell is stressed as well. A reoccurring theme is that Rose believes humans and animals are both still beings, as shown by the way that her family interacted with Fern. Rose also brings up her old habit of playing games with her family members, specifically Lowell in this instance.

Discussion Question 1

What role does Mary play for Rose?

Discussion Question 2

Compare how Rose was as a child to her adult persona.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of denial and the part that guilt plays in it.

Vocabulary

Bacchanal, nostalgia, unnervingly, egregiously, indiscreet, incredulously, convoluted.



Part 1, Chapter 7

Summary

Part 1, Chapter 7

Rose goes back to the story that she told Harlow. The story is technically true, but there are a lot of details that she leaves out, details that she has never told to anyone else before. She hints that the parts she left out largely had to do with her brother. She has gotten so used to leaving those parts out that she is, now, having a hard time remembering how to best tell the actual version of the story.

Analysis

Part 1, Chapter 7

Although she doesn't realize it now, Rose is hiding details from herself as well. One of the reoccurring themes in the book is that Rose has reshaped the memories of her youth because she doesn't know how else to deal with the trauma of losing Fern. She either outright buried her memories, or convinced herself that different people were acting stressed when in truth she was the one that panicked every time that Fern was mentioned in a family gathering. The theme of Denial is seen in this chapter as Rose realizes that it has been for her sake that her family has hesitated to discuss the past, mention Fern, or bring up anything surrounding her brother, Lowell. The miscommunication and assumptions that Rose has made for many years is shown to have proven detrimental to her in many ways, especially in her emotional and social development.

Discussion Question 1

What does Rose find is happening to the real truth about Fern?

Discussion Question 2

Why might Rose find it important to bury her memories about Fern?

Discussion Question 3

Why has Rose left out parts of her personal narrative having to do with her brother?

Vocabulary

Solidifies, codifies, stropping, discord, limpid.



Part 2, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Part 2, Chapter 1

Rose flashes back to the summer of 1979, right when she was being picked up by her father from her grandparent's house. She had been scared that her family didn't want her anymore. This fear was made worse when she was taken to a brand new home. Her father told her that they moved while she was gone and encouraged her to explore the house. He told her not to bother their mother though who Rose could occasionally hear crying. Rose's brother, Lowell refused to go with the family and ended up staying with his best friend. Rose reveals that her other sibling was a sister, Fern, whom she says her parents got rid of during the move.

Rose has very distinct memories of Fern, but because she was only five by the time she left she had a hard time telling when her memories were real or when they were just things she imagined. Rose goes over how she used to be so much more talkative as a child, something her parents always encouraged. After they moved into the new house they didn't listen to Rose as much and she became quieter and quieter.

Part 2, Chapter 2

Rose talks about how every family has their favorite child, even if it isn't something that they want to admit to. In her family, Rose's mother considered Rose to be her favorite child. To her father though, Lowell was the favorite. Rose loved Lowell the most, but Lowell favored Fern over her. Rose thinks about how strange it is that there's enough care and love to go around, but that it also clearly isn't an appropriate way to have a family.

Analysis

Part 2, Chapter 1

Rose finally brings up Fern herself, although she doesn't yet reveal that Fern wasn't her human sister. Rose starts to explain one of her old coping methods, trying to quickly fall asleep. This comes up a few times in her later years, but mostly serves to show how quick she was to shut herself out from the reality of events as a youth. Rose again covers how talkative she used to be when she was younger; pointing out that this was something that her father encouraged. Again, while it isn't mentioned now it will later become apparent that this encouragement was part of the experiment to see how Fern would grow alongside Rose. The theme of Communication is seen in this chapter as Rose recalls how her parents encouraged both of their children to be talkative with everyone, especially Fern. The dysfunction, of course, is that they didn't communicate within their own human family dynamic.



Rose also foreshadows the fact that her memories about Fern might not be as accurate as she remembers. Despite them being incredibly vivid, they've been altered and Rose has changed some of the events because she wasn't ready to deal with Fern being gone, especially because she thinks that she was responsible. The theme about Denial and the dangers that it presents is seen in this series of memories by Rose.

While she tries to deny her responsibility in Fern's departure, Rose is happy to put the blame on her father. It starts off subtly at first, but Rose highlights some of the shortcomings of her father. She talks about how much he was out of the house and starts to highlight his drinking problem. She also puts the weight of the blame on him for both the move and getting rid of Fern. This all led to Lowell leaving the house, further splintering the family. As an adult, Rose will go on to see that she was wrong to paint her father as being the only one responsible. The theme of Family is expressed in her realization that a family shares the burden of responsibility or triumphs and no one person should be left to bear the burden alone.

Part 2, Chapter 2

At first this short chapter might seem insignificant. Rose's obsession over who is the favorite child is ultimately what motivates her to make her parents choose between living with her or living with Fern. Lowell's relationship with Fern is important because it serves as his main source of motivation and makes it clear why he was willing to leave the family and become an activist. In the chapter, Rose also talks about how being the favorite can be a burden. While she doesn't realize it yet, Rose feels that way because of the guilt she feels over making her parents choose. She feels like because she was the favorite, she was the one that was picked while Fern was rejected and sent away.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Rose become quieter as she grew older?

Discussion Question 2

What role does Rose believe her father played in her traumatic childhood?

Discussion Question 3

What is the burden of being viewed as 'the favorite' by a parent?

Vocabulary

Cognitive, decorous, demarcation, burdensome, benign.



Part 2, Chapters 3-4

Summary

Part 2, Chapter 3

Rose recalls that shortly after they moved, her mother rarely came out of her room, and when she would come out she was a mess. Rose's grandmother would come down during the day to take care of Rose and help out around the house, but it was clear that she didn't want to be there. She tried to get Lowell to come back home, but he told her that he wanted to stay with a friend. It was around this time that Rose's father started to drink, although at the time she was too young to really understand that. Her father and mother frequently fought; with her father feeling like everyone blamed him for what happened. Lowell finally returned one night and told Rose that it was her fault for what happened to Fern. He said that if she had just learned to keep her mouth shut things would have been different.

Part 2, Chapter 4

In a continuation of the memory, Rose states that Lowell had decided to stay at home, but he was frequently leaving at odd hours and avoiding most of the family. Rose began to develop a phobia of closed doors because her mother was always locked behind one. Lowell seemed to shift between wanting to take care of her and blaming her for what happened. Rose's father hired a babysitter, Melissa, who would take care of Rose in the afternoons. Melissa would teach Rose a new word from the dictionary each day, which Rose would try to use to impress her father.

One day, Lowell sneaked her out of the house and they drove to the old farmhouse they used to live in. Rose was excited at first because she thought that Fern would still be there. Rose pauses in her recollection to state that Fern didn't die and is still alive in the present, although Fern wasn't at the farmhouse which had been abandoned. As Rose remembers, Lowell made fun of her when she asked about Fern, but he doesn't actually tell her what happened to Fern. The two return home and get in trouble for going out.

Analysis

Part 2, Chapter 3

A lot of important things happen in this chapter, especially at the end. In one short sentence, Lowell covered a lot of issues that come up in the future. The first thing he did was imply that it was Rose, not just their parents, who were responsible for Fern being sent away. Rose of course still doesn't remember this and wouldn't until she encounters Lowell much later on. He says that she was sent away because Rose couldn't keep her mouth shut. This is one of the major contributing factors for her changing to become quiet and reserved compared to her more outgoing monkey-girl persona. The theme of



Family and of Responsibility come through in this chapter as each family member feels crucially responsible for Fern's demise. As a young child, Rose believes that it was her fault, and then when Lowell reinforces this idea it sends her into a tailspin, which she still struggles with. Rose's father believes that it is his fault because it had been his research project, while Rose's mother felt that it was her fault because she allowed her children to be a part of the experiment. She believes that she was a bad mother. The theme of Family is also touched upon as Rose's memories clearly show a family that is disintegrating through a lack of communication, trust, and mutual care and consideration.

Part 2, Chapter 4

Rose continues to recall her childhood events and says that Melissa continued to teach her and play games with her just like when Fern was around, although this wasn't to encourage her to learn and explore so much as it was to keep her quiet. It's still important because her advanced vocabulary frequently comes up, and this is one of the first steps that she takes to becoming more reserved and quiet. Lowell returns home, but he's still not really part of the family as shown by the fact that he leaves at odd hours and doesn't want to be seen around his family.

Rose clears up that Fern didn't die, which at the time was one of the possibilities for Fern. The fact that Lowell knew she was alive is what drives him to leave the family and become an animal activist. It is important that Fern is alive in the present because she motivates Rose's teaching at the end. She also motivates Rose and her mother to write books.

In flashbacks, the farmhouse is a happy place because it reflects the time where Rose's family was whole. Returning and seeing the old place abandoned reflects the fact that Rose's family has been torn apart. The family unit is vacant just like the farmhouse.

Discussion Question 1

How do Lowell's comments to Rose contribute to Rose's decision to quit speaking?

Discussion Question 2

How does Fern serve as a motivation for both Rose and Lowell?

Discussion Question 3

Why would Rose's father feel responsible?

Vocabulary

Harrowing, vaporous, acquainted, salubrious, phobia, repressed, stratagem, ebullient.



Part 2, Chapters 5-6

Summary

Part 2, Chapter 5

Rose finally reveals that while Fern was her sister, she wasn't her human sister. Fern was a chimpanzee, but she was still part of the family. Rose talks about how they weren't the only family that had a chimp and it was actually fairly common in the area. Her father would perform tests on the chimp to see how intelligent it was, as well as how it reacted to being part of the family. Rose realizes how strange all of this must have been, but she still speaks fondly of Fern and will always think of her as a sister. She even made her invisible friend, Mary, a chimp because she missed Fern so much. Rose remembers when Lowell and their neighbor sneaked over to their old house to have a Halloween party. Their neighbor ended up getting in trouble when police showed up at the party and found there had been underage drinking.

Part 2, Chapter 6

Rose discusses how she didn't have many friends as a child because she spent so much of her time with Fern. Fern couldn't go out and play with other children, so it tended to just be her, Rose, and Lowell. After Fern's removal Rose's mother finally started to come out of her room, and the family traveled for Christmas, something that they could never do with Fern. Her mother had continued to improve for the next year or so. Rose remembers that she found out that she was going to kindergarten, which at the time she was excited about. Not too much longer after this, Lowell decided to bring up Fern, which upset his mother. He said that they should go and visit her and implied that he had been seeing her on his own. His father disagreed and said that it was hard for Fern to transition away from the family and she would be happier not seeing any of them again. At the time, Rose believed her father when he said that Fern was on a farm with other chimps. Now Rose knows that this wasn't the case.

Analysis

Part 2, Chapter 5

The most important thing that happens in this chapter is the revelation that Fern wasn't a human sister, but was a chimp. This is a huge turning point and makes the reader look at all of the previous events in a different light. Rose doesn't explicitly state it yet, but readers can get the impression that her father was using Rose as part of the experiment as well. This is one of the reasons why she was encouraged to talk so much. Rose felt like she always had an audience to listen her, plus she was also talking on behalf of Fern.



Rose makes it very clear that she did and still does consider Fern to be her sister. This again sets the stage for the rest of the book. Rose being raised alongside Fern is the reason that she gets bullied and tries to later suppress her emotions as well as her memories. She covers up her monkey girl side and only embraces it years later, which is ultimately when she starts to get her life back together. The theme of the Sanctity of Life is expressed in this chapter by Rose's intense feelings for Fern. It is evident that she does not, nor never will, view Fern as an 'animal' or as an inferior being. She sees Fern as she sees all animals....as living beings with as much right to happiness as anyone else on the planet.

Rose making Mary into a chimp is just another way that she had tried in the past to deny what happened. Deniability is one of the running themes throughout the book and is explored and faced by Rose in this chapter. By using Mary, Rose didn't have to come to terms with what happened when they had to give up Fern. Now, as an adult, she is able to face the truth about her past, her relationship with Fern and some of her eccentricities as a child are fully explainable to her now.

Part 2, Chapter 6

In this section, Rose remembers that Lowell had begun to show signs of getting ready to find Fern, something that the rest of the family discouraged. Rose hadn't realized it at the time, but she was the one that panicked when Fern was brought up, not her mother. She just wasn't ready to accept her responsibility in Fern's removal, again bringing up the theme of Denial. Rose's family begins the tradition of traveling for Christmas, their way of trying to deal with the absence left by Fern. Again, this shows how they're willing to deny that Fern existed, which ultimately does more harm than good.

Discussion Question 1

Why didn't Rose have many friends when she was younger?

Discussion Question 2

Compare Lowell to Rose in regards to Fern.

Discussion Question 3

What sort of incidents have made Rose, as a child, feel like an outsider?

Vocabulary

Coy, vigor, eliding, pungent, decanting, anthropomorphize.



Part 2, Chapter 7

Summary

Part 2, Chapter 7

Rose focuses more on some of her memories growing up with Fern. She recalls that she used to sit with Fern while her mother would read them books. Rose would keep interrupting her mother to ask her things about the story, or what certain words meant. Rose's mother didn't like this, and told her to be more like Fern, who obviously didn't interrupt. Rose frequently acted as a translator for Fern, as she had learned to understand the way that Fern communicated. As she grew up, Rose realized that the experiments were not only about seeing if Fern could interact with a human, but if Rose could interact with Fern.

When she started kindergarten, the kids gave Rose a hard time because her sister was a monkey. Rose had developed a lot of Fern's mannerisms, and her mother had to work hard to keep her from slouching or jumping around on furniture, among other things. Rose generally looks back very fondly on her time with Fern, and for her it was the last time that her family was ever truly complete.

Analysis

Part 2, Chapter 7

Rose explores her past and talks about how she had a difficult time in kindergarten because of the way that she was raised. She still exhibited a lot of behavior that she had learned from Fern. Because she couldn't speak, Fern had to communicate using nonverbal cues, something that Rose picked up on and did herself. She had a hard time keeping her hands to herself and frequently jumped about the room just like Fern used to do. This obviously wasn't the way that other students were raised. To Rose though, this was still a perfectly valid form of communication. On top of that, Rose was seen as strange because of all the things she learned from her father and the other experiments, so she had a much more advanced vocabulary compared to the other students and even the teachers. The theme of Communication is exemplified in this chapter, in that the author seems to be suggesting that sometimes Communication, or the way one chooses to communicate can cause as much harm as good. All of this makes Rose feel like an outsider, which drives her to try and change herself.

Rose explores the idea that she was being experimented on as much as Fern was. Her father wanted to see if it was possible for Fern to learn to communicate with humans, but also if it was possible for a human to learn how to communicate with a chimp. Rose reveals it was these experiments that made her so talkative as a youth. She was speaking not only for herself, but also for Fern. This covers one of the themes that Rose is always trying to express throughout the book, that not all communication is verbal.



Despite the fact that she was teased for the way she acted, Rose doesn't regret her time with Fern and still considers her to be her sister. For Rose, the only time that they were all really a family was when Fern was still around. Even with her jealousy issues it was clear that Rose was happy when she was spending her time with Fern. Without Fern, the family was unhappy. They chose to ignore the problem instead of addressing it. What is interesting to consider is the definition of Family, and it is to this theme that this chapter caters. First, it is easy to see that everyone took it very badly when Fern was removed from the home. It was as if a family member had died. Rose's mother took to her bed, her father started drinking, and her brother started acting out. Rose, herself, became withdrawn and stopped communicating. In essence, they were all grieving Fern's loss as if she were a family member. Thus, the definition of Family is challenged and the theme of Family is explored with the idea that a family can be more than the usual group of the same species and genetically related beings.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Rose surmise she was so talkative as a child?

Discussion Question 2

In Rose's opinion, when was the only time her family was truly happy?

Discussion Question 3

What are the ethical implications of the experiment that Rose's father and mother implemented in their household?

Vocabulary

Perambulator, rheumatism, protuberant, virtue, deprivation.



Part 3, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Part 3, Chapter 1

Rose discusses how the loss of Fern was a lot different for her compared to the rest of the family. They had obtained Fern when Rose was only three months old, so she didn't have a persona to go back to without Fern around. Everyone else in the family could at least return to their old lives before Fern. For Rose, it wasn't just that Fern was gone, but also all of the other grad students that helped with the experiment. Rose was used to having every word she spoke monitored, which is part of what led to her being so talkative as a child. Without Fern, nobody appreciated all of the facts that she memorized and the advanced vocabulary that she used.

Part 3, Chapter 2

Rose recalls that she was transferred into a new, more socially accepted school. Her parents hoped that would make her normal, as she still didn't really know how to act around other kids. Lowell had trouble adjusting as well. While Rose was trying to act on her best behavior, Lowell was rebelling against their parents. He was told to treat Fern like a sister. When his family got rid of her, he took it personally because to him it meant that his parents didn't care about keeping the family together or loving their children. Rose's family kept trying to appeal to Lowell, doing all of his favorite activities and eating all of his favorite foods, but it didn't work. Despite that, Rose's mother started to get better because Lowell's therapist said the loyalty and love he showed to Fern were all admirable traits. Rose's father was having trouble adjusting though because he felt disrespected at work.

Analysis

Part 3, Chapter 1

Rose thinks that the rest of her family was able to adjust quicker than she to Fern's departure. Readers later learn that this isn't really the case though and again just highlights the fact that Rose was in denial about what her family was actually going through. She makes it out to sound like everyone was able to adjust to Fern being gone, but that wasn't the case. Everyone was torn up and acting differently, and the only reason Rose didn't know is because the family couldn't bring up Fern around her, so she mistakenly believed they had moved on. In many respects they thought that what they were doing was for Rose's own good, but by denying that Fern even existed or refusing to talk about her, things were only made worse. This realization by the reader and later on, Rose, demonstrates the theme of Denial and that it can often be worse than just facing the truth and dealing with the pain of the loss.



Rose began to change because she felt like she wasn't appreciated anymore because she didn't have the grad students around to examine her every word. She thought that she had to change, as she believed the rest of her family had, which plays a huge role in why Rose buried her memories about growing up with Fern. Rose tried to change and become someone that she wasn't, but all it did was make her unhappy and feel unappreciated. The demonstrates the theme of Being Oneself in that when one denies who one is, when one tries to mimic or please others while suppressing their own inner voice, damage can occur.

The theme of Loyalty is also demonstrated in this chapter in that the family were trying to protect Rose and Lowell from the trauma of Fern's loss. But, by not speaking about it, things were compounded as both Lowell and Rose believed that they were expendable and that if one sister was sent away, then they might be next. In this context their loyalty to their project, to their children's feelings, was misplaced. Conversely, both Rose and Lowell are loyal to Fern and her memory, even if Rose suppresses the fact that Fern was a chimp for a good deal of her life.

Part 3, Chapter 2

Rose continues to recall that she started to show her fear that her family would get rid of her if she wasn't on her best behavior. Rose only thinks that though because of the memories that she's repressed, and the truth is that they only got rid of Fern because they were trying to do what was best for Rose. However, they never addressed this with the children. While Rose was afraid, Lowell was angry. In his eyes, his parents had committed an act of betrayal by getting rid of a family member. The theme of Family is expressed in this section by Lowell's internalization of what a true family should be. In his eyes family members don't arbitrarily send other members away.

Lowell, just like Rose, had made the mistake of believing that his family didn't care. In his eyes, he was the only one that actually cared about Fern. Lowell would eventually grow up and realize the mistake that he made, and he even tells Rose that he wanted to go back to his family. His status with the FBI made that impossible though, making it impossible to reconnect with not only his birth family, but also with Fern. This touches on the theme that it's easier to place blame than accept responsibility. Lowell was quick to blame everyone, but the truth is no single person was responsible. No matter what, they would have gotten rid of Fern because it wasn't safe for the children. Lowell just placed blame which destroyed his relationship with his family.

Rose explores more about the stress that her father experienced at work. Again, she doesn't realize it at the time, but this actually shows how much her father cared about her. Not only was he willing to give up Fern for her, but also sacrifice his career. His experiment was considered a failure since he had to give up Fern, something that continued to haunt him and greatly contributed to his stress.



Discussion Question 1

Why couldn't Rose go back to her old way of life when Fern was taken?

Discussion Question 2

As a child, what did Rose internalize in regard to her personal safety and place in the family?

Discussion Question 3

What is contributing to the stress that Rose's father feels?

Vocabulary

Phantasmagorical, verbosity, lexemes, reputation, catatonia, buoyancy, intoxicating.



Part 3, Chapters 3-4

Summary

Part 3, Chapter 3

Rose recalls that things continued to get better for her family. In high school, Lowell finally stopped talking about Fern. By senior year he not only had a girlfriend, but had become a popular player on the basketball team. Rose had stopped being such a chatterbox and no longer corrected people when they spoke. This led to her bottling up all of her thoughts, and as a result she had trouble focusing on anything in school. One night, when Lowell was a senior, he angrily made Rose leave his room when she went to see him. Rose was confused by this, but he seemed fine by the time dinner rolled around. That night, he took all of the money he had saved up and what possessions he could pack away, and left the house. He also freed the lab rats that Rose's father had been studying in the wake of losing Fern.

A few weeks later, Rose found a note in one of her books that said Fern wasn't on a farm. Rose never asked her parents about this though. School becomes even worse for Fern. Other students are annoyed at her because the basketball team suffered without Lowell there. Rose kept quiet about being bullied because her mom was already too devastated by Lowell leaving. They hired private investigators to try and find him, but there was no trail to pick up. Later, the FBI showed up asking for Lowell's whereabouts. They claim that he caused over four million dollars in damage at the Davis veterinary clinic. This is the same town where Rose would eventually go to college.

Part 3, Chapter 4

In the present, Rose runs into Lowell's old girlfriend, Kitch. Kitch is excited to see Rose and catches up with her. She tells Rose that the last night she saw Lowell they had run into one of the old grad students, Matt. Matt told Lowell that Fern had been taken to a lab run by someone named Dr. Uljevik. Matt was barely allowed to spend time with Fern, despite the fact that she was struggling to adjust to suddenly being in a new environment with other chimps. Dr. Uljevik didn't respect Fern and only ever referred to her as an animal.

Kitch tells Rose that Lowell was furious when he heard about this and he set off to rescue Fern. Later, Rose tries to convince herself that Lowell had misunderstood the situation, and that Fern was only held at the lab temporarily before being moved back to her farm. She feels sure that if this was so, then Lowell would have rescued her by now and the two would be taking care of each other.

Analysis

Part 3, Chapter 3



Lowell finally leaving the family marks another big changing point for Rose. Her family never recovered from losing Fern, but they were able to at least try and pretend that things had gotten better. Once Lowell left the family truly fell apart, and once Rose got the opportunity she left as well, only returning for obligatory holiday visits. Part of the reason that she left is because she loved Lowell the most, as mentioned in the previous chapter where Rose discussed who was the favorite sibling. In her eyes, it was her parents that drove Lowell away, specifically her father. This is why their relationship is so strained when the book starts. The theme of Responsibility is demonstrated here as it shows that no one is willing to accept the responsibility for Fern's dismissal, for fully explaining the situation to the children as they grew up. The family seems to dodge any bad news or unpleasant situations rather than facing them together.

Rose continues to show her inability to accept the past by ignoring the note that Lowell left for her the night he left home. She always imagines that Fern is happy on a farm and seems unable to accept the fact that she might be unhappy. This is because Rose is still trying to suppress the responsibility she feels for Fern being removed from the family. She would rather live in her constructed fantasy than face the reality of the situation.

When the family learns that Lowell was last spotted in California this encourages Rose to go there in the hopes of finding him. Her parents support the decision and keep paying for her to go to college down there, even though there are plenty of other opportunities available to her closer to home. Rose doesn't reflect on it at the time, but this shows how incorrect she was in thinking that her parents didn't care about the family and were just trying to bury the past. They still care about Lowell, but know that if anyone has the chance of getting in touch with him again it is going to be Rose.

Part 3, Chapter 4

Kitch encourages Rose to become a teacher, something that she initially dismisses, but ultimately ends up embracing later on in life. Kitch also helps fill in a lot of blanks about what happened with Fern and why Lowell had become so motivated to get her back. Fern's mistreatment is a sore spot for both Lowell and Rose. Unlike Lowell though, Rose can't accept the reality of where Fern is going because of the guilt that she feels.

Rose tries to cope with this by diving deeper into denial. She tries to convince herself that Lowell has just misunderstood the situation. When that doesn't work and she does admit that Fern might have been in trouble, she tries to convince herself that by now Lowell would have rescued her and the two of them would be living happily together.

A big part of what sets Lowell off is the fact that Dr. Uljevik keeps referring to Fern as an animal and treats her as such. To Lowell, and all of his family for that matter, Fern was never an animal but an accepted part of the family. This is one of the themes that Rose frequently tries to get across during the book, that both humans and animals are still sentient beings. Rose also gets her first taste of how chimps normally behave. She isn't ready to fully accept it yet because she can't bear the thought of Fern being in a



negative environment. Later on, when Rose begins to learn more about chimp society, she goes through a nervous breakdown imagining what it might have been like for Fern.

Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of the letter that Rose finds?

Discussion Question 2

How does the definition of family differ from the norm for Rose and Lowell?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Lowell become so upset when Dr. Uljevik refers to Fern as an animal?

Vocabulary

Clamorous, prestige, transplanted, estrus, inexplicable, interim, amendable.



Part 3, Chapters 5-6

Summary

Part 3, Chapter 5

Rose remembers again, focusing on her first year in college. She still had a hard time making friends, despite the fact that she was now considered normal. She had mostly gotten over her childhood with Fern, although she avoided any classes that made even the slightest mention of primates. All of the other students in her dorm talked about the weird childhoods that they had, but Rose didn't want to be considered the monkey girl. Rose's roommate was a girl that was nicknamed Scully because of her love for the X-Files. Scully and Rose never fought, but they were never friends either. Rose fast forwards to the next year when she started to room with Todd. One evening, Todd and Rose were watching *The Man in the Iron Mask* and Rose had a horrible panic attack because she felt like Fern and she mirrored the characters in the movie.

Part 3, Chapter 6

In the present, Rose catches up to where the story first began. She realizes that Harlow reminds her a lot of the way that Fern used to act. Her outburst in the cafeteria was similar to the way that Fern would communicate when she was angry. Harlow convinces Rose to open the incorrect suitcase that she had been given by the airport. Inside they find a ventriloquist doll which Harlow is delighted with. Rose tries once again to get in touch with the airport so she can get the correct suitcase back.

Rose is excited about the fact that her brother had tried to get in contact with her. She is worried about the upcoming winter break because it means that she will have to go back home and might potentially miss seeing Lowell again. Rose looks up the veterinary clinic that was supposedly damaged by Lowell. She discovers that it was done by a group known as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). She does more research on the ALF and finds out they have a history of other extreme activities on animal testing facilities, and the FBI is worried that their actions will lead to someone getting seriously hurt or killed.

Analysis

Part 3, Chapter 5

The theme of Denial is demonstrated when Rose refuses to take any classes that have anything to do with primates, even avoiding classes that just feature pictures of primates on the syllabus. At this point in the book, Rose is still unable to accept the role she played in Fern being sent away, and just like when she was younger, any mention of Fern or primates is enough to set her off. This is clearly shown when she's watching *The Man in the Iron Mask* with Todd. It isn't that there are any primates in the movie but



that she identifies with the loss of identities and the incarceration aspects. She imagines what it must have been like for Fern and it terrifies her that Fern might have suffered.

To Rose, the movie also reflects the relationship that she had with Fern. She subconsciously feels like she made her family choose between having her as a daughter or having Fern. She is the one that was chosen, but she thinks that her parents made the wrong choice. Just like in the movie, the sibling that wasn't chosen was imprisoned and made to suffer. Just thinking about Fern having to go through that because of her causes Rose to have a nervous breakdown.

Rose is unable to interact with the other college students because she is trying to be someone that she isn't. All of the other students have weird family stories, but Rose wants to act like she's normal because she thinks that's the right thing to do. All it does is lead to her being isolated. Rose overhears a story from one of the other students about how they remembered something wrong which tore their family apart, mimicking the situation that Rose herself is in, in regards to Fern. She even directly references it later when Lowell and her family explain the truth.

Part 3, Chapter 6

Harlow and Rose begin to get closer because Rose sees a lot of Fern's mannerisms in the way that Harlow acts. In many respects, subconsciously, Harlow has become a substitute for Fern to Rose. Harlow is someone that communicates through her actions as much as through her words, something that Rose can completely relate to. This also brings up the running theme that not all communication is verbal. This is the chapter where Rose and Harlow start to become friends, which is a huge change for Rose since she hasn't ever really had a friend outside of her family before.

Rose ends up developing an odd attachment to the ventriloquist doll. To her, she sees it as being a type of surrogate for Fern. Everyone thought that Fern was just an animal, so Rose doesn't like that people treat the doll like it's just an object, because in her mind it has deep significant meaning to whoever actually owns it. Rose begins to personify the doll and become overprotective of it, essentially making it a new version of Mary. Harlow takes a liking to the doll as well because it's a new way for her to get attention. She continues to act as a foil to Rose, who just wants to blend into the shadows while Harlow constantly craves the spotlight. Interestingly enough, the doll's name is Madame Defarge, which is a character from *A Tale of Two Cities*, where this particular character represents 'freedom'. That Rose is enamored of the doll would seem to suggest that she is also longing for the freedom to be herself, to be accepted, and to be free of the guilt that she's carried around for so many years.

Rose begins to do research into what Lowell has been up to. She finds out that Lowell's group doesn't believe in harming anyone, whether human or animal. She discovers that Lowell has been going after groups responsible for seriously abusing and mistreating animals in their experiments. Rose reveals that the experiments have been deemed illegal.



Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of the movie, *The Man in the Iron Mask*, to Rose?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the ventriloquist's dummy to Rose?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the author chose to have the luggage with the journals replaced with the luggage containing the ventriloquist's dummy?

Vocabulary

Acquiesced, compensating, appallingly, gregarious, impositions, portent, arithmetical, paranoid.



Part 3, Chapter 7

Summary

Part 3, Chapter 7

Rose attends one of her university lectures, Violence in Religion. To her surprise the professor, Dr. Sosa, starts talking about the way that chimps behave. He discusses how male chimps are naturally violent creatures and often act very commanding towards female chimps. This news devastates Rose, who is barely able to comprehend the rest of the lesson. Dr. Sosa goes on to compare the violent ways that chimps act to the violent ways that humans act. He says that both species share the same base instincts; they just handle themselves in very different ways. This reminds Rose of some of the things that her father used to say; that chimps like Fern could act and emulate human behavior.

Analysis

Part 3, Chapter 7

Rose is forced to accept the reality of what happened with Fern when her teacher brings up the way chimps act. Rose seems to shift between having a mental breakdown and being overwhelmed with anger when she hears about some of the things that Fern might have been enduring. Fortunately, Rose later learns that while Fern might have had a difficult transition, it wasn't nearly as bad or violent as what Dr. Sosa had suggested. Still, Rose feels guilty just imagining that Fern could be in that type of situation, again subconsciously blaming herself even though she hasn't come to accept her involvement in Fern being sent away. Again, she mistakenly places the blame because she can't accept the fact that no one person was responsible for what happened.

This chapter marks a turning point for Rose. From here on out, Rose stops trying to ignore primates and begins to take the first step towards recovering her suppressed memories about Fern. After this point, Rose begins to drastically change. She starts becoming more outspoken and begins to show signs of her earlier monkey-girl persona.

Discussion Question 1

How does the reader know that Rose has begun to empathize with Fern's situation?

Discussion Question 2

How does Rose begin to allow herself to be who she truly is?



Discussion Question 3

What finally begins to make sense to Rose about Fern's life with them?

Vocabulary

Ironically, propensity, egalitarian, matriarchal.



Part 4, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Part 4, Chapter 1

Rose jumps forward to the summer of 2012, which she declares is the present. In the present, she's researching what happened to all of the other chimps that were raised in human families. She finds that most of the ones that were sent back into the wild were unable to adapt after being raised by humans. They suffered severe depression and even displayed suicidal tendencies. She did find a few instances of chimps that successfully managed to live their life alongside humans, even learning some basic sign language to communicate to one another.

Part 4, Chapter 2

Rose remembers that back in college she had gone to meet up with Harlow after the disastrous lecture with Dr. Sosa. Harlow was playing with the ventriloquist doll that they got when the wrong luggage was delivered to Rose. Harlow was getting a lot of attention which upset her boyfriend, Reg. Rose remembers being upset as well because she felt responsible for taking care of the doll. In her mind, it was a precious item that the original owner must be dearly missing. Rose and Reg went outside and Rose ended up surprising him by talking quite a bit about the lecture that she had attended, and also about how certain animals are able to identify themselves in the mirror. Once Rose realized she was talking like she used to she panicked, although Reg didn't seem to think she was acting strangely.

Analysis

Part 4, Chapter 1

Despite it being years after college, Rose's research ties into what she learned from Dr. Sosa. It shows that she's willing to open up her mind and start accepting the things that Fern could have been going through. This chapter also exposes a little more of Rose's monkey girl persona, as she reads about behavior that she herself originally exhibited when Fern was taken. Not all of the information that she finds is bad. Rose does find out about some chimps that were able to interact successfully with humans, and it becomes clear later on that Fern and Rose developed their own style of nonverbal communication, continuing the theme that not all communication is verbal. Additionally, the theme of Love is demonstrated in this chapter in that so many years after the incident, it is clear that Rose still loves Fern. This indicates that the author is suggesting that love does not have any boundaries and can be extended honestly and purely to any being to another.



Another important part of this chapter is showing that, in the end, no one person was really responsible for Fern having to be abandoned. As Rose's family will later point out, it wasn't just Rose's ultimatum that made them consider getting rid of Fern. Even the more successful cases that Rose read about still established that it wasn't yet possible to have a perfect relationship between human and chimp. Rose does find instances where humans and chimps almost succeeded. This demonstrates the theme that humans and animals are both equal sentient beings.

Part 4, Chapter 2

Harlow continues to embody Fern, but an older and more experienced Rose isn't bothered by the attention that Harlow's getting. Rose starts to revert even more into her old self by becoming a chatterbox once again. Once she realizes what she's doing she acts horrified, as though she committed some grievous sin. The theme of Being Oneself shines through when Reg doesn't mind in the slightest that she's been a chatterbox, which shows Rose that it is possible for her to be herself without hiding behind her quiet and reserved persona. Their interaction together also hints at the short relationship they will share later on in the book.

Rose's relationship with the ventriloquist doll is explored more. Even though it's an inanimate object, she's treating it like a surrogate for Fern. Harlow continues to act as Rose's foil, simply using the doll as a way to gather more attention while Rose is clearly more comfortable being ignored by everyone else at the bar.

The doll, itself, named Madame Defarge, is largely significant as she represents the symbiotic relationship that she feels she had with Fern. The doll, just by its very name, represents freedom, since Madame Defarge is the name of a Dickens character in the Tale of Two Cities. This doll also acts as a bridge object and vehicle for several themes, such as the Sanctity of Life, and Personal Responsibility.

Discussion Question 1

What type of reconciliation is Rose able to embrace through her research?

Discussion Question 2

What characteristics have made it possible for Harlow and Rose to be friends?

Discussion Question 3

What is a characteristic that comes back to Rose once she is able to let go of some of the guilt that she'd previously had?

Vocabulary

Underlying, unsubstantiated, credence, sanctuary, paradigm, ruckus.



Part 4, Chapters 3-4

Summary

Part 4, Chapter 3

Rose recalls that she continued to hang out with Harlow, but she was having a hard time not thinking about Fern. After Sosa's lecture, she kept imagining what it must have been like for Fern when she was taken away from the house. Rose remembered how scared she was as a child, but she at least had her family there to take care of her. Rose knew her family wasn't there, but she at least hoped that Matt had been there. She worried how hard it would have been for Fern to adapt to being around so many other chimps, especially males since they were the dominant ones. Rose remembers that she ended up breaking down at a restaurant and found herself crying in the bathroom. She tried to get over it and had tried to continue to party with Harlow. She very briefly ran into Lowell, but before they got the chance to really talk the cops showed up and took Rose and Harlow away, so they could spend a night in the drunk tank.

Part 4, Chapter 4

Rose continues with her memory of that time in her life. She says that she was released from jail, but spent most of the day recovering in her apartment. During that time, she thought back to everything that happened with Fern. She wondered if she really saw her brother the other night or if she had just imagined it. She remembers thinking back to when Fern was still with them and they would watch *Charlotte's Web* together. Fern liked the movie because there was a character named after her. Fern had a sign for spiders, which Rose kept repeating when she was resting in prison. Harlow informed her that Rose had been talking nonstop. It is then that Rose remembers having the realization that ever since meeting Harlow, she'd started to revert to some of her old mannerisms.

Analysis

Part 4, Chapter 3

Rose is starting to become overcome with guilt for what she imagines that Fern went through. She still doesn't know exactly what she did to get Fern taken away, but she's started to accept some of the responsibility based on what Lowell said to her. Rose begins to really appreciate how lucky she was to have her family. The theme of Family is demonstrated in this section clearly, as the reader sees that Rose is beginning to have a changed perspective on her family. Until this point she has not truly appreciated them and has even considered it lucky that she was able to leave them. She begins to understand that even though they weren't perfect, they were at least there for her and tried to help her. Rose feels terrible that Fern didn't have that same experience and that



she had to go through the pain of not only being abandoned by the only family that she knew, but suddenly being introduced into a completely new one where she was considered to be inferior.

While Rose isn't necessarily trying to bury the truth anymore, she's still not quite living in reality either. Rose is letting her guilt and her fears get the better of her, imagining all of the worst possible scenarios happening to Fern, much like how she used to imagine the best possible situations when Lowell went to rescue her.

Rose remembers that she was completely surprised to run into Lowell. Seeing him renewed her hopes that she would be able to speak with him, as after hearing from her landlord that he was around she had no idea if they'd cross paths. When she's taken away by the cops, Rose worries that it might scare Lowell away since he's still wanted by the FBI, so Rose might be too dangerous to try and approach.

Part 4, Chapter 4

Rose uses another movie to relate her experiences to Fern. Rose is still imagining the worst possible situation for Fern, relating her to Charlotte in *Charlotte's Web*. In this memory sequence the theme of Communication is demonstrated by the fact that in *Charlotte's Web* and in Fern's circumstances, both were animals that had their own way of communicating with people, so Rose imagines that they must have both ended up suffering the same unfortunate fate. The flashback also goes to show exactly how close Fern and Rose were, and emphasizes how Rose was being extra talkative because she was trying to communicate for both herself as well as for Fern.

Rose's talkative side continues to shine through when Harlow reveals that she had been talking nonstop when they were together in prison. This is an important development for Rose because Harlow remains her friend even though Rose had been starting to let her old self shine through. Rose hasn't realized it yet, but it's possible for her to be herself without having to sacrifice her social life.

Discussion Question 1

How has Rose's feelings of guilt and responsibility changed from Part 4, Chapter 2 to Chapter 3?

Discussion Question 2

How does the author show the depth of feeling that Rose had for Fern in Part 4, Chapter 4?

Discussion Question 3

What does Rose realize about being friends with Harlow?

Vocabulary

Snit, exiled, solidarity, unscrupulous, incarceration, premonition, ghastly, invalidism.

Part 4, Chapters 5-6

Summary

Part 4, Chapter 5

Rose recalls that she spent the day trying to find her missing bike and the ventriloquist doll, which Harlow had already returned. When she went back to the apartment, she found out that her brother had stopped by and had run into Harlow. The two of them were going to dinner so Rose went out to meet them. She was worried about what Lowell might be telling Harlow about their family, and that she and Lowell wouldn't be able to openly talk with Harlow there. Rose thinks back to a study that discussed whether or not it was possible for chimps to really understand the actions behind human behavior, or if they were just conditioned to respond to repeated stimuli. The study decided that it was possible for chimps to learn human behavior, which Rose decides Fern is able to do.

Part 4, Chapter 6

As Rose continues in her flashback, the reader sees that Rose found Harlow and Lowell having dinner together. She could clearly tell that the two were flirting, which made her a little jealous. Harlow was surprised that Rose had a brother since she never mentioned him before. Rose loudly announced that she only has the one sibling, a clear sign to Lowell not to mention Fern. Harlow spun all of the stories about her and Rose, doing her best to make Rose out to be a legendary figure and an amazing friend. She also made a point of badmouthing Reg, clearly not wanting Lowell to focus on the fact that she was already in a relationship. The group returned to Rose's apartment where Lowell stayed the night. He ended up waking Rose in the evening and took her out to a small restaurant so they could get pie and have a chance to talk to her alone.

Analysis

Part 4, Chapter 5

Rose continues to show the significance that the ventriloquist doll has to her. She shows more concern about finding the doll than she does her bike, and she continues to treat it as much like a person as she does an object, and this demonstrates the theme Sanctity of Life. Rose always refers to the doll by name, even though it ultimately just leads to confusion when she's trying to find her.

Rose and Lowell both have their own way of communicating. This is a reminder that Rose isn't the only one who was learning to communicate with Fern. The two rely on nonverbal cues to figure out what is or isn't important to convey. This once again touches on the theme that not all communication is verbal. This is hammered home



when Rose decides that Fern had been able to learn human behavior, due to their way of communicating.

The theme of Loyalty and Friendship is demonstrated in this chapter when Harlow shows her continued loyalty and friendship to Rose, even though Rose has been revealing more of her true self. Rose also comes to realize that not only are chimps capable of genuinely learning how to communicate with humans, but it was possible for her to learn how to communicate with Fern as well.

Part 4, Chapter 6

Rose continues to show how she can pick up on nonverbal communication cues. Rose's jealousy starts to shine through when she sees the way that Harlow and Lowell are flirting with each other. Even though they only spend a short time together, Lowell has a huge impact on Harlow and convinces her to become an activist. Rose manages to show how much she's grown despite this. Even when she initially points out that Harlow has a boyfriend, she doesn't end up making quite as much of a fuss as a younger Rose would have, something that Lowell notices. Lowell is starting to see the all the ways that Rose has changed, something which ultimately seems to make him nostalgic for the life that his family used to have.

Lowell seems to be trying to capture that old family spirit by sneaking into Rose's room at night, just like he used to do at their old house. In the following chapters the reader will get to see additional ways in which Lowell has changed. For Rose, speaking to Lowell is a huge development. She's been desperately waiting for the chance to speak with Lowell ever since he left.

Discussion Question 1

What makes Lowell want to return to his idyllic memories of their family in the past?

Discussion Question 2

What is the author trying to convey about Rose's metamorphosis through her obsession with the ventriloquist's dummy?

Discussion Question 3

What conclusions does Rose come to about communication?

Vocabulary

Incontrovertibly, insouciance, primordial, idiom, contemptuous, pique, decorum, solipsism.



Part 4, Chapter 7

Summary

Part 4, Chapter 7

Rose recalls that during that time in her life that she and Lowell ended up spending the whole morning together. Lowell did the majority of the talking. He told Rose all about the activities that he had been up to in Davis, saving animals that had been experiment on by different medical testing groups. Lowell asked about their parents, and then revealed that he has been trying to read papers that their dad published. He talked about how he disagreed with not only his recent papers, but also his earlier ones. He said that their dad always blamed Fern for not being able to understand them, but he never once considered that they were at fault for not being able to understand Fern.

He also discussed a game that Fern used to play with the students. She was given two different colored chips: red and blue. The game was supposed to be a matching game, where Fern would hand a red chip forward when she recognized a match, and a blue when something wasn't a match. She never played along though, but the only time she ever gave the red chip away was to Rose, indicating that they were the same.

Lowell started to tell Rose about how he went to rescue Fern that night he left the family. He told her how he had to sneak into the facility, and when he found Fern he could only recognize her because she was clearly the youngest one there. Fern was a mixture of angry and happy to see Lowell. He said that she seemed so different from when they all lived together, and not for the better. The other chimps wanted to attack Lowell, but Fern tried to defend him. The noise ended up alerting the staff. Lowell was torn away from Fern, who was clearly distraught at having Lowell torn away from her once again. Lowell mournfully told Rose that was the last time he ever saw Fern.

Analysis

Part 4, Chapter 7

In this remembered section, it is clear that Lowell continues to show how close he wants to be with his family. The theme of Family is exemplified as well as Loyalty in that Lowell keeps reading all of the papers that their father published, even though he ended up disagreeing with them. This shows that while he might care about his family, he's also still bitter about what happened with Fern. Just like with Rose, he seems to be unfairly placing the blame on their father, especially since he's shown he's able to forgive Rose for her part.

Lowell is the one to point out to Rose how her father was experimenting on them as much as with Fern. He thinks that their father misunderstood the initial experiment. He always blamed Fern for not understanding them, but Lowell gets Rose to realize that



communication is a two way street, and they were at fault for not understanding how Fern was expressing herself. This demonstrates the theme of Communication, a reoccurring theme throughout the book, especially with Rose. She does it not only with other characters, but even herself.

Lowell recounts the tale of the red and blue poker chips. The symbolism of the poker chip is introduced in this section, in that Fern clearly communicated her feelings about Rose. When Rose had been talking about favorites, she didn't mention the fact that Fern clearly found Rose to be her favorite. Fern shows this by only ever giving the same token to Rose. Learning about Fern's fate was important for Rose because it was the only way that she would ever be able to accept what happened in the past and try to move forward with her future.

Discussion Question 1

What are some of Lowell's observations about their father's experiments?

Discussion Question 2

Why was this revelation about Fern necessary for Rose's development?

Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the red poker chip?

Vocabulary

Fundamental, tangentially, autonomous, introspection, conclusive.



Part 5, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Part 5, Chapter 1

Lowell continues to tell Rose about the events that took place after he left the family. He talked about how he had his friends keeping an eye on Fern, since the FBI would have been waiting for him to show up to rescue her again. He said that Dr. Uljevik retired five years ago, which was ultimately a good thing since he didn't really seem to care about the chimps. He was particularly rough on Fern. Lowell had tried to have one of his friends buy Fern, but he refused to sell her. Instead, they rescued a different chimp. Lowell revealed this is for the best, since chimps don't always adapt to new homes well. The one they did rescue was nearly beaten to death by the other chimps.

Fern had gone on to have three children, though two of them were taken away. The last child, Hazel, had started to learn signs from Fern. Fern herself had learned nearly two hundred new signs. Lowell revealed that he felt like a failure because he rushed in without thinking and ruined any chance he ever would have had at rescuing Fern, or even just seeing her again. He was too angry with their mother and father to return. He always wanted to go to college, but it just never ended up happening. He instead just focused on rescuing animals.

Lowell told Rose that he had to get going for a while, but he arranged it so that Rose would keep getting updates about how Fern was doing. Rose was devastated that he had to leave. Before he got on the train, she asked why he thought she was responsible for Fern leaving. Lowell told her that when she was five, she told her parents that they had to choose between Fern or her because she had gotten jealous of all the attention Fern was getting. Lowell told Rose that he's forgiven her for that since she was so young. Before he left, he told Rose that he's so proud of her for making a good friend like Harlow.

Part 5, Chapter 2

Continuing the memory, Rose recalls that she had started the long walk back to her home where all she could do was think about Fern and Lowell. She felt like Lowell wasn't just angry, but he seemed like he'd been traumatized by not being able to rescue Fern. Rose wanted to do something to help rescue Fern, but she didn't know what she could possibly try that Lowell hadn't in the last ten years. Not only is rescuing Fern difficult, but they'd also have to find a safe spot for her to live, otherwise she'd just be taken back to the lab. Rose worried about what she would tell Harlow, knowing that she had become attached to Lowell. When she arrived back at the apartment she worried that the FBI might be waiting for her, but it just turned out to be Reg. She briefly spoke with Reg, who admitted, at the time, that he knew his relationship with Harlow was over.



Analysis

Part 5, Chapter 1

Despite running away, Lowell clearly cares about his family. He was watching over Rose just like he had been watching over Fern. He shows how much he trusts Rose by letting her inherit the task of watching over Fern. Both siblings also receive a reminder that things with Fern weren't so black and white. After all, the chimp that Lowell had rescued ended up getting rejected by the other chimps. Lowell shows some remorse for the decisions that he made, which later acts as motivation for Rose to try and do something with her life. Fern having children reinforces this lesson as well.

Rose finally learns why Lowell blamed her for Fern being taken away. This is the final step that Rose needed to take before she could start to accept what had happened and recover her suppressed memories about Fern. Despite this, Rose still isn't communicating correctly, since she hasn't actually gotten the whole story.

The theme of Responsibility is demonstrated in this chapter, primarily using the character of Lowell. At first he blamed Rose for Fern leaving, and then he blamed his parents. He never once considered the fact that it could have been Fern's fault as well. This goes back to when Rose said that Fern was his favorite. The idea of no one actually taking responsibility and how it has inherently damaged everyone's relationships and lives, is apparent.

Part 5, Chapter 2

Rose begins to realize all of the damage that came from her family being splintered. Lowell has become a wanted criminal, and Rose is beginning to see that he's distancing himself from humanity. Her monkey girl persona had always managed to combine her human traits with the traits she learned from Fern. Lowell has thrown himself into the darker side of humanity and started to sympathize with animals more than people. This goes back to what Rose had said earlier, where she declared that Fern was always Lowell's favorite.

Reg demonstrates the theme of Denial in that for the larger part of the novel, he's been oblivious to the fact that he and Harlow are mismatched. His relationship with Harlow had been in trouble since Rose had met them, but they both kept denying that they should just break up. Harlow was even looking for other partners. By finally accepting their relationship is over, Reg was able to get to the point where he could move on.

Discussion Question 1

What events convince Rose that 'life must go on'?



Discussion Question 2

Describe all of the damage that Rose says occurred because of Fern's dismissal.

Discussion Question 3

What does the author seem to be suggesting about the definition of 'family' and 'personal attachments'?

Vocabulary

Proposition, exuberance, lucid, traumatized, burden.



Part 5, Chapters 3-4

Summary

Part 5, Chapter 3

Rose recalls that Lowell had saved many animal lives. She notes that when he was making comparisons between animals and humans he seemed to classify himself more as an animal than a man. Rose remembers that at the time she was in danger of failing her Religion and Violence class because on her final she had started to write about how people rely on inhumane animal testing to advance in different fields. She had gone to argue with the professor, who decided to give her an incomplete because she had been good for the rest of the year and he appreciated the fact that she was trying to fight so passionately for her grade.

Part 5, Chapter 4

Later on, Rose recalls that Harlow had badgered Rose with questions about Lowell. At first Rose only told the basic truth, like he used to play high school in basketball and he only had one ex that she knew about. Eventually, she told her more of the truth. She doesn't actually mention Fern, but she talked about how her brother was wanted for being an animal activist. Harlow was crushed by this, which Rose thought was unfair because Harlow should have been the one comforting and supporting her, not the other way around. Rose recalls wondering what she was going to tell her family on the upcoming winter break. While she was preparing for winter break, she remembers that the police showed up at her door.

Analysis

Part 5, Chapter 3

Rose starts to show how much she's changed just from her meeting with Lowell. Instead of being the quiet student that she used to be, she passionately argues with her Religion and Violence class Professor. Even the way she expressed herself on her paper showed her monkey girl side returning. Rose drew upon what she had learned from Lowell, arguing that humans were violent to animals. Her professor disagreed with her, but admired the fact that she was able to clearly express herself and cared enough to argue her point. If she hadn't met her brother and embraced her past self, Rose would have continued to try and be a people pleaser and wouldn't have ever thought to confront her teacher. In her staunch support of animal rights Rose demonstrates the theme of the Sanctity of Life, and that all beings have a right to live their lives.

Part 5, Chapter 4



As Rose shows in her recollections, she had continued to embrace change. Where she would have once normally avoided telling Harlow the truth, she decided to tell her everything about her brother. This shows that not only has she realized the importance of communication, but she's also accepted Harlow as a friend, someone that she wants to protect. Rose thinks about how she's going to communicate with her parents and tell them about everything that happened with Lowell, as well as with Fern. Again, this is something that she never would have done before if she had kept her shy and reserved persona.

It should be mentioned that at this point the same type of dynamic that Rose had with Fern is expressed in the relationship between Rose and Harlow. In comforting Harlow, Rose is also, by proxy, comforting Fern. She finds her comforting gestures towards Harlow curious, since in all reality she should have been the one accepting condolences at her brother's departure.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Rose's paper shock her professor?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the ways in which Rose has begun to change.

Discussion Question 3

What does Rose's decision to communicate with her family and to tell them everything suggest about her character's development?

Vocabulary

Omitted, excruciating, euthanized, fathomless, miscreant, ecstatic, contradictory, enchanted.

Part 5, Chapters 5-6

Summary

Part 5, Chapter 5

In a continuation of her past, Rose says that she was taken into an interrogation room by the police, although she wasn't officially under arrest. The officer started to ask about Lowell, but Rose doesn't give him any information and instead asked to get a lawyer. She was left alone for several hours; unsure whether they were actually getting her a lawyer or just trying to make her feel impatient so she'd start talking. While she was secluded, she thought back to her childhood. She thought about how it was hard to remember so far back, and she wasn't sure if the memories she had from then are memories of what actually happened, or just events her young imagination made up because she couldn't accurately remember.

Part 5, Chapter 6

As this recall continues Rose starts to think back to when she and Fern would play together. Fern had always wanted a cat, and there was a stray that had given birth to kittens at the creek they used to play beside. Rose could approach the cats, but the mother was territorial around Fern. Rose taunted her with the cats, and the mother ended up getting hurt when Fern tried to approach. Rose went to get help, but Fern hid the cats and Lowell assumed that Rose had made it up, since she was still very young and had a habit of telling made up stories. She recounted how Fern would sometimes play a game where she wouldn't let Rose into the house, using her considerable strength to pull her out of the door if Rose managed to get by her. Nobody was too concerned about this since Rose never got seriously hurt, so they just saw it as two children roughhousing. A frustrated Rose told her mom that she was afraid of Fern, which is when she made the ultimatum that they could either have her or they could have Fern.

Analysis

Part 5, Chapter 5

Rose was able to pick up on the ways that the police were nonverbally communicating with her. She knew that they were making her wait on purpose to get her on edge, but she didn't give in. Instead, she did what Fern would have done and started to play with a bug. This was her own nonverbal way of communicating with the police, expressing her dissatisfaction with the situation. With the time to herself, Rose began to accept what happened in the past with Fern, and she went out of her way to try and embrace the memories that she had buried long ago.



In this section the reader sees that Rose is finally facing many of the repressed memories that she's had of her involvement and childhood with Fern. Though it is clear they still hurt to remember, she allows herself to remember them, anyway. As an adult, she is better able to deal with the feelings and see situations more clearly. In her memories, now, she is able to begin to understand her parent's decision to send Fern away.

Part 5, Chapter 6

Rose, now in the present, fully embraces what she had done to Fern when they were younger. Even though Rose had been taunting Fern, Fern showed off her strength which made her unsafe to be around children. Rose might have been lying when she said that she was afraid about being around Fern, but her parents were legitimately getting concerned that Fern was growing too much and becoming too strong to safely be around children. Rose mistakenly believed that they weren't concerned though and just saw it as roughhousing. To an extent, this is true because her parents did see the behavior as normal roughhousing that children engaged in. The part she was wrong about though was their concern. This goes back to the articles that Rose researched in a previous chapter. While it was possible for humans and chimps to get along, there were still differences between the two that couldn't be ignored and presented very real safety risks.

This chapter is significant in it serves as a turning point for Rose. The burden of her own guilt in Fern's dismissal begins to lose its hold on her as she is better able to look back and remember the time she spent with Fern, but with the experience and maturity of being an adult, she is able to gain the necessary perspective to see that her parents did love her, didn't blame her, and that raising a chimp with a human family was doomed to failure from the beginning.

Discussion Question 1

According to the author, what is communication truly about?

Discussion Question 2

What events from these chapters indicate that the author is purposely blurring the lines between human and nonhuman?

Discussion Question 3

List a few ways in which Lowell is also beginning to change?

Vocabulary

Pique, decorum, solipsism, incontrovertibly, insouciance, primordial, idiom, contemptuous.



Part 5, Chapter 7

Summary

Part 5, Chapter 7

Rose recalls that back in the police station she had decided to talk to the police, intent on trying to protect her brother. When an officer finally returned, it was to let her out. Rose recalls being confused by this, but when she got back to the apartment Todd, her roommate, filled her in. Todd had brought in his mother, a skilled attorney. The police had brought in Rose because the previous night her apartment manager, Erza, had been arrested breaking into a testing lab to try and release a group of monkeys. He had a female accomplice that the police hadn't managed to capture. They assumed it was Rose given her family history. Rose was with Todd the previous night though, and with the help of Todd's mom they were able to convince the police that it was probably Harlow. Todd suspected that Lowell had recruited Harlow, but Rose didn't think it was anything that official.

Rose remembers that she had gone to her room that same day only to find that the ventriloquist's dummy, Madame Defarge, had been taken. She becomes devastated by the doll's disappearance.

Analysis

Part 5, Chapter 7

It is interesting that, with the continued recall of her childhood, viewed through the lens of adulthood, Rose is able to see that she is not to blame for other people's choices. This is readily demonstrated when she gives up Harlow to the police. Since she's viewed Harlow as a Fern substitute, this is much deeper than her giving up someone she was close to, to the police. She is acknowledging the fact that Fern had a dark side and had not been her 'loving' sister, always. In fact, Fern had given in to her own nature which had caused everyone a great deal of anxiety. In much the same way, Harlow gave in to her own natural proclivities and as a result, must face the authorities for her choices.

Rose found herself the center of attention by all of her suite mates in the dorm (apartment building). Not only did she have an infamous brother, but her wild past is fully embraced by everyone, who found it novel and exciting. They didn't see her as being some sort of freak because they understood that everyone has their own sordid past and complications. Rose recalls that it was at this point in her life that it occurred to her that she had made some good friends.

Rose recalls that she was saddened to see that the ventriloquist doll was taken. She saw this as another parallel to what happened with her and Fern. Just like with Fern, the



original owner of the doll would never be able to see her again. The doll also represents that Rose had to let go of Harlow. Just like with Fern, Harlow was starting to become a risk to Rose, since she kept dragging her into situations Rose wasn't comfortable with. Had the two continued to stay together it's a very real possibility that Rose would have become a wanted activist just like Harlow and Lowell.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the author suggest Harlow has taken the dummy?

Discussion Question 2

What makes Rose suddenly very popular?

Discussion Question 3

What events suggest that Rose is continuing to evolve into her true self?

Vocabulary

Boasting, fathomless, allegation, acutely, nemesis, malicious.



Part 6, Chapters 1-3

Summary

Part 6, Chapter 1

Rose shares that she went home that Christmas and after a few days decided to tell her parents about her meeting with Lowell. Her parents had a hard time with the news, especially when they heard that Lowell had talked about wanting to go to college and had even considered coming home. Rose's father was angry when Rose pointed out that Fern had never been sent to a farm. He argued that there was no real way to tell a five year old about what was really going on. Her parents talked more about Fern. To Rose's surprise, they said that Rose was the one that would panic anytime Fern was brought up and that's why the family didn't talk about her.

Rose's family went on to say that it wasn't just the incident with the cat that caused concern with Fern. Fern was starting to get older and had displayed other incidents of violence. It genuinely seemed like they were accidents and Fern didn't realize her own strength or was just playing around in her own way, but it was still getting to be a serious issue. The family was worried that as Fern continued to get older these incidents would get worse. Rose wasn't sure what to feel. Even though she wasn't the sole reason, she still felt guilty about Fern being sent away.

Part 6, Chapter 2

Rose remembers that shortly after that she met with Harlow's parents. Harlow had told her, after meeting Lowell, that she came from a broken home. She claimed her mother frequently had children with other men, but her father worked with a stage crew and was going to get her a job after she graduated from college. All of that turned out to be lies. Harlow's parents were surprised to hear about the way that Harlow had been acting, which in turn surprised Rose because she couldn't imagine Harlow acting any other way.

Part 6, Chapter 3

In a continuation of Rose's recall, she states that she had thought about getting a job working with chimps or other primates. She ended up deciding against it when she realized that she'd have to be a neutral party and couldn't interfere in their lives. In the end, she decided that she's wanted to become a teacher, since her previous classes had actually been leading up to that. Rose shares that she briefly dated Reg for a couple of months, citing it as one of her longest relationships. She talked about how in 1998 her father passed away as a result of his drinking and the stressful life that he had led. Rose felt guilty for placing all of the blame about Fern onto him. She realized that her mother was responsible too, as well as herself. A few days after he passed, they got an anonymous postcard from Lowell.



Analysis

Part 6, Chapter 1

More of Rose's past is exposed to her when she communicates with her family. The theme of Family is demonstrated when Rose discovers that she was the one who would panic whenever Fern was brought up. It wasn't her family trying to bury the truth, but they were just trying to support her because they knew that she wasn't ready to deal with the past. This demonstrates not only the theme of Family, but Love and Loyalty. Rose's family might have been trying to protect her, but they were also encouraging her suppressed memories. Not only that, but they were adding onto their own stress because they took the brunt of the responsibility themselves. If they had all communicated openly together they would have learned that no one person was at fault for what had happened, and it's likely that Lowell would have stayed with the family.

Part 6, Chapter 2

Rose learned that Harlow, just like her, was trying to create her own persona. Harlow was doing the opposite of Rose though. In truth, , and ironically, she was the normal girl that Rose always wanted to be. To everyone else though she tried to present herself as a wilder girl, making scenes when she fought with her boyfriend and constantly flirting with boys whenever she went partying. She even lied about her family life. Again, she did the opposite of what Rose did and portrayed her family life as being a dysfunctional mess. Rose can tell that Harlow despite having lied about some things, was also being herself whenever they were together, as Rose was able to pick up on her nonverbal communication cues thanks to having learned them from Fern.

Part 6, Chapter 3

Lowell continues to show the loyalty that he has to his family, and demonstrates the theme of Loyalty with the postcard that he sends upon learning of his father's death. When their father passes away, he sends a postcard wanting them to know he's still keeping tabs on them, even if he can't be there in person to support them. Rose begins to realize how it was wrong of her and Lowell to place so much of the blame onto their father, once more touching on the theme that it's easier to place blame than it is to accept responsibility. Rose knows she was responsible in her own way, and even Lowell had admitted that his antics trying to free Fern did more harm than good, something that their father had warned him about.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of communication as it applies to Part 6, Chapter 1.



Discussion Question 2

How is Harlow the person that Rose always wanted to be?

Discussion Question 3

What does Rose realize about blame and responsibility in Part 6, Chapter 2?

Vocabulary

Vendor, merriment, indecipherable, eluded, warren, inadvertent, delude, plummet, assessment, violations.



Part 6, Chapters 4-6

Summary

Part 6, Chapter 4

Back in the summer of 1996, Rose finally got her suitcase. She was disappointed to find that Todd had returned the other one as she wanted to write a note apologizing for the fact that the ventriloquist doll had gone missing, likely stolen by Harlow. She hoped that Harlow might have snuck in at some point to return it, but doubted that was the case. Rose finally started to go through some of the journals and realized that they are more like baby books. They contained pictures of both a young Rose as well as a young Fern.

Part 6, Chapter 5

Rose starts to drift between the present day of 2012 and 1996 when she was reading the journals. She reveals that in the present she and her mother have turned the journals into books and are starting to get them published. Rose became a kindergarten teacher and frequently brings her students to see Fern and the other chimps. Fern has had a few more children. Rose's mother volunteers at the center, and even though it took some time Fern has managed to forgive her. Things aren't perfect between Rose's family and Fern, but Rose has come to accept that it just wouldn't work. Her family was right when they thought that Fern could do serious damage if left at home, even if it was just on accident.

Rose is getting ready to promote the books that she and her mother had been publishing. She's dreading the interviews, but she doesn't want her mother to be the one to do the promoting because she's worried about how the crowd will react. She understands that a lot of people will be angry about the fact that Fern was given away, and she doesn't know how her mother will react to that kind of stress.

Part 6, Chapter 6

In 2011 it was announced that testing on chimps was no longer allowed unless it was for medical purposes that were deemed absolutely necessary. Rose considered it a victory, even if it was just a small one. She celebrated with Fern, which got her wondering if Fern could remember the way they used to drink champagne on New Year's. According to some studies, animals displayed exceptional short term memory, but as far as long term memory went there were no conclusive studies. Rose recalls that at the time she believed that Fern remembered the time they spent growing up together.

Analysis

Part 6, Chapter 4



Now that Rose is finally able to accept the truth she is able to look through the journals. Instead of dreading them like when she first received them, she has started to embrace them. The journals represent everything that she has learned from Fern, and how much she cherished her family. In a very real sense, they represent her memories....things she had avoided, things she didn't want to delve in to. Now, of course, she's facing everything, including her memories, and she is able to read the journals, and do something constructive with the insights it offers her. Rose can now see the past for what it really was. She knows that it wasn't a perfect storybook that she first tried to make it out to be. She also knows that it wasn't as dark as her imagination had feared, and that she wasn't the one who was responsible for destroying her family. The journals also go on to serve as motivation for Rose to share her story and help children understand the importance of communication.

Part 6, Chapter 5

After everything that she has learned, Rose has tried to reconnect with her family. She's willing to protect her mom from the press when they need to begin promoting their book. She's also trying to reconnect with Fern, but also giving Fern the space that she needs to live her own life. Rose is still trying to help out Fern, and all of the proceeds from her book will go into getting a bigger living space for Fern and the other chimps. In the present, Rose has completely embraced her monkey girl side. She uses this side and everything she's learned to help teach her students new ways of communicating with each other.

In the present, Rose has also finally accepted that what happened with Fern wasn't any one person's fault. She's used everything she's learned to make it so that her students are able to safely interact with the chimps without putting anyone at risk. Even though it isn't as close as Rose and Fern were, it's ultimately something that can be long lasting because nobody is in danger. Rose is still respecting of Fern's feelings as well, always making sure she's ready to accept visitors before bringing students to see them.

Part 6, Chapter 6

Rose and Fern both show that even with everything that happened, they are still sisters. They both celebrate the fact that new animal testing laws have been put in place. The laws reflect what Rose had been writing about in her paper back in college. Human cruelty starts with animals, but it's possible for animals and humans to communicate with each other despite being different species.

Discussion Question 1

What actions taken by Rose indicate that she's now ready to learn the full truth about her past?



Discussion Question 2

What is significant about the age group that Rose prefers to teach in school?

Discussion Question 3

What closure does Fern offer Rose?

Vocabulary

Consolation, retribution, disheveled, consolingly, poachers, resilient, quarantine, immunology, bipedalism, retention.



Part 6, Chapter 7

Summary

Part 6, Chapter 7

Rose starts to get media attention, but it largely comes from the fact that Lowell is captured and arrested. He spends three months in prison without seeing an attorney. Rose tries to get Todd's mother to represent him. She's interested, but says it is a complicated case. Rose recounts her first reunion with Fern. She had sent several items ahead from their past to try and get her to remember. When they meet, she brings the red poker chip, showing it to Fern to let her know she still thinks they are the same. While Fern doesn't react violently or poorly, Rose isn't sure if she recognizes her either. Even though her body has changed so much, and she's an adult now, Rose feels like she can still recognize everything about Fern.

Analysis

Part 6, Chapter 7

Lowell has given up on humanity and fully embraced his animalistic side while fighting for their rights. Without his family to anchor him, he loses himself and becomes consumed by his cause. This mirrors the way that Rose's father had become consumed, first with the experiment and his job, and then with stress, which eventually took his life. Rose and her mother are lucky because they were able to move beyond what happened. They are able to become a family again along with Fern. It isn't an easy transition for all of them after so much time.

Fern has become more weathered after being separated from her family, but she has been able to move on and have a family of her own that she takes care of and educates. Rose still has trouble making long lasting connections with people, but she has her students and salvaged a relationship with her mother and Fern. No matter what changes, Rose and Fern will always be family, and Rose will always consider them to still be the same.

Discussion Question 1

Why has Lowell decided to give up on his own humanity?

Discussion Question 2

What is the author saying about family and family relationships?



Discussion Question 3

Compare Rose's father to Lowell, and Rose to her mother. How does each react to their family's history?

Vocabulary

Subdued, fluent, monstrosity, empathy.



Characters

Rosemary Cooke

Rose is a character with many different sides. Because she was raised alongside Fern, she has a mixture of human characteristics as well as those of a chimp. At a young age, Rose would frequently display chimp traits, something that came out whenever she got nervous. She would occasionally pick at the hair of other students and climb around on furniture. Rose loved attention as a child because she and Fern were constantly being studied by scientists and grad students. Because of the experiments, Rose was a very intelligent child and had an advanced vocabulary. She was a chatterbox when she was younger because she always had an audience to listen to her, plus she was communicating for Fern as well as herself.

Her love for attention made her jealous though, which resulted in Fern being sent away. Rose was unable to cope with the trauma and suppressed the memories that she had of her sister. She tried to bury her monkey girl persona and become a normal girl. She stopped talking so much or trying to show off her advanced vocabulary. Rose became too passive and never had the chance to make any friends until she got into college where she met Todd and Harlow.

Rose has a unique way at looking at people thanks to growing up with Fern. She's very sensitive to nonverbal forms of communication. Rose pays particular attention to different scents. To her, everyone has their own unique scent which can sometimes help display their mood. Certain scents can also invoke memories for her.

Rose has a bumpy relationship with her family. At the start of the book, she doesn't associate much with either of her parents and only considers herself to be close with her brother. As the book goes on, Rose realizes how close she was with Fern, and manages to reconnect with her mother. Her father passes away, but she absolves him of the guilt she placed on him for everything that happened with Fern.

Rose has a hard time having long lasting relationships with people because of her family issues. She cites a five month relationship as being one of her longest. By the end of the book, Rose has reconnected with what remains of her family. Rose cares about her students and helps them to learn different ways of communication and expression just like she did when she was a child. Along with being a kindergarten teacher, she is also co-writer of a series of children books which details her own childhood growing up with Fern.

Lowell Cooke

Lowell is Rose's older brother. Just like Rose he has a strained relationship with the rest of the family. Lowell rebelled when his parents decided that it wasn't safe for them to keep Fern around the rest of the family. He was constantly coming and going from the



house, and he outright left during the senior year because he wanted to save Fern. Lowell was inexperienced though and ended up getting caught before he could save Fern. This led to him joining up with animal activists and becoming hunted by the FBI for acts of terrorisms against animal testing groups.

Lowell expresses remorse for his actions and wishes that he could have gone to school and stayed with his family. When he meets up with Rose, she can sense that he's traumatized by his failure to save Fern. Despite the distance he put between his family, Lowell continued to keep tabs on everyone, Fern included.

Seeing the results of animal testing took its toll on Lowell, and by the end of the book Rose remarks that it seems like he has lost his humanity and completely taken on an animalistic side. Despite that, both Rose and her mother are proud of the positive traits that Lowell embodies. They see the love and empathy that he shows to the animals, and his willingness to make sure that they are protected and properly taken care of. While he might be an extremist, Lowell always made sure that nobody was hurt during his activities, whether animal or human.

Lowell is eventually arrested and held in prison for three months without getting to consult with an attorney. Rose is trying to get Todd's mother to represent him, but she's hesitant to take the case because of how complicated it is.

Fern Cooke

Fern is a chimpanzee that was raised almost directly alongside Rose. Fern is very intelligent and managed to learn how to communicate nonverbally with Rose and the others. Fern had a very playful personality when she was living with Rose and the others. Unfortunately, she had a hard time understanding how much stronger she was compared to the humans. She loved to show affection, but didn't realize that doing something like hugging a leg would cause bruises because of her size and strength.

When Fern is sent away she struggles to adapt to being raised around other chimps. She was just too used to being around humans. At her new home, she was just treated like an animal. Once Dr. Uljevik left the lab her living conditions improved. Fern had several children, although some of them were taken from her. The ones that weren't she treats with love and care, and teaches them to communicate just like she had learned from her time with Rose and the others.

Fern has strained relations with her human family when they return. She was both excited and angry to see Lowell, but ultimately showed that she was willing to protect him when the other chimps tried to attack. She was able to accept Rose and her mother coming back as well, even though it had been years since last seeing them.



Rose's Father

Rose's father is a scientist and responsible for bring Fern into the house. He wanted to prove that it was possible for animals to learn how to communicate with humans. His experiment is ultimately considered a failure when he has to get rid of Fern. He struggles with this for years. Not only does he feel like he failed as a scientist, but also a father. His family places the blame for what happened on him, and on top of that he's the only one working and providing for his family. With all of that stress, he's driven into becoming an alcoholic.

Rose's father cares greatly for his family and is there in an instant to help Rose when she gets arrested. He spent a lot of time teaching Rose and was responsible for giving her an advanced vocabulary. He's constantly turning every situation into some kind of learning experience. He passes away in 1998 due to a combination of drinking and stress.

Rose's Mother

Rose's mother only actually appears a few times in the story. She is shown to take Fern's leaving the hardest, becoming bedridden and barely able to get up. Before then, she was shown to be a very kind and loving mother, treating both Rose and Fern as equals despite Fern being a chimpanzee. She's also shown as being very sentimental, having filled up journals with different stories and pictures from her time raising her family. She later turns these journals into children's books alongside Rose.

Harlow

Harlow is a college student alongside Rose. Rose instantly recognizes that she's a dramatic person, in no small part because their first meeting involved Harlow screaming in the cafeteria and tossing everything around. Rose sees a lot of Fern inside of Harlow. Harlow grew up with a normal family, but she likes to lie and pretend she came from a broken home, but she has a father who works in the film industry and will get her a job once she graduates.

Harlow is a passionate person who tends not to respect personal boundaries. She takes things that belong to Rose and constantly sneaks into her apartment building. Harlow ends up becoming infatuated with Lowell after meeting him. When she learns the truth about him from Rose, she becomes an animal rights activist herself and is believed to be Lowell's partner, although Rose doubts the two are actually working together. Harlow acts as Rose's first real friend throughout the story.



Reg

Reg is Harlow's boyfriend, although she ends up dumping him once she meets Lowell. Rose initially doesn't think very highly of Reg and finds him to be needlessly difficult. He and Rose do end up developing a friendship where she thinks kinder of him, and the two even briefly date for awhile.

Dr. Uljevik

Dr. Uljevik is the closest thing to an antagonist in the series. He's a conceited scientist that takes over as Fern's caretaker. Unlike Rose's family, he cares little for the chimps and only treats them as animals. He develops an odd fascination with Fern and refuses to give her up when Lowell has his activist friends try to purchase her. He ends up leaving the program much to the pleasure of everyone else working with Fern. After that, the living conditions of the chimps improves.

Todd

Todd is Rose's roommate and as she finds out near the end of the book, one of her friends. Todd has very few interactions with Rose, but when she gets arrested he calls up his mother to represent her. When Rose has a panic attack after seeing a movie that reminded her of Fern, Todd was there to help ease her through the panic attack.

Rose's Grandparents

Rose's grandparents show up at various parts throughout the book. They are mostly there to give their negative opinions on Fern as well as Rose's father, who they dislike for bringing Fern into the family. They still do their part to try and help out with the human kids, although they frequently discourage Rose from being so talkative.



Symbols and Symbolism

Solipsism

Solipsism is the extreme preoccupation with one's own feelings to the point of denying reality. By creating alternative scenarios, the person is safe from emotional pain. For example, Rose had lingering memories of some of the more troubling things that happened during her youth, but she was never ready to face them. Instead, she would make excuses or come up with a more acceptable explanation. She didn't know that Fern was taken to a lab, so she decided that Lowell must have saved her, or that the lab was just a temporary stop before going to the farm.

Ventriloquist Doll (Madame Defarge)

Rose first encounters Madame Defarge early in the book when she is given the wrong suitcase by the airport. For Rose, Madame Defarge represents the relationship that she used to have with Fern. On a deeper level, she represents freedom. Everyone outside of the study always thought that Fern was just an animal or, at best, like a family pet. To Rose though, she was a sister and a person.

Rose makes the same assumption about Madame Defarge. While anyone else might have just seen an inanimate object, Rose imagines that the owner has a similar relationship to the doll that she had to Fern. Rose always refers to the doll by name and treats it like a person. Everyone else acts like it's just a doll. This becomes one of the major vehicles for two themes, the sanctity of life and personal responsibility.

Additionally, Madame Defarge (the dummy's name) represents a figure from *A Tale of Two Cities*, where the character was the vehicle of change.

Lab Mice

After Fern's experiment is considered a failure, Rose's father started to do more basic experiments with lab mice. The night that Lowell decided to leave one of the last things that he did was release all of the mice that their father had in the house. For Lowell, this was his first step into becoming an animal activist. Releasing the mice was his attempt at penance for being unable to keep Fern in the family. Lowell would continue to go on and release animals until the FBI finally managed to catch him in 2012.

Rose's Homes

Throughout the course of the book, Rose has a few different homes. The first is the giant farmhouse. This is the largest home that she's ever lived in, which represents the fact that her family was fully complete in this home. When they lose Fern, Rose's family moves to a smaller house, representing the fact that they've lost one of their family



members. After Lowell runs away and Rose goes to college, they move into an even smaller home, again reflecting on the loss. Each time Rose goes into one of the new houses she comments on how empty the new homes feel and how further apart the family has gotten.

The Journals

Rose's journals are a direct link to the past. While they physically represent the time that Rose and Fern spent growing up, there's a deeper meaning to them as well. At first, Rose isn't ready to open the journals. She's grateful that the airport lost them because it meant she wouldn't have to be responsible for getting rid of them. She only accepts them because her mom insists. As time passes though, Rose begins to recover her memories about what happened. She stops denying what happened with her family and becomes willing, even eager, to read the journals. Her willingness to read them directly represents accepting and moving past what happened to her family.

Scents

Throughout the book, Rose constantly refers to objects by the scent that they give off. Sometimes, she even refers to people's feelings by the scents that they are giving off, and she associates certain memories with certain scents. At first this just seems like the writer is adding additional details to the book, but once Rose starts to remember her time with Fern it becomes clear that these mannerisms are symbolic of her repressed monkey girl persona. Just like a chimp, Rose would sniff at people and objects. While she wasn't as direct with it, she retained this trait even into adulthood which is why she brings it up so much in her descriptions.

Mary

Mary is Rose's invisible friend that she had as a child. Rose eventually reveals that Mary wasn't a normal invisible friend because she was a chimp, just like Fern was. Although Rose originally created Mary before Fern was taken, after she's removed the family Mary takes on a different role. Mary embodies the fact that Rose isn't able to face losing Fern. Instead of remembering the real memories she has with Fern, she started to associate all of those memories with Mary. She knew that Mary was imaginary, so it made it easier to forget about Fern, since she was now associating those memories with a figment of her imagination.

Tarzan

When Rose first meets Harlow and Reg they ask her who her favorite superhero is. Rose is surprised by the question and reflexively answers with Tarzan, which initially seems like an odd choice. When Reg argues that he isn't a superhero, Rose points out that his ability to communicate with animals makes him special. Since this is early on in



the book it just seems like an odd answer from Rose. Rose starts to reveal everything about Fern though and it starts to make sense why she chose Tarzan. Rose frequently mentions how she believes that superheroes are just people with gifts outside of the ordinary for their species. It becomes clear that when she said Tarzan, she was really thinking about Fern because she believes that, like Tarzan, Fern had learned how to communicate with a species outside of her own and that makes her special.

Red/Blue Poker Chips

When Fern is giving the different colored poker chips its part of an experiment. She was presented with different objects, and when they were the same she was supposed to indicate this with the red poker chip. All of the grad students mistakenly believe that Fern didn't understand the experiment because she would only ever present the blue chip. According to Lowell, the only time that Fern ever used the red chip was on Rose, indicating that they were the same. Rose herself presents the red chip to Fern when they first reunite again, and several times she refers to Fern as her red poker chip.

Movies

There are a few different times where movies come up in the book. One of the first instances is Star Wars. As a child, Rose didn't like that the nonhuman character, Chewbacca, didn't receive a medal while the human characters did. To her, this was a slap in the face because it was saying that animals weren't equal to humans. Rose of course doesn't believe that because in her eyes Fern is her sister and not an animal.

When Rose watches Man in the Iron Mask she has a panic attack. The story is about two twins, one destined to rule and the other imprisoned. The twins switch places so the one that should rule was instead imprisoned. Rose panics because she feels guilty over what happened to Fern. In her mind, she was the one that should have been imprisoned, but she got swapped out and got to live the good life while Fern was locked away in a cage.



Settings

Davis California (1995-1996)

Rose spends the majority of the time in Davis hoping to run into her lost brother, Lowell. Rose primarily spends her time at her college and apartments, but once she does run into Lowell she explores more of the town. She also frequents different bars and restaurants when she's with Harlow.

Farmhouse (1974-1979)

The farmhouse in Bloomington Indiana is where Rose is raised alongside Fern. The farm is home to Rose's family as well as several grad students that record everything Fern and Rose would do. Rose looks back fondly on her time at the farmhouse and considers it the last place where her family was truly together. Rose returns to the farmhouse once more when she's older, but the place is cold and abandoned.

Grandparents' House

Rose spends alternating year going to her grandparents' house for the holidays. Her family consistently looks down on her father for bringing Fern into the family. Rose spends a few weeks here when her parents are getting rid of Fern. She hates it there though because she feels alone and ultimately tries to run away.

Rose's Apartment

Rose only spends a little bit of time at her apartment, but it's where her friendship with Harlow really begins, and where she finds out that she's friends with Todd. Rose's apartment acts as a sanctuary for Harlow and very briefly her brother. It's also where she reads her journals and explores her past with Fern.

Prison

Rose is initially taken to prison at the start of the book for mistakenly being part of Harlow's rampage in the cafeteria. She returns to prison a few other times during the course of the story. The first is when she and Harlow are brought into the drunk tank after a night of partying, and the second time is when the FBI is trying to learn more about Lowell.



Research Center (1991, “Present Day”)

Lowell first goes to the research center when he tries to free Fern. Back then, it was a smaller lab where the chimps were treated like animals. In the present day, the lab is much bigger and the chimps are treated more humanely. Rose frequently brings her kindergarten class to see the chimps and learn about communication.

Rose’s Second and Third Home (Various years)

After the family gets rid of Fern, they move to a smaller house still in Indiana. This is where Rose spends the majority of her childhood, and also where she started to bury her memories about Fern. Her family eventually moves to a third house, still in Indiana. Rose only spends a couple of nights over the holiday there where she comments that it doesn’t feel homely, and she suspects her family only moved because the other house felt so empty without her and Lowell.

The Graduate

The graduate is one of the main bars that Harlow brings Rose to. Rose initially recounts her tale about living with her grandparents at this bar. Harlow frequently brings Rose to this bar whenever they go out, even if they end up moving onto other locations in Davis.



Themes and Motifs

Communication

One of the main messages that Rose tries to convey throughout the book is that communication isn't always something that is done verbally. Characters outside of the study don't seem to understand that Fern was able to communicate with the family, especially with Rose. Rose mentions several times that she always understood what Fern was saying and would act as a translator. Lowell argued with their father that the experiment shouldn't have been about Fern learning to communicate with humans, but if it was possible for humans to learn to communicate with Fern.

Throughout the book, Rose is constantly reading people based on their nonverbal cues. When she first meets Harlow she understands that Harlow isn't acting out of rage. Everyone else in the cafeteria thinks she's crazy, but Rose can see that she's just putting on a performance because she likes the attention. Rose is frequently observing people based on the way that they act, or through other ways like the scents that they're giving off.

Because of her experience with other forms of communication, Rose is able to emulate different behavior and make herself unreadable. When she finds Harlow in her apartment, she notes that Harlow is trying to study her and get a read on her emotions. Harlow can't learn anything about Rose though because she's mastered nonverbal communication through her time with Fern, so she knows how to guard herself so Harlow can't learn anything about her.

Whenever Rose is really distressed, she starts to communicate in nonverbal ways. When she and Harlow are brought into prison, Rose finds herself constantly signing without even thinking about it, falling back into her old habits from when she was with Fern. As Rose grows up, she begins to teach her students about how to communicate just like chimps do, even bringing them to see Fern and the other chimps.

Denial is Dangerous

Throughout the story Rose is in denial about everything that happened with Fern. She tries to bury her emotions because she can't accept the responsibility of what happened. Rose's family went along with this behavior, with her parents trying to never talk about Fern around her because it would set her off. As a result, Rose's family began to fall apart. Rose's father was forced to take the brunt of responsibility, constantly being criticized by the rest of the family. Lowell was torn apart because he felt like his family didn't really care about each other when that couldn't be further from the truth. He couldn't handle this and ended up leaving.

It isn't just the memories that Rose tries to deny either. She denies her true nature, her monkey girl side because she thinks this is what everyone else wants. As a result, she



pretends to be the normal girl that she mistakenly believes everyone wants her to be. This leads to Rose becoming isolated and having no friends throughout school, until she meets Harlow and starts to let her true self shine through.

Once Rose begins to remember and accept her true self her life begins to get better. She begins to make friends and finally find purpose in her life. Part of denying her monkey girl side meant that she was keeping all of her thoughts inside. As a result, her mind was filled with unspoken thoughts and she was having a hard time focusing on anything. She just drifted through college taking generic classes. After she meets with Lowell again though and remembers everything about Fern, she refocuses her life and becomes a teacher, using everything she learned from Fern to teach her students new ways of communication.

Accepting Responsibility

At the very start of the book, Rose places the majority of the blame on her Father for her family falling apart. Everyone else in the family seems to blame him as well, with Rose even commenting that it seemed like her family members were only doing so because they didn't want her mother to feel any of the blame for Fern. Even Rose herself later admits to doing this. Lowell on the other hand splits the blame between Rose and her father, which ultimately leads to him leaving the family.

When Rose finds this out, she becomes overwhelmed with guilt because now she believes she was the one who was solely responsible for Fern being sent away. This guilt is one of the reasons why she tried to live in denial for so long. All that it did though was ensure that she was miserable throughout her childhood and lost in her adulthood. Things are even worse for Rose's father, who shoulders all of the responsibility and becomes so stressed that he passes away.

What Rose comes to learn by the end of the book is that it wasn't any one person that was responsible for Fern having to be sent away. Rose did contribute by saying that she was afraid of Fern, but as her mother reveals that wasn't the sole reason they sent Fern away. Fern was just growing too quickly and becoming too strong to safely be around humans. She wasn't trying to be malicious towards anyone, but her form of playing and showing affection was starting to hurt people.

Even though it hurts Rose to accept responsibility for the part she played in getting rid of Fern, it was ultimately the only way that she was able to move on with her life. By trying to take the easier path, all she did was prolong her pain and put stress on her family, contributing them to all drifting apart and becoming splintered.

Sanctity of Life

Throughout the story, Rose talks about how people don't understand that Fern was more than just a chimpanzee. Everyone at the farmhouse understood that, but even members of Rose's family wrote off Fern as just being an animal. When Fern was taken



away, one of Rose's neighbors came by, trying to comfort Rose by saying that she - and not Fern - was the one that was made in God's image. When Rose's mother is depressed, Rose's grandmother is quick to point out that she got the same way when their childhood dog died, implying that Fern was just a pet.

Even Rose's father leans more towards treating Fern like an animal. As Lowell points out when he meets with Rose, the experiment wasn't to see if humans could communicate with chimps, but if a chimp could learn to communicate with humans. This implies a natural superiority, that because humans are above chimps they don't have to learn how to communicate with them. This is the same attitude that the new lab has towards Fern, treating her just like an animal and not an equal being like Rose had.

Lowell witnesses humans doing cruel experiments to animals when he becomes an activist. He sees animals being bred specifically for the purpose of undergoing horrific experiments, their whole lives spent in agony just to observe the effects that a certain medicine or product has on their body. Seeing such acts makes Lowell give up on his humanity. Both Lowell and Rose are constantly trying to express that although the species are different, they're both still sentient. Rose herself even says at one point that the most important part in the phrase "human beings" is the beings.

Being Yourself

As a young child, Rose had a hard time fitting in with other students. To them, she was a strange girl who was constantly talking. Throughout the course of the book Rose laments that she doesn't have other children to play with. Part of why she cared so much about Lowell was the fact that he would play with her. Rose tries to fit in by giving up her monkey girl persona and becoming quieter and reserved, believing that is what everyone wants from her.

Despite changing the way that she acts, Rose still isn't able to make any friends. In college, all of the other students are able to bond, but Rose is trying too hard to come off as normal and not being herself, so she still isn't able to make friends. Rose only begins to make friends once she embraces her monkey girl side, which is how her and Harlow became friends. Rose also gets closer to everyone in her apartment once she starts being herself.

While she has started to make friends, Rose also recognizes that just because she was being herself it doesn't mean that everyone is automatically going to like her. Rose showed her true colors to her college professor. He was previously pleased because she seemed like a model student when she was being her fake persona. When she argued over her paper she was still respected by her teacher, but not quite as liked. Similarly, Rose is able to be herself with Reg, and the two even end up in a relationship for a while. The two ultimately end up breaking up though because they weren't meant to be together.



Rose learns that ultimately not everyone is going to be compatible with each other, but it makes more sense to be yourself and have some friends than to try and be someone that you're not and end up having no friends. There's just no way to appeal to everyone's tastes.

Loyalty

The theme of loyalty is explored in this novel. The first time it appears is through the perspective of Rose, a very young girl. Rose, who was raised along side of a chimpanzee youngster, views Fern (the chimp) as her sister, refusing to recognize that she is different. Perhaps, she sees that Fern is 'different' in the way that children can, and she accepts this difference and doesn't love her any less.

Rose's loyalty to Fern doesn't diminish when Fern is taken away. In fact, her loyalty to her sister's memory (however incomplete the memories might be initially) is rock solid. It is what serves as a behavior modification as she grows up, structures her responses to other beings, and shapes her perspectives when she interacts with others.

Lowell demonstrates loyalty in that from the moment that Fern leaves he goes looking for her. Without fully understanding what it was that he was embarking on, or what the long term consequences would be, he leaves home to try and find Fern. Then, when he is unsuccessful in rescuing her, he turns his life into a lifelong pursuit against the sort of injustice that he sees occurred to his chimp sister.

Other types of Loyalty are explored, showing that, as with most things, there can be a dark side to Loyalty. For example, Rose and Lowell's father was so dedicated and loyal to his work and the laboratory that he essentially sacrificed his family's well being to see the experiment succeed. Then, out of loyalty to his family, he walks away from the experiment and is not able to recover fully from the failure.

Harlow displays loyalty to Rose, as well as a type of loyalty to her own true nature. However, this is not recognized as a liberating type of loyalty and in the end, her destructive tendencies were shown to be, just like Fern's, detrimental to those living in close proximity.

Family

The theme of family is explored throughout the entire novel. The first instance occurs when Rose's 'sister' is removed from their childhood home. The fact that Rose cannot recall that her 'sister' was a chimpanzee and that she was part of her father's experiment is at the heart of her dysfunction, and it is at the heart of her entire family's dysfunction and demise.

Family is shown to be both supportive and nurturing, but also that it has the additional characteristic of being one of the most harmful settings for someone when that support and nurturing ends, or is laced with contingencies. Removing or limiting emotional



involvement is shown to be crippling, as evidence in nearly all of the family member's lives post-Fern. The father shoulders the burden of making a living experiment out of his children, and of the impact that it had on his wife. He becomes an alcoholic to try and deal with the problem.

Rose finally comes to terms with her family's fault and involvement in Fern's dismissal. As an adult she can see the reasons that they took the actions that they did, but she also blames them for not communicating to both her and Lowell in regards to Fern's disappearance. This lack of communication, of emotional support, ruined everyone's lives.

In the end, it is the family ties that do bring everyone back together, though not as they once were. With her father's death, Rose is able to reach out to her mother, mainly due to Rose reading her journals, and they are reconciled. Lowell is captured, notably because he was tired of running. The reader learns that animal testing on primates has been banned, and Rose is able to visit Fern in her new facility.

Love

The theme of love is demonstrated in a number of places throughout the novel. Most notably is the pervasive issue of Rose's love for her sister, who was removed from their home when Rose was only five years old. Though she argued with her sister and had skirmishes, she didn't dislike or hate her sister. So, when Rose returns from her grandparents house to find that Fern has been removed, she is devastated. Her love for her missing sister never wavers.

While it can be said that love has the ability to heal, in this instance, it is Rose and Lowell's love for their sister that acts as a catalyst for change in both of them. Lowell uses it destructively, and initially, so does Rose (she masks her true nature to fit in). The damage that has been done to both children is ignored by the parents, who opt to ignore what happened all of those years ago.

However, the fact that the lines of communication, however crippled, still remain open, Rose is able to slowly come to terms with what happened, and to expand her ability to make emotional connections with others. This is evidence in her friendship with Todd and Harlow. Later, she is able to expand this further to include her love of teaching and for showing others how to communicate more fully.



Styles

Point of View

We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves is written in a very unique way. The author writes from the first person perspective of the main character, Rose. The story is written as though Rose is speaking directly to her audience. Rose opens up the story by telling the audience that she is going to start with the middle of the story because she believes that is the most exciting part. From there, Rose tends to jump around to different settings and time periods with little warning.

Rose will shift her perspective depending on what age she was, but sometimes she jumps out of the narrative to explain something in further detail. She might be explaining how she felt as a five year-old at one point, only to jump back to her adult self and explain how she realizes that something was different now or the effect that an event might have had on where she was in the future.

Rose also likes to explain the way that she imagines what other characters are feeling. This is part of her ability to pick up on nonverbal communication thanks to the years she spent growing up alongside Fern.

Language and Meaning

Rose uses a very distinct language when she is speaking to the audience. She frequently makes observations based around growing up as a monkey girl. When she's giving descriptions she usually defaults to using her sense of smell to paint a picture. She will sometimes even examine objects based around whether or not she can climb them, like when she's examining the bars in her prison cell.

Rose's language can change depending on what time period her story is set in. As a college student, she uses more adult language compared to when she was younger. When she's telling stories from her childhood, she tries to capture her innocence or naivety. Rose frequently uses advanced vocabulary because of the way that her father raised her. She will also bring up lessons and sayings that her father used when teaching her. Rose will usually comment on the way people communicate, and she likes to compare certain human behavior to animal behavior.

Structure

Many of the chapters are separated into a specific period of time. Sometimes, the first few paragraphs of the beginning are set in a later time period so Rose can set up the importance of the time shift. The book is further divided into six distinct parts. Each part has a total of seven chapters. While the chapters tend to highlight specific time periods in Rose's life, the parts are more about overall events and tend to have a unifying theme



to them. For example, one part might be about everything that Rose experienced as a child after her family got rid of Fern. The next part would be about meeting up with Lowell and finding out everything that happened after he left the family.

As Rose begins to learn more about the memories she's repressed the narrative will shift and more details about previous events are revealed. There are many instances where Rose will foreshadow something that she reveals later. For example, Rose is constantly dropping hints about growing up with Fern, mentioning that when she first went to school she had to learn to keep her hands to herself and not pick at people's hair, or not to jump around on the furniture. The audience later learns that she picked up this behavior from her chimp sister Fern.



Quotes

The happening and telling are very different things. This doesn't mean that the story isn't true, only that I honestly don't know anymore if I really remember it or only remember how to tell it. Language does this to our memories, simplifies, solidifies, codifies, mummifies. An off-told story is like a photograph in a family album. Eventually it replaces the moment it was meant to capture.

-- Rosemary (Part 1, Chapter 7 paragraph Page 48)

Importance: This quote is one of the first hints that Rose is hiding something in her storytelling. Rose is deep in denial about what happened when she was younger. While she has distinct memories of her childhood, she recognizes that those memories aren't always correct or that she's modified them to hide from what she's done. She's so used accustomed to telling her own version of what happened that she isn't sure whether or not that's the accurate version.

In the phrase human being, the word 'being' is much more important than the word 'human.'

-- Rosemary (Part 4, Chapter 1 paragraph Page 158)

Importance: Rose is constantly trying to get across that she believes humans and animals deserve to be treated equally. This quote shows that it doesn't matter if someone is a human, all that matters is they're a sentient being.

In everyone's life there are people who stay and people who go and people who are taken against their will.

-- Rosemary (Part 6, Chapter 2 paragraph Page 271)

Importance: Rose is talking directly about her family and the challenges that they faced. Lowell is the brother that left. It also applies to Rose herself who ends up leaving her family in her attempt to find Lowell and escape her past. Fern is the one that was taken against her will, which is what started all of the family problems in the first place.

I'm unclear on the definition of person the courts have been using. Something that sieves out dolphins but lets corporations slide on through.

-- Rosemary (Part 6, Chapter 7 paragraph Page 305)

Importance: Both Rose and Lowell are unhappy with the way that humans are protective of their own rights, but they do not show the same concern for animals. Corporations are allowed to get away with doing horrible tests on animals simply because they aren't doing it to humans.

Sometimes you best avoid talking by being quiet, but sometimes you best avoid talking by talking.

-- Rosemary (Part 1, Chapter 3 paragraph Page 37)



Importance: Rose is a master of communication. When Harlow starts asking her questions, she sticks to her "normal girl" persona and spins an elaborate story about her past. She avoids telling any details; yet, she manages to make Harlow feel as though Rose has given a satisfactory answer. Rose frequently does this when she's trying to hide her true nature.

It seems to me that every time we humans announce that here is the thing that makes us unique--our featherless bipedality, our tool-using, our language--some other species comes along to snatch it away. If modesty were a human trait, we'd have learned to be more cautious over the years.

-- Rosemary (Part 6, Chapter 6 paragraph Page 302)

Importance: Rose constantly disagrees with people who try and act like humans are above animals. Rose recognizes that there are many similarities between the two. She thinks humans like to believe they are superior and are capable of more than animals, but Rose knows that animals are capable of sharing some of the same traits as humans, especially in terms of communication.

But no one is easier to delude than a parent; they see only what they wish to see.

-- Rosemary (Part 6, Chapter 2 paragraph Page 274)

Importance: Rose isn't the only one that's in denial during the book. Her parents often have a hard time seeing what is in front of them because they want to believe that everything is fine with their family and children.

I still haven't found the place where I can be my true self. But maybe you never get to be your true self, either.

-- Rosemary (Part 6, Chapter 5 paragraph Page 298)

Importance: At the start of the book, Rose is struggling with her true self. She felt rejected during her childhood so she had tried to change. That hasn't worked for her either. Rose keeps trying to be someone else because she is convinced no one wants to be around her "monkey girl" persona.

But where you succeed will never matter so much as where you fail.

-- Lowell (Part 2, Chapter 7 paragraph Page 102)

Importance: Rose and other characters are constantly reflecting on their failures, which they believe outweigh any of their successes. This is especially true with Lowell. Despite all he has accomplished helping animals, he still feels like he's a failure because he was never able to rescue Fern from the lab.

Language is such an imprecise vehicle I sometimes wonder why we bother with it.

-- Rosemary (Part 2, Chapter 5 paragraph Page 85)

Importance: Rose is frequently expressing the importance of communication throughout the book. To Rose though, communication isn't something that just involves



language. Rose has learned to communicate through Fern. She can use things like scent and hand motions to get her thoughts or emotions across much clearer than she could through verbal communication.

There were knitting needles in one of its little hands and a red mob-cap on its little head . “Madame Defarge,” I told him and then added, “Madame Guillotine,” because I always forgot what a reader Ezra was; it seemed so out of character, so uncinematic.
-- Rosemary (Part 3, Chapter 6 paragraph Page 144)

Importance: This quote introduces the 'dummy,' Madame Defarge, whose symbolism of rebellion is not lost on Rosemary. Defarge was a figure from *A Tale of Two Cities*, who angrily knitted and sought revenge for presumed grievances. She was less concerned about the evidence and the truth as she was bloodthirsty.

The world runs,” Lowell said, “on the fuel of this endless, fathomless misery. People know it, but they don’t mind what they don’t see. Make them look and they mind, but you’re the one they hate, because you’re the one that made them look.
-- Lowell (Part 5, Chapter 3 paragraph Page 232)

Importance: This quote demonstrates the theme of respect for life, in all its forms. Here, Lowell is stating that human beings don't particularly like to have the ugliness of their actions pointed out because they are less upset at the ugliness that they caused than for having had it pointed out.