We Love You, Charlie Freeman: A Novel Study Guide

We Love You, Charlie Freeman: A Novel by Kaitlyn Greenidge

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

NOTE: This study guide specifically refers to the 2016 Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill hardcover edition of We Love You, Charlie Freeman by Kaitlyn Greenidge.

We Love You, Charlie Freeman is a young adult novel by Kaitlyn Greenidge. In the story, African-American teenager Charlotte Freeman and her family participate in a linguistics experiment with Charlie, a chimpanzee, at the Toneybee Institute. The Toneybee Institute has a history of racism. The story of Ellen Jericho serves as a backdrop to substantiate the racist past of the Institute. Ellen Jericho, who takes the name Nymphadora in the black Christian women's organization she joins, is one of the Afro-Americans who had been victimized by the Institute in 1929. When the novel begins in August, 1990, Charlotte and her family are moving to the Institute to participate in the experiment. The money is good, and the project gets the family away from the bad areas of Boston.

The Institute is funded by Julia Toneybee-Leroy, elderly heir to two massive family fortunes stretching back centuries. The Institute is run by Dr. Marietta Paulsen and her assistant, Max. The experiment the Freemans are to participate in is simple. They will attempt to teach Charlie, a chimpanzee abandoned by his mother, sign language. To do this, they will have to earn his trust and love –all the while being filmed and studied by the researchers of the Institute itself. Charlotte is a little put off by this, as almost all the researchers are white. Eventually, the family settles into a routine. Charlotte’s dad leaves the institute each day to teach math at the local high school, while Charlotte and Callie begin school. There, Charlotte meets another black girl named Adia, whose mother teaches art at the community college. Both Adia and her mother live their life according to a list of things black people should and should not do –such as not watching Westerns because they are for whites. Charlotte and Adia soon become lovers, and Charlotte confides in Adia her unease with the Institute.

As time wears on, Charlotte discovers her mother breastfeeding Charlie, which disturbs her greatly. She also learns a book is about to be published which exposes the racist-fueled early history of the Toneybee. As a result, she is prepared to confront the elderly Julia Toneybee-Leroy about it at dinner, but Charlotte’s visiting uncle causes a scene and beats her to it. The dinner ends,and a rift in the family opens –especially when the breastfeeding is exposed. Julia pens an open letter to all African-Americans, detailing the true history of the Institute, and arguing that parts of the book were not accurate. She explains that she opened the Institute when she was very young to learn how to communicate with chimpanzees after killing one and feeling guilty about it while in the Congo. She explains she hired a Dr. Gardner to head things up, giving him free reign so long as he sought to teach chimpanzees to communicate. Julia reveals that Gardner conducted racist experiments without her knowledge –such as comparing the genitalia of female chimpanzees with the genitalia of Ellen Jericho. She asks not to be blamed for what Gardner did, but to be forgiven for everything that happened in the Institute’s name.

An epilogue rounds out the novel in which the successful experiment with Charlie has brought even more fame and fortune to the Institute. Julia's letter helps settle public opinion about the Institute, while the book written to expose it is virtually ignored. This enrages Adia, but Charlotte is content to let things be despite her heart breaking for the past. The experiment has caused Charlotte's parents to divorce and her father to remarry. Her mother continues to teach sign language at the Institute, while Charlie is retired. Once a year, Charlotte, now in a relationship with a woman named Darla, returns to the Institute with Callie to visit Charlie. During dinner with her mom and Charlotte, Callie announces that she is traveling to the Congo. Charlotte knows Callie will not be coming back.

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Summary

Charlotte – It is August, 1990. A black teenager named Charlotte Freeman, along with her family (mother, Laurel; father, Charles; and younger sister, Callie) leave the Dorchester section of Boston for the Toneybee Institute in their brand new 1991 silver Volvo station wagon. The new car has been provided by the Institute. Charlotte and her family are to live in a house with Charlie, an abandoned chimpanzee, for a research study in communications. The study includes teaching Charlie sign language. “Charlie” is a combination of “Charlotte” and “Callie." Charlie has been given the name to make him feel more comfortable at home. Charlotte worries about how it will all work out, because the family has never been very good with pets. Laurel does not want to hear about it. So, she turns on music. Charlotte and Callie continue to communicate with sign language. Charlotte thinks about how their mother wanted them to draw cards for Charlie to make him feel welcome, which Charlotte thought was crazy. However, Callie wrote “We Love You Charlie Freeman” on the card she drew.

The family arrives at the Toneybee Institute, founded in 1929. The Institute's main drive is lined by white elm trees. The Institute is surrounded by a forest. The building itself is a massive brick mansion-like structure, with towers and wings. The building is beautifully decorated with angels and with instruments, as the Institute had previously been a music conservatory. Inside the front door is Lester Potter, a white guard, who says Dr. Marietta Paulsen will be down in a moment. She arrives a few moments later. She is very tall, has a hipster-like style, and is the one who not only conceived of the experiment, but elected the Freemans. Paulsen hugs Laurel and welcomes the family, bringing them on a tour of parts of the Institute on the way to their apartment. Charlotte believes the building smells old. It smells like wild animals and furniture polish. Paulsen introduces the Freemans to researchers and scientists along the way.

Paulsen explains the Institute was founded by and receives its funding from Miss Julia Toneybee-Leroy. Near the apartment is a painting of Julia, which includes baby bones, and which freaks Charlotte out. Paulsen explains the bones belong to the first-ever chimp at the Institute, Daisy, from illness. In the apartment, which features several rooms and old furniture. It is not much better than Boston. Dr. Paulsen then brings the family to meet Charlie, who lives behind a door in the living room. It is full of African plants. The family also meets Max, who graduated from college a few years before and works as Paulsen’s assistant.

Charlie is shy when meeting everyone in Charlotte’s family, but he is a little less so with Charlotte. Paulsen has dinner with the family and watches Laurel’s attempts to feed Charlie. Paulsen asks if Charles is ready to teach at Courtland County High School. Charles explains he is. It is also the school which Charlotte will now be attending. That night, Charlotte considers it a luxury that she and Callie will now have separate rooms.

Before bed, Charlotte and Callie hear Charlie give a very sad wail, and watch as their parents try to comfort him.

Nymphadora of Spring City, 1929 – It is now 1929. Thirty-six year-old Ellen Jericho is a resident of Spring City, the black part of the county of Courtland, and is a Star of the Morning in the Fifth House, Second Quadrant Division, North Eastern Lodge of Spring City. The Stars are a black female Christian organization where members take on Biblical names Ellen chose Nymphadora. The men belong to the Saturnites. Ellen is a teacher who, despite the suicide of her parents –both Stars –secretly continues to accept she is a Star, wearing her Star pin beneath her clothing. Ellen thinks about how her mother told her that God lives not in the sun, but in the world around and within each person, and that denial and self-control help them to shine. Ellen thinks about the founding member of the Stars, escaped slave Mary Whitman, who denied herself everything in life to found the Stars to be a shining beacon for others. Ellen also recalls how her parents committed suicide in shame after stealing money from the Stars and the Saturnites, and how she destroyed her father's pharmacy account books to hide the scandal.

Ellen also begins to think about the past in general. She reflects on how the young heiress, Julia Toneybee-Leroy returned home from safari with one dead monkey and ten live ones to shut down, and revamp the music conservatory (which she inherited) for animal research to be headed up by Dr. Gardner, an Englishman. Ellen remembers how many spoke of Gardner as the next Charles Darwin, but how he made black people uncomfortable when he began spending time in Spring City with no discernible purpose. Ellen recalls how Nadine Morton, a former Army nurse now working at the Institute (though not allowed to say doing what) urged Ellen to find out what Gardner wanted. She remembers Gardner telling her he loved black people so much he wanted to study them without prejudice, like Dr. DuBois. Ellen remembers explaining she was photographed by DuBois for use in his work, and how Gardner asked to sketch the school children to the same end. She remembers how Gardner's desire to be liked put off the kids, and remembers agreeing to let Gardner sketch her instead if he would leave the children be. It is something she must now do.

Laurel – The novel returns to the present. Laurel tells her children that they are special, which is why the Toneybee Institute has asked them to participate. Laurel remembers how her parents owned a Christmas tree farm in Maine after leaving Boston, where Laurel's mother, Nancy, felt racism. The racism was not shown in overt anger. Rather, the racism took the tone of over-politeness toward them by locals. Laurel remembers how a visit to the tree farm when she was eleven by the Hallelujah School for the Colored Death and their field trip leader and teacher, Mary Ann, inspired Laurel to want to learn sign language. Laurel remembers how, in exchange for food and washing their clothes (something the school group could not do along the way thanks to racism), the students put on a Biblical play and later sent Laurel a copy of a sign language dictionary. Laurel remembers how she continued to sign and study it in college to become an interpreter. Laurel now knows not only American Sign Language, but the black version of sign language as well. Laurel hates being underestimated, and signs not only white but black to Charlie.

Charlotte – A few days past. Charlotte and her family do their best to get into a routine with Charlie, but each night, Charlie lets out his sad wail. Charlotte is also annoyed by the motion-sensor timer lights the Toneybee has installed. She also learns Charlie was an unplanned pregnancy in the lab, as his mother, Denise, was on a pill to prevent pregnancy at the time. Charlotte comes to see Charlie as her mother sees him, as beautiful. The family as a whole does their best to connect with Charlie, and to begin teaching him. Charlie has a violent outburst against Laurel one day, which requires Paulsen and Max to become involved and to administer a sedative. Laurel downplays the incident, believing that Charlie seeing himself in the mirror led to what happened.

Analysis

Kaitlyn Greenidge's novel We Love You, Charlie Freeman, takes its name from Charlie, the chimpanzee that Charlotte and her family must teach how to use sign language. To do so, they must earn his trust through love. Love assumes many different forms in the novel, and becomes a core component of the lives of Charlotte and her family while at Toneybee, and becomes central to their efforts to teach Charlie how to communicate. It is interesting that the researchers should counsel Charlotte and her family on love, for one does not think of the history of science as necessarily loving or warm. Rather, what is needed now is love and warmth toward Charlie. This counseling of love proves to be ironic, as the dark history of race hatred at the Institution is revealed much later in the novel.

The novel itself is structured with three narrators –Charlotte, Ellen, and an unidentified third-person narrator. Charlotte and Ellen narrate individual chapters devoted to them, while the third-person narrator takes on chapters primarily dealing with other characters, such as Laurel, Callie, and Charles. Readers learn firsthand through the Charlotte and Ellen what they think and feel; and readers learn secondhand through the third-person narrator, by way of exposition, reveals the thoughts and feelings of the other characters. This helps to dimensionalize all characters in the novel, making them fully unique and independently-motivated of one another. Laurel's motivation is to ensure the success of the experiment at all costs, for example, while Charlotte is more concerned about school (this concern will later be placed on the experiment –she is already concerned that most of the researchers are white, and this is unfamiliar territory to her to be around so many white people).

Therein, race and racism form part of the heart of the novel, and racism assumes many different forms. Charlotte's unease at being around so many white people comes from her cultural background among an almost exclusively black area in Boston –a subtle kind of acquired racism based on circumstances (both the setting of her upbringing, and the history of racism at large in America). Laurel herself does not care about the past in as much as she is forward-looking, and does not choose to dwell on things which cannot be changed. Laurel seeks to build a better future –something she will make very clear to Charlotte in upcoming chapters. Laurel is already aware of the racist history of the Institute, and while it sickens her, she will not allow it to overcome her or dictate the present. (Readers should herein pay attention to the last name that Charlotte's family

bears: Freeman. It is symbolically ironic, for Freeman is a compound of “free man.” While the Freeman family is not rich in Boston, they do have their freedom to live their lives as they wish. They are now set to give up much of their freedom by participating in the experiment, being filmed, studied, and constantly watched like prisoners.)

Even Laurel’s own upbringing in the very white area of Maine was met with a kind of racism manifested in being overly-polite. No one necessarily liked Laurel and her family, but most treated the Freemans with politeness as a mockery because they were black. Readers should take note of the Institute having selected the family for being “special”, i.e., black. The polite racism endured by Laurel’s family is to be contrasted with the overt racism endured by Ellen Jericho in her sections of the novel. Here, Greenidge brings history to life by creating a flesh-and-blood character who will come to suffer at the hands of the Institute. Her encounters with Gardner are seemingly positive: Gardner wants to conduct an unbiased study of blacks, or so he says. His presence in the black town of Spring City scares a lot of black people, leading to Ellen being forced into intervening. There is something slightly off about Gardner, but readers cannot quite pin it down. Nevertheless, readers know –like Ellen –that they must approach Gardner with caution.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Laurel so determined to successfully conduct the Charlie experiment at the Institute when the rest of her family seems only vaguely interested at best (at first)? Why is the rest of the family seemingly lackluster about the whole experience?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Ellen Jericho? Why does she approach Dr. Gardner? What does Gardner claim to want to do? How does Ellen respond to him? Why? Do you believe Gardner can be trusted? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Early in the novel, race plays an important though minor part. In what ways do race and racism affect the novel –both in Charlotte’s time, and in Ellen’s time –so far? Why does this matter not only to the plot but to the lives of the characters involved?

Vocabulary

research, experiment, iteration, belligerent, gravitas, brocade, impertinence, prejudice, malice, assimilation, reticence, omitted, eschewal, ominously, inertia

Pages 77 – 130

Summary

Nymphadora of Spring City, 1929 – Ellen goes to see Dr. Gardner in Dr. Gardner's room, which he has taken not far from Spring Grove. Ellen is secretly let into his boarding house room. Gardner welcomes her, and begins to talk about chimpanzees, and says Julia Toneybee-Leroy believes chimpanzees can talk. Gardner explains this is why he has been hired. His current work on studying blacks is not to compare them to chimpanzees, he explains, but to provide an unbiased scientific study that demonstrates blacks are no different than whites. He explains the blacks of Spring City are excellent specimens. Ellen tells him that if he loves blacks so much, he should not call them specimens, but Gardner explains he calls everyone a specimen, regardless. He asks her to disrobe and lay on the floor for sketching, with his purpose being that he wants to prove blacks are for more than exploitation of any kind.

As a Star, Ellen is committed to believing in a better future for the Negro race. She hopes Gardner will be a step to that better future, and so disrobes. Gardner begins to sketch. As he does, he speaks of England and how he grew up reading encyclopedias, and that he had hunches about many theories about things like evolution and race being wrong. Much of this stems from the fact that lower-class whites were considered less evolved by some –and Gardner, himself lower-class, knew this to be untrue. When Gardner is finished, he will not let Ellen see the drawings, because he is self-conscious. Ellen, however, wants to be drawn by Gardner again, and how she wants to tell him about her life despite being brought up to never let a white person know her. Gardner explains he is in revolution to his own kind, and that he is glad because their motives are so false. This causes Ellen to cry.

Charlotte – Charlotte and Callie do their best to feel at home at the Toneybee by exploring and getting to know the people and their routines. They explore the upper floors, the old rehearsal rooms, and find old instruments, music sheets, and materials like lace. Meanwhile, Pauslen and Max continue to work with Laurel and the family on getting Charlie to open up. Paulsen explains Charlie is used to attention, but not to love, because he thinks everyone will always leave him since being abandoned by his mother. Paulsen explains that a family like Charlotte’s is needed to make him feel and understand love, as well as things like sign language. Paulsen, Max, and other researchers like to talk to Charlotte and Callie, especially at lunch –though their questions are always the same. They ask what sorts of books the girls like to read, what their favorite subjects are in school, and so on. Charlotte is a little unnerved and annoyed by this, so she asks her mom about it. Laurel explains this is because they, too, are part of the experiment. Charlotte asks what Paulsen and the team actually want from them, so Laurel says she will ask Paulsen about it.

Max later agrees to bring Charlotte, Charles, Callie, and Charlie to the lake at Toneybee. Max knows some white sign language, so he is shocked when Charlotte and

Callie use black signing to talk about themselves, believing the signals used are racist based on assumptions from decades before in which whites believed blacks were inferior for many reasons, including flat noses (touching the nose in black sign is symbolic of Africa). Charlotte explains this sign for Africa is not racist while Callie laughs. Max also mistakes the white sign for Africa with a dirty sign for “tits”, which also amuses Callie. Charlotte later explains that Callie should not be mean because Max only knows white signing. At the lake, Max explains it is manmade, and has a pump to filter the water. He also explains chimpanzees are made nervous by the water while Charles and Callie go swimming. Max apologizes to Charlotte for their rough start, but Charlotte says she has been the jerk. Max and Charlotte get to talking. Charlotte explains it is strange to be around so many white people, and it is strange how everyone watches them and asks so many questions. Max nods in understanding. Charlie seeks Charlotte’s gaze, so Charlotte signs to him that she can be better.

Charlotte – School begins. Some of Charlie’s urine accidentally splashes on Charlotte’s first-day-of-school outfit as her mother inspects it while holding Charlie. Despite massive amounts of detergent, Charlotte can still smell it on the way to school. Charlotte meets a girl named Melissa on the bus, who is interested to learn Charlotte is from Boston, and who at first mistakenly believes Charlotte lives in Spring City, where Melissa has volunteered at the soup kitchen before. Charlotte wonders what Melissa and the other white girls think of her. Courtland County High School is simple but clean, well-ordered, and well-cared for. Mr. Carroll, Charlotte’s homeroom teacher, explains to the class who she is and where she lives. Charlotte feels ashamed about telling everyone she teaches sign language –though she will not say to who –and because she is rude to the teacher because she is self-conscious. None of the other kids even speak to Charlotte.

Charlotte believes she will be the only black kid in her high school, and thinks it could benefit her, until she meets Adia Breitling, who is late to biology class. This makes Charlotte a little unhappy. Adia is beautiful, wears a boy’s haircut, and wears unique clothing, such as purple feather earrings. Charlotte tries not to look at Adia because she doesn’t want to give Adia the idea they will be friends because they are both black. As the day wears on, Charlotte begins to feel lonely. While she was always teased and bullied outright in Boston over her clothes, for example, in Courtland County, no one pays much attention to her at all. Instead of going to English, Charlotte hides in the bathroom. She wonders what she can do to get people to like her, and begins singing a Bell Biv DeVoe song to herself when she is interrupted by Adia who tells her she has messed up part of the song. Adia also comments that Charlotte smells like she has been around zoo animals. Charlotte says this was an accident. Adia asks what kind of music Charlotte listens to, to which Charlotte responds that she does not listen to much. At home at dinner, Laurel asks about how everyone’s day went, but Charlotte does not want to talk about it. When Charlie gently nibbles on Laurel’s ear, she does it back to Charlie.

Charles – Charles has always yearned for living in a wide, open space, and meeting Laurel makes him realize that black people do not have to live in cities. Charles’s decision to agree to the Toneybee experiment had little to do with the monkey, the book, and the awful stories about the place did not matter at all to him due to the wide-open

setting of the area. He thinks about how Laurel wants him to love Charlie, and how being with her has gotten him to care more for what was beyond the edge of his understanding.

Analysis

Greenidge continues her structural form of moving back and forth through time, as she shifts among the unfolding stories of Ellen Jericho, and Charlotte Freeman. While Charlotte is not thrilled about being at the Institute, she does want her family to succeed, so she is willing to go along with things as best she can. (Callie herself is warming up more and more to the experiment as well.) This is to be compared with Ellen, who reluctantly deals with Gardner in order to help protect her community and to ensure it succeeds. She is cautious, but intrigued by the fact that Gardner claims to want to conduct an unbiased scientific study in defense of the black race. It seems Gardner is a would-be protector of blacks, and his work may prove a way to a better future –something which Ellen (like Laurel many years later) wants to work toward. Still, Gardner's insistence on sketching Ellen in a sexually-exposed way, and his refusal to let her see the drawings, are demonstrative proof that his declaration that he wants to prove blacks are not made only to be exploited seem disingenuous. At the same time, Charlotte feels almost exploited by the questions she is asked, and by the fact that she is constantly watched.

Race, and the issue of racism, continue to take many different forms in this section of the novel. While Gardner represents a seeming obstacle to racism, his very domineering nature with Ellen seems at times more racially condescending than it does racially uplifting. (Additionally, readers should wonder why and how a man charged with linguistics and chimpanzees as work could be devoting time to a study of a race of people and chimpanzees.) Ironically, both Gardner and Ellen find themselves in opposition to their own races –Gardner for refusing to accept blacks are inferior to whites, and Ellen for choosing to trust a white man. (Note that Gardner's assertion about being in revolution against his own race therein causes Ellen to cry because she, too, is in revolution to her own race.)

Race and racism can also be seen in a number of other ways. The miscommunication between Max, Charlotte, and Callie over signs reminds Max of racism of the past – something he clearly wants no part of. Charlotte is touched by Max's opposition to racism, and must remind Callie not to laugh at Max because he does not understand the black way of signing. Black signing thius becomes symbolic of black subculture, something which Max knows nothing about. Nevertheless, it proves an important launching pad for dialogue between races. Charlotte opens up to Max about being around so many white people, but Max does not judge her: he merely listens and seeks to understand her point of view regarding race (readers should note: Max listens, learns, and discusses, while Gardner speaks, demands, and condescends).

Clearly, Max would feel out of place in Charlotte's Boston neighborhood. Indeed, as readers learn, Charlotte was not considered black enough by her black peers in her own

neighborhood –a kind of elitist racism. When Charlotte begins school, she hopes she will be the only black kid and hopes she can use this to her advantage –but when she first meets Adia, she is disappointed to find another black kid in school and does not want Adia to think they will be friends just because they are black. Readers should also note that Charles has acknowledge the dark history of the Institute, but does not want to let it drag him down in the present.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ellen ultimately consent to allowing Gardner to draw her? Is her reasoning for doing so sound? Why or why not? Do you believe, at this stage, Gardner can be trusted? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What explains the miscommunication that Charlotte, Callie, and Max have regarding sign language and meaning? How is this situation resolved? Why does this matter to the issues of race and racism overall?

Discussion Question 3

How do the approaches of Max and Gardner differ relating to race and their dealings with Charlotte and Ellen, respectively? Why?

Vocabulary

anthropological, stupefying, louche, truncated, profound, dominance, obscure, officious, mondegreen, mortified, bucolic

Pages 131 – 199

Summary

Charlotte – One night, Charlotte discovers her mother breastfeeding Charlie. She is sickened and horrified by this, but Laurel says Charlie needs it, or he wails. She tells Charlotte not to tell anyone, especially her father, because Laurel must do it in her own time in her own way because it is a sensitive subject. Charlotte is still disturbed by this, and so tells Adia about the Toneybee the next day, though she does not mention the breastfeeding. Adia, who calls her mother, Marie, by her first name, tells Charlotte they must tell Marie about Toneybee. Marie is an art professor at Courtland County Community College, but lives on Main Street in a converted general store with Adia where they assume the roles of angry black women. She and Adia's father, a jazz musician, came up from the South as affirmative action hires at the college, but the father returned South.

Adia and her mother now exist in their own world, protesting well-intentioned but misguided attempts by the county at race-related issues, such as black history celebrations while refusing to acknowledge anything or anyone from Spring City except when decrying segregation. They resist white culture where they can –for example, Adia says she hates to hear white people singing, refuses to watch Westerns, and refuses to sleep on a mattress because it is "colonialist." Adia brings Charlotte over to meet Marie. Marie is interested to learn about Charlotte being at the Toneybee. Over time, Charlotte and Adia grow very close, becoming very intimate with one another to the point where they become sexually active. Adia says they will have to learn to find kings, because they can't go queer like white girls. Adia, however, realizes she likes girls, and she loves Adia. She signs this to Charlie at home because she wants to tell someone about it.

Callie – Callie is upset that Charlotte does not come home more often to watch Westerns with her, so she begins watching them with Charlie. Charlie loves Westerns, and sits up close whenever a Western with Joan Crawford is on. Charlotte denies that Charlie is Callie's friend, but Callie insists he is, saying that Paulsen and Max have told her the most important part of the job is to be Charlie's sister. Callie has even taking to letting Charlie lick off food residue from her mouth. Callie also begins to rapidly gain weight. Whereas everyone else asks Charlie basic questions such as "Where is the blue ball?", Callie asks Charlie real questions, asking such things as if he misses his mother. It is Callie who first sees Charlie begin to sign with his hands behind his back. It is also Callie who first figures out what this means: Charlie, signing behind him, is talking about what went on in the past (behind him). Paulsen, Max, Laurel, and the others are impressed. Callie does not feel as if compliments for her matter, because Charlotte does not care about them.

Charlotte – After Callie's discovery, Max attends every dinner with a video camera, though he clearly does not like filming everything. Paulsen is thrilled about Charlie's signing. Charlotte constantly tries to mess with Max, but Max is too serious to be

amused. One night, he leaves his camera bag behind, so Charles sends Charlotte upstairs to Max's office to drop it off. There, she sees a book on his desk called Man or Beast? The book is written by a Dr. Frances Gray, and the book is stamped "UNCORRECTED PROOF" on the cover which features the portrait of Julia Toneybee-Leroy. The middle of the volume features a number of pictures, including detailed drawings of labias and vaginas of Nymphadora by a Dr. Terrence Gardner. Charlotte begins to cry.

Nymphadora of Spring City, 1929 – Gardner continues to draw Ellen, who continues to talk more and more about her life to Gardner. Gardner also reveals how he came to work for Julia –his name was passed along by a mutual contact when Julia put out a call for names. Although Gardner will talk ill of the white race, he will not say anything ill of Julia, which makes Ellen hate him. Ellen remembers her mother teaching her she cannot trust a white man, though she wants to think of Gardner as a friend. She wonders what Julia is like, and can judge her only by a newspaper picture of her. She imagines Gardner must be in love with Julia. As she continues to meet with Gardner to pose for him, Ellen betrays the secrecy of the Stars by telling Gardner about them, and giving him her Star name, Nymphadora in exchange for a drawing of herself.

That night, Ellen dreams of being at the Institute and Gardner stabbing her in the heart. When she awakens, she realizes she is in love with Gardner. At the next Star meeting, Ellen learns that Gardner has been bringing men to the Institute for work, giving them drugged tea, and using cards with pictures to ask them questions, the answers of which the men give Gardner writes down. The men believe what is going on is un-Christian. Nadine even reports that busloads of different black men from Boston arrive at and depart from the Institute all the time. Nadine explains the few men she has encountered appear to be missing something from their minds. As such, the Stars want to stop Gardner from coming into town and drawing everyone. The Stars decides that Ellen must ask Gardner what he is up to, and must tell him all of it must stop. Ellen has no choice but to say she will try.

Charlotte – Charlotte tells Adia that everyone at the Institute are racists. She shows Adia the book, Man or Beast? and explains the author of the book found out Julia Toneybee-Leroy and the researchers at the Institute, led by Dr. Gardner, were doing experiments on black people and chimpanzees. She shows Adia that the Institute was conducting research on human and chimpanzee genitalia, such as with Nymphadora's. Charlotte begins to cry. Adia argues the whole place must be shut down, but Charlotte wants to tell her mother, first. When Charlotte's mom picks her up, Charlotte pulls out the book. Laurel is aware of the book, and tells Charlotte a lot can change in sixty years. Laurel says she does not care what is in the book, that it is history, and that they –their family and Charlie –are bigger than history. She explains she does not know why the Institute hired them, but all that matters is that they are there to make history. Laurel tells Charlotte not to tell Callie, and that there is a lot to lose by fouling up the experiment. Charlotte tells Laurel that Marie says all black people are involved in the struggle together.

Laurel calls this idea bullshit. She says that women like Adia and women like the one who wrote the book enjoy to tear down, but do not know about building up. If Charlotte plays victim, she will be hurting a lot of people. She goes on to say Charlotte cannot just think about herself. Charlotte agrees not to cause trouble if she is allowed to continue to see Adia. Laurel consents to this. Adia later tells Charlotte that history is a weapon, and so begins writing to the newspaper about the Institute. The paper does not print any of Adia's letters, leading Adia to believe the Institute is using their money and influence to block the letters. Marie is also made aware of the book and the situation at Toneybee. Marie argues that nothing more can be done, because what is going on at Toneybee is only part of a much larger epidemic of racism. Charlotte realizes her mother was right about such people, knowing now they are useless.

As Thanksgiving approaches, and the chimpanzee signing experiment makes progress, Paulsen suggests a Thanksgiving dinner with Julia Toneybee-Leroy. Adia says it is Charlotte's chance to confront Julia, but Charlotte does not want to embarrass her family. Even extended relatives are to be invited. Adia insists, and Charlotte agrees to confront Julia. The plan is for Adia to confront Julia after the praying of Grace by reading a prepared statement and signing parts of it for the oppressed Charlie to understand. Thanksgiving Day arrives. Uncle Lyle and Aunt Ginny arrive at the Institute for dinner. Everyone is dressed up, including Charlie. The very elderly Julia and an elderly black nurse both arrive moments later. She is dressed casually due to her very old age, and introduces her nurse as Nadine Morton. Lyle is a gentlemen and gets along well with Julia, asking her about the chimpanzees which she says came from the Belgian Congo. Julia is very warm and friendly towards everyone, including Callie. Everyone then sits down for dinner.

Analysis

Charlotte's blossoming friendship –and romance –with Adia expose her to a far more complex set of ideas about race. Adia and her mother assume the role of angry black women who, Laurel explains, would rather tear down than build up. For example, readers should not that rather than working with Courtland County to improve their black history month celebration, Adia and her rmother only criticize them. Adia and her mother have a list of things they will and will not do based on whether it is "black" or "white" in nature. They will not watch Western movies, for example, because Westerns are "white" –and this in turn is a form of racism. This is to be contrasted with the Freeman family, who enjoys something for the sake of that something in and of itself. The Freemans enjoy Westerns, and do not approach them from a racial standpoint. Indeed, Adia and her mother live their lives doing everything they think white people would not want them to do –a kind of racism in itself –while the Freemans live as they want to (freely in both choice and freedom from racism) regardless as to what anyone has to say about anything.

However, everything gets worse all around when Charlotte discovers a copy of a forthcoming book, Man or Beast? by Frances Gray. The book exposes the dark history of the Toneybee Institute –including for the reader (as the reader will remember) despite

promises of not wanting to compare or contrast blacks with chimpanzees, Gardner has done exactly that. While there is still more to learn about Ellen's story, and Gardner's intentions, what is known is that Gardner is, at the very least, a condescending liar. His motives are now suspect. This brings to light a now strongly-emerging theme in that science is not a pure field of study, because even science can have an agenda. It is the racist agenda of science regarding race that Gardner claimed to be wanting to counteract –but clearly, Gardner's lies to Ellen demonstrate his own personal agenda through science. What this is –his intentions –are not yet known.

The book also brings to light two incredibly relevant and important themes –the idea that history must be learned from but should not be used as a weapon and the idea that there are no clear answers to everything. Adia lives in defiance of both of these arguments. She contends history is indeed to be used as a weapon; and she contends that there is a clear answer to everything. Based on what happened sixty years ago, Adia wants to use history to shut down the Institute in the present, believing the horrible past of the Institute cannot be abided or be made up for by the present. Laurel stands in defiance of Adia's position on things, arguing that someone like Adia knows nothing about building up, but only tearing down. Laurel, who has acknowledged the past in her accepting of participating at the Institute, is now only focused on the path forward. She does not want to be dragged down by the past. And herein, Laurel's argument confirms the thematic idea that not everything has a clear answer: Should the present-day employees of the Institute be forced to pay for the sins of the past by losing their jobs and the Institute being shut down or pay by some other means? Do present generations, in general, bear responsibility for the sins of previous generations? Readers must decide for themselves.

Discussion Question 1

Laurel argues that people like Adia and Marie have no idea about moving forward, that they would rather tear down than build up. Do you agree or disagree with Laurel's assertion? Explain your reasoning.

Discussion Question 2

Adia argues that the Institute must be shut down based on the activities that went on there sixty years ago. Why? Do you agree or disagree with Adia's assertion? Explain your reasoning.

Discussion Question 3

Do you believe Laurel's approach to the past –acknowledging it but looking past it and moving on –is the right way to handle a situation like the Institute? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

diffuse, profane, revered, pabulum, omnipresent, nonchalant, sublimation, industrious, prestigious, incredulous, acrid, brusquely, blatantly

Pages 200 – 260

Summary

Charlotte (continued) – Uncle Lyle says the blessing at Thanksgiving Dinner. Lyle thanks Paulsen for the invitation to attend. Lyle also finds it amusing that Charlie has taken so quickly to his wife, Ginny. Julia is also amused by this. When Lyle begins serving ham in addition to turkey, Charlotte refuses, reflecting on the standards of Marie and Adia saying it is not right for blacks to eat pork because blacks did not traditionally eat pork. Lyle says this is nonsense, and that pigs are just animals. Julia says Charlotte should eat what she wishes, which confuses Charlotte because Julia is the only one taking her seriously. Charlotte goes on, saying that pig meat is full of all kinds of toxins from the way they are bred, and that pigs are bred the Laurenway black people used to be bred. Laurel tries to cut Charlotte off, but Lyle goads her on. Julia looks on with both pity and a plea for Charlotte to stop. Lyle elbows Max, also present at dinner, and says this must be weird for him to experience. Max does not know how to respond so smiles politely.

Lyle then asks if it is odd for Julia and the other white researchers to watch his brother's family with video cameras the way they do. He asks if blacks are as much a specimen as the chimp. Paulsen interrupts, saying that the Freemans being black have nothing to do with their research. Lyle does not believe this. Charles tells Lyle to stop it. Lyle says he is only calling it like he sees it: white host providing dinner for a black family and a monkey while the whites film everything. Sudddenly, Charlie tears off one of Ginny's sleeves and puts it in his mouth. This startles everyone. Julia and Lyle laugh while Ginny cries and is comforted by Laurel. Julia excuses herself for the evening while Charles apologizes for what has happened. Julia says she has had worse directed her way. After Julia leaves, Lyle continues to protest the situation. Charles orders his children out, meaning Charlotte cannot read her speech. Outside, she hears Lyle telling her father no amount of money is worth what they are enduring, always performing for whites around them. Charles calls Lyle jealous, and Lyle says when Charles calls to apologize, he won't pick up. Charles tells Lyle not to come back.

Charlotte is sent to get Ginny, who is looking for a shirt to replace her torn sleeve with Laurel. Ginny notices there is blood in the shirts where the breasts of a woman would be, but Laurel dismisses it as a trick of the light. Meanwhile, Paulsen and Max have gotten Charlie to calm down. They return him to Laurel. When he grabs at Laurel's breast, Ginny figures it out and shouts what Laurel has been doing. Ginny calls Laurel sick, while Laurel tells Ginny she is in shock. In the attempt to defend her mother, Charlotte tells everyone that Laurel is only trying to help Charlie. Charles tells Lyle he and Ginny have done enough accusing for the night, and walks them out. Callie is horrified and bolts from the room. Paulsen says they will all speak again in the morning, and she and Max leave for the night. Charlotte spends the night in the attic of the Institute in a drum.

What She Said to Me: An Apology to the African-American People, by Julia Toneybee-Leroy, November 23, 1990, Toneybee Estate, Courtland County, Massachusetts – In an open letter to all black people, Julia apologizes for her past and the past of her Institute, noting that all accusations of racism in the forthcoming book Man or Beast? are true. Julia notes she is both ashamed and guilty. She admits her Institute under Gardner did indeed conduct horrible eugenics experiments on blacks, and Gardner himself exploited a woman known only as Nypmphadora, rather than linguistics and chimpanzee communication as had been the cover story. Julia says she went on to hire help to find a way to make up for the past, and so entered the Freemans. The Freemans are not enough to make things right, so Julia enters into history. She reveals her family going back hundreds of years has been very rich, and that she is the last of them, meaning her Institute is the heir to carry on the family name.

She explains she first met Dr. Francine Gorey, a black professor, when Gorey came to talk her about the Institute relating to a book Gorey wanted to write about the history of scientific institutions. Julia says that what she originally intended for the Institute was not what it became –but Gorey did not include this information in her book, rather writing Julia off as a white supremacist. Julia explains her reasons for beginning the Institute originated in 1927 when she shot a chimpanzee and it spoke to her before it died. She had gone to the Congo after the death of her parents when she was eighteen, and that she fell in love with Africa and was amazed by the African people. She explains that on the last day of the safari she took to the Congo to do hunting, she shot a chimpanzee and listened to it attempt to communicate with her before it died. Julia explains she did not want her inheritance, and would have given up everything just to learn what the chimpanzee had said. It broke her heart and made her feel guilty, she explains, which is why she set up the Institute and poured everything she could into it.

Julia reveals Daisy to be her first chimpanzee, and that Nadine Morton was hired to tend to Daisy. Julia reveals that Daisy learned how to mimic a few words in English, such as Mama, Papa, cup, and ball. Julia reveals that Daisy ultimately died of the flu. Heartbroken by Daisy's death, Julia says she hired Gardner and gave him free reign over the Institute so long as he continued in trying to get a chimpanzee to talk. Julia explains that Gardner stayed with the Institute for a year, then suddenly left for Miami, tearing out pages of his research, never to be seen again. Julia reports that Gorey discovered Gardner buried under the name of an alias, probably having committed suicide. Julia did not know Gardner was dead until Gorey told him. She explains after he left, she waited a few months, then fired all of his people. Julia reveals she did not know what Gardner was up to until Gorey's book. Still, she begs forgiveness and asks not to be blamed for what she did not know was done under her watch and under the name of her Institute.

Charlotte – The morning after Thanksgiving, Charles and Charlotte go to a diner in Spring City for breakfast. Charles tells Charlotte he is not mad at her, but instead says he and Laurel asked too much of her and Callie. Charlotte promises to do better. Charles says he can no longer participate in the experiment, so he will be moving out. He will live nearby, but not at Toneybee, but doesn't have the ability to bring both girls to live with him permanently because Laurel does not think a single father can raise a

young girl. Charlotte says she cannot leave Callie, so she will also stay at the Institute. Charlotte later relays her decision to her mother. Charlotte meets with Paulsen, who admits the things that happened at the Institute in the past make her sick and were done out of malice, but what is being done now is being done out of love. This is true for Laurel, and Paulsen urges Charlotte to see it that way.

Callie – Callie asks her father to buy her the book Magic for the Sole Practitioner. It contains the chapter “How to Master Those You Love.” She uses the book in the attempt to win over Charlie and to feel better about herself. Charles takes an apartment on the top floor of a Victorian house in Spring City. Bit by bit, Charles fixes it up. Callie continues to attempt to use magic to win over Charlie and to feel better about herself. She repeats the mantra “Good things are mine and I am good things” over and over again.

Analysis

What is at first hoped will be a good Thanksgiving dinner quickly falls apart, but it is not Charlotte who breaks things open as she hopes she will be able to do. Instead, it is Lyle who is aware of the history of the Institute. He does not believe any amount of money is worth being watched constantly like lab animals –in this case, chimpanzees. (Readers should note Gardner’s insistence on calling everyone a “specimen” –a demonstration of the objective coldness of science. This is indirect contrast to the modern approach based in love that Paulsen reveals.) To Lyle, all his family members are, are specimens to be studied like chimpanzees –and this is especially aggravating to him given the history of comparing blacks to monkeys, apes, and chimps. To Lyle, the racism is all too apparent. He believes his family members were selected for the experiment because they were indeed “special” –in other words, they were black. In a sense to Lyle, this is a kind of racism as well (by this light, Marie’s hiring at the local college as an affirmative action fulfillment could also be construed as racism).

Charles, who had acknowledged but then gone on to ignore the past of the Institute, can no longer do so. Lyle’s comparisons and arguments have made Charles consider things from Lyle’s point of view, and so he will be leaving the Institute and will live a short distance away. Much of this comes not just from history, but from knowledge that Laurel is breastfeeding Charlie. The family is far too involved in things for Charles’s own liking, and so he must separate himself from the situation. Readers should especially note that Callie attempts to get a handle on the situation by succeeding at it, even trying magick to attempt to win over Charlie. Callie, who feels out of control and without freedom in her life, now seeks to exert control over someone else in order to feel freer and more in control. Callie’s sudden need to be free will have a tremendous impact in her life in the coming years, so reader should be on the lookout for this in coming chapters.

Race and racism thus continue to be central to the novel in these current chapters. Julia’s open apology and letter to blacks symbolizes the taking of responsibility, and apologizing for, the past. Julia’s letter confirms a number of important things. First, Julia herself had no direct control or knowledge of Gardner’s work. She does not want blame

for this, but instead takes responsibility and asks for forgiveness. She confirms that Charlotte and her family were hired on because they were black, and it was an attempt to help right the wrongs of the past to benefit, rather than exploit, a black family (though now it is clear that their choosing was a kind of exploitation in a way because it was done on the basis of them being black, Charles considers). Julia also effectively explains that the true purpose of the Institute never had anything to do with people at all: it was designed to study chimpanzees, and to seek a way to get them to communicate. Despite this, Julia still takes ownership of the situation, and again apologizes for it.

Discussion Question 1

Why does it take Lyle to throw Charles off enough to reconsider the experiment? How does Charles's view of the experiment change?

Discussion Question 2

Do you believe Julia is to blame for what Gardner did at the Institute? Why or why not? Regardless as to her blame, should Julia be forgiven? Why or why not? Do present generations, in general for any reason or issue, bear responsibility for the sins of previous generations? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Julia ask for forgiveness, but not blame relating the actions of Gardner under her Institute's name? Do you believe Julia should be asking for forgiveness at all? Why or why not? Do you believe that Julia should be forgiven? Explain your reasoning.

Vocabulary

theatrical, oblivious, contrariness, retribution, fortuitous, alias, dormant, supplications, imperceptible,

Pages 261 – 326

Summary

Nymphadora of Courtland County, 1929 – Ellen goes with Nadine to the music conservatory-turned-scientific institute. Ellen is amazed by how big and beautiful the place is. Nadine takes Ellen to Gardner's office. Ellen is heartbroken to know that she was not Gardner's only specimen, but she still loves him. Ellen asks about the work being given to the men of Spring City. She says the questions the men are being asked are indecent, and that Gardner must stop. Gardner explains his tests are merely about language, and that he should have explained things better to those undergoing the tests. Gardner says he himself has taken the test. The test, he explains, is to determine how different kinds of brains understand language. He says all assistants working for him have also taken the test, and pulls out the results to show Ellen and Nadine.

A moment later, alone with Gardner, Ellen confesses her love for him. Gardner is in disbelief, but a scream comes from outside. Merryweather, the chimpanzee, goes mad. This prompts Gardner to rush out. It is then that Ellen discovers drawings of a chimpanzee put into the same poses as herself. She begins to cry, knowing the racist intent of what she and the chimp have been made to do. Ellen leaves, and refuses to see Gardner again. She even packs up and leaves her house. She first sneaks into the Institute, where she finds Rosalee, the chimpanzee forced into the same positions Gardner drew her in. She frees Rosalee, who falls asleep in her arms. She leaves Rosaelee sleeping in a ditch, then hides out in the West End of Boston. Ellen then pens the confession, which readers are currently reading, and sends it to Dr. Gardner.

Charlotte – A Boston Globe reporter comes to speak with Charlotte, Callie, and Laurel at the end of January based on everything that has happened. The article includes a brief mention of Man or Beast?, but features a major interview with Julia. Charlotte gets good attention at school based on the article. She realizes her ticket to acceptance may have been Charlie all along. Gorey's book does not have the impact she thought it would have, and Julia's version of events gains the attention despite Adia's best efforts to plaster the school and county with photocopies of the book. Charlie himself becomes a popular sensation. When all the attention becomes too much, Charlotte visits with her father during his final free period of the day before heading home.

Charles – Charles does not want a divorce, but Laurel has left him not alternative. He feels a sense of loss without her and having Charlotte and Callie with him all the time. One day in his mathematics class, he devotes an entire period to tessellations, which he calls the most beautiful patterns that will ever be encountered. As he teaches, he hears one of the kids in the class making monkey sounds. Charles says he will not be embarrassed by such a thing. When the guilty student, Martin Wade, continues on, getting his friends to laugh, Charles says it is lucky those boys are white. The entire class breaks out in laughter, and Martin is roundly sized up as having been burned. Even Charles laughs.

Charlotte – Charlotte learns her father has become something of a hero by the end of the day thanks to his firing back at Martin's racist-fueled antagonism. Adia later shows Charlotte a drawing she has made of Charlotte and her family, exaggerating their African features and making them look ugly. This disturbs Charlotte, but Adia calls it ironic because that is how white people see them. Charlotte counters that Adia was the one who drew the picture. Adia says she submitted it to the school paper, but it was rejected even though she knew Mr. Carver, the supervisor, really felt that way about black people. Now, Adia wants to plaster the school and the county with photocopies of it. Charlotte tells her no, then leaves and calls Laurel to pick her up.

Callie – When Laurel goes to get Charlotte, she allows Callie to watch Charlie. Callie does her best to continue to win over Charlie, so they got the lake. It causes Lester, Paulsen, Laurel, and Max to go looking for them. Callie accidentally drops Charlie in the lake. Laurel rushes in to save him.

Epilogue: Charlotte – It is 2011. Charlotte is now dating a woman named Darla, and browses the internet once a year for stories, news, and social media chatter about her and her family's experiment from twenty years before. Charlotte lives in Boston, and goes to see Callie who lives on the other side of Boston. Callie is much heavier now, and only wears black. Callie hopes in Charlotte's car. Charlotte reports their father –who now lives with his new wife, Gloria. Callie no longer sees Charles. Callie works in massage. Each year, she and Charlotte make a trip to Courtland County. Adia now lives in San Diego, married to a white man, and has three sons. Laurel now teaches sign language to all new employees at the Toneybee Institute. Paulsen still works there, and still looks exactly the same. Since the story and news of Charlie's signing, the Institute's reputation has grown. It now features several buildings, more employees, and a team of security guards. Charlie is now in retirement at the Institute, and the annual trip to the County is to visit him together with Laurel. Charlie is happy to see the three of them – and the Christmas gifts they have brought. At dinner later, Callie announces she is going to the Congo for a year, but Charlotte knows it will be forever.

Analysis

As the novel comes to a close, Ellen learns the truth about Gardner's lies because the black community asks her to intercede on their behalf against him. Gardner promised he would not compare chimpanzees and blacks –but he has done so. It never becomes clear if this is to argue that blacks and chimpanzees are relatives and are to be exploited, or just the opposite as he promised, but what is clear is that Gardner has lied. It may be possible his work was not an effort to dehumanize, but to humanize blacks – though his cold method was in doing so was mere hypocritical exploitation of a dehumanizing nature. Whatever Gardner's intent may have been, it is also undermined and delegitimized by his work in eugenics. Gardner's involvement with eugenics implies one of two potential things: either lied completely about wanting to prove blacks were not inferior, or he did not believe blacks were inferior and were therefore dangerous to whites, so their populations had to be controlled through eugenics.

It is therein confirmed that science always has an agenda –and Gardner is proof of this. Ironically, the love which Ellen gives Gardner through the name of science is rejected by Gardner. However the love Paulsen and the others intend for Charlie and the Freemans through science is ultimately rejected by all but Laurel. Readers should also note the hypocrisy and irony in Adia's racist drawings, choosing to behave like a "white" person in order to demonstrate what they all supposedly think rather than working to change what some of them actually think. Adia is not, as she makes herself out to be, a selfless race-equality crusader, but rather given to racist attitudes and assumptions as well.

History, it is concluded, is to be learned from and not used as a weapon. Thanks to the Charlie experiments, the efforts of the Freemans, and Julia's apology, the book Man or Beast? does not have the desired impact (the public at large, including blacks, believes acknowledging and moving past the past is better than using history as a weapon) –and the Institute, interestingly, thrives while Laurel continues to work there. Laurel has succeeded –and achieved a kind of freedom despite history. Charles achieves freedom from history by walking away and remarrying.

Charlotte and Callie also move on with their lives, content to acknowledge the past but not to use it as a weapon. This is especially telling for Charlotte, who does not want to harm the Institute anymore, and who even visits it to see Charlie. Adia, the anti-white young black woman, ends up marrying a white man and having children with him. The novel has one final twist: Callie cannot get over the idea of being watched and having her freedoms repressed while at the Institute –but there is freedom in the Congo. There is no one to watch her or control her life in the wild. The Institute and its history prompt Callie to return to a state of human freedom in nature over a state of controlled human freedom in civilization.

Discussion Question 1

What finally proves to be the breaking point between Charlotte and Adia? Why does this matter so much? Why is Adia blind to what she has done?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Callie want to go to the Congo? Why do you believe Charlotte feels as if she will never see Callie again? What will Callie do? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Is there ever a point at which people should stop paying for the sins of the past? If so, when? Do you believe successive generations are responsible for paying for the sins of the past? Explain your reasoning.

Vocabulary

begrudgingly, sophisticated, reconciliation, recriminations, careening, effusiveness, transgression, brandished

Characters

Charlie Freeman

Charlie Freeman is a research chimpanzee belonging to the Toneybee Institute. Named after Charlotte and Callie, Charlie was the result of an unexpected pregnancy. He was abandoned by his mother as a newborn baby. Charlie now becomes the central point of an experiment to teach him to communicate via sign language, which he learns how to do through the Freemans. He becomes famous for this. Charlie retires many years later. He lives out his life at the Institute.

Charlotte Freeman

Charlotte Freeman, an African-American girl about fourteen-years-old, is the daughter of Charles and Laurel. She is the older sister of Callie. Charlotte feels out of place in the heavily-white county in which the Institute is located, and she is equally angered and shocked by her mother's closeness and commitment to Charlie. It is Charlotte who discovers for herself the history of the Institute. She is brokenhearted and angry about it. Charlotte goes on to want to use history as a weapon. Eventually, she comes to see her mother's point of view. Nothing will ever get better if the past is dwelled upon and things are torn down rather than built up. By the end of the novel, Charlotte is in her thirties. She is living with her girlfriend, Darla, in Boston.

Charles Freeman

Charles Freeman is the African-American father of Charlotte and Callie. He is the husband of Laurel. Charles is a schoolteacher, who is happy to be at the Institute because it gets him out of the confined, cramped city of Boston. Charles does not care about the history of the Institute. He believes in letting the past be the past. He looks forward to the future, especially living in the country.

Laurel Freeman

Laurel Freeman is the African-American mother of Charlotte and Callie. She is the wife of Charles. Laurel is a warm and kind woman who is morally sound, believes strongly in education, and is forward-looking. Laurel acknowledges but refuses to dwell on the past of the Institute. She warns Charlotte not to waste her time with people like Adia who only want to tear things down. Laurel is determined to do whatever is right and moral to succeed. She actively counters the things Adia and Marie teach Charlotte. Laurel gets personally involved in the experiment by breastfeeding Charlie. As time passes, Laurel moves beyond the experiment to teach sign language full-time at the Institute.

Callie Freeman

Callie Freeman is the nine-year-old African American younger sister of Charlotte. She is the daughter of Laurel and Charles. Callie takes to the experiment with Charlie at first, wanting to be his sister and do as she is instructed. However, Callie's learning about the Institute's history along with her mother's very personal involvement with Charlie cause Callie to have a crisis of freedom and self. She attempts to overcome her sense of being constrained by exerting power over Charlie through magic.

Callie later decides to go and live in the Congo to embrace real freedom from everyone and everything else. She does not return from her journey. Whether her reason for not returning is that she lives in the Congo until her natural death or commits suicide while there is never stated.

Dr. Marietta Paulsen

Dr. Marietta Paulsen is the white woman in charge of the programs underway at the Institute. Tall and kind, Paulsen is sickened by the history of the Institute. She wants to make up for it in the present by committing to real science and hiring the Freemans. Paulsen ends up working for the Institute for decades to come as a result.

Lester Potter

Lester Potter is the balding, white security guard who works at the Institute. Lester is gruff but kind, and he has no time for small talk. As the lone security guard, he has a lot of work to do, and he does it well. Lester is among those who goes looking for Callie and Charlie the night Charlie almost drowns.

Max

Max is the white assistant to Paulsen. In his late twenties, Max is very sensitive about the Institute's past. He wants to move beyond racism in general, and he wants to do real science at the Institute. Max tends to the chimpanzees. He also films the Freemans as much as he can for the experiment. Max serves as a counterpoint to Gardner, listening and seeking to understand the point of view of Charlotte, especially regarding race.

Ellen Jericho

Ellen Jericho is a black resident of Spring City, Massachusetts. In her thirties, Ellen is a single schoolteacher who is seduced by Gardner into posing for sketches for him. Ellen, who is gentle, kind, and brave, wants to advance the black race in accord with her membership in the Christian Stars organization. Through her posing for Gardner, Ellen

falls in love with him. But, the love is not returned. When Ellen learns that Gardner has been comparing her to a chimpanzee, she is heartbroken and devastated. She flees the city as a result to begin her life all over again.

Terrence Gardner

Terrence Gardner is a white English scientist who comes to work at the Toneybee Institute where he is given free range so long as he pursues linguistics and communication with chimpanzees. Gardner's motives and intentions are never entirely clear in the novel.

Gardner seduces Ellen to get her to pose nude for him. He says the sketches will be used in his research. He explains he is a revolutionary against his white race, because he does not believe blacks are inferior and will never compare them to chimpanzees. However, he does compare Ellen to a chimpanzee. Whether or not this is to prove blacks are or are not like chimpanzees is not known. Either way, he lied to Ellen. However, the eugenics program undertaken under Gardner cannot be denied or explained away. A year after joining the Institute, he abruptly leaves, takes much of his research with him, and commits suicide in Florida.

Julia Toneybee-Leroy

Julia Toneybee-Leroy is the very old, white heiress to the Toneybee and Leroy fortunes, funds which she pours into the Toneybee Institute. Julia is a kind, thoughtful, and responsible woman who is taken aback when she learns about Gardner's experiments and activities sixty years ago. Julia delivers an apology in letter form to blacks, saying she originally founded the Institute to communicate with chimpanzees after killing one while on safari in the Congo and feeling guilty about it. The founding of the Institute had nothing to do with people and race. Julia does not want to be blamed for Gardner's work, but she does accept responsibility for it while offering an apology for what was done.

Symbols and Symbolism

Freeman

The last name, Freeman, is an ironic symbol. "Freeman" is a compound form of “free man”. Though the Freeman family is not rich or wildly successful in Boston, they do have their freedom. They are now prepared to give up much of their freedom by participating in the Toneybee Institute experiment with Charlie. They will have regulations and parameters to follow with the experiment, and they will be required to teach Charlie sign language.

1991 silver Volvo station wagon

A 1991 silver Volvo station wagon is symbolic of masked intentions. The car is a gift and a perk to the Freeman family for participating in experiments at the Toneybee Institute. It glosses over the past of the Institute, when it was involved in racist activities and research, and serves to be yet another enticement to the Freemans to participate. The car also serves as a kind of reparation for the sins of the Institute against blacks in the past.

American Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) is symbolic of communication and scientific legitimacy. It is used among the deaf to communicate, and is studied and used by those who can hear to communicate with those who cannot. As part of the Institute’s mission, it wants to teach sign language to Charlie, and so hires the Freeman family to make it possible. This is demonstrative of the Institute’s desire to do legitimate science as opposed to the racist history of the Institute under Gardner.

Black sign language

Black sign language is symbolic of black subculture. Black sign language utilizes different signs and hand motions than ASL. The signs are unique and confined to areas of black population. Max misinterprets many black signs as being racist because he only knows ASL. Charlotte cautions Callie to be respectful of Max because Max does not know black signing since he is white.

The sign research experiment

The sign research experiment is symbolic of redemption. Looking to right the wrongs of the past, Julia, Paulsen, and a team of public relations specialists put together a legitimate science experiment for the Institute to conduct that will involve a black family

–the Freemans. This is different because the racially-motivated experiments of the past exploited blacks against their will. It will be a small measure given the past. However, it is one designed to build a better future. It is a step to restore the name of the Institute.

Drawings of Ellen's genitalia

Drawings of Ellen's genitalia symbolize a violation of her humanity, and the racist experiments being conducted in the late 1920s and 1930s by the Toneybee Institute. The drawings are made by Gardner, who claims to be doing research to argue blacks are no different from whites. He argues he will never compare blacks to chimpanzees – though this is exactly what he does. The drawings are found decades later in the Institute's files by Frances Gray, who uses them in her book, Man or Beast?, to demonstrate the racist past of the Institute.

Man or Beast?

The book Man or Beast? by Frances Gray is a symbol of irony. Intended to expose truth and shed light on the racist legacies of various scientific institutes, the book omits important information to garner popular outrage. For example, the book leaves out the fact that Julia had no idea what was going on with Gardner at her Institute –ironically demanding truth of the past while ignoring truths counterproductive to the purpose of the book. Between the Charlie experiment and Julia's apology letter, the book does not have the impact Frances Gray hopes.

Julia's letter of apology

Julia's letter of apology symbolizes responsibility and the quest for redemption. While Julia is not personally to blame for Gardner's racial experiments at the Institute, she is ultimately responsible as the founder, owner, and funder of the Institute. As such, she pens an open letter, apologizing to blacks for what happened sixty-some years before, asking not for blame but for forgiveness. She explains the Charlie experiments as a physical step toward forgiveness, and explains why the Freemans were chosen: not only could they participate in a legitimate science experiment, but they were black.

Gardner's experiments

Gardner's experiments demonstrate both irony and hypocrisy. Gardner tells Ellen that he does not believe blacks are inferior, that he loves the black race, and his science experiments are designed to prove there is nothing different about blacks. He says he will not compare blacks to chimpanzees as others have done –but this is exactly what he does, hypocritically. He says he will not exploit blacks as others have done, but he hypocritically exploits Ellen sexually in order to do this. Gardner's involvement with eugenics means one of two things: either he is lying completely about wanting to prove blacks are not inferior, or he does not believe blacks are inferior and are therefore

dangerous to whites, and so must have their populations controlled through eugenics experiments.

Callie’s pending journey to the Congo

Callie’s pending journey to the Congo symbolizes freedom. Callie, unable to overcome her sense of being controlled at the Institute even after leaving the Institute, compels her to seek out freedom somewhere else. She chooses the Congo, to which Charlie’s roots can be traced and the continent of which (Africa) Callie can trace her own roots. Callie will return to a state of absolute human freedom in nature rather than the controlled kind of freedom in civilization. Charlotte knows Callie will not come back either because Callie will live out her live in the Congo, or will end up taking her own life in the Congo.

Settings

The Toneybee Institute

The Toneybee Institute, located in rural Courtland County, Massachusetts, serves as the primary setting for the novel. Formerly a music conservatory, the Institute was converted by Julia Toneybee-Leroy for use as a scientific facility poised to study chimpanzees and the possibility of communicating with them. As such, the brick Institute features beautiful architectural flourishes of cherubim angels and musical instruments, along with towers and wings despite its very practical purpose in the present.

The Institute becomes the home of the Freeman family in the novel, where they live in a large apartment with multiple rooms while teaching Charlie how to sign. While Charles and Laurel are aware of the past, Charlotte and Callie belatedly learn that, for one year under the control of Dr. Gardner, the Institute was used for racially-motivated experiments and eugenics programs. It is a past Julia now seeks to make up for, and which she ultimately succeeds at doing with the success of the Charlie experiments and the help of the Freemans.

Spring City

Spring City, Massachusetts, is the black community in Courtland County, Massachusetts, where most black people live, having been historically segregated there. Spring City, in the 1920s, is the home of Ellen Jericho, and is where she teaches school. It is a poor and working-class community. In the 1920s, Spring City is visited by Dr. Gardner, who uses Ellen in his experiments. In the 1990s, after being overwhelmed by the truth of the past of the Institute, Charles and Charlotte go have breakfast at a diner in Spring City –a place they consider safe beyond the Institute, and where they feel socially accepted.

Dr. Gardner’s office

Dr. Gardner’s office is located in the Toneybee Institute, and is where he runs the Institute and conducts some of his work. The office is visited by Ellen and Nadine when they confront Gardner over his practices. Gardner denies anything unethical, but it is in his office that Ellen discovers the truth. Despite his seeming opposition to blacks and chimpanzees being compared, Gardner has done the exact same thing with his drawings of Ellen’s genitalia.

The East Wing of the Toneybee Institute

The East Wing of the Toneybee Institute is where the chimpanzees are kept. It becomes a place of imprisonment for Ellen when she sneaks in, as she rescues Rosalee, the

chimpanzee to whom Gardner has compared her. At this time, the chimpanzees are treated rather coldly and with much disdain. Years later, Charlotte and the Freemans are allowed to come and go as they please where the chimpanzees are kept, though they remain focused on Charlie in their own apartment. The East Wing, once a place of horror and pseudo-science, is now a place of legitimate science and concern for the welfare of the chimpanzees.

Adia’s room

Adia’s room is where Charlotte and Adia make love, cuddle, and speak about their lives and issues like racism. Adia’s room becomes a kind of refuge for Charlotte at first, as she sexually explores herself and Adia, and considers important intellectual questions – such as those raised by the history of the Institute. However, Adia’s own racist attitude drives Charlotte away, and Adia’s room becomes a prison rather than an escape.

Themes and Motifs

Racism assumes many different forms and is not exclusive toward or from any particular group of people.

Racism assumes many different forms and is not exclusive toward or from any particular group of people. Race relations and racism therein rest in the heart of Greenidge's novel, especially as the disturbing history of the Toneybee Institute comes to matter so greatly in the present.

When the novel begins, Charlotte and her family leave their black community in Boston for the mostly-white rural area of Courtland County to participate in the communication experiment. Having been around primarily black people for most of her life, Charlotte feels out of place to some extent at the Institute because so many of the researchers are white, whereas many blacks in Boston held racially elite views in that they did not consider Charlotte to be black enough. Charlotte and Callie quickly learn that many things common among blacks –such as black sign language –are things unknown to whites. There is a sense of cultural understanding and patience that must be afforded one another, and this can be seen when Max and Charlotte speak about Charlotte's feelings about being around so many white people.

For their part, Max, Paulsen, and the other researchers are friendly toward the Freeman family. Their kindness toward the Freeman family is genuine. As such, it contrasts with the pretend kindness of local Maine residents toward Laurel and her parents when she was a little girl. Racism is not always overt, angry, and violent. Oftentimes, it is disguised as politesse or comes through condescension. This is the case with Gardner, who, unlike Max, would rather dictate and make demands of Ellen. He speaks down to her while claiming to want to raise her race up. Gardner's lies about race are apparent in his pursuit of racist eugenics programs and his broken promises about not comparing Ellen to a chimpanzee as other racist scientists have done. Because of the history of racism in America at large, and the Institute in particular, Lyle cannot help but draw comparisons between the Institute then and now, looking at his family as if they themselves were chimpanzees to be studied and exploited by human (white) scientists.

Despite the past of the Institute, which she acknowledges, Laurel wants to overcome history to make something productive out of the future. She has no time for Adia and Marie, who live by their own brand of racism –choosing not to do things because white people do them, or because they think white people expect them to do these things (such as watch Westerns), or choosing to criticize rather than help Courtland County celebrate black history month –wherein they tear down rather than build up. Indeed, Adia's own racism –her hypocrisy in choosing to illustrate the Freeman family with exaggerated African features which she wrongly believes is how all white people see

black people –is the breaking point for Charlotte. Charlotte looks toward a better future of race relations.

Love assumes many different forms.

Love assumes many different forms. Love's different forms affect the characters of the novel in important ways. In turn, love is responsible for the outcome of the novel.

The first kind of love readers are exposed to is familial love. The Freeman family, with Laurel in the lead, is taking on the Toneybee experiment out of love for Laurel, and for one another. They are a close-knit family, and whatever they do, they do together. (Unfortunately, their family love will not survive the Thanksgiving episode.) Initially, upon finding out about the history of the Institute, Charlotte agrees not to cause trouble in the present for the sake of her family –but later decides she cannot abide by this (the decision which is preempted by Lyle's own outburst at Thanksgiving).

The second kind of love in the novel is experienced through the love of animals and the love of science. The experiment itself will require taking Charlie in as a member of the family, getting him to trust and love in order to be able to communicate with him. Indeed, Charlie becomes a beloved member of the family, so much so that Laurel takes to breastfeeding him, and she, Charlotte, and Callie continue to visit him for the next two decades at Christmas. At the same time, the experiment they are undertaking is being done out of love –out of love for Charlie, for language and communication, and love for science, which is a clear far cry from the science of Gardner's day in which exploitation and cold objectivity were dominant.

The third kind of love the novel features is romantic love. Romantic love in the novel arises on the part of Ellen toward Gardner, though this love is seemingly unrequited. This helps to secure Ellen's decision to leave the area, giving her the courage to go on alone. Romantic love is also shared between Charlotte and Adia, as the two commit to an intimate, sexual relationship. Adia, however, finds it to be only a sexual foray, as she says she does not want to end up like white girls who are all-out lesbians. However, Adia's racism and hypocrisy are what end up breaking apart her relationship with Charlotte, who chooses love of her family over Adia's racist-fueled activism.

History must be acknowledged and learned from, but it is not to be used as a weapon.

History must be acknowledged and learned from, but it is not to be used as a weapon. This position on history takes into consideration how the present is to take and understand the past, as well as how the present is to respond to the past. The characters of Adia and Laurel take diametrically opposite positions, both seeking to influence Charlotte and readers.

Adia believes the past must be acknowledged and confronted in the present. She believes history is even a weapon that must be used in the present to force others to pay for the sins of the past. For Adia and her mother, nothing is ever good enough. For example, rather than help to make the well-meaning but falling-short efforts of the county to celebrate black history month, Adia and her mother simply criticize it. When Adia learns about the Institute's history, she calls for it to be shut down and all the people currently working there to be fired while Charlotte personally confronts Julia.

Laurel opposes this entirely. Laurel is well aware of the past of the Institute. She acknowledges that what was done was horrible, but she also knows it was sixty-some years ago. The people there now are not the same people then, and the people there now are not racists. Laurel knows people like Adia only know how to tear down, rather than build up. History is not a weapon to be wielded against people, but a foundation from which to build a better future. Present generations, in Laurel's sense of understanding, cannot be made to pay for things they had nothing to do with years ago.

Julia herself, who was alive at the time but had no direct control over what went on, nevertheless makes the important and responsible step of claiming responsibility for what was done –and apologizing for it in an open letter. She acknowledges the past and declares her intention to seek redemption for it in the present. Julia's way of understanding incorporates aspects of both Adia's need to confront the past directly, while seeking the positive and constructive benefits of Laurel's philosophy. It is this kind of synthesis that Charlotte ultimately adopts. She is heartbroken by the past, and she is angry about it. However, she knows that Paulsen and Max, for example, had nothing to do with it. She looks to a better future instead.

Science is not a pure study because it has agendas, too.

Science is not a pure study because it has agendas, too. Popular conceptions of science and scientists are that the various fields of study and the vast numbers of people who make those studies are altruistic individuals committed to advancing the truth no matter what truth arises. But this, historically and in the present, is not true. Scientists are human; therefore, they can be motivated by less than honorable intentions like everyone else.

In the 1920s, many scientists approached the study of blacks and chimpanzees as one in the same. They considered blacks to be less-evolved human beings, more closely related to monkeys, apes, and chimpanzees, than white people were. The scientific work and studies they undertook were done to fit the preconceived theory, rather than allowing the theory to fit the facts. This was done due to racism on the part of those seeking to support the theory. Science, respected then as now, was therein responsible for the persistence of malicious racism for decades.

Even those who claimed to be in favor of blacks were not immune from motives or corruption. The character of Dr. Gardner is the case in point. He claims to see blacks as

equals, yet speaks down to the black Ellen like an inferior. He hypocritically slams scientists for comparing blacks to chimpanzees while doing the very same thing himself. While his ultimate intent is not clear, it can be guessed that it had to do something with the racial eugenics he undertook –such as sterilizing blacks to prevent them from reproducing. Either he considered blacks to be equal and thus a threat to the supremacy of whites (meaning the blacks had to be kept down by stopping their reproduction) or he was lying all along, and was really only a racist bent on using science to the benefit of his own race.

In the present, legitimate science is being combined with altruistic motives through the Charlie experiment. Julia wants to restore the name of her family and the Institute which bears its name, so she seeks to have legitimate scientific experiments undertaken, which they are. She also insists that the family being used in one of the experiments be black, not out of a sense of racism, but because she wants to atone for what her Institute did decades before. In a sense, she is exploiting a black family through science without their real knowledge as to why, but this is something that Laurel can live with while Charles and Charlotte cannot.

There are no clear answers to everything.

There are no clear answers to everything. Issues of race, history, and love are never always easy to tackle. Nevertheless, they must be discussed. The questions raised do not always have easy answers, and it is not clear that such situations may even have right answers.

While Adia sees history as a weapon to be wielded in the present, Laurel sees history as a foundation from which to build a positive and better future. This is especially true given the racist history of the Institute, and the history of racism in America as a whole. This brings to light some very important questions (which readers can answer here or in the discussion questions sections of the chapter summaries and analyses). These questions include if there is ever a point at which people should stop paying for the sins of the past, and if so, when? Taken one step further, are successive generations of people responsible for paying for the sins of the past? If so, why? If not, why not? The answers to these questions are not always easy or as simple as they may first seem.

When it comes to Julia, who was alive at the time of the racism going on at her Institute, but who had no direct hand in it, Julia takes a middle road: she apologizes for the past in her confrontation of it, but looks to a productive future rather than dwelling on the past. When it comes to someone like Julia, who was alive at the time but had no direct hand in things, does she owe anyone an apology? Doe she bear the burden of paying for her generation’s sins? Questions of racism here and in the previous paragraph could easily be replaced with things like the relatively recent horrors of Nazism or the more distant brutality directed against Christians by Muslims in Spain during the Middle Ages.

Other questions relating to subjects like race and history are made apparent in the actions of different characters, specifically Gardner and Adia. Gardner claims he

opposes comparisons of blacks and chimpanzees, arguing blacks are no different than whites –but then compares blacks and chimpanzees anyways. Adia claims to want to fight racism, but creates racist drawings to prove her point. Are Adia and Gardner acting as hypocrites, or merely using horrible means to reach a better end? In such a situation, do the ends justify the means, or are the means to reaching a good end just as important as the end itself? These questions, like others, can only be answered by readers in an open discussion with consideration for one another.

Styles

Point of View

Kaitlyn Greenidge tells her novel We Love You, Charlie Freeman, from both the first and third-person narrative modes, alternating between modes based on chapters. The first-person narrators of the novel consist of Charlotte and Ellen. The third-person narrator consists of an unidentified storyteller who gives readers intimate insight into the thoughts, feelings, and private actions of characters other than Ellen and Charlotte, who would not be privy to the same information about the other characters communicated to the reader by the third-person narrator.

The thoughts, feelings, and private actions of Ellen and Charlotte are on full display for the reader, as revealed by Charlotte and Ellen themselves. Charlotte's sections of the novel are a kind of personal confession to the reader. It is only natural that she narrates it. Ellen's chapters are actually in the form of a letter she has written to Gardner. Nothing is held back from the readers for these, or any characters, creating a close intimacy between the written character and the reader. The narrative modes give the characters a strong dimensional depth, making them believable and very much human. This is especially important given the very sensitive topics of the novel –such as race and history.

Language and Meaning

Kaitlyn Greenidge tells her novel We Love You, Charlie Freeman in language that varies based on the narrator. The language used bv Charlotte is straightforward but educated with a strong vocabulary in used despite her very young age. This is because her mother places such an emphasis on the importance of education, and instills in her daughters a motivation to succeed. The third-person narrator assumes much the same style of speaking as Charlotte, primarily for the sake of continuity –though language used by Charlotte is personal and first-personal (such as "I" and "we" as subjects) while the third-person narrator does not use such language (using instead words like "she" or "they"). Ellen's own language is very similar, but also very intuitive. She questions and is often pensive, but this is only natural given the situation in which she finds herself. She is falling in love with a white man whom she was raised not to trust. The educated aspect of the language she uses comes from her own strong education, as she works as a schoolteacher. The use of these different kinds of language according to the different characters lends an air of being believable and a sense of realism to the dimensions of the characters.

Structure

Kaitlyn Greenidge divides her novel We Love You, Charlie Freeman into unnumbered chapters that are titled according to the character primarily associated with that section's

focus. Entire chapters are devoted primarily to Charlotte, Callie, Charles, Laurel, Ellen, and Julie, in which their characters, actions, and motives are explored.

The chapters themselves leap back and forth through time, with Ellen's chapters occurring in 1990, and the epilogue of the novel occurring in 2010. Weaving back and forth allows Greenidge to create a puzzle that is filled in piece by piece, allowing readers to learn about the Institute's past as that puzzle is filled in by her characters, their lives, and their discoveries (Ellen about Gardner and the Institute, and Charlotte through Gray's book Man or Beast?). It also allows readers to understand events taking place in 1929 as well as in 1990 –and how 1990 leads to the 2010 epilogue. This gives readers a more acute sense and understanding of history, allowing readers to experience it through the eyes of Ellen –and this helps readers understand why difficult questions must be answered in both 1990 and 2010.

Quotes

We, the Freemans, had been chosen to take part in an experiment and we were going to teach sign language to a chimpanzee.
-- Charlotte (Charlotte)

Importance: Early in the first chapter, Charlotte effectively lays out why her family is leaving Boston for the Toneybee Institute. They are to teach sign language to Charlie, a chimpanzee as part of a research experiment being conducted by the Institute. A new car, living arrangement, and other finances are taken care of by the Institute. However, there is much more to the situation than meets the eye, as Charlotte and the readers soon find out.

Laurel told her daughters that they were special.
-- Narrator (Laurel)

Importance: This is a statement of irony. Laurel tells her children they are special, which is why they were selected to participate in the experiment with Charlie. At first, this seems simple. The family knows how to sign, and such a family is needed for the experiment. However, the special qualities of Laurel's family go beyond knowing sign language.

This is Charlie adjusting to us and his surroundings.
-- Laurel (Charlotte)

Importance: Laurel endures a violent incident with Charlie, in which Charlie lashes out at her. The family is worried about it, because it is so bad that Paulsen and Max must become involved and give Charlie a sedative. However, Laurel downplays what happened, insisting that Charlie is getting used to his surroundings. This demonstrates the efforts and trials of the family to befriend Charlie and how experiments can go wrong.

They're curious about you because you are in the experiment. This is new for them. They're just excited.
-- Laurel (Charlotte)

Importance: When Charlotte becomes a little unnerved and annoyed by being asked the same questions over and over again by the researchers, she asks her mom about what is going on. Laurel patiently explains that they, like Charlie, are part of the experiment. Charlotte is not satisfied with this answer. She wants more information. The truth, as Charlotte will later learn, is chilling.

But what do they want from us?
-- Charlotte (Charlotte)

Importance: When Charlotte's mother explains to Charlotte that they, too, are part of

the experiment, and so the researchers will ask them all sorts of questions, Charlotte is not satisfied. Instead, she wants to know what the researchers actually want from them. Laurel promises she will speak to Paulsen about it, and Charlotte looks forward to the answer.

It's really okay, Charlotte. He needs it.
-- Laurel (Charlotte)

Importance: One night, Charlotte discovers her mother breastfeeding Charlie. Charlotte is shocked and horrified by this, but Laurel insists Charlie needs it so as to prevent him from wailing. This continues to disturb Charlotte, but she does not quite understand until later. Her mom has become more like an animal in a place historically devoted to comparing black people to chimpanzees.

Charlie is my friend.
-- Callie (Callie)

Importance: When Charlotte begins to spend more time with Adia, Callie begins to spend more time with Charlie. In time, she comes to see Charlie as a friend. The two especially enjoy watching Westerns together. Charlotte argues that Charlie is not a friend, but Callie insists that he is. She says the most important part of the job is to be Charlie's sister, so that is what she is trying to do.

They're all racists.
-- Charlotte (Charlotte)

Importance: When Charlotte discovers the book Man or Beast?, she learns that racism is a core part of the Toneybee Institute's history. Charlotte explains that Gardner and the other researchers conducted horrible experiments on blacks and chimpanzees, such as one where they compared the genitalia of men, women, and chimpanzees. It causes Charlotte to break down in tears and cry.

I don't care why the Toneybee brought us here…. What matters is we're here.
-- Laurel (Charlotte)

Importance: When Charlotte confronts her mother over Man or Beast?, Laurel is not fazed at all. She argues that the book is history, and that their family is bigger than history. She argues that a lot can change in sixty years, and that it does not matter why their family has been selected in the current research at Toneybee. All that matters, Laurel insists, is that they are there.

The woman who wrote this book and your friend, Adia? People like that just love the trouble. They live for the breaking down. They don't know anything about building up… You start in on this, you decide to make a statement and play the victim on this and it's not just you ends up hurt.
-- Laurel (Charlotte)

Importance: Laurel squares up with Charlotte: Laurel acknowledges the past but does not want to dwell on it. She is looking to build up the future, not for ways to tear down the present based on the past –or to tear down anything at all. Laurel argues that people like Adia and the woman who wrote the book, for various reasons, do not know anything about building up. The Freeman family is trying to build up now, not tear down. Charlotte has no choice but to be quiet about her anger and her concerns, knowing her family depends on it, and knowing her mother is in charge.

History is a weapon, Charlotte.
-- Adia (Charlotte)

Importance: When Adia reads Man or Beast?, she becomes enraged and commits to using the Institute's history against it like a weapon. She begins writing letters to the local paper, but the paper does not print them, leading Adria to believe the Institute is stopping it from happening through their money, power, and influence.

I seek your forgiveness, African Americans, in earnest.
-- Julia Toneybee-Leroy (What She Said to Me: An Apology to the African-American People)

Importance: Although Julia did not know what Gardner did at her Institute the year she gave him control of it, she still bears responsibility for it. She asks not to be blamed for what happened. Instead, she asks to be forgiven for what happened. It is an immense act of self-responsibility and humility that Julia should openly appeal to blacks for what was done to them in her name.