

We Were Liars Study Guide

We Were Liars by E. Lockhart

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Plot Summary

Cadence Sinclair Eastman struggles to remember what happened to her during her fifteenth summer in the book “We Were Liars” by e. lockhart. The story details the life of Cadence and the rich Democrat members of her family as they struggle to deal with a tragedy to which they have all contributed. The novel touches on the themes of materialism, young love and racism.

Cadence’s family has always sought to present itself as perfect, rich Democrats. During the summer vacation of her fifteenth year on her family’s private island, Cadence has an accident which causes her to suffer debilitating headaches. Additionally, Cadence has amnesia, and can’t remember the details of what happened to her that summer. She sees herself as damaged and believes she no longer fits with her perfect family. To make matters worse, her mother and others won’t tell her the details of her accident. Nearly two years after her accident, she still hasn’t seen from the group of closest cousins and her boyfriend — a group known as The Liars — who were her constant companions while on the island.

During the summer of her seventeenth year, Cadence dedicates herself to learning the truth about what really happened to her. As she spends time on the island, Cadence begins to remember the increasing friction between her mother, the aunts, and her grandfather as they fight over the possessions that once belonged to her grandmother. Her grandfather tries to manipulate his children through the promise of houses and jewelry. When they don’t follow his wishes, he makes threats to disown his three daughters, pits one against the other, and makes promises he can’t fulfill. Because her mother and aunts depend on their father for the money needed to sustain their lifestyles, they allow themselves to be more and more manipulated and degraded. Cadence finally remembers one night that the women decided they’d had enough. Everyone but The Liars leaves the island. Hoping to get rid of the cause of the adults’ arguments and make them see there is more to life than just possessions, The Liars decide to set fire to island house in which their grandparents lived.

Unfortunately, the fire catches quickly and Cadence’s cousins and boyfriend are unable to escape from the house. Adding to the shock of the ending, Cadence had believed that her cousins and boyfriend joined her on the island during her seventeenth summer. When she learns they died in the fire, she realizes she is able to see them only because they have returned from the dead to help her regain her memory of the tragic events of their final summer together.



Part One: Welcome — Chapters 1-5

Summary

Cadence wants to remember the events that have led to the amnesia and debilitating headaches she has suffered since her fifteenth summer on her grandparents' private island. She feels damaged and out of place in her family of perfect, rich Democrats. When she remembers she was partially responsible for the tragedy that killed her closest friends and caused her own sickness, Cadence learns the truth of her own faults as well as those of her family.

In Chapter 1, the Sinclairs are described as perfect, old money Democrats.

In Chapter 2, Cadence Sinclair Eastman describes the ways she has changed since her accident. She has migraines, she has dyed her hair black, and she believes she looks sick. When she is fifteen, her father leaves her mother for another woman. Cadence describes the pain as a gunshot. Her mother instructs her to act normally. After her father leaves, Cadence and her mother throw away all the gifts he ever gave them, then order new items to replace what they've thrown out. They then go to the private island owned by Cadence's grandparents.

In Chapter 3, Harris and Tipper Sinclair are rich and lavish their riches on their three daughters — Penny, Bess and Carrie. Cadence doesn't remember how her grandfather became rich. As the oldest grandchild, Cadence is to be the heiress of the family's money and expectations.

In Chapter 4, Cadence meets Gat when he comes to the island with her aunt Carrie when Cadence and Gat are eight. Gat is the nephew of Ed, Carrie's Indian boyfriend. He joins the cousins Cadence, Mirren and Johnny to make up a group known by the family as The Liars. When Carrie and Ed first come to the island together, Cadence notices the expression on her grandmother's face change, but she puts on a smile to greet the family. Cadence and Gat's eyes lock when they first see one another. They, along with Mirren and Johnny, run to the small beach where they play together for the first time. When Johnny begs Gat be allowed to stay longer and then to come back the following summer, his desire is allowed.

In Chapter 5, Cadence describes how one time during their fourteenth year, she and Gat take out the small motorboat together. They try to go swimming but the water is too cold. Gat admits to Cadence that he thinks she is pretty. One day later that summer, Cadence looks at Gat and gets the feeling that he is her person.

Analysis

In these first five chapters of the novel, Cadence lays the groundwork for the novel. The brief, first chapter lets the reader know that Cadence is a member of a proud, wealthy



family. They work to seem happy and beautiful despite their problems. The first chapter suggests there are financial problems, love problems and addiction problems in the family. It also indicates the family owns a private island where its members spend their summers. It is on this island that the majority of the action of the novel takes place.

Cadence describes how her father, who has always seemed to love her mother so much, suddenly announces he is leaving and moves out. It is just before the summer of her fifteenth year. In her description of the day her father leaves, Cadence describes the pain she feels as a bullet shot. She believes the emotional pain she feels as being as bad as the physical pain of a bullet wound. Despite the pain she is feeling, her mother forces her to act normal and not lie crying in the front yard of their home.

Cadence goes on to describe her grandparents. They lavish their love and their riches on their three daughters. Each of the daughters has her own home on the island. There are three cousins, Cadence, Johnny and Mirren who are close to the same age. In the summer they are eight, the three cousins are joined by Johnny's friend, Gat. Gat and his father, Ed, who is dating Cadence's aunt, Carrie, are of Indian descent. Although they try to disguise their feelings, Harris and Tipper do not appear to approve of the Indian background. Cadence notices a change in her grandmother's facial expression when she first notices the people of different nationality with her family. The darkness of Gat and Ed's skin and hair is also used as a drastic contrast between the white skin and blond hair of the Sinclairs. It is obvious that they do not belong.

Even though he is so strikingly different from the rest of the family, these differences don't stop Cadence and Gat from developing a bond. Because Johnny wants Gat to be able to continue to come to the island in the summers, his grandparents allow him to continue to visit. One day Cadence and Gat take the motorboat out together. It after this outing that Cadence realizes that she thinks of Gat as her own person. She indicates that they seem to understand one another.

One of the most interesting aspects of Lockhart's writing is her use of words, sentences and even breaks to accentuate her meaning. For instance, in Chapter 1 the sentence that describes Cadence's pain of being desperately in love is divided into different lines. This use of divisions slows the reader's eye and reading speed making this divided sentence seem of more importance. Lockhart's writing is often comprised of short, almost abrupt and spartan sentences. Lockhart also enjoys using imagery, particularly to depict pain. Her description of Cadence's reaction to her father leaving appears at first that Cadence's father has really shot her. At first it appears this might be the accident Cadence refers to in the second chapter of the novel. Soon it becomes apparent Cadence is describing her pain in terms of a gunshot. Her father hasn't really shot her, though she believes her pain is similar.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Gat find it hard to be on the Sinclairs' private island?



Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast Gat and the Sinclairs. How is he different from the family? Are there any ways that he is similar?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the author's use of imagery thus far. How does it accentuate the story?

Vocabulary

endure, middling, gaunt, departed, craggy, snark, prow, dapper, hypothermia



Part One: Welcome — Chapters 6-11

Summary

In Chapter 6, when Cadence first sees Gat their fifteenth summer, she believes he has dried a beach rose to give to her. She is hit by a rush of love for him. Then she sees him put the rose in an envelope and put a stamp on it. She is angered when she realizes it is not for her.

In Chapter 7, Johnny tells Cadence about Gat's girlfriend. Her name is Raquel. Cadence cries and grieves alone that night, then acts normal the next day and the rest of the summer. One evening the four cousins are having a picnic on the tiny beach. Gat brings up the idea that the Sinclairs' way of life is deluded. He has learned how truly poor some people are during a trip to India. The cousins don't want to think about it and tell him to shut up. Gat walks into the ocean, angry. Cadence feels she must follow him or she will lose him forever. She apologizes to him, telling him he challenges them to think about things they don't want to think about. Johnny and Mirren follow her to where Gat is floating. They play together in the ocean.

That night, Gat calls to Cadence after the others have gone to bed in Chapter 8. He asks if she believes in God. He tells her he doesn't believe any longer. He has seen the suffering of the poor in India, then noticed the sick and poor even in New York. He doesn't think God would let that happen, he says. Believing she is cold, he gives Cadence his hunting jacket. She wants to kiss him, but doesn't.

In Chapter 9, Gat and Cadence are sent by her mother to the attic of Windemere to sort through Cadence's father's things. While there, Gat tells Cadence he loves her. They kiss.

In Chapter 10, Gat and Cadence are interrupted by her grandfather. He warns Gat he could get hurt from the low ceiling. After Gat has left, Cadence's grandfather reminds her of how special she is to him. He tells a story about Cracker Jack. Although Cadence usually loves her grandfather's stories, she is distracted by what is happening between she and Gat. After she and her grandfather leave the attic, she goes in search of Gat. When she finds him, she kisses him again.

In Chapter 11, Cadence reports that her grandmother, Tipper, had died eight months before the beginning of summer fifteen. She remembers her grandmother making muffins early in the morning and throwing lavish charity parties for the Farm Institute. Clairmont, the house where Tipper lived with Harris, seems empty to Cadence after her death even though her beautiful things were still there. Cadence remembers going into the room where her grandmother made quilts. She broke down crying but her mother found her and made her hide her pain. Penny tells her daughter it is kinder to her grandfather not to mention or remember her grandmother. Gat, however, continues to talk about both missing family members — Candace's father and her grandmother —



although others try to cover his comments and quickly change the subject. Cadence feels fresh pain with each mention. Instead of trying to force her to ignore it, Gat would take the time to help her work through her pain.

Analysis

In addition to the loss of her father, Cadence and her family suffer another loss before summer fifteen. Tipper Sinclair, grandmother to all of the children, has died. Although all of her things are still there, Cadence feels the change in the house where her grandmother once lived. As with other tragedies, Cadence's mother instructs her to behave as if nothing has happened. Her advice, and the family's motto, seems to be to ignore anything that brings them pain. They don't talk about divorces, Cadence's father leaving, or Tipper's death. It is during this time that Cadence is attracted even more to Gat as he notices the pain she feels from the loss of her grandmother. Instead of ignoring her pain, Gat tends to her emotional wounds and helps her to deal with her pain.

Interesting in this section is the imagery that continues to accompany all of Cadence's descriptions of emotional pain. She grieves alone when she discovers Gat has a girlfriend. Her emotions cause her to feel as if she is swirling into the sky and banging stars from their moorings. She describes herself as washing off her shame and grief in the shower as if shame and grief were dirt that could be gotten rid of so easily. When she goes into her grandmother's sewing room, Cadence describes herself as "melting" in her grief. She speaks of her grief in terms of this melting as her grief soaks the quilts on which her grandmother was working before her death. Her grief is so much that it rusts the metal parts of the sewing machine. In another description of her pain, Cadence describes her hurt as blood running from cut wrists when Gat would mention Tipper. Although the other members of her family ignored her pain and bleeding, Gat would notice. She describes his attention to her emotional pain as someone wrapping up her cut wrists in gauze and asking her about her feelings.

The family definitely takes an unusual stance on dealing with pain. It seems they believe the way to protect themselves from the pain of their lives is just not to talk about it. Cadence remembers it was this way when each of her aunts separated from their husbands. These men were just never talked about again. Similarly, Cadence is not allowed to talk about her father or the way she has been hurt by his actions. While Cadence feels as if her father has shot her in the heart, her mother instructs Cadence to act as if nothing has happened. This pretense that nothing is wrong is stressed again when Tipper dies. When Cadence's mother finds her grieving in her grandmother's sewing room, Cadence is told that silence is a protective coating. She argues it will be easier for Harris, Cadence's grandfather, if they go on as if nothing has happened than if they try to confront the change that has taken place in their lives.

Meanwhile, despite the pain Cadence feels at her grandmother's death, she and Gat become closer than ever. He allows her to talk about her grief and cares for her emotionally. The summer gets off to a rough start when Cadence learns that Gat has a



girlfriend back home in New York, but it appears that Cadence soon takes this girl's place in Gat's heart. The two have their first kiss in the attic at Windemere. It is interrupted, however, by Cadence's grandfather. Because the roof of the attic is low, Harris warns Gat to watch himself. While Harris explains he doesn't want the boy to bump his head, the warning could be taken to have a double meaning, one in which Harris is telling the outsider that he has no place in Cadence's life. Even after this encounter, however, Gat and Cadence continue to spend time together.

Discussion Question 1

In Chapter 7, Gat tries to talk to Cadence and her cousins about how deluded their way of life on their private island is. Cadence pretends to understand his point because she is afraid she will lose him. How much of Gat's point of view about poverty and his loss of belief in God do you think Cadence really understands?

Discussion Question 2

Do you believe there is a double meaning in the warning that Harris gives to Gat? If yes, what do you think it is?

Discussion Question 3

What is your opinion of Cadence's mother's advice that "silence is a protective coating over pain" in Chapter 11? Do you think ignoring pain is the best way to deal with it? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

contorted, politicize, agitating, illicit, flippant, angular, bashful, tentative, destabilized, oblivious, covertly



Part One: Welcome — Chapters 12-15

Summary

In Chapter 12, Cadence tells how she apparently went swimming alone at the tiny beach in only her underwear, bra and camisole. Her clothes were never found. There was no towel. She believes she hit her head against some rocks as she swam. Her mother found her lying on the sand. She was taken to a hospital where doctors diagnose hypothermia, respiratory problems and some sort of head trauma, though no injury was found in tests. Her mother takes her to their Vermont home to recuperate. Cadence feels sorry for herself not only because she is sick, but also because she never hears from Gat. She writes to Johnny asking him to find out about Gat, but believes Johnny ignores them.

In Chapter 13, Cadence begins having debilitating headaches six weeks after the accident. She is given medicine and diagnosed with post-traumatic migraines.

In Chapter 14, for summer sixteen, Cadence's father takes her on a ten-week trip to five different countries. Her mother tells her the timing is great as Clairmont is being redone. She claims she's told Cadence this before but Cadence can't remember. She spends her summer in pain. She tries to call and text Mirren and Johnny but doesn't get answers. She emails the two, but doesn't get answers to her emails, either.

In Chapter 15, Cadence describes the changes that have taken place in her and her mother since her accident. Cadence has withdrawn from her friends and dropped out of school activities. Even the nice students are tired of helping her to the nurse's office. Because her family is rich, Cadence doesn't get teased or ridiculed. She knows her mother is trying to take care of her but is frustrated with her hovering. She believes she and her mother are no longer glamorous even though those who live around them hang onto that belief because the two are members of the Sinclair family.

Analysis

In the final four chapters of this introductory section, Cadence tells what she can remember of her accident and the months that follow. She seems to have blocked out what really happened the night that she was found on the beach. This amnesia is fitting as her family has always taught her to ignore the bad things that happen in life and pretend like they don't affect her. In its own mysterious way, amnesia is the brain's way of pretending something didn't happen.

The things that Cadence has been told about her accident don't seem to add up. Although she believes she went swimming alone, a swimming accident would not explain why she is diagnosed with respiratory problems. In Chapter 12 she also mentions that her feet and hands hurt, pain that doesn't seem to be explained by a late night swim, even if she did hit her head on the rocks. It is six weeks after her accident



that Cadence begins to have the crippling headaches. Doctors are unable to find a cause but finally diagnose her with post-traumatic migraines. She is put on addictive pain medication to help alleviate the pain.

Although Cadence questions her mother, it seems she can't get a straight answer about what might have happened the night of the accident. Though her father hasn't had much to do with her before this time, he suddenly manages to arrange a Europe trip during summer sixteen so that Cadence doesn't go to the island that year. Her mother will tell her only that her grandfather is remodeling Clairmont and he will be staying at Windemere. She cries when Cadence questions her, telling her she's answered her questions but Cadence doesn't remember.

Also strange are the people that drop out of Cadence's life after the accident. Although Cadence finds reasons to explain why her cousins don't respond to her letters, texts and emails, it is unusual that they aren't even mentioned as being at the hospital after her accident. Cadence remembers seeing her grandfather and aunts, but never the cousins or Gat. She seems most heartbroken because Gat has left her without a word. She feels abandoned and sorry for herself.

Discussion Question 1

What do you notice that is unusual about Cadence's memories after her accident?

Discussion Question 2

How is Chapter 15, the closing chapter of Part One, similar in structure to the first chapter of the novel? How is it different?

Discussion Question 3

What reasons does Cadence's mother give her for the Europe trip being timed well? Do you think these reasons are legitimate?

Vocabulary

villainous, prone, inevitably, vile, phenomenal, explicitly, aura



Part Two: Vermont — Chapters 16-22

Summary

In Chapter 16, Cadence begins writing fairy tales following the patterns she finds in a stack of fairy tale books her father gave her the Christmas she turned eight years old. She tells a story in which a young princess proves to her father how much she loves him and is set to inherit the kingdom. However, she also must deal with her father, who has become demented. At the end of her story, Cadence asks if the daughter stays only because she wants the kingdom or if she truly loves her father.

In Chapter 17, after Cadence returns from her Europe trip, she begins giving her things away. She mails Mirren a Barbie and Johnny a scarf. She has noticed her family members have a tendency to collect and hold onto things. Although these things are beautiful, Cadence sees them as useless and has come to believe the accumulation of things is only an attempt to prove that one has power. She gives away the pillow from her bed, books and even a picture of her grandmother. Cadence's mother warns her not to give away any of their Golden Retrievers. Cadence tells the dogs she would never give them away.

Cadence realizes in Chapter 18 that even though she wants to learn what happened to her the night of her accident, it is best to stop asking her mother. She has begun to notice that her mother drinks whenever Cadence asks her for the truth about the accident. Her mother claims to have told Cadence what happened, but Cadence still can't remember.

In Chapter 19, although her father wants to take her to Australia during her seventeenth summer, Cadence begs her mother to allow her to stay on the island instead. Her grandfather comes to visit to their home in Vermont. He picks a peony in the garden and tells Cadence how much he loves her as his first grandchild. He picks a second and tells her it is for forgiveness. Although she asks him not to, he picks a third, telling her she should have three flowers.

In Chapter 20, Cadence tells another fairy tale in which a king sacrifices his three daughters to a dragon. At the end of her story she asks if the father or the dragon were responsible for the girls' deaths. After her grandfather's visit, it is decided Cadence should stay on the island for four weeks and then visit her father in Colorado for four weeks. She hears snatches of whispered phone conversations between her mother and the aunts.

In Chapter 21, Cadence gives away a travel toothbrush kit her mother bought her and makes plans to give away the hunting jacket Gat gave to her.

In Chapter 22, Taft calls Cadence the night before she is to come to the island. He asks if she is a drug addict, and then tells her that Cuddledown is haunted.



Analysis

In this section of the novel, Cadence becomes very anti-materialistic. She begins giving away things ranging from her books to family photos and even the pillow from her bed. She begins to criticize her mother for being materialistic and believes that her mother's shopping trips and expensive furnishings give her a false sense of power.

It is also in this section of the novel that Cadence begins writing fairy tales. She follows the basic pattern that she has discovered in the stack of fairy tale books her father gave her one Christmas. The two tales that are included in this second section of the novel both deal with a father who is a powerful king and his three daughters. The premise is unusually similar to Cadence's grandfather with his three daughters. In one story, the youngest daughter wins the father's love when she proves to him that salt does have worth, especially in cooking. She is named inheritor of the kingdom, but also has to deal with her demented, power hungry father. Cadence asks her readers if the youngest daughter stays for the things she will get after her father dies, or if she truly loves her father enough to care for him despite his sickness.

In her second story, the father sends his daughters to a dragon believing they can keep it from destroying his kingdom. Ultimately, the dragon eats all three daughters. Cadence's question to the reader is if the dragon is responsible for killing the daughters or if the king is responsible as he continued to send his daughters even after the first had been killed. Although these tales seem aimless at first, the reader will get a sense of what was going on in Cadence's subconscious mind as she wrote. Even though she didn't remember what happened the night of her accident, her mind is beginning to put together the circumstances leading up to her being hurt and putting the details into these stories that she believes are fictional. After the reader has finished the book, he should go back and read the tales Cadence has written again to see the new shades of meaning in them.

Notice also during his visit, Cadence's grandfather picks peonies from their garden. He tells her that one of these is for forgiveness. The incident is not discussed or considered unusual as Cadence's grandfather has begun to develop dementia. However, it bears pause to wonder for what Cadence's grandfather believes he needs forgiveness from Cadence.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you believe Cadence begins giving away all of her things? Do you think there is some unconscious impulse at work?

Discussion Question 2

Consider the fairy tales that Cadence writes. Do you think they relate to her life in any way? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 3

Cadence does not believe she is being told the truth about her accident. Figuring in the odd way her parents, grandfather and aunts are acting, do you believe she is right? Why do you think they are hiding the truth from her?

Vocabulary

surpasses, exile, demented, tyrant, patronizes, prosperity, portly, amnesia, coherent, infuriatingly, pronouncements, defiantly, negotiation



Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapters 23-27

Summary

In Chapter 23, Carrie meets Cadence and her mother at the dock. On the boat ride to the island, Cadence thinks about the summer ahead and hopes she will still feel at home. She catches a glimpse of Windemere, and then cranes her neck to see the turret of Clairmont but it isn't there. The trees, including the big maple with the tire swing, are gone. The house that sits in Clairmont's place is described as being sleek and modern with a Japanese garden. Cadence is hit by a wave of grief. Her mother notices and orders her to be normal. As the boat turns toward the shore, Cadence sees The Liars by the perimeter path.

In Chapter 24, it is only the younger children who meet the boat at the dock. Taft tells Cadence that Mirren read him a bedtime story, helping him go to sleep, but says his family has moved to new Clairmont. Cadence and her mother take their luggage to Windemere. Bess is there, cleaning. Cadence's grandfather is there as well. He calls Cadence by Mirren's name. The twins talk briefly to Cadence. Liberty tells her that Bonnie is obsessed with dead things.

In Chapter 25, once she is alone, The Liars swarm all over Cadence. They all go to Cuddledown which they tell her they will have all to themselves. Gat doesn't seem to want to meet her eyes. Gat mentions how tall Cadence has gotten. Cadence notices she is about his height now even though he used to be several inches taller. He warns her not to get taller than he. She realizes he is flirting with her. Although The Liars tell her she looks different, Cadence mentions that they look the same. They ask Cadence about her college plans and seem surprised to learn she hasn't finished high school yet. Later, at the tiny beach they tell her they won't be going to the new Clairmont for supper or breakfast, ever. Cadence realizes it's a topic The Liars have talked about before she came.

Cadence and Gat sit together on a blanket in Chapter 26 as Mirren and Johnny snorkel. He admits to her he was afraid he'd never see her again. Cadence doesn't ask why he didn't call or write her. He asks to hold her hand and she lets him, even though she thinks he's a jerk, she still loves him.

In Chapter 27, in her room at Windemere, Cadence tries to find something that sparks her memory of what happened to her during the summer two years ago. Her mother sees her packing up her books and asks if she's giving them away as well. Cadence argues that when her father left, her mother got rid of everything that reminded her of him. She asks why it was okay for her to do that, but not for Cadence. Her mother says she'd hoped Cadence would feel differently once she got on the island. She orders her to be at new Clairmont for supper.



Analysis

During these first few days of her summer at the island, Cadence doesn't learn anything new about her accident. The family members seem to be acting strangely around Cadence with her aunts hugging more than usual. Bess seems to be cleaning compulsively when Cadence and her mom enter Windemere the first time. One of the twins is obsessed with dead things. Taft, Bonnie and Liberty all seem to be obsessed with Cadence's medication use and ask her multiple times if she is addicted to drugs. They've also been coached to be nice and not say anything to her about the accident.

Cadence is shocked by the change she sees in Clairmont. Even though her mother had told her that her grandfather was reworking the house and they had talked about the new kitchen, no one had mentioned to Cadence that the old Clairmont was gone along with the lawn and trees. When Cadence bends over in shock and pain when she gets a glimpse of the new house, her mother, again, orders her to act normally.

Interesting in this section of the division between The Liars and the rest of the family. With the exception of Taft, no one had mentioned The Liars. The members of this group don't mingle with the others on the dock when the boat pulls up and Cadence doesn't even speak to them until she is alone. In fact, The Liars tell Cadence upfront they plan on staying at Cuddledown all summer and don't plan to go to Clairmont for supper or breakfast, ever. Their comments indicate a frustration with their parents and younger siblings. Notice also that although The Liars comment on all the ways that Cadence has changed, Cadence notices they haven't changed at all. Cadence notes that Gat is wearing a green t-shirt that she remembers from two years ago.

Although her mother had hoped the new obsession on Cadence's part would stop once they were on the island, Cadence continues to give her things away. When her mother confronts her about her reasons for giving her things away, Cadence points out to her mother that when her father left them, her mother gave away everything that reminded her of him. Cadence doesn't seem to realize that the things she is giving away follow no pattern, she just gives away what ever is handy almost as if she believes she is making penance for something.

Discussion Question 1

Consider the discussion between Cadence and her mother about Cadence's giving away of her things. Do you agree with Cadence or with her mother? Is there anything wrong with Cadence giving away her things when her mother gave away everything of her father's? What are the differences in their motivations?

Discussion Question 2

Do you find it strange that The Liars see changes in Cadence, but Cadence believes The Liars look just the same as they did two years prior?



Discussion Question 3

Why are the changes in Clairmont significant?

Vocabulary

turret, semaphore, ornate, jovially, redundant, pretentious, batik, nocturnal, botanic



Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapters 28-33

Summary

In Chapter 28, Cadence uses an old pad of graph paper she's found to write down all of her memories from summer fifteen. She tacks these pages to the wall above her bed along with sticky notes bearing questions for which she wants answers. She hopes that if she studies the notes each morning, she will begin to remember what actually happened. She is confronted by a headache, which she describes as being caused by a witch who hits her in the head multiple times with an ivory statue of a goose. Her mother leaves for supper without her.

In Chapter 29, Cadence wakes up in the night and is unable to go back to sleep. She goes out onto the porch where she sees Carrie walking in her nightgown and boots. Carrie asks Cadence if she's seen Johnny, and then says that Will has nightmares that wake her up. Cadence offers her a flashlight but Carrie continues her walk without it.

In Chapter 30, the next morning Cadence goes to new Clairmont for breakfast. She notices Tipper's dogs aren't there. Her mother says only that they are gone. Her grandfather tells his daughter to be nice to Cadence, and expounds, saying they passed on awhile back. He continues to call Cadence by Mirren's name, and then complains about her dyed hair again.

In Chapter 31, as Cadence is headed to Cuddledown with a basket of things to give away she meets Mirren, who is excited to be on the island again. Cadence asks Mirren about the emails and Barbie that she sent to her. Mirren says she never got the doll. Later, Cadence tells her cousins about her plan to give all of her things away in the hopes they will understand her desire to separate herself from her mother's materialism. They suggest giving away all of her things isn't the best idea.

In Chapter 32, Gat runs to meet Cadence. He seems to be trying to apologize to her. Cadence tells him how angry she is with him for going off for two years. He asks if they can start over again. She agrees.

In Chapter 33, Cadence goes to lunch at New Clairmont. Her grandfather gives her a tour of the new house. She notices how it is devoid of any personal touches. She asks her grandfather about the things that are missing. Her grandfather tells her he has chosen to start over. He gets a vacant look, and then asks about Gat, telling Cadence there was a book he promised him. When Cadence reminds her grandfather most of his books are gone, he becomes angry. Carrie comes in to make sure they are okay. When Cadence asks Carrie if she found Johnny the night before, Carrie tells her she doesn't know what she's talking about.



Analysis

As Cadence begins trying to remember what happened to her during her fifteenth summer she takes an idea from the pictures she and Gat used to draw on graph paper. She hopes she will be able to piece together the bits and pieces of the summer that she can remember, along with the memories that being on the island brings to her mind, to put together what happened that summer, somewhat like the way a picture would appear on graph paper by coloring in different blocks. She lists all of the things she remembers — like Mirren holding a gas jug, her grandfather's face in the light of a fire and her mother asking about a specific set of pearls — on the pieces of graph paper that she has posted above her bed. She plans to study these lists each day in hopes of remembering the full story of that summer.

Meanwhile, Cadence begins to have strange encounters with her family members on the island. She meets her aunt, Carrie, Johnny's mother, wandering the island after dark. Carrie asks Cadence if she's seen Johnny. Her question to Cadence is "Do you see him?" Carrie seems to be asking Cadence if she sees Johnny at that moment but Cadence interprets the question as asking her if she knows where he is. Later, when Cadence asks Carrie if she found Johnny that night, Carrie tells Cadence she doesn't know about what Cadence is talking.

During her visit to New Clairmont, Cadence realizes that her grandmother's dogs, Prince Phillip and Fatima are not there. Her mother is blunt, telling her only the dogs are gone but Cadence's grandfather tells his daughter to be nice. He tells Cadence the dogs passed awhile back but is vague about their cause of death, telling Cadence only that they didn't suffer long. Cadence's grandfather seems off during their time together this first day at New Clairmont. He complains about Cadence' dyed hair, which is understandable, but also slips up and calls Cadence by Mirren's name on a regular basis. At one point Harris chides his daughter for not being nice to Cadence when she asks about the disappearance of the dogs, then becomes angry with Cadence when she asks him about different items he used to have in the house.

Cadence also gets confusing signals from both Mirren and Gat. Mirren seems overly excited to be back on the island. In fact she tells Cadence she can't believe she's here again, which can be taken either at face value — that Mirren really didn't think she'd ever get to return to the island or can be interpreted as the speech of an overly dramatic teen. Mirren makes bad excuses for not having read the emails that Cadence sent her during the past summer. Surprising, however, is that Mirren is not aware that Cadence mailed her the Barbie that they used to fight over. Cadence offers Mirren the explanation that Mirren's mother might have thrown the doll in a closet and Mirren grabs onto the explanation, not offering a better one. Another character who doesn't offer excuses for his actions is Gat. Cadence confronts him, telling him he's been a heel for disappearing for two years without trying to reach out to her then suddenly smothering her with affection. Gat doesn't give any explanation for his actions, only indicates that he wants to start over again.



Materialism, or rather Cadence's desire not to be materialistic, continues to be a theme as she gathers things to give away out of her bedroom at Windemere. When she tells The Liars what she is doing, they question her and try to convince her that owning things is not bad in and of itself. Cadence, however, continues to see the act of amassing possessions as a character fault. She takes a handful of purple rocks from Mirren only because she knows she will hurt her cousin's feelings if she doesn't take these rocks. When she tours her grandfather's house for the first time, she compares his actions to her mother's behavior after her father left them. She asks her grandfather where different family heirlooms have gone and why they aren't in the new house only to have him respond in anger. She believes her grandfather, like her mother, is trying to cover the pain he feels in losing his wife by buying himself a new life that doesn't include the things that will remind him of Tipper. Notice that even though Cadence has given away things herself, she is shocked by all the things that she remembers from the old house that are missing from New Clairmont.

Discussion Question 1

What is your opinion of Mirren's confusion about the Barbie that Cadence mailed to her?

Discussion Question 2

How do The Liars differ from Cadence on her opinion of materialism and her decision to give away all of her things?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that Gat makes no excuses for the time he was out of contact with Cadence? How is his behavior unusual?

Vocabulary

pixelated, resolve, intricately, obligations, buffeted, idyll, botanic, reproachful, compulsive, hacked, biffing, pretentious, materialism, suboptimal, spartan, opulent



Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapters 34-39

Summary

In Chapter 34, Cadence has lunch at New Clairmont. She tries to talk to her younger cousins about the prior summer. When she asks if they went boating with Johnny and Gat, they say no, then tell her they've been instructed not to talk to her about her accident. Taft tells her that Bonnie and Liberty saw pills in her bedroom. He shows concern she is addicted to drugs and tells her that drugs are not her friend. Cadence tries to push for information about the prior summer but the boys refuse to talk to her any longer.

In Chapter 35, at Cuddledown, Cadence helps Mirren, Johnny and Gat rearrange and decorate. Mirren says her mother won't be mad because she has said she won't come in the house again until it gets remodeled. Johnny seems shocked that Cadence doesn't remember Bess' request to have the house remodeled. Mirren yells at him, telling him Cadence doesn't remember summer fifteen. Cadence is embarrassed. She asks if her mother told them all about her memory loss. Mirren admits that everyone knows, and that they have been told they are supposed to let Cadence remember what happened in her own time.

In Chapter 36, The Liars ask Cadence about her trip to Europe. Cadence admits she was sick most of the time. Mirren points out to Cadence that she asks them not to feel sorry for her, and then tells them how sick she is. The Liars agree they are also jealous that she got to go to Rome. When Cadence tells them they should go, they tell her it isn't that simple.

In Chapter 37, Cadence eats dinner that evening with the family at New Clairmont. As she watches her mother and aunts gathered around her grandfather, Cadence remembers a night two weeks before her accident. At dinner her grandfather had asked them if he should renovate his house in Boston. He suggests he could sell the house if he wanted to, knowing that all of his children hope to inherit the home in which they grew up. He has focused his question on Bess, making the other two daughters believe he is leaving them out. They bicker and Harris tells them to pull themselves together as he doesn't plan to leave his estate to crazy people. Cadence notices the aunts and her grandfather are getting along again now. She wonders what has changed.

In Chapter 38, Cadence and The Liars discuss their mottos. When Cadence says that hers is to always do what she is afraid to do Mirren argues with her telling Cadence that she should listen to her instincts, as she might get hurt or killed if she does what scares her.



In Chapter 39, Cadence follows Gat upstairs and they kiss. He pulls away, telling her he shouldn't. When Cadence asks him to explain his reasoning, he tells her that she really doesn't know who he is. She only knows what she sees of him on the island, not the whole picture. He becomes angry when he tries to explain to her that everyone is white and rich except he, Ginny and Paulo. Cadence asks who Ginny and Paulo are. Gat tells her that's part of the problem as the two have worked for the family summer after summer and Cadence doesn't even know their names. He compares his role on the island to Heathcliff in the book *Wuthering Heights*. Gat tells her that her grandfather thinks he is a brute because he has lured Cadence away from the family. He doesn't believe there is anything he can do to make the family accept him as its equal. He even tells Cadence that he has turned into the monster that Harris had always believed he would.

Analysis

Gat and Cadence finally begin to discuss the problems between them. Gat still gives Cadence no explanation for all the time that went by without him contacting her. He does tell her he doesn't feel as if she knows the real him. Earlier in the novel Gat had expressed his frustration with the family because of the way they lived so luxuriantly, with their own private island, while others were so poor. Cadence had pretended she understood at that point because she didn't want to lose him. Now, Gat makes the point to her that she doesn't understand his viewpoint as she doesn't even know the names of the staff who have cleaned up after her and taken care of her for all the years she's been on the island. Gat relates to the staff more than he does to the Sinclair family as they are dark skinned, like he is, and they are not rich, just as he is not rich.

Gat compares himself to Heathcliff, a character in the novel *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff was adopted and never fully accepted by the family. While the Sinclair family allows him to stay on the island during the summer and treats him well, he always feels like an outsider. He believes Cadence's grandfather sees him as a threat as he has seduced Cadence, pulling her away from her family. He is the dark monster who has persuaded Cadence away from her light skinned kind. Gat tells Cadence that he, like Heathcliff, has given into the evil in his nature.

Also interesting in this section of the novel is the conversation that Cadence has with the twins after lunch at New Clairmont. She tries to question them about the prior summer and the two answer her questions as expected until she asks if they went boating with Gat and Johnny. The question must take the two by surprise because they stop jumping on the couch, as they had been doing through the other questions, and say no. They tell her the aunts have instructed them not to talk to Cadence about Johnny or Gat or how she wound up in the water. It is almost as if the aunts are trying to protect her from something and have coached the children multiple times so they will know how to handle Cadence's questions.

Cadence has a memory of her fifteenth summer on the island. She remembers her grandfather tormenting her mother and aunts with the idea that he might renovate or sell



the family home in Boston. Though he knows all three of his daughters hope to inherit the house, he plots Bess against the others by asking her to help him with the renovations. As Cadence watches her family interact two years later, she sees a beautiful loving family that is not fighting over possessions. She wonders what has changed.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Gat is on target in his assumption that Cadence's grandfather sees him as an unwelcome intrusion on the family? What do you think of his comparison of himself to Healthcliff?

Discussion Question 2

What do you think has changed with Cadence's family? Why are they so much nicer to one another now than they were two years ago?

Discussion Question 3

What is significant about Cadence's conversation with Will and Taft? What do you think it means that the aunts have threatened to punish them if they aren't nice to Cadence?

Vocabulary

petulant, pillage, delusional, kleptomaniacs, skewed, pristine, seducing, penance



Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapters 40-44

Summary

In Chapter 40, Cadence writes a fairy tale in which a tiny princess meets and falls in love with a mouse. The mouse is not accepted by the family but the princess decides to move away from the palace to live with the mouse. They have a happy and full life.

In Chapter 41, Cadence's grandfather invites her to go with him to Edgartown. He seems like his old self, spending money on her and the others. While in town, they happen to see Richard Thatcher, her grandfather's lawyer. Her grandfather brags on her to the lawyer. Cadence believes the bragging is unfounded. He tells her that he has taken care of her in his will, but to not tell her mother as she will stir up trouble again.

In Chapter 42, on the boat ride home, Cadence has a memory of the ivory goose that used to be in her grandparents' house. Her grandfather explains how the goose came from China along with some other animal statues even though ivory is illegal. While Cadence had always thought his saying "don't take no for an answer" was heroic, she now sees that it can also be the attitude of a person who doesn't care who gets hurt as long as he gets what he wants. Cadence tries to talk to her grandfather about a book that Gat is reading but he won't allow her to continue. When she suggests he sell the statues and donate the money to wildlife conservation, he becomes angry with her. He orders he not to tell him how to dispose of his things or how to spend his money. Back in the present as they tie up the boat, Cadence asks her grandfather if he misses Tipper. He comments that she took the best part of him with her.

In Chapter 43, Gat asks Cadence if they can start over again. Cadence doesn't want to give him another chance, but he asks that they just be normal. She hears her mother telling her to just be normal, a request with which she is familiar. She is touched by the way Gat's face lights up when she gives him a bag of fudge.

In Chapter 44, Cadence and Mirren take the motorboat to Edgartown. Mirren chatters about her boyfriend, clothes she wants to buy and things she wants to do. As they sit on a bench in the village, Cadence remembers another bit of her fifteenth summer. She tells Mirren she remembers Gat giving her a book, the aunts fighting about the estate and an argument with her grandfather about the ivory goose. She questions Mirren about why Gat disappeared after the accident. Mirren repeatedly tells Cadence she doesn't know what happened. When Cadence asks if Gat is mad at her Mirren tells her that he has good reason to be, but that it isn't something that Cadence can fix. Mirren suddenly gets sick and asks Cadence to take her back to Cuddledown. After they return to the island and Cadence listens to her mother's lecture about not driving the motorboat without adult supervision, she goes back to her bedroom at Windemere and writes down all the things she has remembered.



Analysis

The goose is a significant symbol in this section of the novel. It first appears in Chapter 28 when Cadence describes a headache as feeling like a witch has hit her over the head with this statue. It is in this section of chapters, Chapter 42 in particular, that the reader learns the significance of this goose. Before her accident Cadence and her grandfather had an argument about the goose. Harris had bought it, along with several other statues made of the illegal material, ivory, because Tipper had wanted them. As Cadence listens to her grandfather talk about how he'd gotten the statues, she suddenly realizes how manipulative her grandfather is. She sees him no longer as heroic for not taking no for an answer, but instead childish for wanting his own way, no matter what that meant.

This realization of Cadence's part is significant because it is her first step in remembering what really happened during her fifteenth summer on the island. While she'd always believed her grandparents were good people, their faults, particularly those of her grandfather, have begun to make their way forward in her memory.

Cadence writes another fairy tale that is recorded in Chapter 40. In this story she tells of a tiny princess who meets and falls in love with a mouse. The princess clearly represents Cadence. Instead of Cadence being extremely small, she is troubled with headaches. The act of keeping the tiny princess in a pocket represents Cadence's mother's attempt to protect and smother her because of her sickness. The mouse appears to represent Gat as he likes to eat chocolate and likes to read. In her story, the princess and mouse live a happy life away from the princess' family despite the family's feelings of disgust for the mouse. This ending mirrors how Cadence hopes her future with Gat will turn out.

Notice the way that Cadence reacts when her grandfather brags about her to his lawyer. Although Cadence sees herself as a failure, her grandfather brags that she has a good head on her shoulders. Cadence considers herself broken and useless. Cadence's grandfather tells his lawyer that Cadence has Sinclair blood, through and through. Cadence doesn't correct her grandfather, but thinks to herself that she's actually only half Sinclair blood as her father is considered an unfaithful Eastman. Also notice that none of the other older cousins are mentioned by Cadence's grandfather during their visit. He takes Cadence only on his trip to town. He doesn't invite any of the others come along to drive the boat, nor does Cadence suggest they come. In town, they buy gifts for the younger cousins, and even the housekeeper, but buy nothing for the older cousins. When they meet Harris' lawyer, they talk about Cadence. The lawyer does not even ask about the other older cousins.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the significance of the goose. What does Cadence remember about this ivory statue? How does it change her opinion of her grandfather?



Discussion Question 2

Interpret the fairy tale that Cadence has written about the princess and the mouse. Who do the characters represent? How do you know this? What is the moral of the tale?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think Cadence's grandfather means when he tells Cadence that the best part of him died with her grandmother?

Vocabulary

disdain, nautical, penuche, dispose, supervision



Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapters 45-50

Summary

In Chapter 45, Cadence and The Liars begin spending time on the roof at Cuddledown. Cadence mentions that if she dies, she wants her ashes spread at the water of the tiny beach. She thinks it would be a great place to have one's ashes. Gat and Mirren are silent until Mirren suggests the conversation is a bad one. Cadence talks about planning her funeral but Mirren tells her most people plan their weddings. As Cadence sits with her friends, she thinks how they can be young forever on the island.

In Chapter 46, The Liars stay mostly at Cuddledown. Mirren is sick with body aches and a sore throat. The teens leave dirty dishes, broken bottles and food scraps lying around. Gat reads through a book list he wants to finish by the end of the summer. He seems to avoid being alone with Cadence. When they are alone, the stress causes Cadence to have migraines that can last as long as two days.

In Chapter 47, Cadence finds Johnny building with Legos. He's talking about what he wants to make when Cadence asks why he didn't email or call after his accident. He tells her he disappeared because he is a follower, didn't think through his choices and has seen too many action movies. She asks him about Gat, which Johnny replies is a different question. He tries to explain Gat was angry with himself by starting up with Cadence while he was dating Raquel. When she pushes him further, he tells her that Gat isn't good enough for her.

In Chapter 48, Cadence gives her copy of *Charmed Life* to Gat. When she knocks on his bedroom door, he isn't there. She leaves the book on his pillow.

In Chapter 49, Cadence and Gat are alone on the roof of Cuddledown. Cadence decides to try to talk to him but he approaches her, telling her how beautiful she is. She makes a snide comment about having a boyfriend named Percocet. The statement makes Gat angry and he points out to her that although she tells them she doesn't want them to feel sorry for her, she makes comments that draw attention to her sickness. He tells her she doesn't realize how lucky she is. He tells her that it was Harris, her grandfather, who paid for her Europe trip, something he'd never do for the others. Although she hadn't thought about it before, Cadence realizes he is right. Even though she knows she is lucky, Cadence explains to Gat how desperate the pain makes her feel, especially on the days when the medicine doesn't dull the pain. She tells him all she can do is remind herself a day is coming when she will feel okay. He holds her close for a long time.

In Chapter 50, Mirren feels worse and worse. She listens to the same song about wasted youth on Cadence's iPhone. Cadence asks her to stop singing that same song.



Mirren tells Cadence she should leave Gat alone as she is afraid it will end badly. When Cadence tells Mirren she's tired of living in her small world of her mother, her pills and her pain Mirren suddenly admits she doesn't have a boyfriend. As they discuss Mirren's reasons for lying, Cadence's mother calls her to help with lunch. In the kitchen at New Clairmont, Cadence's mother lectures her about always being on the small beach and not spending time with her family.

Analysis

The most significant discovery that Cadence makes in this section of the novel is her realization that Gat is telling her the truth when he tells her that her grandfather paid for her trip to Europe. She had believed her father paid for the trip, but had never really considered the reality behind her incorrect assumption. As soon as Gat tells her who really paid for the trip, she knows he's right. She knows her father couldn't have paid for the trip on his college professor salary especially since they stayed in five star hotels and flew first class on the planes. She realizes she has been so accustomed to the rich lifestyle on the island that she never gave a thought as to who might have paid for the trip. Even more questions come to mind when Cadence realizes who the benefactor for her trip was. She wonders why her grandfather sent her and not one of the other grandchildren. She wonders why her father, who her grandfather dislikes, was sent with her instead of her mother going.

Gat's lecture to Cadence is strange as he asks her to look at the opportunities she has for her life. It as if he feels doomed to nothingness. While it is true that Gat does not have the financial opportunities that Cadence has, it is strange that a young man his age would have such a negative look on the opportunities for his own life. He seems to think there is no opportunity for him to go to Europe, or do any of the other things that Cadence can look forward to despite her disabling migraines. Cadence also points out that Gat is taking unusual risks, like walking down the roof of the house.

Mirren also lectures Cadence though not as severely as Gat. Mirren tells Cadence she needs to leave Gat alone, fearful that Gat will get hurt. She seems to be getting sick more often, unusual for a teen in the summer. During a discussion one day Mirren finally admits to Cadence she doesn't have a boyfriend. She blames her lie on her jealousy of Cadence and the way Gat looked at Cadence when she first came to the island that summer. Mirren, like Gat, seems to have no hope about her future. In her case, she believes she'll never have someone who will love her and look at her like Gat loves and looks at Cadence.

Note in this section that Johnny is the first character who directly answers any of Cadence's questions about the accident. Notice she asks him why he didn't call or email after her accident. Notice he words his answer to tell her why he disappeared. She asks one question, he answers another. His answers to her will make more sense later in the novel. Notice also that when Cadence's mother calls her to help with lunch, she lectures Cadence for not spending time with her family. It seems strange that Cadence doesn't



defend herself by telling her mother she's spending time with the cousins who are her age. In fact, the time Cadence spends with The Liars is never mentioned.

Discussion Question 1

What difference does it make that Cadence's grandfather paid for her trip to Europe? How does this knowledge change things?

Discussion Question 2

Cadence's mother lectures her for spending so much time at the tiny beach. She makes no mention of the Liars in her lecture. Is this unusual? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Johnny's explanation of why he didn't contact Cadence after he accident. What do you make of his reasons?

Vocabulary

eulogy, transcendently, unrequited, pretentious, tolerable



Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapters 51-57

Summary

In Chapter 51, Cadence is out with a headache for several days. She notices she's running out of pills. She wonders if her mother or the twins are taking them, or if maybe she's taking too much. She doesn't want to have to tell her mother she needs more. When she finally gets better she goes to Cuddledown where The Liars are gathered around a Bible. They say they're having a Scrabble word argument. Cadence, however, saw the Scrabble tiles spread across the floor of another room when she came in and knows they weren't playing. When she asks what they've done the last few days, they tell her they've gone to New Clairmont, gone out on the boat and to Nantucket. Cadence wonders why they only go out with the family when she isn't there. When they talk about the doughnuts they had Cadence knows they are lying because they say they got glazed doughnuts but the shop they claim they visited only has cake doughnuts. She wonders why they are lying.

In Chapter 52, Cadence eats dinner at New Clairmont, but then gets another migraine that sends her to bed. She wakes to find Gat standing over her. He's looking at the graph paper and sticky notes. She tells him she's trying to remember the things that no one will talk about. He takes her hand and tells her he had a girlfriend two summers ago. Cadence says she knew, but Gat reminds her it wasn't because he told her. He tells her that he wants things he can't have. His touch is cold. Cadence wonders what it is he wants that he can't have. When she wakes, Gat is gone. She looks out the window. Carrie is walking in the dark again. She can hear Will crying for his mother but Carrie doesn't go to him. Instead she goes to New Clairmont.

In Chapter 53, Cadence finds a box of Legos in the attic and brings them to Johnny. He asks her to give them to Will. She gives the Legos to Will and Taft at lunch. The two are so happy they don't even eat but play instead.

In Chapter 54, The Liars decide to go kayaking but Mirren says Cadence shouldn't come because of her head. Gat, however, says she can come. Mirren is sick and lays down after they reach their destination. The boys climb up to a high point in the rocks. Cadence follows them. Mirren won't, saying she jumped last time. Cadence doesn't think it's possible but Johnny jumps from the rock, then pops up from the water below. Gat jumps as well. The three beg her not to jump but she does. Going down in the water is similar to what she remembers of her accident. She believes the jump proves she is not sick or weak. She suddenly wonders if there are variations of life. If there are different outcomes of life for each choice a person could have made.

In Chapter 55, Cadence has another memory the night of her accident. She remembers Carrie bending over, crying, not bothering to wipe her running nose. She is wearing



Johnny's jacket. Cadence walks to Cuddledown. At first she thinks the house is empty but then sees Mirren on the couch. She asks Mirren about her memory of Carrie crying. She begs Mirren to tell her what happened the night of her accident. She suggests something happened besides hitting her head. Mirren agrees but tells her the doctors have said Mirren needs to remember on her own without anyone pushing her. Mirren asks what her best guess is about what happened. When Cadence tells what she thinks happened, all Mirren can tell her is that it was a messed up summer. Cadence asks why Mirren never leaves Cuddledown. Mirren says she's sick and always cold. When Cadence suggests they should tell Bess, Mirren tells her it isn't that bad, just a cold.

The following morning, there is a tire swing hanging from the tree at Windemere in Chapter 56. She remembers The Liars cramming themselves onto the old tire swing at Clairmont. They'd spun until they felt dizzy and sick, but were laughing. An envelope in the swing is filled with beach roses. A note from Gat indicates the swing is "For Cady."

In Chapter 57, Cadence adds another fairy tale. In this story, the king's eldest daughter has twins, one of which is a mouseling. As soon as he was old enough, his mother sends him off to see the world because the king is disgusted by him. He plans to make a name for himself in the world, so he doesn't even look back at the castle where the family there didn't even give him a name. One day he plans to come back and burn the place to the ground.

Analysis

The Liars' behavior becomes more and more erratic in this section of the novel. Cadence catches them lying to her twice. One time, they are gathered around discussing a copy of the Bible. When Cadence walks in on them, they tell her they are discussing a Scrabble word but she knows they are lying because she saw the Scrabble board and letters scattered in another room. She additionally catches them lying about going to a doughnut shop. They tell her they've gotten glazed doughnuts from a shop she knows only sells cake type doughnuts. She wonders about the purpose of their lies.

Also in this section of the novel Cadence believes she proves to The Liars that she is not sick or weak when she jumps off a cliff into the rock-filled ocean below and is not hurt or killed. She compares her feeling of going down into the water far enough that she could see the base of Beechwood Island then coming back up as being similar to her memory of being in the water the night of her accident. It is at this point that she wonders if there are different variations of life that are based on decisions made by people, just as there are different versions of fairy tales. Interestingly, Cadence writes a fairy tales in which a mouse, which in the past has represented Gat, returns to a place he's been forced to leave with the intention of burning the palace of the king to the ground. If these stories are ways of Cadence's subconscious mind working out the details of her accident, it appears she has some lingering memories of Gat intending to destroy her grandfather's (the king's) palace because Gat feels so disliked and rejected by the family.



Mirren continues to be sick in this section of chapters. In fact, she seems to be getting worse as the summer goes along. Instead of going to her mother for help or even going to a doctor, Mirren tells Cadence she's okay. It is strange for a teen to be this sick without a parent getting involved or at least checking on her occasionally.

Discussion Question 1

Interpret Cadence's fairy tale in Chapter 57, who do you think the characters in the tale represent in real life? What is the meaning of the tale?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways are The Liars acting strangely? Why is it significant that Cadence catches them lying to her on two different occasions?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Johnny and Gat take Cadence to the place where they jump from the rocks? Why do they beg her not to jump after taking her there? Do you think they're trying to use reverse psychology on her? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

contradiction, veers, agoraphobia, disgusted, humiliation



Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapters 58-63

Summary

In Chapter 58, Cadence remembers that she, Gat, Mirren and Johnny set fire to Clairmont. In the light of the following morning, Cadence sees New Clairmont as a house built on ashes. It built on the ashes of the symbols and trophies of the family. Cadence realizes the night The Liars were alone on the island, they had told themselves they were not burning a house, but a symbol.

In Chapter 59, Cadence goes to Cuddledown to tell Johnny she remembers them setting a fire. Johnny asks what else she remembers. He lies on the floor and says the aunts had said they were cutting off from each other, destroying the family. He said they'd gotten drunk every night fighting over Tipper's things. Harris did nothing but fuel the spats. The adults had even tried to plot the children against each other. Cadence begins to remember painful memories.

In Chapter 60, Cadence remembers that during the spring before summer fifteen her mother had made her write letters to her grandfather telling him of her accomplishments. She remembers the aunts trying to take Tipper's place caring for her grandfather. They fought over her possessions, however. The settlement of the estate had been left for the summer. Cadence's mother had tried to get her involved by having her ask her grandfather for embroidered tablecloths. She had lied and told her mother she would. Mirren did the same with her mother.

In Chapter 61, Cadence remembers during Liberty and Bonnie's birthday celebration, Harris had sat between Gat and Cadence. He asked their advice saying he'd been planning on leaving a good deal of his estate to Harvard, the college from which he graduated. He suggested they could build a student center and name it after him. Cadence remembered feeling special because her grandfather had brought them into the decision. Her mother, however, had told him the act was not funny. Cadence remembers telling her mother she understood the conversation even though her mother told her she didn't. Even the littles got quiet. Cadence had suddenly realized her mother and the aunts were living off trust money from her grandfather. By saying he will leave the money to Harvard, their grandfather was actually making a threat, saying he would not leave the money to support them.

In Chapter 62, Cadence remembers that a few days later, Harris commented to Cadence's mother that Bess was worried she and Cadence were lonely at Windemere. Harris asked Cadence about the house. Cadence realized she was supposed to stroke her grandfather's ego by telling him the house was great. Cadence remembers simply telling him the house was too big for them.

In Chapter 63, Cadence remembers her mother scolding her for not backing her about the house. Cadence was angry with her mother, telling her that she is lucky because



she has a trust fund when some people have so little. She challenged her mother to stand up to Harris and ask him to stop manipulating her and her sisters. It was when Cadence's mother threatened to send her to Colorado, away from Gat, that Cadence agreed to do her mother's bidding. Cadence remembers that when she went back to him, her grandfather promised her the house, but later she learned through Mirren that her grandfather had promised Bess the house as well.

Analysis

In this section of the novel, Cadence's memories appear to be coming back. She remembers how ugly the fighting had gotten between her mother, aunts and grandfather over the possessions and the money. She remembers her grandfather giving veiled threats under the guise of pretending to want to benefit his alma mater so he could show his daughters he had other places to which he could leave his money. She remembers her mother and her aunts trying to pit their children against one another to gain favor with their father. At one point, she and Mirren compared notes and discovered they'd both been asked to beg their grandfather for the same embroidered tablecloths. They also realize from hearing their mothers talk that their grandfather has promised the same house to two of his daughters. Cadence's grandfather seems to be drunk on the power he suddenly realizes he has over his daughters. Cadence never remembers the family fighting like this before so his behavior the summer after Tipper died could be the reason that Harris says the best part of him went with Tipper when she died.

Cadence stays strong in her desire not to get involved in the arguments between her mother and grandfather until her mother threatens to send her to Colorado with her father, away from Gat. It is this threat of being away from Gat that makes Cadence do her mother's bidding, albeit unwillingly.

Learning that Cadence and The Liars burned Clairmont helps the reader make sense of New Clairmont, the loss of the trees and the tire swing. These things were probably destroyed in the fire as well. This knowledge also explains why Cadence's grandfather was so short with her when she asked over and over about the family heirlooms and other things when she toured New Clairmont for the first time. Because it was hoped Cadence would remember the fire on her own, her grandfather could not tell her that all of the things Cadence remembered were gone because Cadence and The Liars had set fire to them.

Discussion Question 1

Knowing that The Liars set fire to New Clairmont, what questions does this knowledge clear up for the reader? Cite specific examples.



Discussion Question 2

At what point does Cadence give in to her mother's requests for her to beg her grandfather for specific family memorabilia? Is her mother being fair to her by treating her this way?

Discussion Question 3

Why do The Liars reason that they are burning only a symbol, not a home?

Vocabulary

irrevocably, blatant, martyr, conferred, boutique, patriarch, revere, perpetuate, wench



Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapters 64-70

Summary

In Chapter 64, one evening when they are on the tennis court, Gat brings to Cadence's attention the fact that Harris never calls him by his name. He gives his interpretation of Harris' actions in the attic and Cadence realizes her grandfather's words to Gat were a threat. He describes the romantic way in which Ed proposed to Carrie but that Carrie turned him down because she didn't want to risk her inheritance. When Cadence asks why they never talked about this before Gat tells her it was because he didn't want to ruin how perfect the time on the island seemed.

In Chapter 65, Cadence tells a fairy tale in which a wealthy merchant asks his three daughters what they want him to bring them when he returns from a trip. The first asks for fancy dresses, the second jewels, the third, a rose. The father forgets the rose until he is almost home. He cuts a rose from a bush near the fence of a mansion. As he begins to ride away, he is stopped by the owner of the home who tells him he must give him the first of his possessions that he sees when he gets home as payment. The father sees his eldest daughter first. Although she falls in love with the beast, who turns out to be kind and educated, the father can never get over his dislike for the creature.

In Chapter 66, one night when Gat and Cadence go to Windemere for chocolate, they overhear the aunts arguing over who was due what possession and who had done the most for their parents. Carrie slaps Bess after Bess makes comments about Ed and Gat.

In Chapter 67, Harris threatens to clear out Johnny's college fund when he refuses to try to break up Carrie and Ed. When Johnny tells his mother what has happened, she asks Gat to stop going to dinner at Clairmont. Gat and Johnny are angry at her request and all of the older cousins stop attending dinners. Bess asks Mirren to continue asking her grandfather for Windemere. Mirren refuses so her mother takes her phone, laptop and allowance. Cadence's mother asks her to stop seeing Gat. Cadence refuses. In retaliation, the older cousins collect the ivory animals from all of the island houses and smash them.

In Chapter 68, the older cousins think what might happen if lightning were to strike the Clairmont house and burn it to the ground. They believe it would not only be a punishment to their mothers and grandfather, but would also make them appreciate their family again.

In Chapter 69, The Liars listen as their mothers again argue with their grandfather over possessions. The voices are loud enough they can hear them across the island. Harris yells that they cannot act as they are acting and expect him to support their lifestyles and their children.



In Chapter 70, Cadence urges Johnny to tell her what happened next. He tells her that the family members began leaving the island. After the others were gone, The Liars decided to set fire to the house. They drink the wine the mothers had left in the refrigerator. Gat is angry because he knows he wouldn't be allowed to come back to the island. Mirren joins them telling them that Clairmont was the symbol of everything that was wrong. Gat has joined the discussion as well and Johnny tells them loudly that they are only talking about what happened before the fire. Cadence is impressed as she realizes that she and her cousins did something to try to make a difference.

Analysis

In Chapter 64 Gat and Cadence have a discussion in which Cadence learns how much of a racial bigot her grandfather is. In the past, there have been signs that Harris and Tipper didn't like Ed and Gat. The change in Tipper's face when the two got off the boat the first time is one of the clues she didn't like the dark skinned men. Harris' refusal to call Gat by his name is another clue that Harris didn't think Gat was quite worthy of his full respect. In this chapter, Gat tells Cadence that Harris has gone so far as to tell Carrie he will disinherit her if she marries Ed.

Although all of these chapters are told in the present tense, the majority of them are actually a flashback to two summers prior. It is in Chapter 70 that the story returns to the present when Mirren and Gat enter the room where Johnny and Cadence have been talking. Notice the way that Johnny continues to tell Mirren and Gat how Cadence has only remembered that they set the fire. It is almost as if he is warning them not to talk about anything past the setting of the fire. He seems afraid they might say something that would be surprising or shocking to Cadence.

Also in this section of the novel, Cadence seem proud of herself and her cousins for having stepped up and done something about the injustice that they see is being done. Strangely, The Liars don't seem to share her opinion. In fact, The Liars still seem to be angry with the adults for the way they acted over the houses and inheritance.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Johnny speaks so loudly when he tells Mirren and Gat they are talking about what happened before the fire?

Discussion Question 2

What signs have there been in the past that Harris and Tipper did not like Ed?



Discussion Question 3

How are each of the older cousins and Gat affected by the arguments between Harris and his daughters?

Vocabulary

earmarked, suffice, erudite, repugnance, dire, dementia, begrudging, purification, perseverance



Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapters 71-79

Summary

In Chapter 71, Cadence remembers she and Gat crying together after the family's fallout. She suggests they do something to force them to look beyond their differences and be a family again. She and Gat talk to Mirren and Johnny and encourage them to take action with them. They tell each other over and over they should do what they are afraid to do.

In Chapter 72, the teens spread out over the house spreading gasoline and lighting fires. It takes the fire department a long time to get there. No one from the fire department suspects anything. The teens knew their family wouldn't prosecute them if they suspected. Cadence realizes she is an arsonist and wonders if she also is a criminal and addict. Cadence believes their plan was successful. Mirren points out Carrie's habit of walking the island at night, Bess scrubbing till her hands are raw and Penny's vigilance over Cadence. Cadence argues that because they are there, they must have accomplished something. Mirren argues their grandfather isn't bullying others because he is demented while Gat says he thinks Harris has punished himself by the way he has built New Clairmont. They question why Harris gave away all his possessions, and then turn the question on Cadence. She wonders why the attention is suddenly on her. Johnny suggests to Gat they not push Cadence. Mirren goes to bed. Cadence lies on the floor with the boys until she realizes they have gone to sleep.

In Chapter 73, Cadence asks her mother why she and the others never talked to her about the fire. When she tells her mother what she remembers, Penny asks if that is all that she remembers. She asks her mother why no one will talk to her about her accident but her mother avoids the question telling her only that the doctors have suggested they not push Cadence to remember. She claims she's told Cadence what happened but that Cadence didn't retain the information. She adds she's not sure how she will handle Cadence's reaction to the truth.

In Chapter 74, Mirren comes to Cadence's room asking if she can read the emails that Cadence sent to her. Mirren reads the emails, and then tells Cadence there are not words for how sorry she is.

In Chapter 75, Cadence begins putting together her memories into a document. As she types, she realizes that her grandparents' golden retrievers died in the fire. She blames herself.

In Chapter 76, Cadence runs from Windemere. She is angry with herself for once feeling proud of herself since she now realizes she caused the death of the dogs. She stumbles back to her house, still crying. Gat is sitting on the steps.



In Chapter 77, Gat hugs Cadence as she cries over the dogs. Gat asks her if the death of the dogs is all she is crying about. She realizes that there is more to the story than what she has remembered. She asks Gat what happened that night, why he wasn't with her when she was hurt. Gat covers his face and tells her he doesn't know what he should do. He tells her he has to go back to Cuddledown. Gat apologizes for the things he has done for her, saying he has messed things up.

In Chapter 78, Cadence remembers lying in a hospital room on Martha's Vineyard. She is listening to music with earbuds and can't hear what the adults are saying. Her grandfather has brought her fudge. When she lifts her hand to take a piece, she realizes her hands and feet are bandaged because they are burned.

In Chapter 79, in the fairy tale in this chapter Cadence refers to herself as a witch born along with Mirren, Gat and Johnny. She claims she was jealous of the other because they were given gifts she was not given. In her jealousy this witch introduces the children to matches and encourages them to set fire to the house.

Analysis

When they are thinking about burning down Clairmont, the cousins and Gat tell each other over and over that they should do what they are afraid to do in order to convince themselves to go through with their plan. This could be why Mirren gets so upset with Cadence when she says her motto is to do what she is afraid to do. Even though Cadence doesn't remember the end result of The Liars' decision to do what they were afraid to do, Mirren remembers The Liars using this saying to build themselves up and convince themselves to set fire to Clairmont. Mirren knows the use of the motto led to her death.

In the beginning chapters Cadence feels proud of herself for her part in helping to burn down Clairmont. Mirren chides her for being so proud. Even though Cadence does not yet remember the full impact of what happened that night, Mirren reminds her of the way the adults are acting. Along with continuing to drink, the aunts have developed strange compulsions. Carrie can't sleep and walks the island at night, Bess cleans until she scrubs her hands raw, and Penny is obsessed with finding what is wrong with Cadence.

The Liars try to spark Cadence's memory of what has really happened when they discuss what appears to be the purposefully painful nature of New Clairmont. When Cadence asks why her grandfather would have made a house that was purposefully uncomfortable, they turn the question around by asking her why she has been giving away all of her things. They realize she has been giving her things away as a form of penance from a crime she doesn't even realize she has committed.

Chapter 71 is written from two summers prior, in the past tense. Although it is apparent that The Liars plan to do something pretty drastic, it isn't specifically stated what it is they are planning on doing. Chapter 72 switches between past and present as



Cadence's memories of what happened come back to her, and Johnny, Gat and Mirren help her fill in the gaps. The following chapters are in the present tense while Chapter 78 returns to the past when Cadence remembers she was burned during the summer two years prior. Chapter 79 ends the section with another of Cadence's fairy tales in which she describes herself as a witch who teaches the other Liars about fire, then encourages them to set a fire in which they are killed.

Discussion Question 1

How does Mirren try to convince Cadence that their actions in burning down the house weren't necessarily the best thing for their family?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Cadence's memory of her hands and feet being burned significant?

Discussion Question 3

Interpret Cadence's fairy tale in Chapter 79. What does it mean?

Vocabulary

cloying, delusional, toxic, entranced, independent



Part Five: Truth — Chapters 80-87

Summary

In Chapter 80, Cadence tells the truth about the family, the story that her grandfather knows. It is believed the fire started when a jug of gas turned over in the mudroom. Gat, Johnny and Mirren were inside when the fire started. Cadence was not in the house when the fire started, and was unable to rescue anyone because of the fire. She had no memory of the fire and believed she'd suffered a head injury. A new house is built to replace the old one. Doctors tell Cadence's family not to let her return to the island the first summer following the fire but believe she has healed enough by the second summer.

In Chapter 81, Cadence and the others go over their plans to burn the house. They plan to run from the burning house, then go to Cuddledown, change clothes, then call the fire department. Cadence soaks her floor, then watches as the fire she lights spreads. She hears screams coming from upstairs. Cadence tries to get out of the house but the door is bolted. Her hands and feet are slick with gas. She runs for the door to the mudroom, setting the legs to her jeans on fire in the process. Once she is outside and gets the fire on her pants put out, Cadence calls for the others. She doesn't get any answers and runs for the boathouse, expecting they are there. They aren't, and she heads for Cuddledown. No one is there either. She goes back to Clairmont and tries to go inside but a wall of flames meets her at the basement door. When she tries to go upstairs, the stairway collapses.

In Chapter 82, Cadence is sitting on the front steps of Windemere when she realizes she killed Gat and her cousins. She thinks back over the things they should have done differently. She crawls into her bed in her bedroom where she cries for all the things she has destroyed.

In Chapter 83, Cadence's mother knocks on her door. She asks if Cadence has a migraine. Cadence says no. Her mother realizes Cadence has remembered.

In Chapter 84, Cadence goes to Cuddledown. She sees Johnny first. When he sees her face he knows she's remembered. He tells her they can't stay much longer as they are getting sick. When Cadence apologizes, he tells her she shouldn't shoulder the whole burden of the guilt. Mirren comes out of her room and the three walk to the tiny beach where Gat is waiting. Mirren tells Cadence to be nicer than she has to be before they wade into the water and swim until they are in the open ocean where they disappear.

In Chapter 85, when Cadence wakes after sleeping for days she goes to New Clairmont. The aunts are preparing for a picnic, Ed is helping. She writes on her hands the advice Mirren gave her: Be a little kinder. She talks to Liberty and Bonnie, then helps Will and Taft look for rocks in the Japanese garden.



In Chapter 86, Cadence and her grandfather go to visit Edgartown. She comments that Ed is back. Harris admits he doesn't like Ed, but that he has allowed him back. The next day Mirren goes to Cuddledown and cleans. She leaves the furniture the way Mirren liked it. Before she leaves, she draws a picture of The Liars, which she puts on the fridge.

In Chapter 87, Cadence tells the Sinclair story in the form of a fairy tale. She writes that even though the fire marked the family with tragedy, it seemed to increase the fascination others had for them. Cadence writes that she and the other children have learned the truth about tragedy. She also knows people will continue to tell their own variations of the family's story. Cadence ends her story as she started it. She states that she endures.

Analysis

Note the change in point of view in Chapter 80. It is told in short, brusque sentences, almost like a newspaper report. It is also told from the third person point of view instead of the first person point of view as the rest of the novel has been written. Chapter 81 returns to the first person point of view. It begins in the present tense as Cadence remembers what she said to Mirren, Johnny and Gat before they separated, but switches to the past as Cadence recalls the details of the night of the fire. Chapter 82 switches back to the present tense as Cadence reacts to her new knowledge. In Chapter 87, Cadence ends her story with another fairy tale. Instead of the "happily ever after" ending of the typical fairy tale, Cadence shares that she and her family have learned the reality of tragedy. She ends the story as she began the story. The differences include the possessions that she feels are important to her. Along with her library card, she holds dear the envelope of beach roses given to her by Gat and the purple rocks that Mirren gave her. She realizes she does, indeed, endure.

One of the things to note are the mistakes that Cadence believes she made as she was setting fire to her level of the house. It seems that she should put more emphasis on not encouraging The Liars to set fire to the house to begin with. She goes over problems with their plan in which she feels she set fire to her part of the house too soon, she feels she should have kept them all together and she feels they should have had a set time to set fire to the floors on which they were working. The text, however, does not make the point that drunk teens trying to set fire to anything is stupid. Her mother forgives her and her aunts forgive her, which is great. Her grandfather asks for no formal investigation into the fire. Normally, however, fire departments are charged with investigating a fire that is believed to be of a suspicious nature. Of course, Cadence points out the fire departments that respond to their fire are made up of volunteers, not likely to question the fire. In this way, Cadence's family keeps her out of trouble. She could have been charged with arson, and possibly three manslaughter charges, fairly serious charges. She will always live with the guilt of what happened, but never really have to answer to what she did.



One final point of interest in this section is the possible explanation of why the reincarnated Liars make Cuddledown their headquarters. When Cadence is giving them their final instructions to The Liars before they set fire to the house she tells them she will see them at Cuddledown. The next place that she does see The Liars is Cuddledown, even though they aren't alive any more at this point.

Discussion Question 1

Compare and contrast the beginning and ending of the novel.

Discussion Question 2

What problems do you find with Cadence's thought process when she remembers that the fire killed her friends? What is your feeling of the tone of the ending of the book?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Harris' act of allowing Ed to be part of the family. Has he made a real change? Do you think it will last?

Vocabulary

conflagration, decimated, espadrilles, impotent, empathy, grandiosity, certifiable, perpetrator, deluded



Characters

Cadence Sinclair Eastman

Cadence Sinclair Eastman is the main character and narrator of the novel. She is the only daughter of Penny Sinclair Eastman and the oldest granddaughter of Harris and Tipper Sinclair. Cadence suffers with debilitating migraine headaches which she believes were caused by a traumatic head injury she suffered during the summer she was fifteen while she was vacationing on her grandparents' private island. Cadence, however, does not remember what caused her brain injury and her family will not tell her the specifics of her accident. Much of the novel covers the time that Cadence spends on the island during the summer that she is seventeen as she tries to remember what happened to her. After nearly four weeks on the island Cadence — with the help of Johnny, Gat, and Mirren who have returned from the dead — is able to remember their plan to set fire to Clairmont in hopes of reuniting their family. It is only after several weeks of work that Cadence realizes Johnny, Gat and Mirren died in the fire.

In many ways, Cadence could be considered a spoiled rich girl as she has grown up in a family with its own private island. Although she wants to understand Gat's view of the world, his feelings that the family is obsessed with its materialism and lulled into a lack of empathy for others by their own comfortable lives, she really doesn't understand because she doesn't know the kind of life from which Gat comes. It is not until the end of the book that Cadence really begins to understand that she only knew a part of Gat, the part that she saw on the island in her own surrounds, not as he was in the life in which he grew up.

What is most sad about Cadence's viewpoint is that she really felt she and her friends were doing something good and brave by destroying the things about which the adults were fighting. Before she realizes her actions led to the deaths of her friends, Cadence is proud of herself for taking a stand. When she remembers that her cousins and boyfriend were killed in the fire, she realizes how superficial she had actually been. She didn't think about her grandparents' dogs, locked in a bedroom, who died in the fire. She didn't think about the danger in which she was putting her friends. Cadence had the delusion that her actions had brought the family together. In a way, she is right, but the family lost much more than just material possessions.

In the final chapters, Johnny tells Cadence not to shoulder the burden of guilt of their deaths. His advice to her is sound as all of The Liars agreed to set the fire and participated in the act. In that way, they were all guilty. Although they had nothing to do with decision to set the fire, Cadence's mother, aunt and grandfather also share her guilt as they put the teens in a position where they felt their friendships, and their family, was in danger. At the end of the novel, Cadence notes that she still has headaches. The difference in her thinking from the beginning of her quest for knowledge of what happened to her is that she realizes that she must endure. A description of her life she



wasn't happy with at the beginning of the novel. She realizes that behind the façade of her beautiful, perfect family, they all have their faults.

Harris Sinclair

Harris Sinclair is the grandfather of Cadence, Johnny, Mirren, Taft, Liberty and Bonnie. He is the husband of Tipper Taft Sinclair. While Cadence once thought her grandfather was brave and heroic for his way of living in which he refused to take no for an answer, she realizes as she gets older he is actually only a privileged rich man who doesn't care who gets hurt as long as he gets what he wants. Harris' bigoted and manipulative personality comes out in its full strength after his wife's death as he tries to manipulate his daughters and grandchildren into doing what he wants by threatening to stop their inheritance and take away possessions.

Harris is a different person after the deaths of his three grandchildren in the fire. Mirren tells Cadence she believes their grandfather would be the same manipulative person if he were not developing dementia. Harris, however, seems to be trying to take steps to be kinder to his family as he protects Cadence from the truth about what happened to Clairmont and even warns Cadence's mother to be kind to her. With the sparse and stark nature of his new home, it seems that Harris, as Gat points out, is punishing himself by not making his new house more comfortable.

Jonathan "Johnny" Sinclair Dennis

Johnny Dennis is the oldest son of Carrie Dennis. He is best friends with Gat, who is the nephew of Ed, a man of Indian descent who is dating Carrie. Johnny is younger than Cadence only by a few months. For this reason, Carrie tries to get Johnny to plead her case for favor with his grandfather. His grandfather, in turn, tries to get Johnny to break up his mother and Ed, whom Harris dislikes. Johnny refuses to get involved or take sides in his mother's love life. For this reason, Harris has the boy taken from his will.

When Johnny, Mirren and Gat return from the dead, Johnny seems to be leader of the group. He is the one who is first to meet Cadence when she goes to Cuddledown first after she begins to remember the fire, then after she remembers her friends died in the fire. The others seem to take cues off Johnny in their decisions. For example, it is he who leads the discussion with Cadence about her new obsession with giving things away, trying to convince her that owning things is not bad in and of itself. It is Johnny who gives Cadence the most truthful answers about what happened their fifteenth summer. Instead of running away or not answering, Johnny gives answers to Cadence's questions that are true but not exactly easy to understand. For instance, when Cadence asks him why he hadn't contacted her since their fifteenth summer, he tells her it was because he was a follower and watched too many action movies. Both of the reasons are reasons he agreed to help set the fire in which he was killed, preventing him from contacting her again. In Cadence's mind, since she doesn't understand the background, these reasons appear to be bad excuses instead of truthful answers.



Mirren Sinclair Sheffield

Mirren Sheffield is the oldest daughter of Bess Sheffield. She is the older sister of Taft, Bonnie and Liberty Sheffield. She is a member of the group collectively known as The Liars. Cadence describes her as being sugar, curiosity and rain. Mirren and Cadence appear to have been best friends during their time together on the island. Cadence is deeply hurt that Mirren doesn't return her emails during the time between their fifteenth and seventeenth summers. She's also mystified that Mirren was never given the Barbie doll that she sent to her at her home.

Of the three Liars who died in the fire, Mirren seems the one who is the most emotionally unstable. While Johnny and Gat don't say much about their feeling about the adults, Mirren is still clearly angry with them. At one point she tells Cadence she doesn't want anything to do with the other members of the family and refuses to go to the new house for supper or breakfast. Mirren lies to Cadence about her life since they've seen each other last. As she, Gat and Johnny are about to go back to their world, Mirren admits to Cadence she believes she made a mess of the summer. Though she had been excited to be on the island again, she believes she ruined the experience by being angry with her family members and jealous of Cadence.

Gatwick Matthew Patil

Gat is the antagonist of the novel though he is not antagonistic purposefully. Gat is the nephew of Carrie's boyfriend Ed. He is allowed to come to the island because he and Johnny are friends. However, Gat is of Indian descent. His dark skin contrasts starkly with the pure white skin and blond hair of the Sinclairs. Though they try to be accommodating, it is clear from the first time that Harris and Tipper see Gat and Ed that they don't like them. Even Cadence, who is just a child, notices the change in her grandmother's expression when she sees the two. Through their summers together, Cadence and Gat fall in love with one another. Harris sees the developing love affair and gives Gat veiled threats to leave Cadence alone. Cadence describes Gat as being contemplation and enthusiasm, ambition and strong coffee. Although he loves Cadence, he tries to convince her that her and her family's way of life on the island is not perhaps what she thinks it is. He sees the family's materialism and bigotry long before the cousins are drawn into the fights over possessions by their mothers.

Tipper Taft Sinclair

Tipper Taft Sinclair is the grandmother to Cadence, Johnny, Mirren, Will, Taft, Bonnie and Liberty. She is the wife of Harris Sinclair. Though she tries not to show it, she dislikes Ed, Carrie's boyfriend, because of his Indian descent. She throws charity parties for the Farm Institute, the only member of the family that Cadence remembers having an interest in any type of charity. Despite this philanthropy, Cadence learns it was her grandmother who wanted the ivory statues even though the material is illegal. It is before what Cadence and her cousins call Summer Fifteen that Tipper dies throwing



the balance of the family askew. Cadence's grandfather later tells her that his wife took the best part of him with her when she died, a statement which seems to be true as Harris baited his daughters into fights over possessions and position in the summer following his wife's death.

Carrie Dennis

Carrie Dennis is the mother to Johnny and William Dennis. She is dating Ed, a man who has Indian lineage, despite her parents' dislike for him. Although Ed proposes to Carrie in a very romantic fashion, she turns down his proposal because she is afraid her father will disinherit her. During the summer in which Cadence, Johnny, Mirren and Gat burn down Clairmont, Carrie's father tells her that he will disinherit her if she does not stop seeing Ed. After the fire, Carrie begins bringing Ed to the island again. She develops an inability to sleep and Cadence often sees her walking the island at night. One night Carrie approaches Cadence to ask her if she has seen Johnny, a question that puzzles Cadence because she does not realize Johnny is dead. Carrie later denies having asked Cadence about Johnny.

Penny Sinclair Eastman

Penny Sinclair Eastman is mother to Cadence. She raises Golden Retrievers for a supplemental income to her trust fund money. She and Cadence have three dogs — Bosh, Grendel and Poppy — of their own. Penny's main role in the novel is watching over Cadence after Cadence gets sick. After her mother's death, Penny argues with her sisters about family possessions and allows her father to manipulate her by threatening to take away Windemere, the house he had built for Penny and her family. She, like her sisters, tries to involve Cadence and make her (kiss up to) her grandfather in order to win his favor. When Cadence tries to refuse to do her mother's bidding, Penny threatens to send her to Colorado, away from Gat.

Bonnie and Liberty Sheffield

Bonnie and Liberty Sheffield are twin daughters of Bess and sisters of Taft and Mirren. The girls don't play a huge role in the novel. When Cadence returns to the island after her "accident" Bonnie comments that Cadence's dyed hair makes her look like a vampire. Liberty tells Cadence that Bonnie has developed an obsession with dead things. The two girls also go through Cadence's room and find the pills she has been prescribed for her headaches. Mirren tells Cadence she believes her sisters are kleptomaniacs as they stole their mother's sleeping pills and her diamond earrings.

Bess Sheffield

Bess Sheffield is the mother of Liberty, Bonnie, Taft and Mirren. In the weeks leading up to the fire at Clairmont, Bess complains about Cuddledown, her house on the island,



and tries to get Mirren and the other children to convince their grandfather they should be given Windemere, the house originally built for Penny. After the fire, Bess develops a cleaning compulsion.

Taft Sheffield

Taft Sheffield is the son of Bess Sheffield. He is the younger brother of Mirren and also the brother of twins Liberty and Bonnie. After Cadence's "accident" Taft calls Cadence to ask if she is a drug addict. He also tells her that Cuddledown is haunted. This is the first hint that Gat, Mirren and Johnny are ghosts.



Symbols and Symbolism

Clairmont

Clairmont is the house where Harris and Tipper Sinclair stayed while on Beechwood Island. After Tipper's death, it becomes a symbol of greed, a possession that Harris can use against his daughters. For this reason, Cadence and The Liars decide to destroy the house and what it symbolizes.

Beach Roses

Dried beach roses become a symbol of Gat's love for Cadence. During their fifteenth summer on the beach, Cadence's heart is broken when she sees Gat mailing a dried rose to another girl. Later, Gat apologizes to Cadence by giving her a whole envelope full of dried beach roses.

New Clairmont

The house built by Harris to replace the home burnt by the liars is described as being sterile and lacking in personality. At one point, Gat describes New Clairmont as being a punishment. He believes it was built as it is in an effort to be intentionally uncomfortable.

Olive Green Hunting Jacket

Gat gives Cadence this olive green hunting jacket to wear the night they lay on the wooden walkway outside of Windemere together and talk about their beliefs about God. Later, Cadence lists this jacket among the things she believes she should give away. It is never indicated if she gives it away or keeps it.

Stack of Fairy Tale Books

Cadence's father gives her a stack of fairy tale books the Christmas she is eight years old. After her accident, Cadence begins writing fairy tales based on the variations of stories in these books. She eventually uses her writing to help remember what happened the night of her accident.

Ivory Goose

This ivory goose first appears in one of Cadence's descriptions of a headache. She says a witch hits her over the head multiple times with the goose, giving her a headache that keeps her from attending supper at Clairmont her first night on the island. Later, it is



learned that Harris bought this goose for Tipper even though ivory was illegal. Before they set fire to Clairmont The Liars take this goose, along with some other ivory sculptures owned by the family, and smash them.

Jug of Gasoline

Cadence begins to remember seeing Mirren holding a jug of gas for a motorboat during their fifteenth summer. She eventually remembers that she and The Liars used to gas to set Clairmont on fire.

Tire Swing

The tire swing that Cadence remembers she and The Liars enjoying their fifteenth summer is gone, along with the tree on which it hung, when she returns her seventeenth summer. During her seventeenth summer, Gat builds a new tire swing for her as a gift.

Gat's Shirt

Cadence mentions when she first sees Gat and the other Liars, Gat is wearing the same t-shirt that he wore two summers ago. It is unusual that a teenaged boy would be able to wear the same shirt he'd worn two years prior. This is one of the first hints that Gat is really no longer alive.

Black Pearls

Cadence remembers her mother mentioning a strand of black pearls that once belonged to her grandmother. She later realizes that this piece of jewelry was one of the possessions over which her mother and aunts fought.



Settings

Beechwood Island

Beechwood Island is the Sinclairs' private island off the coast of Massachusetts. It is where the family spends its summers.

Burlington, Vermont

Cadence and her mother live in this Vermont town during the summers.

Windemere House

Windemere House is the name given to the home Penny's father had built for her and her family on Beechwood Island. The house is a source of contention for the daughters in the family as it is the largest. Bess believes it should be her's because she has the most children, while Penny believes she should be allowed to keep it because it was built for her.

Old Clairmont

Old Clairmont is the house on Beechwood Island where Harris and Tipper lived during the summers before Tipper's death. The Liars burn the house to the ground in an attempt to get their family to see past possessions and their arguments over Tipper's things.

New Clairmont

New Clairmont is the new, sterile house that Harris has built to replace the one burnt down by the Liars.

Cuddledown

Cuddledown is the house generally inhabited by Bess and her children during the summers. During Cadence's seventeenth summer, the one during which she learns the truth about what happened during her fifteenth summer, the ghosts of Mirren, Gat and Johnny take up residence at this house. This could be because the last thing Cadence said to the Liars was that she would see them back at Cuddledown after they finished burning the house. Taft calls Cadence before she arrives for her four-week stay to tell her that the house is haunted, but no one but Bonnie will believe him as he is just a young child.

Red Gate

Red Gate is the name of the house in which Carrie and her children live in on Beechwood Island during the summers. Very little of the action of the story takes place in this house.

Perimeter Path

Gat and Cadence spend some of their time in the summers walking this path that goes around the perimeter of the island.



Themes and Motifs

Materialism

Materialism is at the heart of the break down in the rich Sinclair family. For years, the family has spent its summers boating and swimming at its own private island. Since the death of Tipper Sinclair, her husband, Harris, has used money, possessions and the threat of taking inheritance to manipulate his daughters and grandchildren. Because they have depended on his money for their livelihoods for years, the daughters can't bear the thought of not having money provided to them any longer. One daughter even turns down a marriage proposal made to her by her boyfriend because she knows if she marries this man, who is of Indian descent, her father will disinherit her.

This instance of the daughter who refused a marriage proposal because she didn't want to lose her father's inheritance leads naturally to one of the fairy tales written by Cadence. In it, the three daughters work hard to earn their father's favor. One is thrown from the kingdom because she compares her love for him as the love of meat for salt. Years later, she has the opportunity to demonstrate to him what she meant by her comparison. He takes her in as the daughter he loves best. At this point, however, he has become demented and the younger daughter must take care of him. Cadence points out the daughter stays but isn't sure if she does so because she loves her father, or because she wants the stuff she has been promised.

Materialism takes on another slant in Cadence's determination to get rid of all of her things, even those that have sentimental value. Even though she doesn't remember the fighting between her mother, her aunts and her grandfather from her fifteenth summer, she appears to have held over the subconscious belief that having things is bad. It is almost as if she is punishing herself for what she has done, even though she doesn't remember exactly what happened. Similar to Cadence's giving away of her things is her mother's act of getting rid of all of the things in their house that reminded her of Cadence's father. Cadence sees this as a form of materialism as her mother's ability to buy herself a new life seems to make her feel powerful. Before Cadence remembers the old Clairmont was burned down, she believes her grandfather is doing this same thing by building himself a new island house devoid of anything that might remind him of Tipper.

Tragedy

Tragedy and the way different people deal with tragedy is a major theme in the novel. Each member of the family has his or her own way of helping themselves to deal with what has happened. Ultimately, the fire that kills Mirren, Johnny and Gat brings the family back from its point of separation, but for all of the wrong reasons. After Cadence's memory of the fire returns, she realizes her mother and aunts are the shells of destroyed people who are clinging to one another out of shared grief.



Notice that each member of the Sinclair family deals with fire, destruction of Clairmont and loss of the three children in different ways. Cadence, for instance, blocks out the memories of what happened in order to deal with her pain and guilt. Cadence's mother puts all of her energy into trying to help her daughter deal with her debilitating headaches. Bess, Mirren's mother, compulsively cleans. Carrie, Johnny's mother, has become unable to sleep and spends her nights walking the island. Bonnie, Mirren's sister, has become obsessed with death and dead things. Taft, like Cadence, can see Mirren's ghost and claims Cuddledown is haunted. William has nightmares and can't sleep. Harris spends much of his time in another world as he has become demented, often believing Cadence is Mirren and asking about Gat even though the boy is dead.

In one of the scenes in which Cadence interacts with Mirren, Johnny and Gat, Cadence tries to convince them they've healed the family. Of course this discussion takes place before Cadence realizes her cousins and boyfriend are dead. She sees only that her mother and aunts can stand to be in the same room together and believes she and the others have done something great. Mirren points out to her all of the strange habits the family members have picked up as well as the constant drinking by the aunts. It is in this conversation that Gat points out that it appears as if New Clairmont has been built as a punishment, as if Harris is deliberately built a home that is uncomfortable because he is trying to punish himself. At this point, the reader is aware that Harris might be trying to punish himself for his role in the deaths of his grandchild.

In the final chapter, the family's tragedy is described as making them somehow even more glamorous to people outside the family. Cadence notes a difference in the way the Sinclair adults and the Sinclair children respond to the way the outsiders see them. She makes it appear as if the adults enjoy the idea that their pain has made them more alluring in the eyes of the general public. The children, however, remember the pain of the tragedy, the multiple ways in which it affected the family and the pain they all felt, Cadence says. They see tragedy not as glamorous, but as ugly, tangled and confusing.

Young Love/Coming of Age

Cadence blames much of her actions on what she calls her "desperate" love for Gat. However, this story is as much a coming of age story as it is a love story. It is through her relationship with Gat, who is different from her both materialistically and racially, that Cadence begins to realize that not all people in the world have the same privileges that she has.

Cadence loves Gat even though — and perhaps because — he is different from her. Because of their differences, Cadence stands to learn much from Gat. She learns how narrow her view of the world is during her interactions with Gat. At first, she pretends to agree with Gat's anger that the world is so divided between those who are privileged and rich, and those who don't have even their basic needs met. Gat struggles with his own belief in God as he cannot fathom a God who would allow some people to be so poor.



It is not until Cadence fully remembers what happened to them the night of the fire that she is suddenly catapulted into maturity. It seems almost amazingly fast the way she goes from a self-centered rich brat to one who seems to suddenly understand how little she knows of the world. She suddenly realizes she knew only part of Gat. She didn't know what his bedroom at home looked like, she didn't know what he ate for breakfast, and she had never met his mother. She only knows Gat as she has interacted with him in her own, familiar surroundings.

The entire story works up to Cadence remembering what happened. In a few days she works through emotions and pain that would take some people years working with a therapist to understand and overcome. It seems that Cadence grew up amazingly quickly in the few weeks she spent on Beechwood Island trying to remember her fifteenth summer.

Racism

Racism is a minor theme, but a significant one, in this novel. Although Harris and Tipper try not to show their dislike, it is apparent they do not like people who are different from them. Much of the racial conflict in the novel centers around Carrie's new boyfriend and his nephew.

When the family is first introduced to Ed and Gat, even Cadence notices a difference in her grandmother's facial expression. Tipper tries to cover her unhappiness quickly and greets the two warmly but it is apparent she is not happy with the pair. Ed and Gat are of Indian descent so they are dark skinned with dark hair. Their darkness contrasts against the white skin and blonde hair of the Sinclairs.

As his summers with the Sinclairs progress, Gat begins noticing differences in the way he is treated by the family, particularly Harris. One aspect of this treatment that Gat points out to Cadence is Harris' refusal to call Gat by his name. While Cadence is angered by her grandfather's refusal to accept Gat as a person of equal standing, she is blind to her own racist actions. For instance, Gat tells her that he feels more comfortable around Paulo and Ginny the gardener and housekeeper on the island. Although the two have worked on the island for all the years that Cadence has been there, she has not even bothered to learn their names. Gat points out this is a form of the same haughtiness that defines Cadence's grandfather.

When the family's frustrations during Cadence's summer fifteen come to a head, Cadence and Gat overhear a conversation that makes them both angry. Gat is aware that his uncle proposed to Carrie and that she turned him down. He knows Carrie turned Ed down because she was afraid she would lose her trust money and inheritance from her father. One night Cadence and Gat go to Clairmont for chocolate and hear the aunts arguing. Carrie is trying to convince Bess she is lucky because she has their father's good will. Bess snaps back that Carrie is not in her father's favor only because she insists on parading Ed and Gat in front of Harris, even though she knows Harris doesn't like the two.



In the conclusion of the novel, Harris allows Ed to be part of the family. Cadence discusses the new attitude toward Ed with her grandfather. He admits that although he doesn't like, Ed, He's decided to allow the relationship. Perhaps he has realized how destructive his hate has become.

Fairy Tales/Variations

The fairy tales that Cadence includes throughout the novel seem to be her way of working through what happened the night of the fire and the events leading up to the fire. She gets the idea of writing these stories through the books of fairy tales that her father gave her. She notices these tales have elements that remain the same in all the stories, but a variation of themes. These variations are an aspect that Cadence finally realizes has part of her life, as well as her fairy tales.

First, Cadence finds that her family fits well into the framework of the fairy tale. Her grandfather fits the role of the rich, powerful ruler. Her mother and aunts fill the roles of the three beautiful, privileged daughters. In her first fairy tales, the daughters compete to see who loves their father the most. Slowly, the variations of the stories change until they tell the story of her mother and her aunts fighting over the inheritance, their father's love and their mother's things. It was this fighting that tore Cadence's family apart.

Cadence also writes stories about herself and Gat. In these stories she is a forgotten princess and Gat is a mouse or a beast. Despite her family's dislike for the mouse or the beast, the forgotten princess falls in love and leaves her family to be with her love. These stories describe her love for Gat despite what her family thinks about him.

After Cadence jumps off the rocks and compares her plunge into the ocean to the night of her injury two years prior, she begins wondering if in life there are different variations, just as there are in fairy tales. She does not realize that her mind is tricking her into living in one of these variations. In her variation of the truth, Cadence was in some sort of accident, the fire never took place, and Gat, Mirren and Johnny are still alive.

Although Cadence has always described herself as an unfortunate or powerless in most of her fairy tales, it is in the last tale that it becomes apparent she has realized she was responsible for what has happened. In this tale, she characterized herself as a witch who introduces Mirren, Johnny and Gat to fire, and then convinces them to set fire to Clairmont. Cadence's self-loathing is apparent in this story in a way that isn't clear in any of the rest of the novel.

Styles

Point of View

The majority of this story is told from the first person point of view of Cadence Sinclair Eastman, the only survivor of a fire she and her friends started at Clairmont. As the novel tells Cadence's journey to healing after the fire, it would not be as significant or suspenseful if it were not told by a character who did not remember the details of the fire. However, there are a few parts of the novel that are not told from the first person point of view. Chapter 80 is an exception as it is written in the third person point of view, almost as if it were a newspaper report. Cadence's fairy tales are written from the perspective of an omniscient, third person narrator.

The story is told mostly through exposition with scattered dialogue as Cadence interacts with the characters around her. This emphasis on exposition keeps the story focused on Cadence's journey to regain her memory of what happened during the novel. The focus is on what is going on in Cadence's mind and the she is, or is not, interpreting the hints begin given to her about the night of the fire. After Cadence joins her family on the island during her seventeenth summer, the tense of the novel switches back and forth between the past and the present.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is very relaxed and easy to read. The author switches back and forth between a form which could almost be considered free form poetry and standard prose. Chapters 75 and 76 are both examples of the author switching from prose to a poetical form to prose again. The author additionally writes in some chapters sentences that are alliterative, emphasizing an idea using repetition: "No one is a criminal./No one is an addict./No one is a failure."

Particularly interesting is the author's use of imagery in describing Cadence's pain. Both the pain of her headaches and her emotional pain is described with colorful, lively terms. For instance, when her father leaves Cadence and her mother, Cadence describes her emotional pain as a gunshot. When she finally remembers what happened the night of the fire at Clairmont, Cadence describes herself as being frozen in pain.

Even more colorful are Cadence's descriptions of her headaches. One begins when a witch hits Cadence over the head with the ivory goose that her grandfather bought illegally from China. In one instance she describes the pain as a truck rolling over her head; in another she envisions herself being attacked by a giant who wields a rusty saw.



Structure

This novel is divided into five different sections with each section further divided into several different chapters. The first section of the novel is about 20 percent of the story. In this section Cadence lays out the basics of her family, their summers on the island and her accident. She describes her headaches and the confusion that she feels when her cousins will not respond to emails and letters.

The second part of the novel is just under 20 percent of the novel. It details Cadence's time in Vermont as she tries to remember what happened to her on the island during her fifteenth summer, deal with her headaches, and handle her desire to give away her possessions. In the third part of the novel, which covers about 40 percent of the novel, Cadence details her seventeenth summer on the island up until the point that she begins to remember what happened during the summer she was fifteen.

In the fourth part of the novel, Cadence remembers the details of the fire that she and The Liars set up to the point that she remembers she was burnt in the fire. In the final, shortest section of the novel, Cadence remembers Gat and her cousins were killed in the fire that they set. She grieves the loss of her friends, says goodbye to their ghosts and reorients herself to what she now realizes is the truth.

While the story is told in a linear fashion, it is unique in the fact that the reader, like Cadence, does not know exactly what has happened to Cadence until she remembers setting the fire with the help of her cousins. As Cadence begins to remember the details of that night, Cadence's memories seem more like present instead of flashbacks.



Quotes

The Sinclairs are athletic, tall, and handsome. We are old-money Democrats. Our smiles are wide, our chins square, and our tennis serves aggressive.

-- Cadence (Part One: Welcome — Chapter 1 paragraph 5)

Importance: In her introduction to her story and her family, Cadence gives the basic requirements for the members of her family.

My story starts before the accident. June of the summer I was fifteen, my father ran off with some woman he loved more than us.

-- Cadence (Part One: Welcome — Chapter 2 paragraph 13)

Importance: Cadence believes the tragedy that ended in the fire at Beechwood Island began when her father divorced her mother. This divorce left her mother dependent for her living on the trust fund money that was allotted to her, and, thus, desperate to stay in her father's good graces.

One day I looked at Gat, lying in the Clairmont hammock with a book, and he seemed, well, like he was mine. Like he was my particular person.

-- Cadence (Part One: Welcome — Chapter 5 paragraph 38)

Importance: Although Gat and Cadence are very different people with very different backgrounds, Cadence believes they are soul mates with some innate, basic understanding of each other.

What we mean is, we love you. You remind us that we're selfish bastards. You're not one of us, that way.

-- Cadence (Part One: Welcome — Chapter 7 paragraph 53)

Importance: Cadence tries to make peace with Gat after the other Liars become angry with him for pointing out their selfish lifestyle. She tries to make him believe she sees things from his viewpoint even though she really doesn't.

She made me act normal. Because I was. Because I could. She told me to breathe and sit up.

-- Cadence (Part One: Welcome — Chapter 11 paragraph 11)

Importance: No matter how bad Cadence hurts, her mother orders her to act as if nothing is wrong. Cadence's mother makes her act normal when her father leaves, and then again when she first sees new Clairmont.

I must have had my face in the water and then hit my head on one of these rocks.

-- Cadence (Part One: Welcome — Chapter 12 paragraph 8)

Importance: Cadence does not remember what happened to her during her fifteenth



summer so she makes up a story that she went swimming and hit her head on rocks, causing a brain injury.

Antiques and Oriental rugs tell people that my mother may be a dog breeder who dropped out of Bryn Mawr, but she's got power — because she's got money.

-- Cadence (Part Two: Vermont — Chapter 17 paragraph 10)

Importance: Materialism and the power that comes from being rich are important themes in this novel as a new generation of Sinclairs tries to teach their parents life isn't all about possessions even as they try to come to terms with their own worldliness.

It's not important to be tall. Or blond. That is why I dyed my hair: I don't want to be the eldest. Heiress to the island, the fortune, and the expectations.

-- Cadence (Part Two: Vermont — Chapter 19 paragraph 33)

Importance: Even before she remembers what happened on the island during her fifteenth summer, Cadence begins making physical changes to separate herself from her family. One of her acts of rebellion is to dye her hair black. Her grandfather seems to have the most trouble with this change, as he repeatedly complains about Cadence no longer being blond.

Ginny is the housekeeper. Paulo is the gardener. You don't know their names and they've worked here summer after summer. That's part of my point.

-- Gat (Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapter 39 paragraph 16)

Importance: Gat tries to help Cadence see that despite her claims that she is not a typical rich and privileged kid, she is rich and privileged. Although she's had the opportunity, she has not even taken the time to learn the names of the staff who work on the island on which she lives.

A brute beneath a pleasant surface, betraying his kindness in letting me come to his sheltered island every year — I've betrayed him by seducing his Catherine, his Cadence. And my penance is to become the monster he always saw in me.

-- Gat (Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapter 39 paragraph 32)

Importance: Gat compares the way he believes Cadence's grandfather sees him to the way that Heathcliff is portrayed in the novel *Wuthering Heights*. Gat believes Harris has always seen him as some sort of monster, a self-fulfilling prophecy for what Gat believes he has become. It is not until much later in the book that the reader understands Gat sees himself as a monster because he got so angry with Harris for his bigoted mindset and did nothing to keep the cousins from setting fire to Clairmont.

Now, at the breakfast table, watching him eat my toast, 'Don't take no for an answer' seemed like the attitude of a privileged guy who didn't care who got hurt, so long as his wife had the cute statues she wanted to display in her summer-houses.

-- Cadence (Part Three: Summer Seventeen — Chapter 42 paragraph 21)



Importance: When Cadence tries to convince her grandfather that owning ivory statues is illegal, his response to her makes her realize his life has not been built on bravery but instead selfish desire and materialism.

Even farther away, the Woods Hole fire boat chugs toward the fire that we set. / Gat, Johnny, Mirren, and me. / We set this fire and it is burning down Clairmont.

-- Cadence (Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapter 58 paragraph 6)

Importance: In her final week on Beechwood Island, Cadence remembers she, Gat, Johnny and Mirren had set fire to Clairmont though she does not yet remember the full tragedy of that night.

We burned not a home, but a symbol.

-- Cadence (Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapter 58 paragraph 26)

Importance: Cadence explains that The Liars no longer saw Clairmont as their grandparents' home, but as a symbol of everything that seemed to be wrong with their family.

We watched them quarrel over Gran's things and the art that hung in Clairmont — but real estate and money most of all. Granddad was drunk on his own power and my mother wanted me to make a play for the money. Because I was the oldest boy. She pushed me and pushed me — I don't know. To be the bright young heir. To talk badly of you as the eldest. To be the educated white hope of the future of democracy, some bullshit. She'd lost Granddad's favor, and she wanted me to get it so she didn't lose her inheritance.

-- Johnny (Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapter 59 paragraph 25)

Importance: Johnny talks about how his mother tried to get him to make a play for his grandfather's favor in her stead. Although she encourages him to talk badly about Cadence and portray himself as the family's best hope for a future, he refuses to do so as he realizes his mother is manipulating him in an attempt to keep from losing her inheritance.

They no longer had the glue of Gran keeping them together, and they fought over their memories, her jewelry, the clothes in her closet, her shoes, even.

-- Cadence (Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapter 60 paragraph 9)

Importance: Cadence believes it is because of the loss of her grandmother that her mother and aunts are suddenly at odds against each other and against their father as they fight over Tipper's possessions.

So when Granddad said he might leave his money to build Harvard a student center and asked our advice, he wasn't involving the family in his financial plans. / He was making a threat.

-- Cadence (Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapter 61 paragraph 33)



Importance: During her seventeenth summer on the island, Gat helps Cadence to begin to understand that two years prior, her grandfather had been using the teens to make veiled threats against them and his daughters.

And yet the three of you women, with these divorces, broken homes, this disrespect for tradition, this lack of a work ethic, you have done nothing but disappoint an old man who thought he raised you right.

-- Harris Sinclair (Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapter 69 paragraph 7)

Importance: On the night that The Liars decide to burn down Clairmont, they had overheard their grandfather lashing out at his daughters, warning them that he would take away their trust funds and financial security if they did not do as he wished.

New Clairmont seems like a punishment to me.

-- Gat (Part Four: Look, A Fire — Chapter 72 paragraph 30)

Importance: Although Mirren believes her grandfather is the same bigoted, cruel man he always was, Gat argues he has changed since Clairmont burned. Gat backs his reasoning by explaining that new Clairmont seems as if it were built purposefully uncomfortable, almost as a punishment.

I love you in spite of my grief. Even though you are crazy. / I love you in spite of what I suspect you have done.

-- Penny Sinclair (Part Five: The Truth — Chapter 83 paragraph 10)

Importance: It is only after Cadence remembers what happened her fifteenth summer on the island that she realizes when her mother tells her she loves her, she is actually saying much more than just that. She loves Cadence despite her problems, her sickness and her part in the deaths of Mirren, Gat and Johnny.

Not your fault,' says Johnny. 'I mean, we all did it, we all went crazy, we have to take responsibility. You shouldn't carry the weight of it,' he says. 'Be sad, be sorry — but don't shoulder it.

-- Johnny (Part Five: The Truth — Chapter 84 paragraph 16)

Importance: When Cadence apologizes to Johnny for her role in encouraging The Liars to burn Clairmont, Johnny tells her that the fault does not lie solely with her. He advises her not to shoulder the blame and guilt for the entire tragedy.

My full name is Cadence Sinclair Eastman. / I suffer migraines. I do not suffer fools. / I like a twist of meaning. / I endure.

-- Cadence (Part Five: The Truth — Chapter 87 paragraph 52)

Importance: This passage is significant not only because it parallels the way the novel began, but also shows the emotional growth that has taken place for Cadence. She has realized she is in charge of her own life. She has learned to endure, or persist through, the pain in her life.