

We Were the Mulvaney's Study Guide

We Were the Mulvaney's by Joyce Carol Oates

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

We Were the Mulvaney's Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	5
Family Pictures: Storybook House.....	7
Family Pictures: The Doe.....	9
Family Pictures: St. Valentine's 1976.....	10
Family Pictures: Ringing the Cowbell.....	11
Family Pictures: Family Code.....	13
Family Pictures: Dirty Girl.....	14
Family Pictures: Providence.....	15
Family Pictures: Strawberries and Cream.....	16
Family Pictures: Secrets.....	19
Family Pictures: The Revelation.....	20
Family Pictures: Babies.....	21
Family Pictures: Damaged Girl.....	22
Family Pictures: The Lovers.....	23
Family Pictures: Imminent Mortality.....	24
Family Pictures: Every Heartbeat.....	25
Family Pictures: The Assault.....	26
Family Pictures: The Penitent.....	27
Family Pictures: Ask Dad.....	29
Family Pictures: Boys Will Be Boys.....	30
Family Pictures: Phase.....	31
Family Pictures: Gone.....	32
The Huntsman: One by One.....	33



<u>The Huntsman: Valedictorian Speech.....</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>The Huntsman: Snow After Easter.....</u>	<u>36</u>
<u>The Huntsman: The Huntsman.....</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>The Huntsman: Plastica.....</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>The Huntsman: Dignity.....</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>The Huntsman: Reverse Prayer.....</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>The Huntsman: The Accomplice.....</u>	<u>42</u>
<u>The Huntsman: Brothers.....</u>	<u>44</u>
<u>The Huntsman: Crossing Over.....</u>	<u>45</u>
<u>The Huntsman: The Handshake.....</u>	<u>46</u>
<u>The Huntsman: The Bog.....</u>	<u>47</u>
<u>The Pilgrim: Tears.....</u>	<u>48</u>
<u>The Pilgrim: Green Isle.....</u>	<u>49</u>
<u>The Pilgrim: The Pilgrim.....</u>	<u>50</u>
<u>The Pilgrim: The Proposal.....</u>	<u>52</u>
<u>The Pilgrim: Rag-Quilt Life.....</u>	<u>53</u>
<u>Hard Reckoning: Hard Reckoning.....</u>	<u>54</u>
<u>Hard Reckoning: On My Own.....</u>	<u>56</u>
<u>Hard Reckoning: The White Horse.....</u>	<u>57</u>
<u>Hard Reckoning: Stump Creek Hill.....</u>	<u>59</u>
<u>Hard Reckoning: Intensive Care.....</u>	<u>61</u>
<u>Hard Reckoning: Gone.....</u>	<u>62</u>
<u>Reunion: Fourth of July 1993.....</u>	<u>63</u>
<u>Characters.....</u>	<u>64</u>
<u>Objects/Places.....</u>	<u>68</u>
<u>Social Sensitivity.....</u>	<u>70</u>



[Techniques..... 72](#)

[Themes..... 73](#)

[Style..... 77](#)

[Quotes..... 79](#)

[Key Questions..... 81](#)

[Topics for Discussion..... 82](#)

[Literary Precedents..... 83](#)

[Related Titles..... 84](#)

[Copyright Information..... 85](#)



Plot Summary

*We Were the Mulvaney*s by Joyce Carol Oates is a novel about the tenuous grasp on happiness of one American family. A young girl is raped by a high school acquaintance in a very small town, and the fallout affects the lives of everyone in her immediate family. It is a snapshot of the darker side of family life in the modern world.

The Mulvaney's are a typical American family living on a small farm in upstate New York. The father is a roofer with his own business; the mother is a quirky, middle-aged woman with a love of antiques. There are four children in this family, three boys and a girl. The eldest child is an athlete who drops out of school in his first semester to join his father in the family business. The second eldest, Patrick, is a scientific-minded young man, who is destined to become someone who finds a cure for cancer or some other prestigious thing. The youngest child is Judd, a young man who has not a clue of what is going on in the family around him. Marianne is a daughter who is perfection personified. Marianne is everything feminine her mother will never be: a cheerleader, a seamstress, and a wonderful cook.

They are a picture-perfect family, until the night of the Valentine's Day Prom. Marianne goes to the prom in a dress she made by hand, with a boy she knows well and trusts. After the prom, as Marianne is the only member of the queen's court who is not a senior, Marianne attends a party at a classmate's home. There, she meets up with a senior she knows. This senior, Zachary Lundt, offers Marianne alcohol and charming words that make her want to trust him. Finally, Zachary offers to take Marianne home, and he attacks her in the back seat of his car.

Marianne tries to hide what happened to her from her family, until she can hold it in no more. Marianne's father becomes enraged and goes to the Lundt home. There, Michael attacks Zachary and his father in front of a sheriff's deputy. Michael is arrested. The charges are later dropped, however, because Marianne refuses to press sexual assault charges against Zachary.

Michael becomes obsessed with obtaining justice for his family. Soon, this obsession comes to harm his family. The entire town turns their backs on the Mulvaney family for the perceived lie Marianne has told about Zachary. Michael's business begins to suffer, and he becomes even angrier and more obsessed with justice. Michael begins to drink during this time, as well.

Soon, the family begins to fall apart. Corrine sends her daughter away, because Michael confesses that he cannot stand to look at her anymore. Mike Jr. moves into town and stops working for his father's business after the two of them have an argument. Mike eventually joins the Marines, and Patrick goes off to college.

While Patrick is at college, he realizes how angry he is over what happened to his sister and begins to plot his own revenge. Patrick enlists Judd's help and begins to plan a kidnapping and murder. Over Easter weekend, Patrick tracks down Zachary in Mt.



Ephraim and kidnaps him. Then, Patrick takes Zachary to a bog near the town and forces him, at gunpoint, to walk into the sludge and water. Zachary nearly drowns, until Patrick wades in and saves him. Later, Patrick leaves Zachary on the road alone. He drives away, exhilarated. After this event, Patrick begins to travel to find his true self and what he really wants with his life.

Marianne moves from her aunt's house, where she was sent to finish high school, to Kilburn. In Kilburn, Marianne enrolls in the local college, only to discover how expensive it all is. She is soon invited to join a co-op in which they help pay for her college in exchange for her labor at the co-op. Marianne loves the co-op, since it is so like the family she deeply misses. Soon, she is working so hard there that she begins to fail all her college courses. Eventually, Marianne takes on more responsibility at the co-op than she can handle with her studies. Then, the leader of the co-op, Abelove, confesses her love for her, and Marianne must move on.

High Point Farm is sold, and the Mulvaneys, or what is left of them, must move on. Michael buys a small split-level ranch for his family, Corrine and Judd. Michael is rarely around, and when he is, he is drunk and abusive. Soon, he and Judd get into an argument. Judd decides to move out months before his high school graduation. Shortly thereafter, Michael declares bankruptcy and leaves Corrine.

Marianne travels, much like Patrick, and eventually ends up in Stump Hill Creek. She meets an eccentric veterinarian and begins working at his animal shelter. Marianne gets the call she has waited twelve years for and goes home to see her father. Unfortunately, her father is dying of cancer and is never truly aware of her presence.

Corrine moves back to Mr. Ephraim. Eventually, she meets a kindly woman, much like herself. The two buy a small farm and recreate the antique shop that Corrine once had at High Point Farm. There is a family reunion. Mike is married and has two kids, with one on the way. Marianne has married her veterinarian and has two kids of her own. Patrick has settled down to teach autistic children and has found a woman to love. Judd is a newspaper editor and still looking for true love.



Family Pictures: Storybook House

Family Pictures: Storybook House Summary

*We Were the Mulvaney*s by Joyce Carol Oates is a novel about the tenuous grasp on happiness that one American family has. The four hundred page novel is about a young girl who is raped by a high school acquaintance in a very small town and the fallout that affected the lives of everyone in her immediate family. It is a snapshot of the darker side of family life in the modern world.

The novel begins with Judd, the youngest child of the Mulvaney family, telling the reader about the little town where he grew up. The town is Mt. Ephraim in the Chautauqua Valley of upstate New York. High Point Farm is the farm where the Mulvaney family lived from 1955 until 1980, a home that will some day be designated a historical landmark.

Judd is an adult now, thirty-years-old, and the editor of a twice-weekly newspaper. Judd remembers how he came along as a last minute addition to the family, always trying to remember things that took place before his birth in order to feel part of the complete memory of the family. Judd talks about a time when he was accessory to an attempted murder, but assures the reader that this is not a confession, but a family album of sorts. Judd speaks of life on the farm, of all the animals and the controlled chaos that was an everyday part of family life on the farm.

Judd takes the reader on a tour of the town, pointing out the building where Mulvaney Roofing, his father's business, was located. He points out the high school and the local diner, the lumber company where his father did the majority of his business, and the country club where his father was once a member. Then, Judd takes the reader up the road to High Point Farm, describing the old road in detail, the sleigh out in front; and the house itself. with lavender paint and matching plum roofing tiles his father applied himself. The house is such a historical mark in the area that it has often been photographed for post cards and calendars, one of which Judd has on his desk at the office.

Judd talks of his mother's love of antiques, and the antique shop she ran out of one of the barns. The location is so out of the way, he tells the reader, that it gets very few customers, which is a good thing since his mother cannot bring herself to part with many of the antiques she sells.

Judd then explains what he intends to do with this document is to tell the truth about the Mulvaney's. Judd wants to explain what might look like a horrible abandonment was really a saving grace of sorts. Judd wants people to understand what happened to his family, when they were the Mulvaney's.



Family Pictures: Storybook House Analysis

This chapter is an introduction, of sorts, that lays down a lot of foreshadowing into what will happen in the following chapters. Judd has already explained to the reader that he is a grown man speaking of things that happened when he was a child. He says that the Mulvaney family no longer lives in the home he describes throughout the chapter. However, by describing the house and the family that lived inside it, Judd has introduced many of the characters that will populate the book and laid out a list of foreshadowing plots the reader hopes to find within the novel.



Family Pictures: The Doe

Family Pictures: The Doe Summary

Judd wakes as an eleven-year-old child, in High Point Farms' large house. He hears a sound he does not recognize. Again, he tells the reader of the many animals that share High Point Farm with the Mulvaney; including, a cat, Little Boots, who shares his bed this night. Judd runs to the window to find a group of deer below his bedroom window, headed for the pasture pond. Judd runs out of his bedroom and out the back door in order to get a closer look.

Judd finds the deer silently drinking from the pond and becomes aware of the beauty of nature, of the absolute silence of the night. Judd can hear everything around him and is suddenly aware of all the animals in the area, of his own heartbeat. Suddenly, the deer become aware of Judd and rush away, leaving a lone doe. Judd stares at the doe, excited by her beauty and feeling a sort of connection between them. Then, a pack of stray dogs come rushing onto the property and the doe runs. Judd is sure the doe will never make it to safety and imagines her injured by the dogs.

Judd runs into the downstairs bathroom and discovers he has cut his foot. Upset over the doe, he quickly runs water to clean it, afraid of waking his parents and being discovered. Mike, the oldest of the Mulvaney children at twenty-one, comes home while Judd is still in the bathroom and finds Judd on his way to his downstairs bedroom. Mike is clearly drunk and not in any condition to help Judd, except to chastise him for going outside without his shoes.

After Mike goes to bed, Judd cleans up his mess and goes back to bed, trying hard not to think about the doe and what the dogs might have done to her. It is part of living on a farm, his mother has always told him. Death is part of living on a farm. However, Judd decides it does not make it any easier to deal with.

Family Pictures: The Doe Analysis

Judd's encounter with the doe is symbolic of some of the foreshadowing in the previous chapter. Judd mentioned a daughter being sent away by her father. The doe is symbolic of this female alone and unprotected. The death of the doe is symbolic, but also it lays more foreshadowing for the reader. The reader must wonder if the doe's death will reflect some horrible event that will befall the daughter in the following chapters.

This chapter also shows Judd's position in the family more clearly than anything else he has stated so far. Judd's adventure in the night, which goes unnoticed by the other members of the family, is symbolic of his position in the family, as an afterthought to what was previously a complete family.



Family Pictures: St. Valentine's 1976

Family Pictures: St. Valentine's 1976 Summary

Corrine spends this Sunday, Valentine's Day 1976, out in the antiques barn refinishing a chair. Her thoughts stray between her work and the various members of the family. Marianne has spent the night before with a friend in town, because last night was the Valentine's Day Prom, and Marianne was a member of the queen's court. Marianne went to the dance with Austin Weidman, a boy in her class. It is Marianne's call requesting a ride home that brings her to the forefront of Corrine's thoughts.

Marianne made her own dress. Corrine asks about the dress when Marianne calls, and about the prom. However, Marianne has already hung up. Corrine thinks this is not unusual, at least at the time. Later, she will question everything about the phone call, but now it seems normal.

Corrine thinks about her daughter, how beautiful she is, how domestic. Corrine herself is not very domestic. She doesn't sew, except to repair rips and lost buttons. Corrine thinks of how her daughter could never lie, especially not to her, and how she and her husband swore they would always love all their children equally. It is because of Michael's past that they made this pledge. Michael Mulvaney Sr. was banished from his own family for rising up against his father and refusing to play his games any longer. Michael never wanted that to happen to his own family.

Family Pictures: St. Valentine's 1976 Analysis

Foreshadowing is rarely as obvious as it is in this chapter. The author comes right out and points to it for the reader. Oates remarks in several places things like, "Corrine would recall in bewilderment this conversation, so matter-of-fact and--well, familiar. So normal." (pg. 29) Obviously, this conversation is going to mean something to the reader later. In light of all the foreshadowing in previous chapters, the reader must realize this is the beginning of something tragic involving the Mulvaney's only daughter. It is still a mystery, however, what that tragic event must be.

There is also something like a warning in the brief story regarding Michael Mulvaney Sr.'s past relationship with his own birth family. Not only is there the idea that he was shunned from people who should have loved him above all else, but there is also the idea of loving one child above all else. Corrine often muses about a bulletin board that is supposed to display achievements of all the children, but pictures of Marianne overwhelm the other children's achievements. Marianne is perhaps the highest treasure of the Mulvaney children.



Family Pictures: Ringing the Cowbell

Family Pictures: Ringing the Cowbell Summary

Corrine rang the cowbell on the back veranda, and Patrick came running, assuming from family history that something good would come of it. There was once a time in the Mulvaney family that the ringing of the cowbell meant a good surprise, like a trip to the ice cream parlor or movie theatre. However, today it is only a trick to get someone to drive into town and pick up Marianne. It's fifteen miles there and back. Patrick is not happy with the interruption to his day.

Patrick is the intellectual in the family. Patrick fell in love with science when he was young and will go to Cornell in the fall on a full scholarship. Patrick had not gone to the prom the night before, despite being a senior, and despite the fact that his sister was the only junior on the queen's court. Patrick had no interest in that sort of thing, just like he had no interest in going to pick up his sister now and listen to her talk about how great the whole thing had been.

Marianne, however, is very quiet on the drive home. She does not speak unless spoken to, and Patrick is not inclined to speak either, because he is annoyed at being asked to do this little errand. Patrick and Marianne are quite different people. She's popular and always busy with various school activities and clubs. Patrick is shy and intelligent, interested only in what his teacher could teach him. However, they are both very close, and Patrick will later wonder why she did not tell him what happened to her.

It had snowed heavily the night before, and the roads were very slick. On a curve not far from High Point Farm, the car skids as Patrick eases it around the curve. Marianne, who had been quiet the entire drive, began to silently pray. Patrick becomes very annoyed with her behavior, suddenly feeling as though his sister were being rude and cutting him out of her life without so much as a word to the contrary. Patrick will later look back on this behavior and realize he should have seen something in it; however, he was so angry at being there, and being ignored, that he did not realize anything was wrong.

Patrick thinks of his sister and her friends at school, of the prayer vigil they held for an injured football player last year, of the way other boys talk about her and her friends. Patrick thinks about his science and the miracle of sight, thinking of the injury to his own eye that somehow everyone at school found out about and teased him about. Patrick thinks of a multitude of things on the final leg of the ride home, angry with Marianne for treating him as though he does not exist, not unlike the kids at school. When they return home, Marianne drops her bag with her dress from the night before inside. Patrick moves to retrieve it for her, but Marianne quickly snatches it up. This only leaves Patrick angrier with his beloved sister.



Family Pictures: Ringing the Cowbell Analysis

This chapter introduces the character of Patrick, who is the middle of the Mulvaney children. Patrick is quite the intellectual, very quiet and almost nerdy, an outcast among his peers at school, including his own sister and her friends. This description sets up quite a bit of foreshadowing for the future of the plot. It is as though the writer is asking the reader; how do you think he will fit in? This chapter also establishes Patrick's relationship to Marianne, which from previous foreshadowing, we know will be challenged later on.

Again, in this chapter there is obvious foreshadowing. There are several spots in which the writer drops in moments of internal thought that are obviously from a time in the future, compared to the moment the current action is taking place. Patrick continuously asks; why did you not tell me? This is foreshadowing the reader is supposed to notice immediately.

There is also symbolism in this chapter. The first bit of symbolism is the ringing of the cowbell. This cowbell once announced to the family that something good was about to happen, a spontaneous trip into town or some other sort of pleasurable outing. When it is rung on this day, however, it symbolizes something bad, an annoyance that Patrick does not want to partake in, but has no choice. This is symbolic of the content state of the family before this day, and the tragic event that will change all of that. The other symbolism in this chapter is Marianne and Patrick's relationship. Before this day, they were as close as any brother and sister could hope to be. However, now Marianne will not speak to her brother, and she angers him. This symbolizes a break in their relationship that has been foreshadowed by many statements made in previous chapters about the separation of the daughter from the family.

Family Pictures: Family Code

Family Pictures: Family Code Summary

Many things in the Mulvaney family were coded. Codes included the way they called each other by nicknames, such as Button for Marianne, Ranger for Judd, Mule for Mike Jr., and Curley for Michael Sr. Their conversations were also coded. When Mom or Dad wanted to discipline a child, they would often speak through the animals, and the children were to respond to the animal. However, the afternoon after coming home from the prom, when Corrine asks feathers, the canary in the family kitchen, why Marianne did not go to church that morning, Marianne breaks the code by responding how unfair it is to keep a bird in a cage.

This is the first time the code is ever broken in the Mulvaney home, and Judd adds at the end of the chapter that it is broken for the entire family that day.

Family Pictures: Family Code Analysis

This chapter is symbolic of the coming destruction of this family. By refusing to play by the rules, Marianne has effectively shattered a game the family has always played. It is symbolic of the destruction that the rape of Marianne will have on the rest of the family when it becomes public knowledge.



Family Pictures: Dirty Girl

Family Pictures: Dirty Girl Summary

When Mike Jr. was a senior in high school, the night after the final game of the season, a bunch of his friends are involved in something bad with a girl from the school. Della Rae Duncan is a girl from the poor side of town. Her mother is on welfare and her brother was killed in Vietnam. On the night of the game, some of Mike Jr.'s friends take her to the cemetery, get her drunk, and reportedly do things they should not have done.

Della Rae's brother worked for Mulvaney Roofing before he went to Vietnam. Michael Mulvaney cuts his obituary out of the paper and hangs it on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Michael and Corrine often argue about Vietnam, Michael behind the war effort and Corrine against it. Mike Jr. chooses his father's side, Patrick his mothers. Judd is too young to pick sides, and Marianne only hopes the war will end soon.

There are rumors at school that semester about what Della Rae supposedly did in the cemetery with the football players and their friends. Mike Jr. is not involved, though he knew the boys who were. All the boys at school know about it, or think they do, but the girls only know there is a story, not the details. Marianne does not know exactly what is being said. She is a good Christian girl and tends to stay away from rumors. However, when she runs into Della Rae in the locker room one January after this event, she runs from her as though she knows all the rumors are true. Marianne sees hatred in the girl's eyes and runs.

Family Pictures: Dirty Girl Analysis

This chapter touches on the theme of perception. This chapter suggests that, because a girl is poor and unkempt, because she is not like all the other girls at school, that it is her fault when boys take advantage of her and perpetrate a crime upon her. It is the way society saw victims of sexual crimes in the time period that this novel takes place, the 1970s.

This is also symbolic of Marianne. Marianne runs from this girl, who was hurt and abused. She sees nothing of herself in the other girl, the 'dirty girl.' However, from foreshadowing in previous chapters, the reader knows that something equally tragic has befallen Marianne. However, Marianne has been described as the total opposite of this girl, nowhere near as dirty or perhaps deserving of what has happened to her. There is also foreshadowing in the way the rumors spread around school regarding Della Rae. These same rumors may very possibly begin flying about Marianne, herself.



Family Pictures: Providence

Family Pictures: Providence Summary

In December 1938, Corrine is only seven years old. She and her mother are on their way home from a visit to family when a sudden snowstorm hits and their car is forced into a ditch after they attempt to cross an icy bridge and fail. Corrine's mother insists they get out and walk, because they will freeze if they stay in the car. Mrs. Hausmann believes she knows which way to go, however it becomes clear quite quickly that they will never find their way in the blinding snow. Suddenly, in the dead of winter and in the middle of a snowstorm, Corrine and her mother both see fireflies. They follow the fireflies and find a small schoolhouse where there is a working stove. They stay there until they are rescued a few days later. One man died in the storm, and another lost both legs to frostbite.

Corrine will often tell this story to anyone who will listen; swearing that it is the truth, though everyone knows fireflies do not come out in the winter. However, she is a mother, and mothers are always right.

Family Pictures: Providence Analysis

This chapter, and the story contained within it, is symbolic of Corrine's view of life and her deep belief in God. Corrine has such a strong conviction in God and his goodness that she believes that He reached down from heaven to save her and her mother from death. This also foreshadows Corrine's reaction to her child's attack, and the attack she will perceive on her own family when the news of what happened to Marianne is made public.



Family Pictures: Strawberries and Cream

Family Pictures: Strawberries and Cream Summary

High Point Farm is full of antique clocks that Corrine has bought over the years at various flea markets and auctions. Most of the clocks do not tell the correct time; only the electric clock in the kitchen tells the correct time most of the time. This clock was a gift to Michael from his poker buddies on his forty-fifth birthday, because he is notorious for being late. Marianne has several clocks in her bedroom, including an alarm clock that she has not needed for many years and a wristwatch. Marianne is afraid to look at the watch now, because she is afraid the crystal has been cracked.

Marianne enters her bedroom, thinking of Patrick and hoping he does not know what happened to her the night before. Marianne opens her garment bag and removes her underclothes, shoes, and toiletry kit. She puts all of it, except the kit, into the bottom of her trashcan. Marianne leaves the dress she made herself, the white gown with the strawberry and cream lace at the edges, inside the bag and hangs it in the very back of the closet, out of sight. As Marianne stands at the closet door, she remembers snippets of conversation with a boy named Zachary. Zachary tells her that he has no one to talk to about serious things, that he can only be himself with her. Marianne also thinks about what a good girl she has always been, ironing her dad's handkerchiefs when she was only ten. She thinks about her own mother and how opposite they truly are.

Marianne pets her cat, Muffin, and then goes into the bathroom to relieve herself. There is pain in her bladder and pain when she sets all her weight on the toilet. When there is blood, Marianne is relieved, sure this is only her period beginning a few weeks early. Marianne thinks about when she first got her period, how embarrassed she was to talk about it with her mother, of how she always scrubbed the stains from her underwear before putting it in the wash. Marianne also thinks about how tomboyish she has always been, what a daredevil she tried to be.

It is Sunday, and Marianne is expected to make dinner with her mother. However, Marianne slips out the back door and goes to the barn to visit her horse, Molly-O. Marianne sneaks Molly-O some extra handfuls of oats and brushes her coat until it shines. Then, she must do the same for the other horses, not one to play favorites with any of the animals. There are the barn cats to pet, as well. The whole time, Marianne thinks about the night before and words the boy spoke to her, of bathing twice at her friend's house and running through a parking lot in the middle of the night.

Marianne goes from the barn to the antique's barn to look for a painting her mother bought a long time ago that Marianne suddenly needs to see now. Marianne digs through the cluttered room, wiping dust off the multitudes of Corrine's acquisitions. Marianne takes a few old postcards with short little notes from people she did not know



to people she did not know. Finally, she finds the painting, called *The Pilgrim*, stacked among other forgotten paintings. It is the painting of a barefoot woman kneeling in a valley below a light with the shape of Jesus' face in it. The caption on the painting said, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Eventually, Marianne goes into the house and helps her mother with dinner. Dinner is a loud and exciting event in the Mulvaney house, with everyone talking all at once. Marianne is uncommonly quiet, rising quite often to retrieve bread and whatever else anyone could want, smiling when she thought it appropriate and sometimes when it might not have been. During supper, Marianne looks at the Work Schedule on the bulletin board. If not for this schedule, nothing at High Point Farm would ever get done. Around the schedule are pictures of Marianne herself, including pictures of Marianne in her prom dress. Marianne tries not to look at the picture. as she wonders if her family has figured out that she is not right anymore.

After dinner, feeling sick, Marianne returns to her bedroom. Here, she removes her prom dress from its hiding place. Marianne made the dress with the intention of submitting it into a 4H contest that June. It seems undamaged, except for a torn shoulder strap and a few dirty spots she washed in her friend's sink the night before. She turns it and finds several large stains that have faded to brown at the back of the skirt.

Marianne thinks of the dance and all the boys she danced with, some of them seniors. Marianne remembers her friends coming to High Point Farm before the dance to see her dress. They praise her sewing skills, but tease her for her taste in prom dates. Marianne remembers back to when they announced her name as a part of the queen's court that Friday at school. How vain she had been! How excited. Marianne wonders, now, if maybe it was not a sin to be that vain.

Marianne is in pain and is concerned that Patrick knows what happened to her. Marianne worries that her mother will wonder why no one has called for her that day. Finally, Marianne takes another bath, afraid she is seriously hurt and afraid to ask anyone for help. Marianne finally closes her eyes and offers her pain up to God, the only thing she feels she can do.

Family Pictures: Strawberries and Cream Analysis

Much of the foreshadowing from the previous chapters has come full circle. Marianne Mulvaney was raped at her prom, the tragic event most of the previous chapters have foreshadowed. Marianne deals with this painful experience by hiding it away, as she symbolically did with her stained dress.

The theme of perception is touched on in this chapter, as well. Marianne is seen by her family as normal, if a little quieter. However, Marianne constantly asks herself if she is saying goodbye to those she loves, wondering if she has not already disappeared from

this family. It is as though Marianne already sees herself as being pushed out of the family.

The painting in the antique barn is symbolic of Marianne's faith in God. Rather than questioning why God has allowed this horrible thing to happen to her as most women might do, Marianne has turned to her faith to get her through this. The picture, then, symbolizes her belief in God's offering of grace to those who suffer.

The dress, too, is symbolic. Not only does Marianne hide it away, much as she does her own pain, but the dress represents her life the way it was before this horrible event. Marianne found herself to be vain before the prom, to be unworthy and unkind in a way that is not in tune with her Christian views. The dress symbolizes this person she was before the prom, not the person she is now.

Family Pictures: Secrets

Family Pictures: Secrets Summary

As the baby of the family, Judd is often the last to know about the secrets in the family. Often, he will hear his parent's talking in low tones and never come to find out what it had all been about. He will see Mom and Dad standing out in the driveway talking, curious what it is they are saying. Once, Judd asks Patrick what he thinks Mom and Dad are always talking about, and Patrick says sex. Judd does not know for sure what sex is, but Judd is impressed with his big brother's knowledge.

Judd remembers once when he was three-years-old, he walked in on his parent's "in the act," after a nightmare. Not until he was older did he know what it was he walked in on. Judd also remembers another time when Michael Sr. took Mike Jr. and Patrick into the living room and shut the door. The living room door is never closed in the Mulvaney house. Judd hears his father ask the boys about something that happened the night of the final season football game and asking them, again and again, if they knew that one doesn't treat a woman badly, no matter who she is. Judd asks his mom what is going on, and she tells him to ask Dad. Judd asks Marianne instead.

Family Pictures: Secrets Analysis

Judd is the baby, and this chapter underlines his place in this family by describing the way information trickles down to him. There is irony in the idea that the child who is last to know, the child who does not share in the memories of the family as a whole, is the child who has taken on the task of telling his family's history. It is also ironic that Mike Jr. is involved in the rape of another girl, no matter how distant, just a few years before his own sister is brutally attacked. Michael Sr.'s reaction to this other girl's rape is honorable. It foreshadows any reaction he will have to his own daughter's attack.



Family Pictures: The Revelation

Family Pictures: The Revelation Summary

Corrine is in town running errands, when she runs into a local doctor's wife. Corrine tries to avoid the woman, because she does not particularly like her. This woman is a part of the country club group that Corrine finds distasteful. Corrine never did want Michael Mulvaney Sr. to join the country club, despite his own excitement at finally being accepted among the most elite of the local elite. Michael has always craved acceptance in a social and private way, and this country club somehow fulfills that for him. Corrine would rather have very little to do with the club and its members.

However, Corrine cannot avoid this woman, who after a few cordial words inside the post office has followed Corrine out onto the street. Corrine stops, because she has no choice, and this woman tells her that her daughter, Marianne, has been missing school and spending the past three days inside the local Catholic Church.

Family Pictures: The Revelation Analysis

Michael Sr.'s desperate need to be accepted by the local hierarchy touches on the theme of perception. Michael wants the world to see him as not only a great family man and business man, but also as a member of something prestigious and elite. It is about the way people see him, perceive him. The way Michael is seen by the people around him is very important to him and to this theme of the novel. Corrine's opinion of the country club also symbolizes her part in the theme of perception. Corrine would rather have nothing to do with any of these people. This underscores her character and foreshadows how she will react when her daughter's situation becomes public.

Family Pictures: Babies

Family Pictures: Babies Summary

Corrine gives birth to her first child in March of 1954. Corrine is a mature mother at twenty-three, where most of the girls in the ward are in their late teens. Corrine tries hard to behave as such, though she is so overwhelmed by the beauty of her son that she can hardly believe God has truly given her this gift to keep.

Corrine's second child, another boy, keeps her very busy. The two boys roam High Point Farm, which they bought shortly after Mike's birth, like the animals that will soon come to occupy the farm in force. It is Marianne who is their miracle baby, the one who rarely fusses, who sleeps through the night right away and never wanders off. Late at night, Michael and Corrine will talk of Marianne. They're in awe of the child and suggest that perhaps God gave them something they cannot possibly be worthy of. Then comes Judd, like an afterthought. Marianne is like a second mother to him, always carrying him around and helping mother like any five-year-old would do.

Family Pictures: Babies Analysis

This chapter underlines the Mulvaney family hierarchy and shows what a handful Corrine had in her two older boys. Marianne's good behavior and her parents' awe at her behavior are symbolic of the trouble-free life they had expected to happen for this child. Their love for her is also evident in this chapter, separate from the emotions they shared for their other three children. It's ironic that the Mulvaney's easiest and most loved child should be the one that will tear their family apart.



Family Pictures: Damaged Girl

Family Pictures: Damaged Girl Summary

Corrine cannot understand why Marianne would go to a Catholic Church. The Mulvaney's are not loyal to any one church; they often change churches as the mood strikes Corrine. However, they have never and will never attend a Catholic Church. Corrine drives to the church and goes inside, hoping the country club lady had been mistaken, and she will not find Marianne inside. However, Corrine does spot Marianne praying in one of the pews.

On the drive home, Corrine asks Marianne why she was at the church, and why she has not been attending school. Marianne refuses to answer, instead praying silently in the passenger seat, recoiling every time her mother reaches over to touch her. Corrine drives through town, confused, unsure where to go or what to do. Corrine almost hopes that Michael Sr. will be standing outside his office when they drive by. However, he is not there. Corrine drives by many other familiar buildings, her mind wandering over her memories of them. Finally, she suggests to Marianne that she take her to see their family doctor, Dr. Oakley. Marianne refuses.

Corrine remembers an old rag quilt she gave her daughter several years before and suggests that they go home so she can lay under the quilt and sip a cup of soup. Marianne seems to like this idea. However, before they can reach the house, an animal jumps out in front of the car and Corrine cannot stop. Corrine hits the animal. Marianne becomes hysterical, screaming uncontrollably.

Family Pictures: Damaged Girl Analysis

The Catholic Church has become a symbol of safety to Marianne, where she can give her pain up to God. It's also a place she can go where her mother will not think to look for her. Corrine sees the Catholic Church as a symbol of hypocrisy. Corrine does not believe that Catholics believe the same as Christians. It is ironic to Corrine to find her child in this place of worship that is not their kind of worship. Corrine's own hypocrisy is ironic as well, since she believes herself to be a good Christian, and yet, she holds such pride and judgment in her heart regarding another form of religion. Corrine has taught her daughter about God, and how He is a just God. Yet, she is making judgments regarding her child's choice of places to worship.



Family Pictures: The Lovers

Family Pictures: The Lovers Summary

Corrine and Michael Sr. met in the summer of 1952 at Schroon Lake in the Adirondacks. Corrine was a waitress at a resort, and Michael was working with a construction crew. That summer, Michael was dating a girl with whom Corrine was acquainted. When Michael grew tired of the girl, wary of her desires for a commitment, he broke up with her. Corrine was sent by her friends to read him the riot act about the situation and to ask him to take the girl back. While they talked, they walked around a lake. In the lake, a swan became entangled in a net. Corrine jumped into the water to save the swan, and Michael was forced to follow. That was the moment he fell in love with her.

Before he met Corrine, Michael was a Casanova, who enjoyed women very much. He simply did not want a commitment in his life. After being disowned by his entire family, including a much-loved sister named Marian, Michael was shy of love and commitment. However, Corrine changed his mind. When Corrine wanted to invite her ex-fiancé to the wedding, Michael became incensed at the idea. Michael assured her that he was enough for her all on his own. It is the memory of these events that run through Corrine's mind as she sits in the doctor's office, waiting to find out what is wrong with her daughter.

Family Pictures: The Lovers Analysis

The irony of Michael choosing Corrine, because of her quick decision skills and her decisive and protective ways, shines here when Corrine draws strength from his declarations of commitment. Michael and Corrine draw strength from each other, but it is Corrine who is clearly the stronger of the two. Yet, it is she who needs his strength now. Michael's words on the eve of their wedding become a symbol of the strength Corrine needs from Michael. There is also foreshadowing in this chapter. In this chapter, the reader sees a happy couple falling in love. The foreshadowing is the question of whether or not this couple will be able to maintain this love affair in light of what has happened to their only daughter.



Family Pictures: Imminent Mortality

Family Pictures: Imminent Mortality Summary

Corrine waits for Michael in the antiques barn. Corrine has always been the one to tell Michael any bad news that has happened to the Mulvaney family, including the time Patrick was kicked by a horse and lost the sight in his left eye. When Michael finds Corrine in the barn despite the cold, all she tells him is that Marianne's been injured. Michael knows from the look in Corrine's eyes.

After Corrine hit the animal, possibly a raccoon, she made a u-turn back into town and rushed Marianne into Dr. Oakley's office. Dr. Oakley calmed Marianne down, as much as he could, and took her into a room to examine her. When he came back, he told Corrine that her daughter had been sexually assaulted. Dr. Oakley assured a shocked Corrine that Marianne was okay. He prescribed pain pills and sleeping pills, and tried to suggest that Corrine and Michael not do anything rash.

Corrine tells Michael all of this, expecting him to become angry. Instead, Michael sits and takes it all in like a man being told he is about to die. Then, Corrine tells him that Marianne is fine, that the doctor has assured her that she will recover just fine. Patrick appears as Corrine finishes speaking and wants to know what is going on.

Family Pictures: Imminent Mortality Analysis

Corrine takes her daughter to the doctor. The doctor here symbolizes a savior of sorts. The doctor assures Corrine that all is well and that they should keep their mouths shut about what has happened. Corrine takes these words to heart. The foreshadowing in this chapter is wondering what Michael will do with the information Corrine has just given him.



Family Pictures: Every Heartbeat

Family Pictures: Every Heartbeat Summary

Judd remembers a time when he straddled his bike beside the brook in their lower driveway, allowing himself to become hypnotized by the flow of the water. A thought occurs to him as he watches the water flow, that he could be gone just like that. Then, his dad and his brother, Mike, drive past. It occurs to him that they, too, could be gone. It is a thought that will stay with Judd for a long time.

Family Pictures: Every Heartbeat Analysis

The brook and the water flowing symbolize the passing of time to a young Judd and mortality, as a child understands it. This foreshadows the coming destruction of the Mulvaney family.



Family Pictures: The Assault

Family Pictures: The Assault Summary

The first thing Michael Mulvaney Sr. does after learning the identity of the boy who attacked his daughter is to drive to the boy's house. A sheriff's deputy who is a friend of his meets Michael in the driveway. Corrine called him. Michael marches up to the house and demands to speak to Zachary Lundt, the boy Marianne identified as her attacker. Mort Lundt, the boy's father, is a friend of Michael's, but he does not act friendly this night. Mort tries to keep Michael from entering the house. Michael makes accusations. The deputy and Mort try to stop Michael from moving any further into the house, and Michael throws them off. Then, Zachary appears on the stairs. Michael lunges for Zachary, hitting Mort in the face in the process. Zachary begins to fall and Michael grabs him in a bear hug and cracks several ribs. He flings him against a wall, where he breaks his nose.

Family Pictures: The Assault Analysis

Ironically, Michael does the most damage to Zachary in an attempt to keep him from falling down the stairs. Michael is a decent person and cannot bring harm to other people, despite his desire to do so. However, this assault, as the author calls it, is foreshadowing of events to come. It cannot bode well for Michael to be accused of assault in front of a sheriff's deputy.



Family Pictures: The Penitent

Family Pictures: The Penitent Summary

Marianne had an alcoholic drink the night she was raped and cannot clearly remember all the events of that night. Now, Marianne refuses to testify against Zachary, because she is afraid her fractured memory will cause her to tell things that are not true against him. Therefore, since no charges will be brought against Zachary, the Lundt's have agreed not to prosecute Michael for assault.

Marianne does not return to school until March, keeping up with her school assignments from home. Marianne spends her time doing as many chores as she can and praying as often as possible. Marianne is grateful to be alive, aware that Zachary could have killed her that night in the back seat of his car. Marianne will not talk of this to anyone, especially her father who is so angry. None of her friends have called to check on her, and when she calls her closest friend, the friend's mother shuns her as though they had not known each other since fifth grade. Corrine quietly finds Marianne's prom dress and throws it away.

Marianne wonders how much her brothers know. Surely, Mike Jr. knew from the very start, and Patrick, who is in the same grade as Zachary, also likely knows. Judd must be unaware. She returns to Dr. Oakley and undergoes a procedure that she chooses not to know anything about. Eventually, she begins seeing a good Christian therapist.

Things change at home. Michael Mulvaney Sr. becomes quieter, and Marianne can hear him and her mother argue late at night. Sometimes, Michael leaves the house in the middle of the night with no explanation. Corrine never gets phone calls anymore, and she does not whistle the way she once did.

Marianne remembers the night of the prom. She remembers going to a party at a girl's house and seeing Zachary there. She was supposed to go home with Austin Weidman, but when he was ready to go, Marianne was talking to Zachary. Zachary really needed someone to talk to, about his place in the world and about God. Marianne wanted to stay, and Zachary said he would give her a ride to Trisha's house. It was shortly after that that Zachary gave the alcoholic drink to her. Marianne remembers getting into his car and nothing else.

Marianne decides, one February morning, that she is ready to return to school. She wakes early in the morning. The house is still silent, and she finds that her father is not home. Marianne whispers a "sorry" to him. Marianne's thoughts move to school and the rumors that have been going around there. She decides that she must walk barefoot in the snow, a test to prove she is worthy to God. She thinks she must hurry before her mother wakes to stop her. However, Marianne steps on something, a tiny mouse heart that the cats have left for her. After cleaning it up, she has forgotten about her walk in the snow.



Family Pictures: The Penitent Analysis

Marianne's refusal to testify against Zachary is a symbol of her belief in God. Marianne believes that if she testifies against Zachary and her testimony is inaccurate, then she will be committing a sin. Ironically, the victim is once again being victimized; only this time she is also the perpetrator. Also, irony exists in the fact that Zachary is getting off for this crime through Marianne's belief in God, when it is this same belief that Zachary used to lure Marianne into his car to commit the crime in the first place.

The theme of perception begins to really show in this chapter, as well. The community of Mr. Ephraim has already begun to shun the Mulvaneys. Corrine and Marianne's friends have stopped calling. The community sees Marianne, not as a victim, but as a liar attempting to injure one of the elite. This eschewed perception has left Marianne feeling abandoned and taken away the lightness in Corrine's personality. It also foreshadows events to come.

Marianne becomes convinced that walking in the snow will be a test by God of her worthiness to be alive. However, a dead mouse distracts her. This mouse is symbolic of life and death on a farm and, more than likely, saves Marianne's life.

Family Pictures: Ask Dad

Family Pictures: Ask Dad Summary

Judd is once again, as the baby of the family, left out of the loop. Judd wants to know what has happened to Marianne, and why she is staying home from school. Judd asks Patrick, and he tells him that Marianne has had some trouble, but she is okay. This surprises Judd, because Marianne never has trouble. Corrine tells Judd that Marianne's had the flu and so has Dad, but they are both better now. Judd finally goes to Mike.

Mike, who was a town hero when he played football for the local high school, is now an adult working for his father's roofing business. Mike enjoys women and is often out on dates, which is how Judd finds him, getting ready for yet another date. Mike tells Judd that some guy at school, a boy in Patrick's class, hurt Marianne. However, he says that he was going to pay for it. Judd asks why no one will talk about it. Mike says he should ask Dad.

Family Pictures: Ask Dad Analysis

Once again, this scenario of Judd being the last to know is symbolic of the hierarchy of a family, and Judd's place in it. Mike's reaction to Judd's question is also symbolic of the anger most of the family is feeling, though no one seems to be expressing it. However, things will soon change.

Family Pictures: Boys Will Be Boys

Family Pictures: Boys Will Be Boys Summary

Marianne returns to school. On her desk in first year French, there is a picture of a man's penis with directions written on it. The class waits in anticipation of Marianne's reaction; however, she enters just before the bell, places her bag on the drawing and does not see it.

Family Pictures: Boys Will Be Boys Analysis

The obscene picture drawn on Marianne's desk is symbolic of the cruel nature of teenagers, especially in the time period this event takes place. In the 1970's, the victim of a sexual assault was often seen as unclean and, even to a certain extent, as though she had been asking for what she got. This also touches on the theme of perception. People's perceptions of Marianne have altered considerably in her absence.



Family Pictures: Phase

Family Pictures: Phase Summary

Michael Sr. has taken to staying out all night or most of the night, going to an old hangout of his called "The Wolf's Head." As a result, Michael is letting his business slide. Corrine often gets phone calls from people looking for him during the day, from customers annoyed at something left undone. Corrine is also concerned for her boys, who seem to be drifting away from her these days.

The Wolf's Head is a place where the Mulvaney family once spent long summer days, the kids and Corrine rowing in the lake, and Michael playing poker with his pals. Corrine grew concerned about the way Michael acted when they would go there, especially when, one evening, she found him dancing provocatively with a woman who was his friend's wife. Corrine convinced Michael not to go back there, and he had not for years - until now.

Corrine needs Michael. She needs to talk to him. Some of her friends have come back to her, but she cannot discuss Marianne with them. Michael, though, has drifted away from the family. Michael is also making decisions about finances without telling Corrine. Corrine accidentally discovers that Michael has hired a lawyer, but he will not tell her why. Michael also complains about people avoiding him downtown, of lost business. Michael claims that he lost a bid to roof a county hospital because of the rumors swirling about him and the Lundt's.

One night, Corrine gets a call that Michael has been injured. Corrine rushes out to The Wolf's Head and finds that Michael has been in a fight. Michael does not tell her what the fight was about, but she decides to stay the night there with him. He reveals to her how he had been trying to get the DA to prosecute Zachary Lundt without Marianne's testimony. Then, Michael confesses how he cannot look at his daughter, that he is ashamed that he has been unable to protect her. He cannot bring himself to kill the man who hurt her. Corrine is saddened by this revelation, but is determined to fix her husband. After all, he was her first love.

Family Pictures: Phase Analysis

The Mulvaney family is beginning to fall apart, as foreshadowed in the first few chapters. Corrine remembers a time when she nearly lost her husband to alcohol and promiscuity. This seems to foreshadow the coming events at the end of the chapter.



Family Pictures: Gone

Family Pictures: Gone Summary

After a few hours of phone calls, Marianne is packed up to go live with a distant cousin of Corrine's, who has no children of her own. Marianne takes Muffin with her.

Family Pictures: Gone Analysis

The statement at the beginning of the novel, the foreshadowing of events to come, has come true. The only daughter has been sent away to save the father. It is ironic that Corrine has chosen her husband over her daughter, when it is her daughter who has been injured and needs a mother's care, now more than ever. Marianne's taking of Muffin also foreshadows events to come.



The Huntsman: One by One

The Huntsman: One by One Summary

The Mulvaney children move away from home one by one. First to leave is Mike. Mike had been living at home with the freedom to come and go as he pleased. However, he moved out before Marianne was sent away, when things became complicated between him and his father. First, Mike lived in Mt. Ephraim, spending more time drinking and causing trouble than working. Later, he joined the Marines.

Marianne is sent to live with a cousin (that no one had ever met) in a small town on the other side of the mountains that. Corrine promises they will go and visit her, but they never do. There are weekly phone calls, but there is never talk of her coming home or of visits. Dad is never mentioned, either.

Patrick leaves in September of 1976 to enroll in Cornell and always finds a reason why he cannot return home over his school breaks. Judd is the only Mulvaney child left behind. Judd misses his brothers and sisters. He misses Patrick the most, and wonders why they no longer care about what goes on at High Point Farm.

The Huntsman: One by One Analysis

The children of the Mulvaney family move away one by one, as would be expected of grown children. This time it is different, however. Mike's leaving is symbolic of his anger at his father for not doing anything to protect Marianne, and his own inability to do anything about it himself. Patrick's absence is characteristic of his personality, though his absence is symbolic to Judd. To Judd, Patrick's leaving is abandonment. Marianne's absence is a constant reminder to the rest of the family of the bad thing that has happened to her. Instead of curing the hurt, in an ironic turn, her absence has become a symbol of the failures each family member committed in allowing her to become hurt.



The Huntsman: Valedictorian Speech

The Huntsman: Valedictorian Speech Summary

Before leaving for college, Patrick Mulvaney is valedictorian of his graduating class. At first, Patrick is unsure if he should do the speech. He's so full of anger and disgust at his classmates for their treatment of his family, especially his sister, after the rape. He's not sure he even wants to prepare and perform a speech regarding their future. He's especially aware that Zachary Lundt will be in attendance. However, Patrick eventually decides he must go ahead.

On the day of graduation, Patrick chooses to go to the school early to finish work on his speech. This greatly disappoints Corrine, who had hoped to have the whole family ride in together. When the Mulvaney family does arrive at the graduation, Judd wonders if they are lepers for the way the rest of the attendees openly avoid them. Corrine does not seem to notice the reactions of those around her. She is loud and outgoing, as she has always been. However, Michael Sr. clearly notices, for he keeps to himself and refuses to meet anyone's eye. This is quite the opposite of how he once would have handled himself in a crowd.

The ceremony proceeds like any other graduation ceremony. Just twenty minutes into it, however, Michael Sr. slips out, claiming a need for fresh air. Several speeches are read, awards given out, and a local congressman gives a speech. Then, Patrick is called to the stage to read his speech. Before he can begin, however, the auditorium is overwhelmed by the smell of rotten eggs. Someone has set off a stink bomb in the ventilation system.

No one is injured in the rush to exit the building, only a few upset stomachs scattered among the victims of the prank. Theories abound over who might have done it, and it is eventually assumed someone from a rival high school has committed the prank. The Mulvaney family meets at the family station wagon, where Michael Sr. has been waiting. They discuss the disappointing timing of the prank. It is here that Judd begins to realize it is not a rival school who played the prank, but Patrick himself. Patrick will never admit it, but Judd is certain just the same.

The Huntsman: Valedictorian Speech Analysis

This is the first time the reader is allowed to see the depth of Patrick Mulvaney's awareness of the damaging effects of the rumors regarding Marianne's ordeal at school, and his own reactions to them. This is part of the theme of perception. The kids at school now see Marianne as a sex object and have no problem talking about it around Patrick, or leaving comments about it in bathroom stalls. Patrick's way of dealing with this has been to keep it secret. This is foreshadowing, because the reader must realize



that eventually Patrick will have to deal with his emotions, and some event will occur when he does.

The reaction of the other attendees at the graduation is also part of the theme of perception. Judd notices right off how he and his parents are treated as though they are lepers. This bad thing has happened, and no one in town wants to be near the Mulvaney's. It's as though, by talking to them, they will be tainted by this tragic event. They see the Mulvaney family as damaged goods.



The Huntsman: Snow After Easter

The Huntsman: Snow After Easter Summary

Patrick is in Ithaca attending his second year at Cornell, and Marianne is coming on the bus to visit him. Patrick had to work in the lab, so he is running nearly a full hour late. Patrick arrives at the bus station, and he cannot find his sister. Patrick walks around the depot for almost an hour searching for her. He finally realizes that she was right in front of him the whole time. Marianne is asleep on a bench. Patrick did not recognize her, because she has cut her hair very short and has lost weight. Patrick thinks she looks like a prepubescent boy.

Marianne graduated the past spring from high school and is now living in Kilburn, attending Kilburn College. Unable to pay the fees for her books and supplies, Marianne found a co-op where she could live and get most of her books for a trade. Marianne works very hard at the co-op, to the detriment of her schoolwork, Patrick quickly learns. However, she seems happy.

Marianne insisted on bringing food so she could make Patrick a home cooked meal. In the small room he rents, Marianne pulls vegetables, noodles and bread from her bag and makes Patrick a wonderful meal of minestrone. Over dinner, they talk about the co-op, about Patrick's studies, some about home, and the cousin Marianne lived with. The more they talk, the more Patrick becomes aware of the differences in his sister. His anger grows.

After dinner, Marianne brings out a packet of pictures from home that Judd has sent her. Marianne is excited as she goes through them, commenting on everyone, from the many animals pictured to a lovely candid photo of Corrine and another of Michael Sr. climbing into his new car. Marianne regrets that Judd did not send a photo of himself.

Marianne asks Patrick if he thinks Dad will call her home soon. When he does not answer, she tells him of a phone call she received from Mom. Mom said that if Dad were home, she was sure he would want to speak to her. Marianne was so excited afterward that she could not sleep. Patrick becomes angry and yells at Marianne. He says she's crazy to want to see Dad after what he did to her. Then, he leaves the room. When he returns, Marianne is asleep on the couch. Patrick tells himself that Marianne's problems are not his own. He has his own trouble to deal with.

The Huntsman: Snow After Easter Analysis

Marianne's very attitude is symbolic to Patrick of everything he failed to do for her, and the justice that has not been achieved. Marianne appears happy, although, she openly admits that she is failing out of college. It's a fact that surprises Patrick, because she was such a good high school student. Marianne works hard, but it is at a co-op that seems questionable to Patrick, run by a man who appears to have covert motivations in



Patrick's opinion. This also touches on the theme of perception. Patrick sees things through his own experiences and knowledge and Marianne through hers. Therefore, they see things differently.

It is ironic to Patrick how Marianne still clings to the idea of becoming a part of their family, once more. Patrick wants nothing more to do with the people left at High Point Farm. Patrick is angry at the people he went to school with, angry with the way his parent's treated Marianne, and unwilling to return to the scene of the crime. Patrick does not understand why Marianne wants nothing more than to return. Marianne, of all people, should want to stay away.



The Huntsman: The Huntsman

The Huntsman: The Huntsman Summary

"The Huntsman" is a German woodcut that Corrine found at a flea market. Corrine would often take the children with her to flea markets and auctions. One time, she allowed Judd to bid on a rocking horse that he won for eighty dollars. Corrine had stacks and stacks of treasures she bought to sell in her antiques store that she had fallen in love with, or one of the kids fell in love with, and she swore to never sell. "The Huntsman" was one of these items for Patrick.

Patrick had "The Huntsman" hanging in his room for a large part of his adolescence. The drawing was of a hunter standing on a rocky promontory, aiming his rifle at a mountain ram on an opposite promontory. The picture captures the hunter just before he pulls the trigger, or it would seem. Also in the picture is a rabbit, hidden only a few feet from the hunter. It is not the idea of hunting that fascinates Patrick about this painting, but the curiosity over whether or not the hunter would have fired, or lowered his gun. Patrick once again remembers this picture after Marianne's visit. Patrick becomes obsessed with it, wondering if he were capable of hunting, of killing.

The Huntsman: The Huntsman Analysis

There is foreshadowing in Patrick's sudden, renewed interest in this woodcut from his childhood. Patrick has never been a violent person, being the intellectual of the family. However, after Marianne's visit, Patrick becomes obsessed with the power to hold something's life in one's hands.



The Huntsman: Plastica

The Huntsman: Plastica Summary

Patrick calls Judd and tells him he is going to attend a Plastica concert in an experiment on living like a normal person. Patrick has been told by a girl he liked that he is cold. Patrick has decided he wants to be less cold, to be more normal. So, he arranges to attend a Plastica concert with some friends in an attempt to be more like them.

At the concert, Patrick is uncomfortable despite several beers he had before. Patrick listens to the music as long as he can stand it, attempting to hear the lyrics and find something enjoyable about the loud, pulsing noise. However, even the lyrics serve to offend and annoy him. Finally, Patrick stands to leave and believes he sees Zachary Lundt in the crowd. Patrick rushes to catch up with him, but when he does, it turns out to be someone else.

The Huntsman: Plastica Analysis

There is foreshadowing in Patrick's reaction to the boy he thought was Zachary Lundt. Patrick, a non-violent person, chased after this boy with the intention of possibly inflicting bodily harm. This is not only a surprise to Patrick, but it is ironic to the plot. Patrick, the intellectual, the non-violent child among a family of hunters and fighters, is suddenly motivated to bring physical harm to another person. The reader must wonder what this change in character has in store in later chapters.



The Huntsman: Dignity

The Huntsman: Dignity Summary

Michael Mulvaney Sr. walks into the bar at the country club, where he is a member, and immediately becomes aware of the change in conversations around him. Normally, he would have been invited to join one of the tables, but everyone turns away from him as though they do not see him. Michael orders a beer and looks around the bar, noticing some old acquaintances in the back. Again, they all avoid his stare. Michael has enough after another drink and walks over to the table where his old acquaintances are sitting. Michael greets the men. When one of them looks at him with disapproval, Michael dumps his entire beer in his face. The man is a local judge.

The Huntsman: Dignity Analysis

The theme of perception again appears in this chapter. Michael Mulvaney walks into the bar of his country club and automatically assumes the men here are judging him, although he never actually converses with any of them. Michael has had enough of what he sees as his systematic isolation from the social standing that he has fought many years to achieve and finally acts on his anger. This also satisfies some foreshadowing the reader saw in earlier chapters.



The Huntsman: Reverse Prayer

The Huntsman: Reverse Prayer Summary

Judd has been feeling forgotten by his brothers since they both left High Point Farm. Patrick and Mike rarely visit, and Patrick only calls sporadically. Their faces are often on the bulletin board, however, as Corrine gives information about Patrick's grades and Mike's military service to a friend of hers at the local paper and then cuts out the articles to place them on display. However, one night, Patrick calls and asks for Judd's help, a moment that causes Judd to forgive him for every slight he ever committed.

Michael Sr. has been charged with assault, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. This time, the charges will not be dropped, and Michael might face jail time. The country club also expelled the Mulvaney family from their membership. Patrick knows all this, but it is not why he has called. Patrick tells Judd he wants to execute justice, and he will need Judd's help. Patrick wants to know if Dad still has his guns. When Judd asks why, Patrick is cryptic. However, when Patrick calls back a few days later, he still is set on his plans.

The Huntsman: Reverse Prayer Analysis

Foreshadowing is evident in Patrick's cryptic request for Judd's help. Patrick is planning something, but Judd has no idea what it is about except that Patrick wants justice for something. This touches on a theme of the novel as well; the theme of justice. There is also irony in this chapter. Michael Mulvaney Sr. is falling apart, getting arrested and acting dangerously irresponsible, while his sons are plotting to achieve justice for some slight committed against them. It is the inability to act that has Michael Sr. in his current state, so it is ironic that his own children are able to do what Michael could not.



The Huntsman: The Accomplice

The Huntsman: The Accomplice Summary

Michael Sr. gets probation and a fine for his arrest. The family business, which had been struggling for several years, was about to go bankrupt. Most of the animals on High Point Farm had been sold, and the farm itself was to be put up for sale to help pay off Michael Sr.'s debts. The property had been sold off piece by piece the past few years, until only four acres remained. The rest of the property, the house and the outbuildings, were in poor repair. There was no one left to do the chores.

After Christmas of 1979, Judd and Corrine drive to Kilburn to see Marianne. Marianne is thrilled to see them, disappointed only when she learns they will not be staying the night. They all talk a long time, pleased to see Marianne still has Muffin and glad that Marianne is so happy with her living situation. At dinner, Corrine is very complimentary to everyone, especially her daughter. It is clear that everyone loves Marianne, and Corrine is happy to take credit for the girl's lovely disposition. Corrine speaks to Abelow, the director of the co-op, before they go. Everything is fine, at first. Corrine offers money for their meal and compliments Abelow on the co-op. However, things become tense when Abelow tries to comment on Marianne's sadness. Corrine becomes very upset and leaves abruptly.

As Corrine and Judd make their departure, Marianne stands out beside the car with Muffin in her arms. Marianne comments on how thin Muffin has become, the last of many times she has made the same comment. Corrine looks at her child and says that she should be realistic. The cat is old, and his kidneys are more than likely beginning to fail.

The Huntsman: The Accomplice Analysis

There is satisfaction in some prior foreshadowing at the announcement that High Point Farm will be sold, as it was explained earlier in the book that the Mulvaney family stopped living on the farm in 1980. It also creates some foreshadowing for the reader in wondering if the sale will bring enough money to help the Mulvaney family save their business or not.

Corrine's reaction to Abelow is symbolic of Corrine's own frustrations and anger at her daughter for causing the situation the Mulvaney family now suffers, especially Michael Sr. Corrine will never express her anger, though it is clear in her behavior. When Corrine tells Marianne to be realistic about the cat, it touches on her emotions even more. This is the only time the reader has seen Corrine be outright rude to any of her children. Corrine's emotions also open up another theme of the novel, the theme of betrayal. Corrine obviously must feel some betrayal from Marianne to have become such a large

part of this other 'family' despite the fact that Corrine herself is the one who sent Marianne away.



The Huntsman: Brothers

The Huntsman: Brothers Summary

Patrick calls Judd many times in the winter, discussing his plan for executing Zachary Lundt. Patrick refuses to give too many details for fear that if something goes wrong, Judd will be implicated as well. All Patrick wants from Judd is one of his dad's guns, preferably a gun that was once Mike's. Patrick does not intend to use the gun when he grabs Zachary over Easter break, assuming then Zachary will be back in Mt. Ephraim with his family. If it becomes necessary to wound Zachary, Patrick repeatedly assures Judd that he will use a knife, so that the bullet cannot be traced back to the Mulvaney family. Judd is more than happy to help Patrick, because he feels part of family again when he discusses this plan with him. He feels like a brother, a brother who is loved.

The Huntsman: Brothers Analysis

The planning of Zachary's execution not only satisfies foreshadowing from other chapters, it also opens more foreshadowing when Patrick refuses to reveal the entire plan to his brother, Judd. The entire plan is not necessary knowledge in Judd's view, however. Just the idea that Patrick needs his help is a symbol to Judd of the love Patrick has for him, and the emotion of being needed by his brother. Judd could not be happier to help Patrick in his quest for justice, simply because he believes it will create a bond between them that will never be broken. This chapter also touches upon the need for justice, which is another theme of the novel.



The Huntsman: Crossing Over

The Huntsman: Crossing Over Summary

At the end of March, Patrick calls Mrs. Lundt to get Zachary's phone number and to find out if he will be coming home for the spring break. Patrick pretends to be an old friend of Zachary's, a boy Patrick remembers Zachary hanging out with in high school, and who is no longer close to Zachary. Patrick talks to Mrs. Lundt for a long time, even after getting the information he requires, and learns that another girl friend of Zachary's has been making accusations about him to his mother.

Patrick is having trouble in his studies. Patrick has changed his topic for his senior thesis three times and finally decides to pursue a topic that his advisor finds less than scientific. Finally, Patrick is transferred to a professor who is known for his more liberal views on science. During this time, Patrick also begins to have nightmares about a bog north of Mt. Ephraim. Patrick becomes obsessed with the idea of being caught in the bog, and with the concept of his ability to harm another human being. His plan of justice against Zachary Lundt has become an obsession that is affecting every aspect of his life. Patrick often goes for runs three or four times a day, where he once worked in the labs for hours at a time. Patrick also is not sleeping.

The Huntsman: Crossing Over Analysis

Patrick's conversation with Mrs. Lundt seems to underscore the need for justice, one of the novel's themes, when she reveals that another girl has been making accusations against Zachary. Patrick really seems about ready to commit this crime in his quest for justice, laying more foreshadowing as the reader wonders if he'll really go through with it.

The bog of which Patrick begins to dream is symbolic of the anger that has begun to change every aspect of his life. Once Patrick's only desire in life was science, to study and use it. Now, Patrick's only desire is final justice. The parallels between Patrick and Marianne are clear here, as well. Marianne is not losing interest in her studies because of her anger, instead she seems to want so badly to be loved that she is letting her own needs slide to help others. However, there is still a clear parallel between the two, both allowing their passions to slide, because of the symbolic destruction of their personalities due to the rape that has changed all of their lives.



The Huntsman: The Handshake

The Huntsman: The Handshake Summary

On the Saturday before Easter in 1979, Judd meets Patrick on a deserted road to give him the gun he requested. Finally, the plan is going to be executed, and Judd is hoping that, perhaps, this is just a test. Maybe, Patrick will not really go through with his plans. However, Patrick is in disguise and clearly ready to follow through.

The boys do not get out of their cars. They discuss the sale of the farm and Marianne through open windows. Patrick is angry at Michael Sr. for what he has done to Marianne and is not afraid to express that opinion to Judd, who remembers a time when Patrick blamed no one for Marianne's banishment. Finally, Patrick names a place, an abandoned cemetery outside of town, where he can pick up the gun the next day. Then, Patrick says his goodbyes and shakes Judd's hand, strong and unhesitant. It surprises Judd that none of his brothers have ever shaken his hand before.

The Huntsman: The Handshake Analysis

The handshake between the two brothers is symbolic. Not only does it represent a goodbye of sorts, it is also a mature symbol of the love shared between them. Patrick clearly is unsure if he will ever see Judd again; however, he does not want to frighten himself or the boy by being overly emotional or stating the obvious. This handshake says many things between the two boys that words could not express. There is also foreshadowing in this handshake. The reader must now wonder; will Patrick return from this trip?



The Huntsman: The Bog

The Huntsman: The Bog Summary

Patrick calls Mrs. Lundt, again, and finds that Zachary is at a local bar with a group of friends. Patrick goes to the bar and waits in a corner of the parking lot for Zachary to come out. When Zachary finally comes out, Patrick watches until he leaves and follows him in his own Jeep until they reach a deserted section of road. Then, Patrick blocks Zachary with his Jeep and forces Zachary to drive his car into a desolate back lot full of junked cars and debris. Patrick forces Zachary back to his own Jeep and tells him to drive out of town.

The entire time Patrick has his gun on his "victim", Zachary has become a babbling baby, wetting his pants and openly crying. Patrick is annoyed at this reaction. For so long, Patrick played the whole scenario out in his head and hoped that Zachary would put up a fight. Finally, Patrick instructs Zachary to pull the Jeep down a road that follows along side the bog.

Patrick forces Zachary out of the Jeep when they reach the edge of the bog. Patrick tells Zachary that if he can walk to the other side of the bog, he can live. Zachary cries and begs to know why this is happening. Patrick tells him that he raped his sister. Zachary wants to know what girl, clearly unaware that he has been kidnapped by a Mulvaney.

When Zachary begins to falter in the bog and can no longer keep his head above the muck, Patrick battles with himself over whether or not he can leave the man there to die. Suddenly, Patrick finds himself reaching into the muck to help Zachary. He manages to pull Zachary out of the bog. Before he gets back into his Jeep and drives off, Patrick tells Zachary, "I could have let you die and I let you live." (pg. 304) Both men would remember that for the rest of their lives.

The Huntsman: The Bog Analysis

The theme of justice is clear in this chapter. Finally, a Mulvaney has done what they all have wanted to do all along, exacted a punishment on Zachary Lundt for what he did to Marianne. Although Patrick does not murder the other man, justice has still been done, because he has committed something worse than murder. He has allowed the man to live with the knowledge of how easy it was for Patrick to kidnap and harass him. Although no one but the two men will ever know what happened that night, it will always symbolize justice and power over another man to Patrick. He does have the ability to pull the trigger, if it is ever necessary. This knowledge frees Patrick of the anger that has plagued him since his sister's attack.



The Pilgrim: Tears

The Pilgrim: Tears Summary

Marianne dreams of the day her mother will call and tell her that she can come home, that her dad wants to see her. Until that day, she hides her pain. Marianne works hard and often volunteers for jobs that might cause her to discomfort, such as cutting onions or shoveling snow on a cold day, in order to cry out her pain in private. One time, Marianne cried so much while shoveling snow in the cold that her tears froze to her cheeks and some of the men at the co-op had to take her in the house and melt them so she would not suffer frostbite. Another time, Marianne began to cry in the greenhouse, and one of the other girls became so upset that she went and found Abelow to help Marianne. Abelow came to greenhouse to try to help Marianne through her crisis, but only managed to make her cry more.

The Pilgrim: Tears Analysis

This chapter allows the reader to see the depth of Marianne's pain in relationship to the banishment her parents have leveled on her. It might make the reader believe that Marianne does not suffer from the actual rape, only the banishment; however, that mistake creates foreshadowing for future chapters, in which the reader will be allowed a more in depth look at Marianne's emotions. There is also some foreshadowing in Abelow's reaction to Marianne's tears, though it is subtle in this chapter.



The Pilgrim: Green Isle

The Pilgrim: Green Isle Summary

Marianne often goes over the events of that Valentine's night, picking out the mistakes she made that caused her family to send her away. There were many things she should not have done; but why could they not forgive her? However, most of the time, she tries to concentrate on her work for the co-op and her studies. Marianne is still having trouble finding the time for her studies, but she is still taking one class on literature. That is where she read the line, "out of obscurity I came--to obscurity I can easily return," and turns it into her personal motto.

Marianne loves the co-op and believes most of the people there respect her. Marianne is very private when questioned about her past, however, afraid to offend people but still unwilling to share any personal information that might lead to uncomfortable conversations. Marianne is envious of all her other co-op members, of their families that most of them talk so rudely about, but always have a place to go at the holidays. Only Abelow never talks of family or home.

In the winter of 1979, Abelow's assistant disappears. Marianne quickly offers to fill in for him, and a surprised Abelow gives her a few of his duties. When Marianne fulfills these duties better than the original assistant, Abelow gives her yet more responsibilities. Pretty soon, Marianne restructures duty rosters and the whole way the co-op relates to their duties.

Abelow is a mystery to Marianne. Marianne has heard rumors that he is married and has a family somewhere that he has abandoned. Marianne has also heard that he was in love with a woman in Kilburn, who died. All Marianne knows for sure is that Abelow was a professor at Kilburn College, who could no longer force himself to live in that world any longer. He is also a gifted fundraiser, who runs the co-op quite successfully. Marianne believes she might be in love with Abelow, but most of the girls at the co-op are, so she is no different than they are.

The Pilgrim: Green Isle Analysis

Marianne's new motto is foreshadowing of an attitude that will influence many of her decisions later in the novel. Marianne has become convinced that if she becomes real, if someone loves her, then she will lose her identity, and therefore lose the person she loves. She holds tight to this new motto, reminding herself that she was nothing, and nothing is an all right thing to remain.

Marianne's new role at the co-op is important to Abelow and lays down yet more foreshadowing for the following chapters. The reader must wonder, as Marianne wonders, at her feeling for Abelow, and how the man feels about Marianne.



The Pilgrim: The Pilgrim

The Pilgrim: The Pilgrim Summary

While Marianne is out of the co-op one afternoon, when she receives a phone call from an angry, crying woman. It takes Marianne a few minutes to figure it out, but she finally realizes it must be the cousin with home she stayed after she left High Point Farm. Marianne calls the woman back and is told that her grandmother Hausmann, her mother's mother, has died. Marianne is upset when her cousin then continues by telling her that she is not wanted at the funeral as per Corrine's instructions.

Marianne remembers childhood trips to Grandma Hausmann's house, and how her dad would make jokes about the old woman. She thinks of how she is another person Marianne has disappointed and decides she must go to the funeral, anyway. A young man at the co-op, who overheard the phone conversation, offers to take Marianne. They leave early the next morning, without informing Abelove. When Marianne and Hewie arrive at the church, Marianne cannot make herself go in. Instead, she instructs Hewie to drive further up the road, where Marianne gets out of the car and watches the funeral from behind a crumbling wall.

Marianne is hurt by the sight of Corrine and Judd at the graveside, curious where her father is. She knows Patrick has gone on a cross-country trip to find himself, and Mike is still in the Marines. She knows Corrine would send her away if she were to announce her presence. Marianne is sure her mother would welcome the sight of her, but still she hides. When the funeral is over, and Marianne has cried all the tears she can cry, Marianne asks Hewie to drive her around Mt. Ephraim.

Marianne recognizes the town; it has not changed much since she left. Hewie slows the car when they reach Mulvaney Roofing. Marianne sinks down in the seat, half hoping her dad will appear in the doorway, but actually praying he will not. However, the building appears to be shut up tight. They drive past many other familiar buildings; including, the high school. However, they only bring back bad memories for Marianne. Soon, they are on the road to High Point Farm. Marianne wants to see Molly-O and remembers, too late, that she has been sold. There is nothing at High Point Farm for Marianne anymore, and she quickly asks Hewie to turn the car around and go back. On the way back to Kilburn, Marianne and Hewie stop to eat the lunch she packed. Hewie is curious, but he does not ask any questions. When they finally reach Kilburn, Hewie confesses his love for Marianne. Marianne says "thanks," when she does not know what else to say.

The Pilgrim: The Pilgrim Analysis

Marianne is informed that she is not wanted at her own grandmother's funeral. This announcement is a culmination of the betrayal, a theme of the novel, set on Marianne's



shoulders since the day her parents shipped her off to live with a relative. However, Marianne sees it not as betrayal but as another symbol of her own mistakes, her own betrayal of her family.

Marianne's trip through town is a goodbye of sorts, a symbolic acceptance of her separation from her past. Marianne realizes now that she may never be welcomed back into the bosom of her family, and if she is, that it will never be like it was. The death of her grandmother is in many ways like the death of her innocence, in her naive belief that her father will ever want to see her again.



The Pilgrim: The Proposal

The Pilgrim: The Proposal Summary

The night after the funeral, Marianne has nightmares about being buried. She is suddenly the center of conversation when some of the other girls discover Hewie actually spoke to her. Abelove, however, is very upset with Marianne and quickly takes her into his office to talk to her the next morning.

Marianne apologizes and explains that she had a funeral to attend. Abelove wants to know about her future at the co-op and what her feelings are toward Hewie. Marianne is confused by his questions until Abelove announces that he wants to make her a partner in the co-op. He says that he is in love with her and would like to make some sort of commitment to her. Abelove explains that he is legally married to another woman and that he has children, but that should not effect their relationship. Abelove then demands to know if Marianne loves him as well. Marianne is so surprised by all this that she makes an excuse and flees the room.

The Pilgrim: The Proposal Analysis

Marianne now has two men proposing love to her. The reader can see the foreshadowing clearly here. What will Marianne chose to do? Marianne runs from the room without answering Abelove's cries of devotion. However, the last line of the chapter is Marianne's new motto about oblivion. This may be an answer to the foreshadowing all on its own.

The Pilgrim: Rag-Quilt Life

The Pilgrim: Rag-Quilt Life Summary

Marianne packs up Muffin and all her portable belongings and runs away from the cop. No one knows where she has gone or why, except perhaps Abelow, who is not about to reveal what happened between him and Marianne the day before.

The Pilgrim: Rag-Quilt Life Analysis

Marianne has answered the question the last chapter asked, fulfilling the foreshadowing created by the last few chapters. Now, the question remains about where Marianne will go.



Hard Reckoning: Hard Reckoning

Hard Reckoning: Hard Reckoning Summary

High Point Farm has been sold. It took a long time to find a buyer, but finally a doctor and his wife not only paid cash for the property, but also bought many of the furnishings within its walls. Corrine attempts to make friends with the new lady of the house, but the lady makes it clear that this will not happen. Corrine is deeply saddened by the whole event.

What is left of the Mulvaney family moves into a split-level ranch house in Marsena. Mulvaney Roofing and Corrine's antiques business both are moved to Marsena as well, although the antiques business is mostly boxes of old treasures that find their way into every nook and cranny of the new house.

Corrine is very depressed during this time, and Judd often finds her sitting in a stupor when he returns from school, forced to cajole her out of it any way he can. The Mulvaney family loses track of both Marianne and Patrick during this time, though Corrine is sure that Marianne is in Pennsylvania somewhere. They get postcards from Mike regularly, however.

Michael Sr. spends less and less time at home, always off conducting some sort of business that he is not willing to discuss with the family. Michael is trying to strike up a deal with other construction businesses to form a partnership with Mulvaney Roofing; however, each of these deals falls apart. Judd has transferred to a new school and is doing well, especially in English classes. Judd misses his brothers and sister, especially Patrick, who he feels abandoned him after the whole Zachary Lundt incident.

Marianne finally calls and tells them that she is working for a poet as a personal assistant. The poet has MS and needs help with her personal hygiene and with organizing her poetry. It is a good job, Marianne assures them. Corrine is disappointed her daughter is not in college, but when she finds a book of this poet's poetry in a local bookstore, she is extremely proud of the company her daughter now keeps.

In the summer, Corrine's old station wagon finally breaks down and dies. Corrine finds herself stranded out in front of the home of a pair of reverends, who kindly called a tow truck for her. Unfortunately, the mechanic tells her the car is irreparable. Later, the reverends give her a ride home and invite her to attend their church. When Corrine tells Michael Sr. that night, they begin to fight. Judd overhears his father hit his mother, and he rushes out to protect her. Judd grabs at his dad, telling him not to hurt his mother. Michael Sr. pushes Judd up against the house and punches the side of his head. Then, Michael Sr. leaves.



Hard Reckoning: Hard Reckoning Analysis

The sale of High Point Farm is satisfaction of foreshadowing, but it is also symbolic of all the Mulvaney's have lost. The novel begins in this storybook home, everyone so happy and lighthearted that the reader is overwhelmed with the perfection of it all. The loss of this home, though the family is already broken, is an underscoring of this fact. Happiness is over now, it seems to say. The loss of communication with the other children is also another symbol of the destruction of the family, of the separation.

Marianne's call about where she is working now seems to somewhat excite and rejuvenate Corrine. Gone is the bitterness the reader saw the last time Corrine spoke to Marianne, which suggests, perhaps, that Corrine has found some forgiveness for the girl. This segment is also foreshadowing of future events involving Marianne.

Judd's fight with his father is full of symbolism. Judd's reaction to his father is symbolic of his new maturity, of his need to protect his mom, and his new attitude of disdain toward his father. The fight itself is also symbolic of Michael Sr.'s quickly declining personality and attitudes toward his family. Michael Sr. is a broken man, and nothing has shown that as clearly as this fight with his youngest son.



Hard Reckoning: On My Own

Hard Reckoning: On My Own Summary

Judd moves out of his parent's home shortly after the incident between him and his father. His mother is not happy with the idea of him being on his own before he is even eighteen, a full month from his birthday, but she allows him to go just the same.

Shortly after Judd leaves, Michael Sr. files for bankruptcy. The Mulvaney's assets are frozen and their house taken to help pay off debts. Judd is not aware of this. Judd is living in a single room on the top floor of a boarding house that was once a hotel near his high school. Judd has made friends with some of the tenants, mostly welfare families, especially an old man who kept a coop of roosters in the back yard. Little Boots, his dog, lives with Judd.

Hard Reckoning: On My Own Analysis

Finally, all the Mulvaney children have left home. Judd's move is the final symbolic crushing of what was once a happy family. Judd is happy now, his move foreshadowing a future that seems promising. Michael Sr. picks this time to finally file for bankruptcy. This, again, is the final symbolic destruction of what began as a perfect family. Here also is foreshadowing. What will happen to the senior Mulvaney's now?



Hard Reckoning: The White Horse

Hard Reckoning: The White Horse Summary

Michael Mulvaney has moved out of his wife's home and is now on his own. Michael has lost everything he once held dear, his wife and children, and looks back now for someone to blame. It must be his own father, the cruel man who enjoyed pitting his own children against each other, and who banished young Michael for daring to stand up to him.

Michael hadn't the strength to watch the movers pack up High Point Farm and left his wife to do it. When she joined him at the new house, she cried for hours and hours, so unlike the strong woman he married. Michael left Corrine, because he could not stand to see the disappointment in her eyes any longer.

Trying to find a job at Michael's age can be very difficult. Quite often, Michael would go on job interviews and find that the job had just been filled. There were times when the employer would recognize him and refuse to hire him, because men who were once the boss were difficult employees. However, Michael found work often enough to keep a small room and to continue his drinking habits.

Michael often entertains women in his room. When he is drunk, he sometimes talks of the people who betrayed him. Patrick betrayed him by going away to Cornell and never returning. Corrine betrayed him by seeing the weakness he tried so hard to hide. Mike Jr. joined the Marines and Marianne ... Michael refused to think about his daughter.

Mike Jr. found Michael in Rochester in 1986 and took him eat at a small Chinese place in the building where Michael had a room. Mike Jr. told him he was to marry soon and showed him pictures. Mike Jr. tries to tell Michael of Corrine, how she moved back to Mt. Ephraim, but Michael does not want to hear. Michael Sr. drinks from a hidden bottle of wine throughout the meal, baiting his son to discuss the military and the possibility of death, all the while too drunk to follow the conversation closely. When Mike Jr. walks him back to his room, Michael Sr. is disappointed the boy is not taking him for a drink and finds himself hoping the boy will offer him money, though he knows he should not take it. When Mike does offer the money, Michael takes it and is disappointed that it is not more.

Michael dreams of a white horse, of riding with his children. The children get up ahead of him, and Michael races to catch up, afraid he will lose them but determined not to. The children are what is important, Michael knows. He was born to give these children life.



Hard Reckoning: The White Horse Analysis

The end of the Mulvaney's marriage is the final break in this family's dynamics. This break was foreshadowed in the previous chapter, and its results foreshadow more events to come for Michael Sr. and Corrine. Michael has fallen deeply into despair, feeling betrayed by the children he loved so much. The theme of the novel, betrayal, plays a big part in Michael's fall and continues to be a part of his daily abuse of not only his family, but also himself.

Mike Jr.'s visit to his father illustrates the depth of Michael Sr.'s fall. Michael Sr. can no longer concentrate on a simple conversation. His health is failing, and his sense of morality is deeply damaged. This is also a reversal of roles in this segment, underscored by Mike Jr.'s gift of money to Michael Sr. It later proves to be too little to keep the man off the streets until he can find work again. The whole segment is symbolic of the depth of despair Michael Sr. has allowed his feelings of inadequacy and betrayal take him into.

The white horse in Michael Sr.'s dream is also symbolic of his feelings toward his children. Here he is riding with the kids, enjoying a nice day, but the children begin to move ahead of him and he cannot keep up. Once again, we see the theme of betrayal in a more visual way, as well as Michael Sr.'s desire to help and protect his children and not being able to rise to the occasion.



Hard Reckoning: Stump Creek Hill

Hard Reckoning: Stump Creek Hill Summary

Marianne has worked in an animal shelter for more than four years. Marianne found herself at this shelter just months after walking away from her job with the poet. Marianne had been happy with the poet, organizing her office and doing other odd jobs, buying groceries and such. However, when the woman offered a position with her charity organization after Marianne began critiquing her poetry for her, Marianne felt compelled to move on. Marianne did not want her position anywhere to be too permanent.

Marianne moved on to a small town, called Sykesville, after she left the poet. There, Marianne got a job at a roadside vegetable stand and a nice room in a small hotel. When she had been there a short time, Muffin began disappearing during the day while she was at work. Marianne became frightened for Muffin and hitched a ride to a nearby animal hospital, the Stump Creek Hill Animal Shelter and Hospital. There, she met a gruff veterinarian who said the cat was suffering kidney failure. The only thing that could be done was to send the cat to Philadelphia for dialysis, but he told her it would more than likely not work. Marianne insisted he send Muffin anyway.

Marianne stayed at the zoo behind the hospital all day, and even slept there that night to be close to Muffin. When the vet, Whit West found her the next morning, he offered her a job. Marianne has lived and worked there ever since. Muffin also returned from Philadelphia to live with Marianne and continued to live happily another year and a half.

Marianne loves working with the animals, although there are times when the work overwhelms her. Once, Marianne answered a call from a woman who was dying of cancer and wanted someone to take in her cats. Marianne took them herself, completely emotionally overwrought by the poor woman's situation. This, however, is not nearly as neither frightening nor confusing as Whit West himself. Whit has a dark sense of humor that often confuses Marianne and leaves her feeling chastised, although that might not have been his intention. Whit is rumored to be the son of rich parents, who disowned him. He was said to have been married to a debutante, who quickly tired of his animals and left him. Marianne is in love with Whit, and this confuses her even more.

The day Muffin dies, Marianne holds him in her arms while Whit administers a shot to end the cat's pain. Marianne cries as the cat dies, feeling as though her only friend has died. However, Whit tells her softly that Muffin was not her only friend, and he is not the only one who loves her.



Hard Reckoning: Stump Creek Hill Analysis

Marianne runs from a good situation with the poet, because she is frightened of becoming real, of being too attached to other people. She is still holding tight to her motto. However, the beginning of the chapter starts with her mother finally calling her home. This not only satisfies past moments of foreshadowing, but it lays more foreshadowing for future chapters. The reader must wonder if she will finally find a place to stay. The end of the chapter, too, suggests that perhaps she finally has.



Hard Reckoning: Intensive Care

Hard Reckoning: Intensive Care Summary

Marianne rushes to Rochester after her mother's call. She finds Judd and Corrine waiting in the intensive care unit for information about Michael Sr., who had collapsed in the street a week before. Someone found Corrine's number among his things. They have been told that Michael has cancer.

Marianne is taken into Michael's room. Corrine says that he has been asking for her. While she is with him, he opens his eyes and whispers things she cannot understand. Eventually, however, he does whisper something that sounds like her name. Later, while outside the hospital getting some fresh air, Marianne asks Judd repeatedly if Dad did say her name. Judd assures her that he had been asking for her, and he must have said her name. Marianne decides she must believe it.

Hard Reckoning: Intensive Care Analysis

Finally Marianne is called home to see her father. Ironically, he is mostly unconscious when she arrives, and she will never know for sure if he really said her name or that of his sister, Marian. However, much hoping and praying, on Marianne's part, has finally come to fruition.



Hard Reckoning: Gone

Hard Reckoning: Gone Summary

The Mulvaney family, minus Patrick, takes a drive up High Point Road. They drive past the farms and find a secluded place to stop. Mike Jr. and Judd pour out the ashes of Michael John Mulvaney, Sr., and the whole family watch them scatter on the wind.

Hard Reckoning: Gone Analysis

The very name of this chapter is the same as the chapter in which Marianne is sent away, and the downfall of the Mulvaney family began. Perhaps by naming the chapter the same, Oates is trying to tell the reader that all the bad is gone now. A full circle has been made, and it is time to move on. It is symbolic of death and rebirth, of the rebirth of the Mulvaney family, or, at least its survivors.



Reunion: Fourth of July 1993

Reunion: Fourth of July 1993 Summary

Judd gets a phone call from Corrine that there will be a Mulvaney family reunion on the Fourth of July and that Patrick will be there. Judd has not seen Patrick since the spring of 1979, though he has heard he is in California working with autistic children. He does not believe Patrick will show.

Corrine has reopened her antiques shop with a friend. The two women, both divorced and lovers of all things old have bought a house together and run the shop out of an old barn. This is where the reunion takes place. Judd arrives and finds Mike's pregnant wife already there with her two children. Marianne is there also, with two kids of her own and happily married to Whit West. There are also dozens of other people, relatives of his mom's friend and friends from Mt. Ephraim. Judd goes to watch the softball game that has begun in the goat field and discovers the pitcher is none other than his brother Patrick.

Corrine calls everyone to dinner by ringing the cowbell. Dinner is a loud and joyous occasion. Patrick, an assured, athletic man now, is goading Whit with his theories on Darwin. Patrick came to the reunion with a beautiful Russian woman named Katya, and Judd is fascinated by the easy love that exists between them. Patrick has become a person Judd does not recognize, and yet, sees that he's still his same brother.

Judd and Patrick wander off alone, and Patrick shows Judd his camping gear. He tells him of his travels with Katya. Judd slowly begins to allow himself to be brought into the silent comfort between the two men, to realize that Patrick was still his brother, and there was love and forgiveness there even though it would go unspoken.

Reunion: Fourth of July 1993 Analysis

All the foreshadowing at the beginning of the novel has been satisfied in this chapter. There are satisfying little details such as, the cowbell and the fireflies, as well as, big details like Marianne's happy marriage, and Patrick's return to the family. Judd finally finds his own place in the family at the end of this circle they have all traveled. He's finally comfortable in his own skin and in the acceptance of those around him. Perhaps the telling of the story was a catharsis for him, a symbolic purging of the soul.



Characters

Michael Mulvaney Sr.

Michael Mulvaney Sr. is the father and patriarch of the Mulvaney family. Cut-off from his own birth family, Michael has a deep appreciation for the family he built with Corrine. Initially, not interested in settling down, Michael falls deeply in love with Corrine and finds himself planning to have as many children as possible. Marianne is Michael's favorite child, despite the fact that he swore that he would never play favorites. Michael also believes, deep in his heart, that he would kill to protect the people he loves. However, he soon discovers that he is not capable of harming anyone, including the boy who injures his beloved daughter.

Michael wants to be an important man in his town, respected and admired. Michael fights for a long time to become a member of the local country club and is excited to accept his invitation when it finally comes, despite his wife's reservations. Finally, Michael has become a respected member of the elite club, when he accepts this invitation. However, it does not take long for this respected position he has fought for to disappear after his daughter is attacked, and the town sees Marianne's attacker as the wronged person rather than Marianne and her family.

Michael does not take his fall easily. Michael is desperate to find justice for himself and his daughter; he is desperate to hide from the shame and move on. However, he cannot move on. Michael becomes so angry, that he cannot control his behavior and is arrested twice for assault. The second time, he finds himself kicked out of the country club, as well. Soon, Michael becomes a drunk, unable to work or even conduct himself in a proper manner. His company goes bankrupt, and he becomes an employee rather than an employer. Michael is an injured man, more broken than the daughter he is no longer able to look at.

Corrine Mulvaney

Corrine Mulvaney is Michael's wife. Corrine is a kind person with quirky mannerisms and a horsy sort of look that causes people to look twice before seeing the kindness in her heart. Corrine is a truly devoted wife and mother, a woman who is forced to make a choice between her husband and her child. Corrine chooses her husband, because he is her first love. He's almost like her first born, the one she must be devoted to above all else. Corrine does not struggle with her decision, she believes God is with her daughter, and she has done what is expected of a good wife. That is all Corrine wants, to please God and her husband. However, her husband becomes so abusive and elusive that her marriage dies long before her husband ever leaves her.

Corrine loves antiques and is always buying them to stuff in an old barn at High Point Farm. Corrine wants to sell antiques for a living; however, she always falls in love with



the things she buys and cannot stand to sell them. Corrine also prides herself on being a less than invasive mother, never questioning her children or forcing them to reveal things about themselves that they do not want to. It is because of this habit that Corrine does not know what has happened to her daughter until several days after the event.

Mike Mulvaney Jr.

Mike Mulvaney Jr. is the eldest of the four Mulvaney children. Mike is a strong athlete, who was once a high school football star. Mike, as an adult, lives on the fringe of the family. Mike is an adult when Marianne is attacked and deals with it much the same way the rest of the family does. He runs away. Mike lives on his own in town for a long time, dating lots of girls, until he finally decides to join the Marines. Once in the Marines, Mike grows up in an emotional way and finally finds a woman to love and marry. Mike, like the rest of the Mulvaney children, deals with things his own way and eventually makes peace with everything.

Patrick Mulvaney

Patrick Mulvaney is the second of the Mulvaney children. Patrick is the one who makes straight A's without trying and is destined to grow up to find a cure for cancer or some other such prestigious thing. When Marianne is attacked, Patrick has to deal with the situation from the standpoint of being in the same class with the boy who hurt his sister and all the boy's friends. Patrick keeps the misery of this situation to himself, afraid to burden his family or to appear weaker than he believes they perceive him. However, Patrick's anger simmers and grows, until he is eventually forced into some sort of action due to the crippling effects of his anger. Patrick is the one Mulvaney who attempts to achieve some sort of vigilante justice against the boy who injured Marianne.

Patrick's attempt at satisfaction against Marianne's attacker brings him not only peace from his own anger, but it creates a new perception of himself. Patrick always saw himself as somewhat of a nerd; the boy that could never do anything to hurt anyone. However, he proves to his self the night he gets revenge on Zachary that he can do things no one ever thought he could, and that he did not need to fear bullies like Zachary any longer. Patrick then goes on a quest of sorts to find himself and eventually settles on a career helping autistic children. He falls in love with a beautiful Russian girl.

Marianne Mulvaney

Marianne Mulvaney is the third Mulvaney child, and the only girl. Marianne is an all-American girl. She's the popular beauty, the cheerleader and prom princess. Everyone loves Marianne. Marianne is also a strong Christian, who is innocent in her beliefs. Outwardly, Marianne is innocent and kind. She appears to be the same inside, until the night of the Valentine's Day Prom.



The night of the prom, Marianne is wrapped up in her own popularity and the attention of all the boys from the senior class, who have suddenly begun to notice her. Marianne goes to the prom with one boy and ends up getting a ride to her girlfriend's house with another boy. It is this second boy who offers Marianne an alcoholic drink, her first, and who will rape her in the back seat of his car.

After the rape, Marianne is ashamed and does not tell anyone until her mother drags her to the doctor's office and forces her to tell. Then, Marianne refuses to testify against the boy, because the alcohol has so clouded her memory of the event that she is afraid she will not be able to testify to the truth. Eventually, the whole legal matter is dropped, leaving the people in town to believe Marianne is lying.

Marianne is sent away from her home and forced to deal with life and the crime that happened on her own. Marianne moves from place to place, afraid to find commitment in any one place, afraid that people will see the real her and not like what they see. In the end, Marianne settles down at an animal hospital, finding true love and happiness.

Judd Mulvaney

Judd Mulvaney is the baby of the Mulvaney family. Judd is also the narrator of the novel in the beginning and final chapters. Judd is a witness to everything that befalls this family, although he's not really an active participant, because of his young age. Judd does not even find out what happened to his sister until months afterward, and then he is only vaguely aware of what it all means.

Judd grows up to be a newspaper editor and is very happy with his job, although he is unsettled by the state of his family. Everyone is happy at the end; most of them married with children of their own, his mother settled in a new life with a girlfriend. Judd yearns to feel a part of his own family, left separated from all of them because of his young age and the unfortunate events surrounding his sister's rape. Eventually, however, Judd finds his place in the family and is content with what he has been given.

Zachary Lundt

Zachary Lundt is the young son of a local Mt. Ephraim businessman. Zachary is a senior and extremely good looking. All the girls at school like Zachary, and Marianne is flattered when he wants to be with her, a lowly junior. Zachary is charming, telling Marianne things she wants to hear, asking her about her faith and telling her he feels like she is the only he can be honest with. Zachary wins Marianne's trust and then violates it by forcing himself on her and blaming her for the results.

Zachary goes on to college after high school and lives a good life, like the Mulvaney children should have been allowed to do. Patrick is sickened by this idea, convinced that Zachary should be punished. Patrick tracks Zachary down, one night, and threatens to kill him. In the end, he saves his. Zachary will never forget what Patrick said to him that night.



Abelove

Abelove is the leader of the Green Isle Co-op where Marianne goes to live during her time at Kilburn College. At the co-op, Marianne feels as though she is part of a family, although she hides her secrets from her the other members. Marianne works very hard, so hard she often neglects her studies. Abelove admires Marianne and becomes even more enamored of her when she takes over many of the duties of his missing assistant. Abelove confesses his love to Marianne and asks her to become his lover, unable to marry her because of a marriage he has yet to dissolve. Marianne becomes frightened and runs away.

Whittaker West

Whittaker West is the veterinarian and founder of the Stump Creek Hill Animal Shelter and Hospital. Whittaker is a divorced man, who has a sense of humor that borders on cruelty. Whit takes Marianne in the second time he meets her, hiring her on an impulse and quickly falling in love with her. It takes Whit a long time to tell Marianne of his love, perhaps sensing her resistance to that sort of situation. However, eventually, after the death of Marianne's father, Marianne and Whit marry and have two children together.

Aunt Ethel Hausmann

Aunt Ethel Hausmann is not really an aunt, but a cousin to Marianne and her brothers. Marianne is sent to live with Ethel and stays until she finishes high school. Ethel never married nor had children of her own. Ethel works for a doctor and is in love with the man, although she would never tell anyone.

It is Ethel who calls and informs Marianne that her grandmother has died. Ethel also, very unkindly, tells Marianne that she is not welcome at the funeral as per her own mother's instructions. The only reason Ethel calls her, she says, is because it is the morally correct thing to do.



Objects/Places

High Point Farm

High Point Farm is the Mulvaney's home. High Point Farm is not a working farm, though the family does have many animals; including, horses, dogs, cats and various types of birds.

Ransomville

Ransomville is the small farming town where Corrine was born and raised.

Marsena

Marsena is the small town where the remaining Mulvaney's (Michael, Corrine and Judd) move after they sell High Point Farm.

Ithaca

Ithaca is where Patrick goes to attend Cornell.

Kilburn

Kilburn is where Marianne goes to college and the Green Isle Co-op is located.

Mt. Ephraim High School Valentine's Day Prom

The Valentine's Day Prom is the dance Marianne attends as a junior and is honored to be the only girl who is not a senior chosen for the prom court.

Green Isle Co-op

The Green Isle Co-op is the organization that runs the home where Marianne lives while she attends Kilburn College. The Co-op makes and sells baked goods and fresh produce. Marianne is one of their hardest workers while she lives there.

Stump Creek Hill Animal Shelter and Hospital

Marianne takes Muffin, her cat, to the Stump Creek Hill Animal Shelter and Hospital when his health begins to fail and ends up taking a job and a room at the hospital.



Muffin

Muffin is a kitten that Corrine found on the side of the road with his brother as kittens. The two cats were so small when they were first found that they could sit side by side on Corrine's palm. However, the two kittens grow to be twenty-pound adult cats. Marianne takes Muffin with her when she goes to Aunt Ethel's, and then to the co-op and everywhere she lives after that. Marianne adores Muffin and feels he is her only friend. When Muffin becomes ill, she takes him to the Stump Creek Hill Animal Shelter and Hospital and begs Whit West to fix him. Dr. West has Muffin treated, and Muffin lives another year.

Molly-O

Molly-O is Marianne's horse at High Point Farm.

The Bog

The bog is where Patrick took Zachary and nearly drowned him.



Social Sensitivity

With the tide *We Were the Mulvaney*s, Joyce Carol Oates places the emphasis of her novel on how the family creates itself within the environment of a socially mobile and often violent twentieth-century America. Michael Mulvaney, Sr., the disowned son of an Irish steelworker from Pittsburgh, and Corinne Hausmann, a farm girl from upstate New York, have married and settled on picture-perfect High Point Farm in Mount Ephraim, New York. Here they have been successfully raising their family of four, integrating their life on the farm with their life in a town that has recognized Michael's success in the business community by inviting him to join the local country club. Michael has "reimagined himself as a small-town American businessman who owned property, had money and influence, was 'known' and 'liked' and 'respected' in his community.

He'd been a loner in his late adolescence, and was now a 'family man.'" The family he has created lives safely behind the unlocked doors of their historic farmhouse, and the children learn responsibility and independence by helping with the farm chores before and after school and during the summers. Corinne Mulvaney oversees a family where "friends, relatives, houseguests, . . . business contacts, hired help" freely visit them: "every day and frequently every hour you could count on it that something was happening" She mothers with a light hand: The children collect dozens of animals that become household pets with individual names, they let clutter pile on the staircase until Corinne calls for ritual cleaning, and they are encouraged to become individuals.

But then come the events surrounding the Valentine's Day prom, 1976, when the only Mulvaney daughter, Marianne, is raped by the son of one of the town's elite and the family learns that the elite stick together, siding with one of their own over the newcomer to their social set. *We Were the Mulvaney*s traces the responses of the family as its idyllic image of itself and its town crumbles. The event destroys Mike, Sr., who sinks into alcoholism, losing his business and abandoning his family and his home. He disowns his daughter as surely as his family had disowned him, not because he fails to love her, but because she represents the violation of a world he had believed in.

The event forces Corinne to choose between the daughter she loves and the rest of the family, and though she never loses contact with Marianne, she allows her to be exiled to the home of relatives.

Their parent's response to the rape shape the Mulvaney children's relationship to the idea of family. Marianne spends years attaching herself to and then running from substitute family structures until she marries a veterinarian who has devoted his life to healing stray animals. Mike, Jr., just out of high school when the rape occurs, had been breaking from the family as a way of asserting his own adult independence. Now he exiles himself by leaving his father's roofing business and joining the marines. The second-born son, Patrick, the loner made in the mold of Henry David Thoreau, rebels against the social world that shelters people like Marianne's rapist and the family that cannot ignore that world. He plants a stink bomb at the high school graduation



ceremonies so that he will not have to deliver his valedictory address, leaves the family for college but broods there, planning revenge against Marianne's rapist.

Through all of these events, Judd, the baby of the family, bears witness as he writes about the family that he sees disintegrating around him.

Before Marianne's rape, Mike, Sr. was fond of saying, "We Mulvaney's are joined at the heart." What, the novel asks, does it mean to have this kind of blood tie, this kind of love, in a society where violence so frequently tests the family unit?

High Point Farm had been a safe house on the Underground Railway, but there are no safe houses in the late twentieth century: they are only a memory, an honoring of the past much as Corinne's collecting of antiques is an honoring of a concept of a world that may never have existed. But just as the antiques she collects have survived, so, too, does the Mulvaney family. Oates's novel is not only about what these people were as the Mulvaney's but also about what they are, about how they transcend the damage that has been done to them and that they do to themselves. With the death of Mike, Sr., the family heals itself, reuniting at a picnic, where they play that most American of games, baseball, and where that most basic of family rituals, the meal, nourishes and makes them whole again.



Techniques

On the one hand, Oates writes *We Were the Mulvaney*s as a conventional, linearly plotted novel carried forward by the force of the events that shape the lives of the Mulvaney's. She also makes Judd a first-person narrator, but because he is a journalist he serves as a public rather than a private voice. She allows him to slip into the role of an omniscient narrator who creates the interior voices of various members of his family. We move, for example, in and out of the minds of each member of the Mulvaney family: Marianne "[k]nowing she'd hurt her mother's feelings earlier . . . [t]hough she couldn't remember any longer what either of them had said"; Mike, Jr. deciding to do nothing about his suspicions that his classmates are raping someone; Patrick attacking Marianne's rapist with a plan "like an artwork he'd created, out of his guts, the anguish of his Mulvaney pride"; Corinne rationalizing Marianne's behavior after her rape as a "[v]itamin deficiency. Obviously the girl had allowed herself to become exhausted, pushed herself too hard"; Mike, Sr., in the last throes of alcoholism finding it "[t]oo damned exhausting to love [his children], even to keep them straight." The effect of this technique makes Judd's conception of the Mulvaney's become the Mulvaney's. It also emphasizes the "weness" of the family structure. Judd teaches us that although this family structure disintegrates, it also renews itself as a reconstituted family. We believe, like him, that this family will survive and flourish, not together on High Point Farm, but as autonomous selves who join with spouses and lovers and children that continue the belief in the possibility of family.



Themes

Themes

Several other themes prevalent in Oates' fiction permeate *We Were the Mulvaney*s. Three of the most important involve violence, religion, and art. The pivotal event of the novel is an act of sexual predation, but behind it lies a culture that accepts, as the title of one chapter puts it, that "Boys Will Be Boys."

Prior to his marriage to Corinne, Michael had been a sexual "predator," using his charm to exploit college girls. Mike, Jr.

asserts his manhood by sneaking out at night to sleep with his girlfriend and, although he is never shown as sexually violent, he often comes home drunk after he has been with her. He is aroused at the thought of group sex between some of his acquaintances in high school and a girl, reputed to be retarded, whom they make drunk. Oates may have based this episode on a highly publicized actual rape case where most of the town denied that their sons could have been involved, a culture of denial that echoes in the novel when the parents of the rapist refuse to believe that Marianne did not ask for it.

Even Marianne has been so indoctrinated into the belief that boys will be boys that she blames herself for encouraging her rapist.

One way of facing a culture of violence and of uncertainty is to embrace religion.

Corinne, especially, finds support in religion that lies outside the mainstream because when she was a child she was saved during a snowstorm when she saw fireflies lighting her way to shelter. To believe in fireflies serves as a metaphor for faith and, if faith cannot protect Corinne from pain, it can at least provide her with a survival mechanism. Because Michael has no such mechanism, his response to pain is to escape it through alcoholism. Faith, however, also can serve as a crutch that prevents people from working through their pain or helping others work through it. Thus Marianne retreats into a Catholic church after her rape, as if this will make it go away. For Michael, Corinne, and Marianne, alcohol or religion serve as defense mechanisms that take the place of communication as a way of healing. Before the rape, the Mulvaney family had developed a way of talking through animals to one another, but after it, they abandon this practice and are left without even an indirect method for meaningful communication.

What Judd calls their secret lives cease to be lives of privacy and become, instead, lives of isolation.

Where Corinne embraces religious fundamentalism as a way of fulfilling the need for meaning, Marianne a commune experience, Mike, Jr., the Marine Corp, and Patrick environmentalism, Judd embraces journalism, a career Oates associates with the



creative process. Judd is not only a journalist, but also an artist whose passion is to make meaning out of the world he observes and to articulate that meaning for us.

Perception

One major theme in the novel, *We Were the Mulvaney*s, is perception, specifically how people view the members of the family and how the Mulvaney

s perceive the people around them. Michael Mulvaney Sr. is the kind of man who thrives on the idea of being important in his community, of being a member of the elite crowd. Michael wants to be a member of the country club, he wants to be friends with mayors and senators, and he wants to be included in something he perceives as special. However, after his daughter is violated and Michael is caught up in the scandal of the situation, the perception of him by those around him changes. Suddenly, charismatic, charming Michael Mulvaney, is a hothead who attacked a well-respected member of the community and his son, and has a daughter who insists on telling lies about this well-respected family. Now, Michael is no longer welcome in the circles he fought so hard to become a member of.

Michael's perception of himself and his daughter also changes. Michael always believed he was the type of man who could kill for his family. Now that the opportunity to prove this fact has arrived, he finds himself unable to rise to the occasion. There is nothing Michael can do to change what happened to his daughter, nor can he get justice for her. The only option left to Michael is vigilante justice, and he cannot make himself do that, either. Due to this perceived weakness in his own character, Michael becomes self destructive and unable to face the daughter he once loved above all else.

The Mulvaney family, as a whole, has also been affected by the perceptions of the people in the little town where they live. The Mulvaney

s were once well respected. Marianne was beloved by all who knew her. The boys were all respected, despite their different personalities. Corrine, the mother, was adored, despite her own personality quirks. After Marianne's ordeal, however, the town quickly shifts away from the Mulvaneys, through the idea that the Mulvaneys are trying to injure one of the town's own with false accusations. Corrine no longer receives calls from women she called her friends. Marianne is no longer the town darling, as many of her friends will not even talk to her anymore. The boys are forced to deal with rumors and slurs against their family. The family business suffers as well, losing jobs as a result of the unpleasantness that surrounds the family.

The way the Mulvaney

s deal with each other has changed, as well. Once a close-knit family, respected and happy, they quickly fall apart when this situation causes them to see each other differently. Everyone sees Marianne as damaged goods, as someone they can hardly stand to look at and yet must defend. Marianne is sent to live with a relative shortly after the incident, banned from the family for more than twelve years. Most of the men in the family can no longer look at Marianne the way they once did, especially the father. Patrick feels the need to avenge what happened to her; however, he cannot bring himself to murder any more than his father can. None of them know how to deal with what has happened, and they find it easier not to deal with it.



Perception, the way a person sees himself and those around him, is a strong theme in this novel. It is the perceptions of those around the Mulvaney family and the ways Mulvaney family members see themselves that move the plot of this novel.

Justice

What happens to Marianne Mulvaney in the novel, *We Were the Mulvaney Family*, leads many of the main characters intent upon finding justice for her. Marianne, herself, has refused to go to court against the boy who injured her. Her memories of the event are so clouded by alcohol, Marianne is afraid any testimony she might offer could possibly be false. As a good Christian, Marianne is unable to offer false witness against anyone. This creates a situation in which Michael Mulvaney Sr. finds himself beating his head against the wall of justice, fighting for a legal resolution to a situation even his daughter wants nothing to do with. Michael wants the DA to prosecute the boy with only the doctor's reports and is frustrated and angry when the DA refuses. Michael mistakenly believes that if the boy were brought to justice, it would change the way the town has been treating him, and he could look at his little girl again. However, this justice is never to be realized for Michael.

Patrick also becomes obsessed with justice for his little sister. Patrick is only a year older than Marianne; therefore, he is forced to go to school everyday with her attacker and his friends, to hear them joking about the incident and blaming Marianne for what happened. Patrick is so full of anger that he has lost interest in all the things that once brought him joy. Patrick even has trouble being with Marianne, because the sight of her brings on such a rush of anger he does not know how to relate to her. Patrick hatches a plan to kill the man who injured his sister. Although Patrick never actually kills the attacker, he does inflict a type of justice on the boy and receives a small amount of relief from his actions.

Justice is to deal with someone fairly. Patrick feels that what he did to his sister's attacker balanced the morality between the two acts of violence. In his mind, what Patrick has done was justice and eases the intense anger he feels. Patrick finds his true desires in life soon after this and becomes a happy, well-adjusted adult. Unfortunately, Michael Mulvaney Sr. never finds the same sort of peace in his search for justice. Instead, Michael takes his family into bankruptcy with all the lawyers he hires, and the drinking that leads to the ruin of his business.

Betrayal

Another theme of the novel is betrayal. Michael Mulvaney feels betrayed throughout the novel, by not only the people in the little town where his family lived, but by his own family, especially his daughter. The people in town who Michael believed were his friends are the first to betray him at the time of his daughter's attack. The father of the boy who attacked his daughter is a good friend. Then, there are the city council members who are responsible for choosing who will receive the roofing job on several



large city projects. Although Michael was positive that he would receive the jobs before his daughter's ordeal, soon after, he is quickly turned down. The DA will not press charges against his daughter's rapist, but is ready to press charges against Michael for attacking the boy. Michael feels betrayed by each and every one of these people.

Michael also feels betrayed by the members of his own family. Marianne betrayed him by allowing this awful thing to happen to herself. Mike Jr. betrayed him by walking out of the family business and joining the Marines. Corrine betrayed Michael by allowing him to see her desperate disappointment in the sale of their home. Michael also betrayed himself. Michael always believed if anyone hurt a member of his family he would murder them himself. Michael is unable to fulfill this belief, and this turns out to be the deepest hurt of all.

Other members of the Mulvaney family feel betrayal, as well. Corrine is betrayed by her husband when he begins to drink and turns into a person she does not know. Michael becomes abusive and eventually abandons his wife. His entire family betrays Judd. As the youngest member of the family, Judd has the right to believe they will all always be there for him. However, his elder siblings all move away or are sent away. His father becomes abusive, and he is stuck in the middle. Patrick swore love and loyalty while Judd helped him with his plot to gain justice, but disappears without so much as a goodbye. Then, there is Marianne. Not only is Marianne betrayed by a boy she thought she could trust, but also her family betrays her. Corrine sends Marianne away to protect her husband from having to look at the damaged child day in and day out. Though loyal to her husband, Corrine betrayed her child's trust by completely cutting her out of the family.

Style

Point of View

Many of the first chapters of the novel are in the first person point of view of the youngest Mulvaney, Judd. The first few chapters are an introduction to the family and the small town where they live; including, the farm the family lived on since 1955. All of these chapters are seen through Judd's first person point of view. However, as the novel moves along and discusses events Judd is not privy to, the narration switches to the third person point of view of whoever the main character of the chapter happens to be. Many of the chapters are seen through the eyes of Michael Mulvaney Sr., Corrine, Patrick or Marianne.

By changing the point of view in this manner, Joyce Carol Oates tells a story that Judd alone could not have told. There are times in which emotions and events are expressed that Judd, as the baby of the family, would not have understood or been allowed to witness. This technique also changes the feel of the story, allowing the reader to see what it is like to be a part of such a fractured family, and to know how Judd might have felt as the baby of such a family. Only with this technique, could the reader understand the true emotion of the novel.

Setting

The beginning of the novel is set in the small town of Mt. Ephraim, New York and on High Point Farm, the Mulvaney family home. Both these places are initially described as a safe and warm place to live. The town is small enough that everyone knows everyone else; the farm big enough to support the dozens of animals that the family loves. Yet, it does not require the backbreaking work of a larger farm. However, both of these places shift in perception as the story moves along. Suddenly, the small town quaintness becomes a burden. Everyone knows the Mulvaney's business, which means they know of Marianne's attack and have come to their own conclusions regarding it. The Mulvaney's are no longer members of a small community. Now, the Mulvaney's are unwanted intruders against the safety of a small community. High Point Farm has also become a place of tension, a home that is no longer a home. The farm is now just a place and nothing more.

Later, the novel follows the various members of the family to varied places throughout New York and Pennsylvania. Patrick goes to Ithaca to attend school, Marianne to Kilburn to attend her own school. Corrine and Michael Sr. eventually move to another small town up the road from Mt. Ephraim, where no one knows them. However, these physical settings do not have the impact on the plot like High Point Farm and Mt. Ephraim initially had. They are just places, not homes. It is not until the end of the novel when the family returns for a reunion of sorts that the location once again feels like home. The meeting reunites the family, once again, in Mt. Ephraim. However, it is not



High Point Farm, but another home that Corrine has made with a friend she meets after Michael leaves her.

Language and Meaning

The language of *We Were the Mulvaney*s is clear and easy to understand. Much of the novel is told in long paragraphs of exposition, describing everything from the number of animals living on the farm to the long road that leads to High Point Farm. There is no foreign language throughout, though Patrick is a bit of a scientific type person who speaks of DNA, atoms and various other theories that are occasionally unfamiliar. Most of the novel is simplistically told. This is especially true when told through Marianne's down-to-earth point of view. When told from Judd's perspective, the words are well educated and practical. Corrine's view is also educated and occasionally excitedly strung together in long, run-on sentences.

There is a lot of emotion in most passages throughout the novel. Quite often, there are italicized words that emphasize these emotions, bringing to the reader the urgency in that emotion, before they have even reached that portion of the passage.

Structure

The book is divided into four sections, plus an epilogue. Each section contains many chapters, each named by a phrase or word that is found in the following text or describes an event that will take place in the chapter. Many of the chapters are short, consisting of as few as one or two paragraphs. Many other chapters can be as long as fifteen to twenty pages.

The pace of the novel differs from chapter to chapter, sometimes fast and excited, at other times laid back and slow. This technique of changing the chapter lengths adds to the feel of this novel as a description of family life. Life in a family can be extremely exciting and fast paced. At other times, it can be dreary and boring. The change in narration point of views also changes the flow of the novel. The beginning of the novel is told mainly from Judd's point of view with occasional drifts into other people's minds; including, Corrine's and Marianne's. However, the second part of the book follows Patrick more closely, the third following Marianne. Again, this changing narration only adds to the depth of the novel and tells a story that Judd alone wouldn't have had the ability to tell. This novel is about family, whether it be dysfunctional or not.



Quotes

"What is a family, after all, except memories?" Family Pictures: Storybook House, pg. 4

"I believe what God requires me to believe, Patrick. I would not ask of Him that He explain His motives any more that I would wish that any of you might ask me why I love you.' Mom paused, wiping at her eyes. Our hearts beat like metronomes. 'It was providence, and it *is*, that I was spared from death in 1938 so that--' and here Mom paused again, drawing in her breath sharply, her eyes suffused with a special luster, gazing upon her family one by one, with what crazy unbounded love she gazed upon us, and at such a moment my heart would contract as if this woman who was my mother had slipped her fingers inside my rib cage to contain it, as you might hold a wild, thrashing bird to comfort it, '--so that you children--Mikey, Patrick, Marianne, and Judd--could be born.'" Family Pictures: Providence, pg. 64

"Michael took the news as one might take the news of one's imminent mortality. He did not interrupt, he did not speak at all. He was having difficulty breathing and grasped at both her hands, his face suddenly ashen, eyes an old man's eyes, watery and incredulous. He seemed to have lost his balance--stooped, and swayed--sat heavily on an upended wooden box. One of his gloves had fallen from his overcoat pocket and his jaunty fox-colored fedora lay on the floorboards at his feet." Family Pictures: Imminent Mortality, pg. 136

"Members of a family who've lived together in the heated intensity of family life scarcely know one another. Life is too head-on, too close-up. That was the paradox. That was the bent, perplexing thing. Exactly the opposite of what you'd expect. For of course you never gave such relationships a thought, living them. To give a *thought*--to *take thought*--is a function of dissociation, distance. You can't exercise memory until you've removed yourself from memory's source." The Huntsman: Snow After Easter, pg 230

"An image of a broken cobweb, glistening-sticky across his knuckles came to Patrick. As he'd walked through the tall grass behind the horse's barn. Once you see a web in such a way it's too late. It's no longer a web." The Huntsman: Snow After Easter, pg. 230

"Such family snapshots had always fascinated Patrick. The only ones he ever felt comfortable with were those he'd taken himself--there would be a reason, a logic, why he, Patrick, wasn't in a picture. Any snapshot that included him was naturally of intense interest--though usually, being vain, and in his own eyes homely, gawky frowning bespectacled Pinch, he yearned to tear such snapshots into pieces; yet a snapshot that excluded him aroused even more anxiety. *Where am I? Didn't I get born? Has it all happened without me?* He wondered if there was a region of the human brain, somewhere in the cerebral cortex, specifically in the visual cortex at the back of the brain, that was triggered to register metaphysical anxiety over such absences."

The Huntsman: Snow After Easter, pg. 230-231



"So I'd want to scream at them. Damn you all! Don't you pity *us*.

We're the Mulvaney's." The Huntsman: The Accomplice, pg. 257

"This is hard reckoning for a son to make. I'm not sure how to begin.

How Judd, too, went away--left my mom when she needed me. *Thinking I want my own life. I'm not just Mulvaney. I'm Judd.*" Hard Reckoning: Hard Reckoning: pg. 355

"They say the youngest kid of a family doesn't remember himself very clearly because he has learned to rely on the memories of others, who are older and thus possess authority. Where his memory conflicts with theirs, it's discarded as of little worth. What he believes to be his memory is more accurately described as a rag-bin of others' memories, their overlapping testimonies of things that happened before he was born, mixed in with things that happened after his birth, including him. So it wasn't a smart-ass remark, *I don't know what I know*. It was just the truth." Hard Reckoning: On My Own, pg. 378

"I love you so, Michael darling. Why is it so hard now for you to love me?"

These words were whispered, never spoken aloud. And then only in the dark. When, under pretense of sleep, he could pretend not to hear.

Yet he heard, and turned away; didn't care to hear again, so he began to sleep elsewhere in the house. Another wife might have screamed *Bankrupt! Failure! Impotent!* But never Corrine who had given her life to him, and would surely have died for him. Hadn't she sacrificed their only daughter to his blind, raging self-righteousness?"

Hard Reckoning: The White Horse, pg. 386-387

"Mike and I lifted the clumsy box, shaking out the last of the grit and ashes. As the wind took them, so roughly.

And gone." Hard Reckoning: Gone, pg. 430

"Being angry, resentful--that's easier, somehow."

Epilogue, Reunion: Fourth of July 1993, pg. 452



Key Questions

Because we live in a society where we hear much about the breakdown of the family and where we see daily news stories about violence against and within families, *We Were the Mulvaney* contains themes that will be both familiar and troubling to most readers. Group members will differ in their responses because their experiences of family will differ.

They also may discover in the course of discussion that they place different values on different aspects of family, a fact that should lead to lively conversations that can promote understanding of the importance of family dynamics.

1. Which of the Mulvaney interests you the most? Why? Are any of the Mulvaney more important to the story than the others?
2. Why does Mike, Sr. reject Marianne after her rape? Why does Corinne support him in this? Do you find these responses convincing?
3. Do you define Zachary Lundt's act as rape? Why have it occur on Valentine's Day?
4. How do you describe the Mulvaney family language—their use of nicknames, for example, and their way of talking to each other through animals?
5. How well does Oates capture the social milieu of the American high school? How does this connect to high school as you remember it?
6. Who plants the stink bomb at graduation? Why?
7. What is the significance of the firefly episode?
8. How does the episode when Judd follows the wounded deer relate to the rest of the novel? Is this similar to the firefly episode?
9. How do other scenes with animals function in the novel?
10. Are the Mulvaney a dysfunctional or triumphant family or something of both?



Topics for Discussion

Discuss point of view within the novel. How would the story differ if told completely from Judd's point of view? Why does the author choose to tell the story the way she does, using first person with Judd and third person with everyone else?

Discuss family relationships. Why do you suppose the Mulvaney family fell apart the way it did after what happened to Marianne? Would it have still fallen apart if the father had handled the situation better? What if they had not sent Marianne away? Is it easier to be angry and resentful, than to be happy as Patrick states in the end?

Discuss perception. Do you think the way the Mulvaney family were perceived before and after the rape by the community had a direct relationship to the destruction of the Mulvaney family? How about the way the Mulvaney family viewed each other? Would things have gone differently if the family had sent Marianne away sooner? Do you think Michael Mulvaney would have handled the entire situation better if he did not hold his public image up so high?

Discuss the structure of the novel. Why do you suppose the author moved from character to character as often as she did? Do you think the author did a good job showing the movement of time, even when she focused solely on one family member? Do you think the names of the chapters enhance the text?

Discuss justice. Do you think what Patrick Mulvaney did to his sister's attacker was appropriate? Do you think Marianne should have been forced to testify against her attacker? Do you think Michael Mulvaney Sr. would have been justified in murdering the young man?

Discuss betrayal. Who was the more greatly betrayed in this novel, Marianne or her family? Do you think Michael Mulvaney had a right to feel betrayed by Marianne?

Discuss happiness. Is family happiness really as precarious as it seems in this novel?

Literary Precedents

*We Were the Mulvaney*s connects to nineteenth and early twentieth century traditions of family novels and plays, though it lacks the emphasis on successive generations of family in works like John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* (1922) and lacks the social satire of the tradition of Jane Austen. It relates more to the darker tradition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *House of the Seven Gables* (1851; see separate entry) and Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (1925), particularly in Judd's focus on revenge and questions of justice.

With its revenge theme and the hope it offers despite that theme, the novel fits in the tradition of classical tragedies—for example, of *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*. Michael's slow descent into alcoholism—the fall of a good man who loves but cannot sustain his family—recalls F. Scott Fitzgerald's portrait of Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night* (1934; see separate entry).

Related Titles

Oates inscribes her novel "for my 'Mulvaney,'" not to signal it as autobiographical—if it has substantial autobiographical elements, these have not been made public—but to connect it to the world of upstate New York that she grew up in and has used in works such as *Marya: A Life* (1986; see separate entry), *You Must Remember This* (1987; see separate entry), and *Because It Is Bitter, and Because It Is My Heart* (1990; see separate entry). Although it is set more recently than the 1950s of these novels, *We Were the Mulvaney* portrays the same kind of social class divisions and the same kind of teen-age world where girls strive to be popular and boys prove their manhood through sex. Where the highly intelligent female characters in *Marya* and *Because It Is Bitter, and Because It Is My Heart* move outside of the community to find themselves, the male Patrick serves as the genius-figure, here. Like all of these novels, *We Were the Mulvaney* shows the family as a unit that often breaks down under the forces of alcoholism and violence. In the earlier novels, Oates creates characters who must reckon with family in order to heal themselves; in *We Were the Mulvaney*, she shows that individuals can both reckon with and unite with family.

Copyright Information

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

Copyright ©, 1994, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing, Inc., 2100 "S" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994