

# **What Makes Sammy Run? Study Guide**

## **What Makes Sammy Run? by Budd Schulberg**

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# Plot Summary

This novel is an exploration of the changes and personalities of Hollywood in the 1930s. The author reveals this topic through the story of a young Jewish boy named Sammy Glick and a news writer named Al Manheim. Al meets Sammy while working as a theater columnist at a New York paper called the Record. At this time Sammy is a sixteen year old hired as a copy boy. Al becomes intrigued by Sammy when he notices that no goal seems out of reach in Sammy's mind and morals completely escape the teen. Al tries to mentor him but Sammy quickly shows Al how cutthroat he can be.

Sammy undermines Al to their editor and squeezes himself into Al's column as a radio columnist. Sammy uses this break to get his name known around New York and eventually pushes his way into Hollywood. Sammy gets his first job in Hollywood by taking the credit for a meek writer's original story. The movie is a hit and Sammy is on the road to a successful movie writing career.

Around the same time Al is hired by a production company in Hollywood to also write for movies. As much as Al tries to avoid the inevitable, his path crosses Sammy's and they start spending a lot of time together. Sammy tries to introduce Al to the biggest executives in Hollywood and all of the right people for Al to get ahead. Al shows time and again that his interest is not in playing the Hollywood game in order to get ahead. At the same time Sammy shows Al that he has just as little interest in becoming a better writer or a better person. Al watches as Sammy crushes lives and dreams to get to the top while Al tries to find his place in Hollywood and in his own life.

Kit Sargent is the start of Al's turn to happiness. When Al meets Kit, she is Sammy's lover but Al quickly learns that she is nothing like Sammy and their connection is only physical. Al and Kit learn that they have many of the same interests and the same love for writing, theater and film. In their own ways they want to see purity in the writing world and more specifically in Hollywood. Al and Kit also connect due to their intrigue and understanding of Sammy Glick's motivation and tactics. Kit makes an observation about Sammy that leads to Al's revelation that Sammy's poverty stricken past is what has shaped his future.

In the end, Sammy gets the success, money and power that he fights for. He pushes his way into being named the head of World-Wide Studios and he marries the studio chairman's daughter. Even with his ultimate achievement, Sammy is left to run a never-ending race with all of the players of the Hollywood game while Al is the one with the true gift of love and a fulfilling life.



# Chapter One

## Chapter One Summary

Al Manheim is a writer for the New York Record and he meets a teenager named Sammy Glick, employed as his copy boy. Manheim is intrigued by Sammy's drive and tries to guide the sixteen year-old. Sammy is not interested in Manheim's mentoring and starts using his own underhand methods of getting ahead. At first Sammy's tactics are subtle; Sammy makes a correction to one of Manheim's articles one night when Manheim is too drunk to realize his error. Manheim is surprised that Sammy is devious enough to use him to get ahead. The idea angers Manheim but also makes him want to find the good in Sammy. Manheim learns the hard way that Sammy has no intention of changing. Sammy's next move is to get the managing editor to cut Manheim's column in order to add a radio column written by Sammy. The promotion helps Sammy push his way into the spotlight and before long his name is buzzing around New York.

## Chapter One Analysis

There is already repetition in the idea that Al Manheim is intrigued by Sammy Glick. The reader is already being drawn into a plot point that may drive the novel. "The world was a race to Sammy. He was running against time. Sometimes I used to sit at the bar...and say, 'Al, I don't give a goddam if you never move your ass off this seat again. If you never write another line. I default. Al Manheim does not choose to run.' And then it would start running through my head: What makes Sammy run?" Here is the indication that Al cannot relate to Sammy and therefore wants to know more. These two characters have been pegged as opposites.



# Chapter Two

## Chapter Two Summary

Julian Blumberg, a timid aspiring writer comes to Sammy and Al's adjoining cubicle to talk to Sammy about a manuscript he wrote. Al watches as Sammy enthusiastically offers to help the man and listens suspiciously as Sammy raves about the story after Julian is gone. Sammy lies to Julian, offering to show it to his agent when he does not have one. Sammy's next move is to then find an agent and he gets on the phone with Myron Selznick, a big Hollywood agent. He decides to rename Julian's manuscript, claim it as his own and try to sell it in Hollywood through Selznick. Sammy speaks so confidently that he convinces Selznick that the script is in demand and worth buying. Weeks later Sammy closes the deal, selling *Girl Steals Boy* for five thousand dollars, and puts a plug in the paper that he sold it for ten thousand. Julian gets a minor mention in the blurb. After another few days Sammy comes into work and announces to Al that Hollywood has offered him a permanent writing job on the strength of the manuscript.

## Chapter Two Analysis

Sammy Glick's character is unfolding quickly. In a few years he has gone from a lowly copy boy to a radio columnist to a Hollywood writer. All of his upward movement has been achieved by stepping on others and making the right maneuvers to stay on top. His mobility in status carries the same feel as Sammy himself, who is always characterized as always running. The reader gets a feeling for his speedy movements and endless running via the end results.

Al Manheim has come to resent many things about Sammy over the years but he has also opened himself to Sammy. Al cannot help but get drawn in when Sammy has the audacity to call Myron Selznick directly. He has to ask Sammy how he had the guts to make the call and they share one of their first honest moments. It is also a moment that tells the reader just what is driving Sammy. "I was just thinking about me. I just kept thinking nothing but me. I just kept saying Sammyglicksammyglick over and over..."



# Chapter Three

## Chapter Three Summary

Months after Sammy Glick takes the Hollywood writing job, Al also gets an offer for a writing job there. Before he is scheduled to leave he gets a call from Rosalie Goldbaum, Sammy's girlfriend who accompanied them to dinner on Sammy's nineteenth birthday. Before leaving, Sammy promises Rosalie that he will send for her. Sammy even encourages her to quit her job but never lives up to his promise and, by the time she contacts Al, has cut off all communication with her. Rosalie hopes that she can reach Sammy through Al.

When Al gets to Hollywood he makes arrangements to have lunch with Sammy. It does not take long to notice that Sammy is in his element in Hollywood. He has quickly learned the right moves and avenues to get to the top of the social ladder quickly. Sammy is distracted by trying to be seen and seeing who is at the restaurant but Al manages to get on the topic of Rosalie. It takes some prodding but Sammy agrees to send her fifteen hundred dollars the following day.

Al's friends in Hollywood are limited and after a disappointing dinner with an old acquaintance and once renowned poet, Henry Powell Turner, Al is in need of a reprieve. He heads to a late night club called the Back Lot Club and runs into Sammy. Sammy invites Al to join him and two other ladies and they party until morning.

## Chapter Three Analysis

The insinuation that Al and Sammy will be forever tied by their strange relationship is confirmed in this chapter. Sammy has left New York for Hollywood and it is not long before Al's career takes him in the same direction. Al tries to convince himself that he hates Sammy and wants to stay far from him but their pairing seems inevitable. "I told myself at the time that I was only eager to see justice done by Miss Goldbaum, but there was a lot of curiosity mixed up in it too. Morbid curiosity."

The author makes the relationship between Sammy and Al interesting by depicting it as Al's one-sided torture. Nonetheless, it appears that Al may have some effect on Sammy. Al is able to somehow convince Sammy to send Rosalie money when it is apparent that Sammy does not have much of a conscience.

Al compares Sammy's personality from when they were in New York to what he has become in Hollywood. He is clearly changing but it is not a growth or maturity. Sammy is maturing his social opportunist traits and suppressing his human ones even more. Nonetheless, Al is still drawn to Sammy and their paths continue to cross even unintentionally. "His form was smoother and his stride wasn't as jerky as it was in the old days on the Record, but he was still running all right. And from the way he was hugging the rail it looked as if Hollywood was the perfect track for him. I was always a man of

simple ambitions, but one of them was to be around when Sammy crossed the finish line, wherever that would be."



# Chapter Four

## Chapter Four Summary

Al is having a mediocre start in Los Angeles and he is starting to feel like his job may be at risk. Al is therefore vulnerable when Sammy invites him out one night. Sammy further encourages Al by including Billie; the woman Sammy introduced Al to during their last outing. Al is won over and meets Sammy at his apartment where he is introduced to Catherine Sargent, Sammy's date for the night. Catherine is an author and writer at the same production company as Sammy whom Al describes as "neatly put together" with "something about the masculinity of her carriage and gestures that scared you off." Their night is spent at a place called the Back Lot where Sammy spends his time making all of the socially correct moves. Sammy is concentrating on having fun when he notices a renowned producer, Franklin Collier nearby and in no time has him at their table. Sammy works his magic and in no time manipulates his way into writing Collier's next movie. While Sammy immediately gets to work on his next hit, mapping it out on the tablecloth, Al and Catherine, also called Kit; try to get acquainted on the dance floor.

Sammy, Kit and Al meet up with Billie and head to Sammy's apartment. Sammy is still working out the details of his pitch for Collier and he is convinced that the key is how he presents the movie rather than the content. They all sit talking about it, marveling at how Sammy plans to make something from nothing. Al and Billie leave together and Kit stays behind, to Al's chagrin.

Al takes Billie back to his apartment where they have sexual intercourse. Al cannot help but ask her opinion of Sammy and is satisfied to hear that she has not been swept up by Sammy's act.

## Chapter Four Analysis

Al is now officially placed in a less powerful position than Sammy and Sammy is in a position to give Al advice on making power moves. As Al mentions in the previous chapter, Sammy hits his stride in Hollywood in a short amount of time and Hollywood has the opposite effect on Al. Sammy's association with Kit is another indication of his rise. Kit is a well-known author and graduate of Vassar College and is miles above Sammy's league of intelligence. Sammy is sharpening his image and is surrounding himself with the "best of" in order to do it. The reasoning behind Al's opposite motion and his lack of success is revealed later when he is on the dance floor with Kit; "I hate to disillusion you, but he has plenty of soul mates running in the same race...I've known Glicks before...My first producer out here was a Glick and so was the agent I just got rid of. Of course, I will admit that Sammy is an unusual model. But he's put out by the same people." Al is now surrounded by a town full of people like Sammy Glick and Al has yet to understand or relate to how they work. Al is a nice guy in a town of cutthroat sociopaths and is being pushed over because of it. It is also the reason that Al does not





have any friends and is therefore attracted to Sammy's offer for a night out. "For there was no use kidding myself any longer. I wanted to know him. Not that I ever expected to solve the mystery of What Makes Sammy Run. He was like a splinter festering under my skin. If I broke it off now his memory would go on torturing me."

The scene where Sammy sells himself to Franklin Collier and the scene later in Sammy's apartment gives the reader the chance to see Sammy in action. Here are two scenes where Sammy's dialogue dominates. These scenes also define Al as a part of Sammy's inner circle. It is a circle separate from those he is trying to impress, get over on or use to get ahead. He is candid with them about using ideas from other movies and finding dynamic ways to resell them as new movie hits. The reader sees the "charm" of Sammy Glick firsthand.

Al's interaction with Billie and Kit emphasizes Al's near obsession with Sammy. When he is alone with both of these women the only thing Al can think to talk about is Sammy.



# Chapter Five

## Chapter Five Summary

It is the night of the huge premiere of Sammy's movie, *Girl Steals Boy* and Sammy, Kit and Al ride over together. Kit fills Al in on all of the big names who have showed up for the premiere. Sammy is nervous about the reception but in his element because he is the center of attention. Al finds himself caught up in all of the excitement and praise of Sammy but still remembers to ask why Julian Blumberg's name is no longer on the credits. Sammy brushes off the idea that he should be sharing the spotlight at this point. After the premiere Kit and Al slip out the back to avoid making a statement to the press and they run right into Julian. He looks distraught and nervously asks Al to talk. Al makes an arrangement for them to meet the following day for lunch.

At the reception party for the movie Kit and Al exchange stories about how they met Sammy. Sammy jostled his way into Kit's life when he used and tricked her into plugging his name to the studio executives during his first weeks in Hollywood. Meanwhile Sammy works the room and the buzz is that the movie is getting great responses from those who count to Sammy. "Why the hell does Hollywood let him [Sammy] get away with it?" Al asks Kit. "Because there are still too many people out here more interested in boosting their own stock than in making pictures."

Al, Kit and Sammy top off the night at the Triangle Club, a Hollywood producer hot spot. After too many drinks Al found himself asking strangers "what makes Sammy run?" Al ends up somehow going home with Mrs. Henry Powell Turner, the wife of his poet friend.

## Chapter Five Analysis

Sammy's premiere gives the reader a view of Hollywood's inner working during this time period. Everyone has to play the right game in the social atmosphere in order to get anywhere professionally. Kit knows that Sammy is going to get a good review in the *Megaphone* the next day just by how its editor, Gabby Hanigan, enters the room. "'This is like every other spiritualist trick. Very impressive until you go behind the scenes.' She led me...on a verbal tour through Darkest Hollywood. 'All I had to do was watch the guy...who runs the *Megaphone*. When he's written a rave he's giving you the big hello all the way down the stairs.'" Of course when Sammy makes his way back to the table they learn that Sammy bought two hundred dollars in advertising for the applauding review.

Julian's miserable state is a direct contrast to the glamor and success that surrounds Sammy. The situation is the same for all Sammy runs over to get to his position. His girlfriend Rosalie comes to Al in the same destitute state. Both of them recognize that Al is in Sammy's inner circle; Al is the only one denying his position. It is also interesting

that Al uses a Jewish word, nebbish, to describe Julian. It seems that Sammy has decided to conquer and leave behind everything traditional and Jewish.



# Chapter Six

## Chapter Six Summary

Julian meets with Al the day after the premiere but is too distraught to eat. He fills Al in on everything that has occurred between him and Sammy since they were all in New York together. Sammy left Julian in New York with the same promise that he made Rosalie; he would go Hollywood get a feel for things, scout a job opening for Julian and send for him. After hearing nothing from Sammy Julian's wife made him write a letter to Sammy but there was no answer to that either. Julian came home one day to find his wife Blanche packing after making the decision that they would drive to Hollywood in their secondhand car and confront Sammy. They spent their time and all of their money trying to reach or run into Sammy to no avail. When Julian and Blanche were on the verge of completely running out of money, Julian managed to get Sammy on the phone. Sammy talks to Julian in a very demeaning manner, telling Julian to pack and go back to New York since Sammy does not owe him anything.

Afraid to tell his wife that Sammy hung up on him coldly, Julian goes out looking for work. The one writing job he finds turns out to be a scam and he is forced to return to New York. They arrive in New York only to find a telegram from Sammy waiting for Julian. Sammy tells Julian that he has a writing job for him and sends two tickets for Julian and his wife to return to Hollywood.

Julian quickly finds out that Sammy is using him again. Julian does the work Sammy asks for, locked away in Sammy's apartment, and manages to complete an original screenplay called *Country Doctor*. Sammy gives him the impression that none of the writing he did was great or going to be used. Weeks later Julian's wife finds a headline in the paper "Sammy Glick makes two in a row as his latest original *Country Doctor*..." Julian attends the premiere for *Girl Steals Boy* only to find out that Sammy has used every line he wrote verbatim and never mentions his name in the credits. When Julian asks Sammy about it he is mocked viciously. On top of it his wife threatens to leave him because he is allowing himself to be pushed around by Sammy and she is frustrated. This is why he turns to Al for help.

Al goes to Sammy's office to talk to him about Julian but he gets nowhere. The conversation becomes heated and Sammy starts threatening Al. Al knows he will not get anywhere fighting Sammy head to head so he solicits Kit's help. It takes a few days but Kit gets Al to concede to giving Julian a proper pay raise and a documented partnership where Julian gets credit for his work. When Al calls Julian to tell him the good news Sammy is already there taking the credit as if it were all his idea.



## Chapter Six Analysis

Al is reminded that no one is exempt from Sammy's venom. "Listen pal, you'll be doing yourself a big favor if you get out of here. Because I'm liable to be in a position to do you some good one of these days. And when I am I don't want to have to remember what a jerk you're making outa yourself." Sammy's inner circle runs very shallow and he has to be dealt with on his own ruthless level in order to make any real headway with him.

Kit is now characterized as an overseer who is sharp enough to understand and know how to deal with Sammy's type but compassionate enough to relate to Al and sympathize with Julian. She is becoming a powerful character with the Screen Writers Guild behind her. She believes in it and it is the part of reason she stands in Julian corner.

Al is starting to think that Kit may have been correct to think that something in Sammy's childhood transformed him into the person he is. Al hears the hint of truth in her statement when Al tries to appeal to Sammy as a fellow Jew. "'Don't pull that Jewish crapola on me...what the hell did the Jews ever do for me?—except maybe get my head cracked open for me when I was a kid.' That was all he said but I knew there was much more than that. I knew he was speaking his hate and his fear and his rage of anything that had or would ever stand in his way."



# Chapter Seven

## Chapter Seven Summary

Al feels pressure concerning his job; there is talk about cutting back writers and his projects have only been fairly successful. In the midst of this Kit convinces Al to join the Screen Writers Guild. In turn they start spending more time together but Al believes she only sees it as Guild relations. The Guild starts to have its own tensions when they decide to seek assistance and support from the Northern Authors League and writers start speaking out, opposing the idea and the Guild. There is an elitist group among the writers in the industry who not only want the Guild to cater to wealthy writers but also to exclude the North or any "outsiders."

Al eventually loses his job and calls Kit the day it happens only to learn that she is in Palm Springs with Sammy. He calls Billie instead and they spend the day in a Mexican part of Los Angeles called Olivera Street.

Sammy is dissatisfied having to partner with Julian and writes a play in order to establish his name on other fronts. Sammy invites Al to the opening and asks him to escort Kit for the night so he can take Rita Royce, a beautiful upcoming actress. Kit and Al watch Sammy and Rita work the room with precision; each trying to make the right career moves with every move and conversation. When they get tired of the scene, Al and Kit head to her apartment to spend the rest of the evening. They talk about their lives and pasts and about Sammy. Al tries to kiss Kit but she does not reciprocate so they continue their evening enjoyably.

## Chapter Seven Analysis

This chapter explores the Screen Writers Guild, Kit and Al in depth for the first time. The Guild is now established as a character because there is a significance surrounding it. The Guild gives the story a sense of reality since the Screen Writers Guild really exists and is actually established around this time. The Guild and what it stands for is the reason that Kit is driven to help Julian and it is what starts bringing Al and Kit together on a personal level. There is something brewing under the surface so the reader gets the impression that the Guild will continue to be a catalyst in the story.

The reader is given background on Kit for the first time. She, like Sammy was trying to escape something in her life when she left her mother behind for Hollywood. Her father was a Supreme Court judge and everything her mother did was for her father. When her father died, her mother wanted Kit to fill his shoes so her mother's life could have meaning. Kit chose another path that she calls the "ruthless" path to choosing her own future. Her strong characteristics and drive to be different from her mother are what characterizes her as masculine though she is very much a woman.



Al opens up for the first time about why he is drawn to Sammy. Al's father was a Rabbi and after his father died, Al headed to New York with no money, only hopes of finding a job. He pestered every newspaper office before school until he got a job. "I told her a little of how balled up I felt inside because there were times when I wanted to say what I had to say as honestly as possible, and times when I felt as ambitious as Sammy without being able to free myself from the sense of relationship with everybody else in the world, which made it difficult to do anything I thought might cause them pain."



# Chapter Eight

## Chapter Eight Summary

Al gets a job with Sidney Fineman, the top named producer that oversees Kit and Sammy's projects. Al is hired to complete a piece he came up with on the life of Thomas Masaryk. Al quickly learns that Fineman is a great producer to work with and he is excited about digging into the project. On his first day, Sammy comes into his office and insists they go out to lunch. They meet Julian at the restaurant and Al is happy to hear he is doing much better. Julian and his wife have managed to buy a house on the ocean and are expecting a baby. The two sit back and watch Sammy work the room before settling with them at the "Writers' Table." Sammy introduces Al to everyone and when the conversation shifts to the Guild it gets notably tense.

The atmosphere the Guild creates also becomes a battle between the production companies and the writers who support the Guild. The production companies start luring writers away from the Guild with large and long contracts while the Guild asks them to turn down any of these offers. At first Sammy appears to be on the side of the Guild but, soon after, when there is the announcement of an opposition group within the members of the Guild, Sammy's name is on the list. The others are Lawrence Paine, Harold Godfrey Wilson, John McCarter and Robert Griffin.

Julian comes into Al's office one Friday and invites him and Kit to have lunch with him and his wife the following day. When Al and Kit arrive Julian tells them that their company, World-Wide, has offered him a seven year contract and a raise to five hundred dollars a week. With the Guild's stance on the contracts, Julian has turned to Al and Kit knowing that they are both friends who understand his situation and supporters of the Guild. Kit stands by the Guild advising Julian to stand strong. Al is torn, both options are wrong and right simultaneously.

At the next Screen Writers Guild meeting, chaos is expected. The headline in the Megaphone paper reads "PREDICT CIVIL WAR AT GUILD SESSION TONIGHT!" The police force even sends officers over in case the meeting becomes riotous. To everyone's surprise they are able to form an accord that appeases both sides and everyone leaves the meeting happy and full of hope. The five men leading the opposition, also known as the Committee of Five, even agree to work out an agreement and are given spots on the board in order to do so. Unfortunately, only a few days later at the Guild board meeting four of the Committee of Five sell out to the production companies and walk out on the meeting. Pretty soon writers are joining the ranks and resigning from the Guild. The companies now have the ability to strong-arm their writers who are still Guild members. At World-Wide a meeting is called and the writers are given resignation slips and told indirectly that their jobs will be in jeopardy if they did not turn in the slips within forty-eight hours.





After talking with Kit, Al decides to turn in his resignation letter and continue working on his project. That is, until Sammy comes in to congratulate him, carrying his resignation slip. He tells Al that his project on Masaryk will never make it to screen and offers Al Julian's position as his writing partner. Al is so disgusted at the thought of residing in the same lot at Sammy that he shreds the returned resignation letter. Before long Sidney Fineman is forced against his wishes to pull Al off of the project and fire him. Sammy makes one last attempt to bring Al into his circle when he invites him to the first meeting of the Association of Photodramatists. The group has formed from the Committee of five and a few of their supporters. Al's old associate Henry Powell Turner and a few other familiar faces are in attendance. Al cannot bring himself to take them or their ideas seriously and walks out before the meeting even gets underway. Sammy is angry and coldly turns his back on Al.

The next Guild meeting is a farewell to the Guild with the few members who remained faithful. Al, Kit and Julian go out for drinks to try to lift their spirits. The next day Al gets a call from his agent that he has been blacklisted for his support of the Guild. No one will hire Al and he is forced to plan his move back to New York. Al spends his last night in Hollywood with Kit. They go out to dinner and end their night at Kit's apartment where their attraction leads them to sex. It is clear that there are strong feelings between them but neither can survive outside of the life they know best; writing. Al's last update on Sammy comes from the film section of the newspaper where a column announces that Sammy receives his much coveted \$2000 a week salary.

## Chapter Eight Analysis

The reader is brought back to the topical point of view with Al's idea to do a movie about Thomas Masaryk. The author uses a real figure whose death is at the forefront of news during this time. Al is the character that keeps the reader current and objective while Sammy represents the extremes of Hollywood. Al finds a fellow realist in Sidney Fineman; he does not fit the stereotype of the Hollywood producer and he is willing and ready to make movies that have meaning. Al's "real" moment is quickly contrasted by the presence of Sammy with whom Al is again working in close proximity.

Sammy has placed himself right in the middle of the conflict stirred up by the Guild. He feels out his position and decides to side with the elitists who are making the kind of money he hopes to make one day. This chapter is important however, because it is the first time that Al does not seem inadequate or like he is still in Sammy's shadow. Here Al's character takes form, deciding where he wants to stand and holding steadfast to what he stands for.

Al still waits and watches to see what, if anything, will make Sammy stop running. Al witnesses a moment where it seems that Sammy may have finally settled down but the moment is short lived and Al realizes his naiveté very quickly. "For five years I've been waiting for Sammy Glick to make one positive gesture in the direction of Brotherhood of Man. Now I can die in peace." "My God, I thought, it almost sounds as if Sammy were actually going to stop running. Maybe he's decided he's gone as far as he needs and



now he can cut off the motor and stop running people down. That thought made me very happy. It's wonderful what a few drinks of Scotch can do on an empty brain."

Al and Kit first connect by watching Sammy and now they have found their own ground for a connection. Neither of their lives is truly separate from Sammy but they like and possibly love one another. Al is also happy to have found some answers from Kit about what drives Sammy and the others like him in Hollywood. With these answers Al is starting to find comfort and happiness in his own life. He is a far cry from the miserable old man depicted in the first scenes of the novel. Also in Kit he has found the first thing he has over Sammy; a real friend and real love. "Sammy may go through every girl in Hollywood, but this is another pleasure he will never know, the give-and-take companionship, the overtones."



# Chapter Nine

## Chapter Nine Summary

Back in New York Al gets his old job back at the Record and starts to get Hollywood off of his mind. After a month Al's only thoughts about Sammy are when he gets the urge to read about him in the papers or magazines. One day Al is in the office, drinking with some of the other writers and somehow the conversation lands on the topic of Sammy Glick. After they all reminisce about their individual moments with Sammy, they start taking bets on where Sammy was born and raised. The bet makes Al start digging into Sammy's background using his personnel file at the Record. The search leads him to Sammy's family and eventually Sammy's entire life story until he arrived at the Record.

Sammy's full name is Samuel Glickstein and he is born Shmelka Glickstein. His father, Max Glickstein, comes to America as a diamond cutter. Max and his wife lose their first two children to sickness before arriving in America. Israel and Shmelka are born in America and the family moves to Rivington Street in New York City. Max cannot find work cutting diamonds and has to settle for work cutting glass at ten dollars a week. Shmelka is born sickly and tiny and it is thought that he will not live. As a result of this, his mother dotes on him, quickening his milestones. "He walked before his first birthday. Talked before his second. When he was three and a half, he changed his own name." Sammy becomes frustrated at being teased about the name Shmelka and declares at three years old that he will no longer answer to the name. He wants to be called Sammy.

When Sammy is four Max moves up to foreman but the glass cutter workers are striking for a raise in wages from ten dollars to twelve dollars and fifty cents. Max sympathizes with the workers and walks out with them, losing his job. The Glicksteins survive on help from the neighbors, repaying all that Max has done for them in the past. Sammy goes without shoes until Israel passes down his old ones. Their lack of money and their Jewish faith causes Sammy to be ridiculed, tortured and beaten up continually. Before long Sammy starts to despise both. He makes up his mind to find a way out of being poor and disassociate himself with anything Jewish even if it means breaking his father's heart. Max dies the day after Sammy is supposed to be bar mitzvah. The rabbi tells Max that Sammy never comes to worship and he does not know the Torah and therefore cannot be bar mitzvah. That day Max and Sammy argue viciously and Max goes to the synagogue and prays for Sammy as if he were dead. The next day he works with a vacant look in his eyes and witnesses on the street said he walks right in front of a car. While Israel and their mother watch their father die, Sammy is on the roof smoking a cigarette. Israel comes to tell him that their father has passed away and Sammy mocks their father for being foolish while Israel cries over the loss. When Al meets Sammy's mother and Israel he learns that Israel has never forgiven Sammy but his mother still believes that he is a good person at heart.



## Chapter Nine Analysis

Even miles away, back in his home, Al cannot completely shake the pull of Sammy Glick. Finally Sammy's history is unraveled but the reality of it is so intense that it haunts Al rather than bring the relief he thought it would. Every part of Sammy's short life so far is an explanation for the characteristics that the reader has been introduced to in Sammy. He is born in the image of the tiny ferret-like boy that Al first met at the Record. Al thinks him to be innocent at first sight, just as he is everyone in his first years of life. Sammy makes the transition from innocent baby to cold-hearted child is just as quickly as he makes the same transformation in his relationship with Al. Al thinks he is an ambitious copy boy until he gets his first taste of Sammy's venom. Sammy's childhood draws parallels with his relationships with women, his drive to succeed and his inability to have true friendships, even his obsession with shoes. Every move that Sammy has made has been to get himself as far as possible from his father's life, faith, culture and untimely death.

The realization of what bred Sammy Glick makes Al realize that Sammy Glick's personality is no surprise. He becomes angry with a society that ignores the wrongs that made Sammy who he is. "I thought of Sammy Glick rocking in his cradle of hate, malnutrition, prejudice, suspicions, amorality, anarchy of the poor; I thought of him as a mangy little puppy in a dog-eat-dog world. I was modulating my hate for Sammy Glick from the personal to the societal. I no longer even hated Rivington Street but the idea of Rivington Street, all Rivington Streets of all nationalities allowed to pile up in cities like gigantic dung heap smelling up the world, ambitious growing out of filth and crawling away like worms." Al's statement is an argument against another wrong of that society and time period. His description also directly contrasts the glamorous and false façade of Hollywood that Sammy and others like him are forced to hide behind.

Al's trip into Sammy's past also gives him some clarity about his love for Kit. The three of their personalities are magnets for one another. "I thought about my attraction for Kit. The attraction Sammy had for us that brought us together. I tried to trace it all through again...I realized that I had singled him out not because he had been born into the world any more selfish, ruthless and cruel than anybody else, even though he had become all three, but because in the midst of a war that was selfish, ruthless and cruel Sammy was proving himself the fittest, fiercest and the fastest."



# Chapter Ten

## Chapter Ten Summary

Al is working when he receives a call from a man on behalf of Sammy, inviting him to meet with Sammy later in the week. Al meets Sammy at his apartment that Thursday evening and Al is greeted by a new member of Sammy's entourage, Sheik Dugan. Sheik has known Sammy since childhood and beat Sammy every day during his first weeks of school. The beatings only subsided when Sheik tired of fighting someone who never fought back. Eventually Sheik went to jail for a crime Sammy refused to go in on and when he was released he looked Sammy up for a job.

Sammy is interested in finding out why Al went over to his house. Sammy's mother raved about Al when he visited his mother for the first time since he left New York for Hollywood. Sammy also offers Al a job working on an idea he has for a movie. Sammy is now working as Sidney Fineman's assistant and talks Fineman into allowing Sammy to make a few movies of his own. Al is skeptical about entering any agreement with Sammy but misses Hollywood and misses Kit so he accepts.

## Chapter Ten Analysis

The idea that Sammy and Al's characters are equally needy of one another proves true once again. Despite appearances, Sammy is drawn to Al with the same curiosity that attracts Al to Sammy. Every time Sammy writes Al off and resigns to let Al fail if he chooses, Sammy comes back and tries to bring Al into his fold. This time Sammy wants to understand what would drive Al to visit his family. It appears that Sammy wants Al to use his talents for "evil" just as much as Al wants Sammy to use his talents for "good." So the exchange continues and Al gets ready to head back to Hollywood. Beyond Sammy, Al realizes that there is a quality in Hollywood that he does appreciate and would not mind returning to. "Even when I saw one of my own jobs, a stinker...but with one scene in it that sang because I happened to stumble onto real picture technique. That is what held Kit there. Hollywood may be full of phonies, mediocrities, dictators, and good men who have lost their way, but there is something that draws you there that you should not be ashamed of."



# Chapter Eleven

## Chapter Eleven Summary

Al, Kit and Sheik meet up with Sammy outside of another successful movie premiere. Kit and Al both notice that Fineman is becoming less sure of his own success and is looking to Sammy for reassurance. It is not long before Fineman makes the mistake of turning to Sammy for support with the company owners and Sammy starts preying on Fineman's weakness. Al meets Sammy for a meeting about an upcoming movie and, after showing off his luxurious home, he tells Al his plan to upstage Fineman in front of the visiting owners. Sammy convinces Fineman to let him host a party in honor of the owners' visit to Hollywood.

Talking to Al about his relationship with Kit also makes Sammy decide to start his search for a potential wife to show off at the event. Al and Kit laugh about the idea of Sammy in love and married when they have dinner that night. "All Sammy is looking for is a nice simple housewife like his mother told him to marry, who looks like Dietrich, whose only interest in life is Sammy Glick, and whose father is a millionaire who can finance Sammy's company and put him in with the Best People."

On the night of the party, Sammy works the room; socializing specifically with all of the people who have the ability to advance his career. Sammy's most important mark is Harrington, the chairman of the board. Harrington arrives at the party late with his beautiful daughter on his arm. Sammy invites a coworker's daughter, Ruth Mintz, after making up his mind that she would be a good wife. Once Sammy gets one look at Harrington's daughter, Laurette, Ruth quickly becomes a distant memory for him. Sammy spends the rest of the night trying to get Laurette's attention to no avail. Laurette knows she is beautiful and is prepared to manipulate Sammy for her own entertainment.

She plays this game with Sammy for a while and it only makes him more attracted to her. Before long his courting is successful and they are engaged to be married. Harrington, excited about the pairing of Sammy and his daughter, decides to place Sammy in Sidney's Fineman's position as Head of the studio.

## Chapter Eleven Analysis

Al is more at ease now that he has Kit in his corner and they sit back and watch Sammy continue to push his way further into the Hollywood movie business. It has become clear that Sammy does not plan to stop and he always wants more. Therefore Al and Kit resign themselves to just watching what will happen next. Sammy has more knowledge of the business now and he works well with Al. It is not surprising that his eyes shift to Fineman's job and he maneuvers until he has it.



Laurette Harrington represents Sammy's first real challenge. She is haughty but encouraging all at once and Sammy cannot resist her. Before Laurette even knows Sammy she marks him as her next conquest and Sammy is none the wiser. It is interesting to watch how savvy Sammy is in manipulating his way to success in business but is so easily blinded by Laurette. He is so naive that he actually thinks he has the upper hand when he eventually wins her hand in marriage. He is so excited to have been awarded Laurette as a wife and his dream job in one swipe, he cannot contain himself. Al is no more pleased than he was watching Sammy get any of his other conquests. "I sat there as if I were watching *The Phantom of the Opera* or any other horror picture. I sat there silently in the shadows, for it was growing dark and I think he had forgotten he was talking to me. It was just his voice reassuring him in the dark. 'Sammy...how does it feel? How does it feel to have everything?'"



# Chapter Twelve

## Chapter Twelve Summary

The announcement is made three weeks after Sammy's conversation with Al and Sammy is placed as the head of the studio. Fineman stays on for a few months following and completes one last movie. The movie is dubbed his most brilliant work but some even try to take the credit for it away from him and award it to his new assistant. Shortly after taking leave of World-Wide Studios, Fineman dies. There are rumors that it may have been suicide but any links to the possibility are covered up quickly. The announcement states that he had been forced to resign due to failing health. A dinner is organized in his honor that Al attends but Kit refuses to go near. Ironically Sammy speaks at the dinner, making the most heartfelt speech out of everyone and even cries a little.

Sammy and Laurette's wedding day arrives and Al refers to it as a "beautiful production." Sammy has recently purchased a new mansion in Bel Air and the wedding is staged there. Al and Kit take in as much as they can before they leave during the reception. They drive to a private cove where they once spent time together skinny dipping. They enjoy each other's company in silence and then head to a public amusement park. While waiting to get on the roller coaster for the eighth time, Al asks Kit to marry him and she accepts. They agree to take a week off and go to a remote beach cottage on the Gulf to celebrate.

At one in the morning Kit answers a call from Sammy at Al's house. Sammy insists that Al meet him at his house and Al's curiosity causes him to oblige. Al gets there and Sammy is distraught and alone on his wedding night. He caught Laurette cheating on him with a young actor during the wedding and she had no remorse about her actions. She in fact went out without Sammy after everyone left the wedding reception. Sammy is really in love with her and calls Al to ask what he should do. Al advises him to pack up and leave her but all Sammy can think of is the repercussion that action would have on his career. It is the first time Al has ever seen Sammy cry but he quickly pulls himself together like none of it ever happened. He opts to treat the marriage the same as Laurette and calls Al's old acquaintance, Billie, with hopes of receiving sexual favors and a good time. Al leaves him there waiting, feeling sorry for him for the first time.

## Chapter Twelve Analysis

Sidney Fineman's death and his replacement by Sammy Glick represents the death of part of "true" Hollywood movies and the rise of the ugly, false and glamorous side. Kit takes a stance and refuses to attend the hypocritical dinner arranged in Fineman's honor. It is obvious that his life could have been saved and as she puts it "I like to give my testimonials to people before they are dead."





Sammy's last big venture to seek out Sidney Fineman's job as head of World-Wide Studios is successful. His need to have more than Al and everyone around him inserts the idea of marriage into Sammy's head and with this venture he is also successful. The wedding is beautiful, his home is beautiful, and he has money and power. He thinks he has everything until he realizes that like everyone, he has weaknesses. For a moment, his weakness is love. "He had wanted the devotion of Rosalie Goldbaum, he had wanted the companionship of Kit, he had wanted the domesticity of Ruth Mintz and the glamour of Rita Royce, and he had thought that he was getting the drop on all of them (and something more, something indispensable) in Laurette Harrington." Of course he is wrong and has to settle for a façade in this area of his life as well.

Al has found love and security in Kit and the love of his work and for the first time it gives Al the ability to feel sorry for Sammy. "'She's a great girl.' He said it with a memory, with a touch of remorse and I knew what he was thinking, that he would have liked to have her, that he would have liked to have someone, but it was impossible, it was absolutely physically, psychologically, economically impossible." "I thought of him [Sammy] wandering alone through all of this brightly lit rooms. Not only tonight, but all the nights of his life. No matter where he would ever be, at banquets, at gala house parties, in crowded night clubs, in big poker games...he would still be wandering alone...He would still have to send out frantic S.O.S.'s...I'm lonely. I'm nervous. I'm friendless. I'm desperate."

The climax to the novel reaffirms the theory "what makes Sammy run" and the conclusion gives Al his first feeling of power over the young man. Sammy is running from the fear of failure. He knows that there is always going to be someone out there, like him, desperate for success and willing to step on him to get it. He has to keep running to stay on top.



# Characters

## Al Manheim

Al Manheim is a writer and the main character of the novel. The story is told through his voice and point of view. Al is born and raised in Middletown, Connecticut, and lives with his father who is a rabbi. When he father dies, he leaves Middletown and moves to New York with hopes of finding a job. Al is working at a New York newspaper called the Record as the theater columnist when he meets Sammy Glick. Al is someone Sammy continually describes as "the sweetest guy in the world" and since Sammy is the exact opposite, they are intrigued by one another.

At first Al is mostly annoyed and bitter about Sammy's attitude; he was only sixteen and has the crass cynicism of someone who has been around for much longer. Al attempts to take the young teen under his wing but Sammy has his own plans that include almost pushing Al out of his column. Sammy does not undermine Al enough for him to lose his job but enough for an opening to his own success.

Sammy's success leads him to Hollywood and it is not long before Al's path goes in the same direction. A production company in Hollywood hires Al as a writer and his path crosses with Sammy's again. Al tries to fight the magnetism of their relationship because he detests that Sammy has no scruples, but it is no use. He is so intrigued by what Sammy will do next that Sammy becomes one of his only friends in Hollywood. As it turns out, Sammy burns so many people on his way to the top that Al is Sammy's only friend as well. Through Sammy, Al meets Catherine Sargent. She is a writer and a board member of the Screen Writers Guild. They become close quickly and the novel closes with their plan to get married.

## Sammy Glick

Sammy Glick is introduced to the novel as a sixteen year old copy boy for the Record in New York. Al Manheim tries to mentor Sammy and describes him as "always running." Al is the one who later uncovers Sammy's past. Sammy Glick is born Shmelka Glickstein, a poor Jewish boy in the slums of New York. His father, Max Glickstein is a kind-hearted diamond cutter and his mother is a housewife; they come to America like many, with hopes of finding a better life. In America, Max cannot find work as a diamond cutter and has to settle for work cutting glass at minimal wages. When Max loses that job in an act of solidarity with his fellow workers, he also condemns his family to poverty and forces Sammy into an early adulthood.

As a result, by the time Sammy is the sixteen year old that Al meets, he is cold and calculated with only money and success on his mind. Sammy's only motivation is getting as far away from his past and the plague of his family's hardship as possible. Sammy becomes the ultimate social climber and by the time he is nineteen he is a well-



known columnist in New York. Next, an opportunity arises for Sammy to get a break in Hollywood writing and Sammy jumps right in. Sammy has to step on people who care about him in the process but never looks back. After only spending a few years in Hollywood he is appointed to head up the famous World-Wide Studios in Hollywood. For a short moment Sammy realizes how lonely things are in his life but the moment is short lived.

## Catherine Sargent

Catherine Sargent is known to everyone as Kit. She is a well-educated, well-known author and Hollywood writer. She is described as masculine because she succeeds comfortably in the male-dominant world of Hollywood writing. Kit is not emotional, she speaks her mind and is sharp-witted but the reader learns that she is feminine in her own ways. Kit becomes lovers with Sammy when he begins working at World-Wide. Sammy later introduces her to Al Manheim whom she falls in love with. Kit comes from a wealthy background with a father who is a Supreme Court Judge. Her mother is a housewife and when her father dies, Kit wants to get far from his legacy and her mother's mediocrity. She attends Vassar College, writes a novel called *The Sex Express* and starts writing for Hollywood movies. Kit becomes a board member of the Screen Writers Guild because she believes in real writing and seeks to protect those who make their life doing it.

## Julian Blumberg

Julian Blumberg is a young aspiring writer who meets Sammy Glick at the Record in New York. At the time he works in the Advertising Department and he is hoping Sammy will be a mentor to him to help shape his writing ability. Sammy turns around and uses Julian and the story he shows Sammy to get his big break in Hollywood. Sammy promises to send for Julian when he arrives in California and finds a job opening for him. Sammy never does, so his wife, Blanche, forces him to drive to California and confront Sammy. Julian is very non-confrontational and Sammy takes advantage of this, avoiding Julian and Blanche for months. Sammy does not call on Julian until the next time he needs a good story and even then, Sammy uses all of Julian's hard work and claims it as his own. Blanche gets fed up with how Julian allows Sammy to walk over him so she threatens to pack up and move back to New York without him. Out of desperation, Julian turns to Al for help. Al and Kit manage to twist Sammy's arm into making Julian a writing partner rather than a ghost writer. Julian and his wife hit a few other bumps but are able to make a comfortable life in California and start a family.

## Sidney Fineman

Sidney Fineman "was one of the magic names like Goldwyn and Mayer." (89) Fineman is in the Hollywood movie making business, making successful movies for many years. He is a legend and turns out to be Sammy Glick's producer. Fineman is among the few



in Hollywood whom Al Manheim respects. Fineman puts together brilliant movies and he and Al have the chance to work together for a short period of time before industry politics cuts their project short. It is not much later that Fineman is double-crossed by Sammy who takes over his job in a matter of weeks. Fineman dies shortly after leaving World-Wide Studios and it is unknown whether it is suicide, his health or "a broken heart."

## **Rosalie Goldbaum**

Rosalie Goldbaum is introduced as Sammy's girlfriend on Sammy's nineteenth birthday. Rosalie is a meek Jewish girl who is infatuated by Sammy. Sammy introduces Al to Rosalie at his birthday dinner. When Sammy leaves for Hollywood he promises Rosalie that he will send for her and they will spend their lives together. Sammy even encourages Rosalie to quit her job and before long he cuts off all communication with her. Rosalie hears that Al gets a job in Hollywood and asks him to get Sammy to respond to her. She is broke and broken-hearted, but Al tells her that she can do much better than Sammy. He gets Sammy to send her fifteen hundred dollars to make up for her financial loss.

## **Sheik Duncan**

Sheik Duncan is a bully in Sammy Glick's school. He torments Sammy on the first day of school and beats him every day continually for months. Sammy takes the beatings silently until Sheik grows tired of the exchange. As teens he and Sammy lead rival gangs in their neighborhood. Sheik tries to get Sammy to join him in robbing a store but Sammy insists there are smarter ways to make money. Sheik and all of the guys who join him go to jail for the crime. When he gets out he calls Sammy looking for a Hollywood link or a job and Sammy employs Sheik as his assistant and eventually his right-hand man.

## **Billie Rand**

Billie Rand is a woman Al Manheim meets through Sammy one night at the club. She is not a prostitute but it is implied that she gets monetary compensation for her time spent and sexual favors performed with the wealthy men in Hollywood. Her relationship with Al is purely sexual but they do enjoy one another's company. Before meeting Kit, Billie is the only woman mentioned as being with Al.

## **Laurette Harrington**

Laurette Harrington is the daughter of Harrington, chairman of World-Wide Studios. Laurette attends a party Sammy arranges for the World-Wide financiers and board members. Sammy is immediately drawn to Laurette and she finds his attempts humorous. Sammy thinks he is courting Laurette but she is the one in control. She



chooses him before he chooses her and she plays Sammy. She accepts Sammy's proposal of marriage but only sees it as a cover for her image and her real lifestyle. She has an affair in Sammy's house, during their wedding reception and is not remorseful or regretful about it.



# Objects/Places

## The Record

The Record is the newspaper where both the main characters, Al Manheim and Sammy Glick, get their first break in writing professionally. Al returns "home" to the Record when he is blacklisted in Hollywood.

## Rivington Street

Rivington Street is the street in lower Manhattan where Sammy Glick is born and raised. It is one of the streets that make up the poor Jewish-inhabited slums in that area.

## Sammy's Shoes

The first time Al catches Sammy scamming someone for money, Sammy shows Al that the money was spent on a new pair of shoes. From that point Sammy buys a new pair of shoes every chance he gets. When Sammy is a kid in his poor neighborhood he is forced to play in the streets without shoes because his family cannot afford them.

## Hollywood, California

Hollywood, CA is the center of the critique of Sammy Glick. Hollywood has a strange balance where Sammy can reach as high as he can imagine and where real writers like Al and Kit can still find happiness.

## Screen Writers Guild Gymnasium

Screen Writers Guild Gymnasium is the hot room where the writers of every level and pay-grade would pile in for the Screen Writers Guild meetings.

## New York City

New York City is the starting point for both Al and Sammy's career at the Record. New York is where Al escapes to find his start once his father passes away. New York is also where Sammy is born and raised. The part of New York where Sammy develops his callous exterior and his knack for stepping on others strongly contrasts his life at the Record and later in Hollywood. New York serves as the contrast to Hollywood for the characters and the framework of the novel.



## **Glick's Lagoon**

Glick's Lagoon is a well hidden beach cove that Kit once finds when driving. Although Sammy refuses to stop and see it, Kit calls it Glick's Lagoon because like Sammy, "it's the last stronghold of individualism." (173) Kit and Al go skinny dipping there one day to shake off the worries of Hollywood and the tension with the Guild.

## **Olivera Street**

Olivera Street is where Al takes Billie to get his mind off of being fired, loving Kit and Sammy. This happens on the day Al gets laid off his first Hollywood job and he cannot reach Kit because she is in Palm Springs with Sammy. It is a predominantly a Spanish culture area and he and Billie drink tequila and enjoy each other's company.

## **Ocean Park**

Ocean Park is the place where Al and Kit end up after leaving Sammy's wedding. The simplicity of the area and the amusement park is meant to directly contrast the pomp and flair of Sammy's wedding. It is here that Al proposes marriage to Kit and she accepts.

## **The Derby**

The Derby is a popular restaurant writers frequent in Hollywood. After Al reconnects with Sammy and meets Kit, he has many of his meals there. When Al leaves Hollywood to return to New York, he and Kit have their last dinner there.

## **Kit's Apartment**

Kit's Apartment is a quaint and beautiful apartment with a great view over Hollywood. Kit and Al go to her apartment the first night they spend time without Sammy.

# Themes

## Running

The title of the novel is "What Makes Sammy Run?" so running is a clear, key theme of the plot. The main character spends the entire novel wondering what makes his fellow character, Sammy Glick, move so quickly and continually as if he is always running. Starting with the first chapter Sammy is examined in this context; why he is literally running, why he is figuratively running and where he is running to. While examining Sammy, the reader gets a chance to see that the other characters are doing some running of their own by chasing Sammy.

Sammy Glick is raised in the depths of poverty and becomes so resentful of his circumstances that running comes natural to him early in life. The direction of his resentment is first towards his father, whom Sammy feels could have easily avoided the destitute life his family faces. Sammy feels that if his father was more driven and more cutthroat, he would not have lost his job. In order to outrun his father's dim fate, Sammy has to shed the weight of his Jewish identity. He changes his first name and claims himself to be a Christian as a mere child. Then when he enters the work force he completes the transformation by leaving his mother and brother behind and changing his last name.

Sammy's job as a copy boy requires him to actually "run" copy back and forth for the newspaper. This sets up the perfect image and parallel for what Sammy's life will always be. As fast as he arrives at one finish line, Sammy starts racing for another. Sammy keeps running until the close of the novel because he cannot help it. If he were to stop, failure may catch up with him just as it had for many of the people he ran over on his journey.

## True Hollywood

"Even when I saw one of my own jobs, a stinker...but with one scene in it that sang because I happened to stumble onto real picture technique. That is what held Kit there. Hollywood may be full of phonies, mediocrities, dictators, and good men who have lost their way, but there is something that draws you there that you should not be ashamed of." (234) This quote describes the two sides of Hollywood that the author explores throughout the novel. The battle for the "true Hollywood" rages all the way through to the final scenes. Nonetheless the author's bias is towards "real" writers and "real" living as the true beauty of Hollywood.

Al Manheim does not start out dreaming about Hollywood. The thought of being a writer in Hollywood only touches his mind as a curiosity. Al is bred as a writer; he enjoys his work even when he spends his days at the Record and his nights in a bar. His recurring advice to Sammy is a grammatical one; not to use the word "ain't." When the





opportunity arises for him to start a career in Hollywood writing he embraces the opportunity. Even in Hollywood when tempted by Sammy to play the "social climbing" game, Al wants his work to advance his career and nothing else.

The other characters, like Julian Blumberg, Kit Sargent and Sidney Fineman, also represent the author's idea of true Hollywood. They are characters with heart and morals and a desire to see great films surface from great writing. The places that they frequent and reside are cultural, scenic, quiet and beautiful, far from the glitz that Hollywood has become.

On the other side of the spectrum are Sammy Glick and all of the men like him. They are the ones who want to keep real writers from the Author's League away from their writer's guild because their financial interests may be compromised. "Remember that time you told me you knew a lot of Sammy Glicks, I thought you were crazy until I started thinking about that gang at Paine's the other night. They were all so different but they all really had the same idea Sammy had. They were all running." (193)

The author sums up the happiness of being a writer rather than a runner when Al finally gets a movie project to work on that he enjoys. "Sammy Glick may get everything else, I thought, but by God this is a pleasure he'll never know, the joy of writing that first line on the pad, which sounds so beautiful now and so lousy later, the tremendous pleasure and labor of creating something you believe in." (160)

## The Power of the Past

Sammy thinks he wins his fight against fate. He leaves the slums of Rivington Street and leaves his father's morals and love for his fellow man at the same time. Sammy is the epitome of a "rags to riches" story since it is implied that he is only in his twenties when he is appointed head of World-Wide studios. Sammy has done everything in his power to leave his past behind him but it is inevitable for it to creep into his present life.

The first indication that Sammy's past keeps its hand in his life is his running. Sammy runs throughout his childhood and never learns how to stop and live the life he seeks after so boldly. "She...looked as though she really enjoyed it. But not he. He looked desperate and busy. He was working at it, he was working at having fun. Recreation never seemed to come naturally to him. In fact the only activity that did seem to be that damned running." (69) Al points out on several occasions that Sammy does not know how to enjoy himself, or relax. Sammy's past breeds his life in the future.

Al is the only character intrigued enough by Sammy to dig into his future. Finding out what Sammy experienced as a child gives Al his first instance of peace and power over Sammy. For Al, Sammy's past holds the power and not Sammy himself. Sammy, the individual, is just a product like so many others. The key player in the game is the slum that raised him. Sammy could not be different if he wanted to. He tries but "is looking for a nice simple housewife like his mother told him to marry" and somewhere in him are the morals and family values that were instilled in him.



# Style

## Point of View

The novel is told from the first person point of view. The reader explores the life of the main character, Al Manheim, and that of Sammy Glick through Al's eyes. In the beginning Al is as much a naïve observer as the reader but he quickly becomes an authority able to give a detailed account of his experience. Al's view is important because he quickly becomes a catalyst for many of the turns that Sammy's life takes. There is magnetism between Al and Sammy and until the ending of Al's account, neither of their lives exist without the other. Al is drawn to Sammy through all of the high and low points of Sammy's life and is the perfect character to identify what makes Sammy the controversial character he is.

There are a few instances in the last four chapters, starting with the outline of Sammy's past, where points of the plot are written almost like a movie script. In these segments there is a narrator that could easily be Al Manheim or another unseen voice. These sections allow the reader to form images of the plot as if watching the pieces revealed on a screen. Using this method reinforces the idea that the accounts of Sammy's life and other occurrences are concrete.

## Setting

The novel is set between New York and California. New York represents the beginning of both Al Manheim and Sammy Glick's careers and Hollywood, California represents the peak. New York is described as the hustler's town, where dreams start. On one end is the big business of Manhattan but not far are slums and poverty-stricken communities. Al despises the extremes that emerge from this type of environment. Al turns to New York with hopes of living a life a little different from his upbringing in Middletown, Connecticut. In New York, Al finds his love for writing in New York. He also finds Sammy who possesses the career drive that he often wishes he possessed.

California may have the same contrasting scenes as New York but the façade of Hollywood overshadows everything else. Al, Kit and Julian are the only characters to venture outside of the glamorous Hollywood to see other areas and cultures in California. In Hollywood, Al finds the middle ground where he can push his career in the direction he wants without become greed-driven like Sammy. Sammy finds the ultimate success he searches for but Hollywood is the first to teach Sammy that his success comes with the price of loneliness and fear.

The biggest uproar in the Screen Writers Guild is brought about by the possibility of mixing New York and Hollywood writers. The two do not share ideals and are set up as the "real" writers versus the "false" writers—the latter of which is making the most



money for doing nothing. New York and California are set up to be contrasting and never mix; the characters cannot exist in both worlds.

## Language and Meaning

The novel is written completely in English. The main characters are of Jewish decent so there are instances where Jewish terminology is used. Al is the one who always references Jewish terms. He is proud of his Jewish background and his Rabbi father. Al speaks with a hint of sarcasm and intelligent wit but also possesses the sincerity he developed from life in his father's home. As a writer, Al is very conscious of language and grammar. He notices the influences that life has on other characters' use of the English language.

Al notices quickly that as smart as Sammy appears to be, he does not possess a grasp of proper English nor display the influences of being raised in a Jewish household. When Sammy veers from standard english he resorts to using street slang. The slang that slips out in anger or frenzy is Sammy's natural language from raising himself in the streets of New York. Al watches Sammy struggle when around truly intellectual people, simply mimicking the behavior of their language rather than learning the usage of the language itself.

## Structure

The novel is written in 12 chapters, all of them broken into smaller segments. Each chapter averages 30 pages and each segment averages 3 pages. The segment breaks occur with a change of scene or change of focus within the chapter. This is used to explore different aspects of the main characters and compare and contrast their lives and personalities. For example, when Sammy gets his job in Hollywood and leaves the Record for the last time, the chapter closes with this scene. It is a defining moment for both Sammy and Al and it is the end of Sammy's life in the setting of New York and the Record, therefore a new chapter is needed for the next step in Sammy's life.

In chapter five a segment break is used within the chapter to show the difference in Kit and Al when they are with Sammy and then when the two characters without Sammy. The chapter opens at Sammy's movie premiere and the focus of Al and Kit's attention is Sammy. Their reason for being with one another that night is also Sammy and they are drawn to him like everyone else around them. When the segment breaks they are in a restaurant after the premiere and although they are still in a room full of people celebrating Sammy's success, they talk to one another as individuals rather than friends of Sammy for the first time.



## Quotes

"The world was a race to Sammy. He was running against time. Sometimes I used to sit at the bar...and say, 'Al, I don't give a goddam if you never move your ass off this seat again. If you never write another line. I default. Al Manheim does not choose to run.' And then it would start running through my head: What makes Sammy run?" (5)

"I was just thinking about me. I just kept thinking nothing but me. I just kept saying Sammyglicksammyglick over and over..." (33)

"I told myself at the time that I was only eager to see justice done by Miss Goldbaum, but there was a lot of curiosity mixed up in it too. Morbid curiosity." (43)

"His form was smoother and his stride wasn't as jerky as it was in the old days on the Record, but he was still running all right. And from the way he was hugging the rail it looked as if Hollywood was the perfect track for him. I was always a man of simple ambitions, but one of them was to be around when Sammy crossed the finish line, wherever that would be." (49)

"For there was no use kidding myself any longer. I wanted to know him. Not that I ever expected to solve the mystery of What Makes Sammy Run. He was like a splinter festering under my skin. If I broke it off now his memory would go on torturing me." (61)

"I hate to disillusion you, but he has plenty of soul mates running in the same race...I've known Glicks before...My first producer out here was a Glick and so was the agent I just got rid of. Of course, I will admit that Sammy is an unusual model. But he's put out by the same people." (78)

"'This is like every other spiritualist trick. Very impressive until you go behind the scenes.' She led me...on a verbal tour through Darkest Hollywood. 'All I had to do was watch the guy...who runs the Megaphone. When he's written a rave he's giving you the big hello all the way down the stairs.'" (104)

"'Why the hell does Hollywood let him [Sammy] get away with it?' Al asks Kit. 'Because there are still too many people out here more interested in boosting their own stock than in making pictures.'" (105)

"'Don't pull that Jewish crapola on me...what the hell did the Jews ever do for me?—except maybe get my head cracked open for me when I was a kid.' That was all he said but I knew there was much more than that. I knew he was speaking his hate and his fear and his rage of anything that had or would ever stand in his way." (122)

"Listen pal, you'll be doing yourself a big favor if you get out of here. Because I'm liable to be in a position to do you some good one of these days. And when I am I don't want to have to remember what a jerk you're making outa yourself." (123)



"I told her a little of how balled up I felt inside because there were times when I wanted to say what I had to say as honestly as possible, and times when I felt as ambitious as Sammy without being able to free myself from the sense of relationship with everybody else in the world, which made it difficult to do anything with I thought might cause them pain." (153)

"For five years I've been waiting for Sammy Glick to make one positive gesture in the direction of Brotherhood of Man. Now I can die in peace." (177)

"My God, I thought, it almost sounds as if Sammy were actually going to stop running. Maybe he's decided he's gone as far as he needs and now he can cut off the motor and stop running people down. That thought made me very happy. It's wonderful what a few drinks of Scotch can do on an empty brain." (179)

"Sammy may go through every girl in Hollywood, but this is another pleasure he will never know, the give-and-take companionship, the overtones." (196)

"He walked before his first birthday. Talked before his second. When he was three and a half, he changed his own name." (211)

"I thought of Sammy Glick rocking in his cradle of hate, malnutrition, prejudice, suspicions, amorality, anarchy of the poor; I thought of him as a mangy little puppy in a dog-eat-dog world. I was modulating my hate for Sammy Glick from the personal to the societal. I no longer even hated Rivington Street but the idea of Rivington Street, all Rivington Streets of all nationalities allowed to pile up in cities like gigantic dung heap smelling up the world, ambitious growing out of filth and crawling away like worms."

"I thought about my attraction for Kit. The attraction Sammy had for us that brought us together. I tried to trace it all through again...I realized that I had singled him out not because he had been born into the world any more selfish, ruthless and cruel than anybody else, even though he had become all three, but because in the midst of a war that was selfish, ruthless and cruel Sammy was proving himself the fittest, fiercest and the fastest." (226)

"Even when I saw one of my own jobs, a stinker...but with one scene in it that sang because I happened to stumble onto real picture technique. That is what held Kit there. Hollywood may be full of phonies, mediocrities, dictators, and good men who have lost their way, but there is something that draws you there that you should not be ashamed of." (234)

"All Sammy is looking for is a nice simple housewife like his mother told him to marry, who looks like Dietrich, whose only interest in life is Sammy Glick, and whose father is a millionaire who can finance Sammy's company and put him in with the Best People." (245)

"I sat there as if I were watching The Phantom of the Opera or any other horror picture. I sat there silently in the shadows, for it was growing dark and I think he had forgotten he was talking to me. It was just his voice reassuring him in the dark. 'Sammy...how does it feel? How does it feel to have everything?'" (259)



"He had wanted the devotion of Rosalie Goldbaum, he had wanted the companionship of Kit, he had wanted to domesticity of Ruth Mintz and the glamour of Rita Royce, and he had thought that he was getting the drop on all of them (and something more, something indispensable) in Laurette Harrington." (271)

"'She's [Kit] a great girl.' He said it with a memory, with a touch of remorse and I knew what he was thinking, that he would have liked to have her, that he would have liked to have someone, but it was impossible, it was absolutely physically, psychologically, economically impossible." (274)

"I thought of him [Sammy] wandering alone through all of this brightly lit rooms. Not only tonight, but all the nights of his life. No matter where he would ever be, at banquets, at gala house parties, in crowded night clubs, in big poker games...he would still be wandering alone...He would still have to send out frantic S.O.S.'s...I'm lonely. I'm nervous. I'm friendless. I'm desperate." (275)



## Topics for Discussion

What is the significance of including the Screen Writers Guild, especially at its most tumultuous time?

Compare and contrast the female characters in the novel. What do they represent in the author's exploration of the time?

Why is love used as Sammy's weakness and Al's strength?

Discuss the author's choice to include factual information and references from this period. Include support from relevant factual sources.

Compare and contrast Al and his brother Israel. How different are they?

Is Al free of his obsession with Sammy when the story ends?

Are any of the other characters interested in Sammy or is it Al that encourages the obsession?

Is there an implication of whether "Old Hollywood" or "New Hollywood" will prevail?

Laurette Harrington represents Sammy's fear; meeting his match. Explore the role of fear in the novel.

There are many references to the Jewish culture; what is the significance of this group in relation to the main characters?