

Why We Broke Up Study Guide

Why We Broke Up by Daniel Handler

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Plot Summary

Why We Broke Up is a novel by author Daniel Handler. The story follows the main character, Min, as she recounts the relationship she had with her ex-boyfriend, Ed, and all of the reasons they broke up. During their relationship, Min saved various items related to their relationship in a box she hid in her closet to keep her mother from snooping. Now that it has been some time since they broke up, Min is ready to return the box of items to Ed by dropping it on his front porch.

As the novel unfolds, Min is writing a letter to Ed to include in the box. Min goes item by item, telling Ed what each object is and what it represents in regards to their relationship. Since Ed and Min come from very different worlds and lead very different lives, Min's story recounts in hindsight all of the reasons that she and Ed should never have been boyfriend and girlfriend to start.

In this coming of age story, Min is able to overcome her emotions, pain and hurt for the loss of her relationship with Ed by explaining all of the reasons that their relationship did not work. Along the way, Min also learns how to cherish the existing relationships that she has with her friends, especially her friendship with Al.

Min provides the reader with an insider view to the euphoria couples feels as they meet, start to date, and fall in love. She also chronicles the pain, suffering, and emotions that couples deal with when the relationship ends. In this novel, the reader gains insight into one point of view in a relationship, from the girl that is cheated on and betrayed.

Finally, Min illustrates how to see the signs that relationship might not be what you believe it to be. She provides clues in her letters that she should have realized and that in hindsight, makes her realize precisely why the relationship between her and Ed was doomed from the start. Since all of the characters see this except for Ed and Min, it also shows that "love is blind" because those engrossed in the relationship see things much differently than those outside of the relationship.

In the end, Min finishes her letter to Ed. She inserts it into the box. Al drives her the rest of the way to Ed's house, so that Min can drop the box off on Ed's front porch.



Pages 1-23

Pages 1-23 Summary

The main character, Min, is writing letters to her ex-boyfriend, Ed, to explain to him precisely why they broke up. Her first letter is to go on the top of a box that she is dropping off on Ed's front porch. The box contains various items that she collected throughout their relationship. She says they dated from October until November, and she's writing the letter and dropping off the box in December.

Min tells Ed that the thunk noise he hears is the box hitting his front porch. Min explains she found a box in the basement of her house. She wrote a famous quote on the top and added souvenirs from their relationship inside. She hid it her closet under some shoes she never wears because her mother likes to snoop through the things in her room. Min admits that she did love Ed, but that the reason they broke up is he cannot see the movies that are inside of Min's head.

Min calls Al to drive her to Ed's house to drop the box off. Min is able to tell Al exactly where the keys he cannot find are. Al seems a bit surprised that Min is finally ready to give Ed all of his stuff back, but he says he'll pick her up in five minutes. Min mentions how she and Ed met at Al's "bitter sixteen" birthday party. She found Ed in the backyard, even though he wasn't invited, drinking Scarpia's Bitter Ale. Min includes the two bottle caps from their beers from the party in the box.

Min also describes how she bought Al a tie that a character in one of their favorite movies wears. She also describes how she planned on finding a girl at the party for Al. Instead, though, Min ended up finding someone for herself and that someone is Ed. Ed starts talking to Min about how they lost the basketball game and that's why his friend Trevor is throwing up in Al's mother's bushes.

Ed ends up asking for Min's number. She admits that sometimes the heart doesn't know what it wants until that something shows up. Ed asks for Min's number and Min gives it to him. After Ed leaves, Min's friends are all in awe that Ed Slaterton showed up at the party and asked for Min's number.

Pages 1-23 Analysis

It seems as if Min is the one that broke up with Ed, from the way that she is writing the letters. Everyone deals with problems and issues in their life differently. For Min, it seems as if writing the letters is a therapeutic method for her to get her feelings about the relationship out, and to get over it and move on in her life.

Min is telling Ed that love isn't enough in a relationship. Being able to understand the other person is a very important part of a relationship. Min feels as if Ed couldn't



understand the hopes and dreams—the movies inside her head—so she broke up with him. This is likely only one of the many reasons that Min will cite as the novel unfolds.

The status of the relationship between Al and Min isn't quite clear. They are friends, and definitely were friends prior to Min meeting Ed. It could also be that Min and Al are boyfriend and girlfriend now because Min seems a little apologetic for asking Al to drive her to Ed's house to drop off the box.

Min admits that she didn't even know she wanted love or wanted Ed until she started talking to him at the party.



Pages 24- 47

Pages 24- 47 Summary

Min writes about their first date and why she is including the two movie tickets in the box. They went to the movies to see *Great in the Wild*. Min arrives ahead of Ed, who is late, and who Min says she finds out is always late. She buys the tickets and when he arrives, they go in. Ed offers to buy the popcorn and says it's what Min wants, not what he wants. As the movie starts, Ed puts his arm around Min. She's thrilled. Then, they start to kiss and then they watch the rest of the movie. After, Min suggests they get something to eat. She says she shows Ed an adventure he never would have seen if she hasn't pointed it out, which is why they broke up.

Min says the next item she's including will likely break Ed's heart but that he's already heartbroken anyway. She explains how she and Ed are standing on the street after the movie when Min points out the old woman walking down the street that was also in the back row of the movie. She says it's the female star in the movie, Lottie Carson. Ed goes into the theater lobby and steals the lobby card, which has the movie information on it and a picture of Lottie Carson. They decide to follow the old woman to see if it is the real, yet aged, Lottie Carson, and if she lives nearby.

Next, Min includes an empty matchbox into the box and describes it in the letter. She says it is empty now, but was full when Ed gave it to her. Min says when she can't sleep, she crawls out onto the roof of her house and she lights the matches. These matches only lasted three times—the first night Ed gave them to her, the night she lost her virginity and the night they broke up.

Ed and Min end up following Lottie Carson into a very fancy restaurant. Since they don't belong in it, they leave, but Ed grabs the matchbox from the brandy snifter stand first. Ed and Min discuss that night how they live in two different worlds, but it doesn't stop them from pursuing their relationship. Min admits that she wants what she can't have and that's why she and Ed broke up.

Pages 24- 47 Analysis

Ed and Min are total opposites. Ed is an athlete. Min is a creative, who sees everything in life as a movie. She is always comparing real life to events that happen in movies. This implies that Min is a dreamer rather than a realist. It also infers that Min is more of an optimist than a pessimist.

Min eludes to the fact that she starts thinking about and planning her future with Ed that afternoon of their first date. While she had a positive outlook and hope at the time, the relationship obviously ends negatively and hopeless.



It seems as if their differences is what attracts Ed to Min and vice versa. In some situations, opposites do attract. If the differences are too great, however, it can cause a rift in the relationship. It seems as if this might be the case with Min and Ed. While they love each other, they are just too different to remain in a functional relationship. Additionally, they are only a junior and a senior in high school, so they have a lifetime of events and adventures ahead of them.



Pages 48-69

Pages 48-69 Summary

As they are waiting for Lottie Carson to come out of the restaurant, Min and Ed go into the novelty shop across the street. They continue talking and Ed uses the word gay to describe something, and then apologizes because he thinks that Al is gay. Min says Al is not gay. Ed says that Min is different from all of the other girls he's dated since she's smart and arty. Ed also points out that she relates everything to movies. Min admits she wants to be a director. Ed says she reminds him of his sister, who was almost a film major at State.

Ed ends up buying a cardboard pinhole camera from the store because they two old twins that run it, tell them to buy something or get out. Min includes the camera in the box she is returning to Ed. Min says she should have recognized that Ed is unreliable in the way that he handles the shopkeeper, turning her from angry and snarly to a puddle in his hands.

When the door of the restaurant opens and Lottie Carson comes out, Ed and Min are still fumbling with the directions on how to use the camera. They follow her down the street, snapping pictures so they can see if it is really her later when they get the film developed. They follow her to her house and Ed goes onto the front porch to see if he can retrieve a piece of mail with her name on it, but he comes back empty handed. They never develop the film, so Min includes it in the box to Ed. She compares the undeveloped film to their relationship, tossed away before they ever knew what they had. She says this is why they broke up.

Min also includes the folded up note she found in her locker the following Monday at school. She says that Ed always seemed to find her and her him, even though their schedules were completely different. She says she reread the note for the rest of the day, after finding it, and several more times since then.

Pages 48-69 Analysis

In hindsight, Min now realizes that Ed was giving her signs of his real character from the first day they went out together. She wishes she would have realized it at the time because it would have saved them both from heartache and pain.

Min attributes each of the items she is including in the box to an aspect of the relationship she and Ed had. Giving these items back to Ed is a symbol to Min. It's symbolic of getting the items out of her life, which symbolizes the true ending and closure of their relationship in Min's eyes.

Min implies that Ed says he loves her in the note that he slides into her locker the Monday after their date.



Pages 70-94

Pages 70-94 Summary

Min includes a ripped half of a Halloween poster in the box. She describes how she arrives at school one morning, realizing that she has forgotten to help Al, Lauren and Jordan hang the posters up about the ball around school. Al gets mad at her and guilts Min into hanging the posters instead of finding a girl Min needs to beg to copy her bio homework. Lauren says she's pairing up with Jordan to hang the posters because she needs to get away from the sexual tension between Al and Min.

Min admits the best part of those months were being on the phone with Ed at night. She mentions how the first time she called, Joan, Ed's sister answers. While it's awkward when Ed first gets on the phone, they spill everything to each other after that, later into the nights. Min says they need the days too though, so that's why they broke up.

Min also includes a coin in the box. It represents the first time Min invited Ed to meet and hang out with her friends, they choose a neutral place, Cheese Palace. When Ed arrives, he mentions that he loves the jukebox in this place but doesn't have any change. Ed grabs Lauren's purse, rummages through it, takes out her change purse and walks over to the jukebox. Lauren and everyone left at the table is in shock because nobody goes into Lauren's purse except for Lauren. When he returns, he puts a coin down that doesn't work, which is the coin Min is placing in the box.

Pages 70-94 Analysis

Lauren points out that there is sexual tension between Al and Min. This infers that as Al drives Min to Ed's house to drop off the box, that they are indeed more than just friends. It makes sense that Al and Min would get together because they know each other better than anyone else. They also share a passion for movies.

Min suggests that she and Ed spill all of their secrets and experiences to each other when they are on the phone. It seems as if the problem is that the nights are so great, but the days for them are different. What she is really saying is that their relationship has some great elements to it, but it is not a complete relationship, and therefore they cannot be together.

Ed is too presumptuous for Min and her friends. Min tolerates it because she is taken with Ed, and possibly even in love with Ed. Her friends do not like his behavior at all. When everyone else in Min's life despises, or at least doesn't approve of Ed, it makes it difficult for Min to maintain the relationship, which ends up being just another reason why their relationship doesn't work.



Pages 95-117

Pages 95-117 Summary

The next item Min includes is a rubber band that she says still include a couple of her hairs from when Ed ripped it from her. It was the first time Min watches Ed practice and then she rides the bus home to him. Ed tells her to hang out with Joan while he takes a shower. Joan recognizes Min from the phone call the other night and asks her name. the two get along right away. Joan says Min doesn't seem like a typical sidelines girl and Min admits that she hates basketball. When Min mentions her love for movies and that Ed says she studied film at State, Joan says she had to change to a more practical major when they're mom got sick. Joan nods towards a bedroom down the hall.

Joan gives Min the rubber band off one of the doorknobs so Min can help her cook. When Ed pads into the kitchen, he tries to get Min to hang out and he rips the rubber band out of Min's hair because he says he likes it better down. Joan insists that they are cooking together, so Ed takes his snack into the living room to watch TV.

The next item in the box is the high school pennant Ed left on Min's locker for the first Friday night game. The guys on the basketball team leave the pennant on their girlfriends' lockers. Inside her locker, Ed has slipped a ticket to the game, where Min ends up sitting with Joan. Even though Min is bored to death at the game, her excitement renews when she's waiting with the other girlfriends for Ed to come out of the locker room so they can go to the after party.

Pages 95-117 Analysis

Min and Joan get along very well. Min still admires Joan and thinks she's great while she's writing the letter to Ed. It seems as if Joan has become a motherly figure to Ed since their own mother is too ill to fill the role. This could be the role that Min ends up fulfilling in Ed's life, as well. She likely becomes someone that Ed looks up to for advice and guidance, which doesn't end up being very romantic in the long run.

Min feels out of place sitting in the bleachers watching Ed play in the game. Even though she knows they lead completely different lives, lives in which the one does not belong in the other, she continues on with the relationship anyway. It all seems worth it to Min for the time she gets to spend with Ed.



Pages 118-143

Pages 118-143 Summary

Ed and Min go to the bonfire after the game. While Ed is away getting them beers, two of Ed's ex-girlfriends approach Min—Annette and Jillian. Jillian is the most recent ex. She is also drunk, so she's not being nice to Min. Annette apologizes for Jillian's behavior and gets Jillian to walk away. As Min continues her conversation with Annette, Min realizes that Annette is the girlfriend from junior prom—although Min doesn't reveal the story in the letter. Annette says that she's the only ex that Ed still talks to and that he's right, Min is different. When Ed comes back, Jillian is clinging to his arm and starts being rude to Min again. Annette takes Jillian away and Ed apologizes for Jillian.

Ed gives Min a little toy dump truck, which is the same toy she includes in the box. Ed tells Min that he always looks for them in the sand when he comes here because he used to leave his behind all the time when he was a kid. He says he always gives them to someone special, but that she's the first girl he's ever given one. He takes her to his friend's car, where Min loses her virginity, while gripping the toy truck in her hand. When she gets home that night, she can see the blisters and marks the truck left.

Pages 118-143 Analysis

Ed is a player. He sleeps with almost every girl he meets and has slept his way through his high school. While it is typically Ed that breaks up with the girls and breaks their hearts, the relationship with Min is different. It seems as if Ed is really in love with Min. Ironically, this time, it is the girl that breaks Ed's heart. Now, he will know what he has made all of those girls feel like over the years.



Pages 144-165

Pages 144-165 Summary

Ed and Min go to the park across the street from the store. Ed tells her he would spend the \$55 he spent on the book for anything for Min. he says that's a big deal for him. She tells Ed that she wants to have a party on December 5 to celebrate Lollie Carson's 89th birthday. She says she wants to send an invitation to the woman that they think is Lollie Carson.

Next, Min adds a book, *Real Recipes from Tinseltown*, to the box. She says she loves it, hates to give it back and it's what kept them together. She describes how Ed picks her up early the night after they stayed out until 1 am at the bonfire. When Min mentions her starting to like coffee because of Al, he says she gave him a hard time about Jillian, but that he's never supposed to get jealous over Al. Ed insists that guys and girls can only be friends if the guy is gay, is a boyfriend, or ants to be a boyfriend. Min insists she and Al are just friends and that he has to get over the gay thing.

She hands him a cup of coffee but he says he hates it. When she finally convinces Ed to try it, he loves it. They go into the Chinese shop and buy the book together.

She says the book he bought her is the favorite recipes of the stars. She says the first page she opened to is a recipe for an igloo inspired by the Greta in the Wild, the movie they saw together on their first date. Min also finds a recipe from Lollie Carson in the book she wants to make with stolen sugar cubes. She says Ed should recognize the date.

She tells him it's their two-month anniversary. He says he's freaked out that he's not freaked out that Min thinks about things like that.

They plan to buy an overcoat from the thrift store to steal the sugar from a nearby diner. Since the thrift store doesn't open until 10, they have sex in the bushes to kill time. Later, when Min gets home, she finds this unidentifiable pod, seed, or some type of plant in her cardigan. This is the item she adds to the box.

Next, Min adds the coat she bought for Ed that day to the box. Min says some of the sugar they stole that day is now at the bottom of the box. While stealing the sugar at the table, Min tells Ed that she is a virgin. He seems a little surprised since he mentions that he knows Min had a boyfriend last year.

Pages 144-165 Analysis

Ed is basically telling Min that his feelings are so strong for her that he would do anything for her. He even does things he wouldn't normally do because he wants to make her happy. Min keeps pointing out how different she and Ed are. In spite of this,



she also continues to try to open his eyes up to new things and new experiences. In a way, Ed is also introducing Min to things in life that she has never experienced. While Min made it sound as if they were having sex in the car at the bonfire and in the park, it seems that they were just making out and naked. She does lose her virginity to Ed eventually though because she mentions this toward the beginning of the novel.



Pages 166-175

Pages 166-175 Summary

When Min and Ed get back to his house, Ed goes upstairs to shower, while Min tells Joan everything, except about the two-month anniversary and the \$55. Joan seems taken aback by the fact that Ed is going to help Min prepare these foods. Joan says it's complicated. Additionally, Joan says Ed cannot hang out with Min tonight because he has a family thing that they have to take care of. Joan is not surprised that ED didn't tell Min this.

When Min goes to Ed's room, she sees him asleep on his bed, wrapped in the towel he put on after his shower. She goes back downstairs and tells Joan he's asleep. Joan walks Min to Joan's car so Min can get her sweater out of it. Min realizes on the bus ride home that she accidentally picked up a kitchen towel oily with grease from the onion rings Joan was cooking. This is the item she adds to the box to give back to Ed.

Min says she hasn't seen her umbrella since that morning outing. She says she misses it on rainy days and wants Ed to give it back. Min mentions it is one of many things that she will never get back.

Pages 166-175 Analysis

Joan means that the relationship between Ed and Min is more complicated than what Min realizes. This statement and the fact that they have a family thing they have to take care of foreshadows a family secret unraveling. It seems as if their mother might be an alcoholic or a drug addict and this is why Joan had to switch majors in college and acts as the mother.



Pages 176-201

Pages 176-201 Summary

Min admits that she and AL are not still driving in the truck while she writes the letter. They have stopped off at a coffee shop, Leopardi's. Min adds a bottle of Pensieri to the box. A bottle she says she got the night of Ed's "family thing."

Min explains how she spent the evening with Al watching an old crappy movie. She tells him all about the cookbook, the two-month anniversary, the party plans and Lottie Carson. She says she needs Al to get the Pensieri for the recipe from his father's shop. Min also asks AL about losing her virginity and sex. She confirms she hasn't lost it yet, but Al says it would be quick if she had. They drive to the shop and Al gives Min the bottle. He also asks why they've never talked about sex before.

Min keeps asking Al what he thinks of Ed, and she prohibits him from saying that he has no opinion. Al finally tells Min what he thinks, but Min doesn't share it in the letter to Ed. She does say the night ended in shouting, crying and going home late and getting in trouble with her mom. That's the night Min gets the box out of the basement and puts all of the items in it from the drawer in her room. She says Ed calls the next morning and says his mom is at the center and Joan is gone all day, and that he wants to talk to Min. when Min gets to Ed's house, he's angry at Joan for sending Min away the previous night.

He says the "family thing" was that Joan wanted to talk with him. Joan thinks they are moving too fast. When Min told her about the movie star thing, it made Joan realize that Ed feels differently about Min, but that Min is not as experienced as the other girls Ed dates. Ed proceeds to tell Min that he wants to do whatever Min wants to do because he loves her. She admits that she loves him too.

Ed and Min try the liquor in the bottle of Pensieri she brought with her. Then they start undressing in the living room.

Pages 176-201 Analysis

The old adage that love is blind seems to be ringing true in this situation. People on Min's side and people on Ed's side both see that Ed and Min shouldn't be a couple. Min and Ed, however, don't see this because they are blinded by their feelings for each other. Min is dropping hints in her letter, however, that in hindsight she should have come to the same conclusion that Al and Joan came to about their relationship. Min insinuates that it is the day when she lost her virginity to Ed.



Pages 202-230

Pages 202-230 Summary

Min writes about the time that Ed took her to the park he has in mind for the party. Min is sitting on the ground eating the spiced pistachios Joan made for Ed. She says when she thinks about it now, it's indelible, because she knows Ed was there and what happened, but it is as if he wasn't there, that she was alone instead. She places the rose petals from the all of the flowers he gave her in the bottom of the box as a memory of this day.

Next, Min places in the ticket stubs the Goofballs II movie Ed took her to see. He tells Min during the trailers to remind him he wants to talk to her about something when they're eating. He says it's about something unavoidable that they have to do the next weekend.

After the movie, at the diner, Ed is surprised to find out Min thought he was going to talk to her about losing her virginity. He says he wants to talk to her about Halloween. Ed wants to go to the party on the field for the athletes and Min wants to go to the art and civic clubs party. Ed sketches out a map and goes over a plan they can use to attend both parties. On the back of the plan, without Min knowing, Ed wrote, I love you Min Green. Min drops the napkin plan into the box.

Pages 202-230 Analysis

When people break up, there is a tendency to remember all of the good times. There is also a tendency to remember the big events, rather than the small ones. Since the day in the park is somewhat of a mundane day, Min doesn't remember all of the details to recount in her letter to Ed. Min assumes that what ED wants to talk to her about is about them having sex. Once again, while Min makes it seem as if they've had sex, they haven't yet.



Pages 232-245

Pages 232-245 Summary

Next, Min puts in Ed's protractor that she stole from him. Ed uses the protractor to map out his thinking, such as his plan for them to attend both Halloween parties. Then, she puts a metal file from a hardware store in the box. Min tells about her trip to the hardware store to buy it, where she wishes Al were there to consult with, and how Annette rounds the corner of the aisle where Min is.

Annette tells Min that everyone is jealous because she has it all, and she is the one that ended up with Ed. Annette jokingly says Min should prepare to fight off all the girls on Saturday night trying to claw their way to Ed. Min asks Ed how could he at the end of this section.

Finally, Min shoves the plastic tab that represents admission to the Halloween party Min helped Al put up posters for at school. She says this never belonged to Ed, but it represents the night they should have broken up.

Pages 232-245 Analysis

Min asking Ed how could he suggests that he does something wrong to Min. It suggests that Ed cheats on Min and that is what finally caused Min to break up with Ed, even though she loves him and he loves her. Min implies that something happens at the Halloween ball that should cause Min to break up with Ed, but for some reason she doesn't.



Pages 246-271

Pages 246-271 Summary

Min puts a ring of old-fashioned skeleton keys in the box. She bought them the morning of the Halloween parties to go with their costumes—she a warden and Ed a prisoner. Min's mom talks to her about how different she and Ed seem to be or information Min's mom has obtained from talking to Jordan's mom. When Min arrives at Ed's party that night, Ed isn't there yet. When he shows up, he's with the chain gang that is the basketball team, and he is drunk.

Min gets mad. When Ed reaches Min, he apologizes loudly 26 times, for the 26 days they have been together. He announces that he hopes he can do something wrong again so he can apologize a million times, the number of days he and Min will be together. They leave the party and go to a coffee shop, where Ed buys them and the sole other patron in the shop a coffee.

They board the bus to go to Min's party. When they get there, she runs into Joe in the coatroom. She drinks some spiked punch with him and then dances with him in front of everyone. After the dance, Min kisses Ed full on the mouth and tells him to take her home.

Pages 246-271 Analysis

Min is in denial about just how different she and Ed are. Love simply isn't enough when values and morals do not align in a relationship. Min knows that she needs to break up with Ed, deep down inside, but she doesn't want to admit it to herself. Primarily, this is because admitting it and breaking up with Ed would mean that Min has to admit that all of her friends, all of Ed's friends, Joan, and Min's mom are right about their relationship.



Pages 272-291

Pages 272-291 Summary

The next afternoon, Min and Ed are watching a band play at the Blue Rhino. Min has a hangover, so Ed slips her a drink that helps with the symptoms. When they leave, Min tells Ed that she's ready to lose her virginity to him. He says he'll take care of everything and that he's already found an extraordinary place for it to happen to make it special.

Min adds one of the seven boxes of egg cubers she and Ed bought to make one of the recipes for the Lottie Carson birthday party. Min mentions putting her clothes back on from her last "everything But" having sex with Ed. When she gets home, Min calls Lauren to arrange a fake sleepover for Saturday night so that Min can be with Ed.

Ed and min use the egg cuber to make the egg igloo for the party. It is a trial run for the real party. When Joan comes home, she is mesmerized by the creation.

Pages 272-291 Analysis

During her conversation with Lauren, Min mentions a girl in LA that Al dated. When a new girl asks Al out, Lauren says he's not in the right frame of mind to date her right now. Min says to Lauren it's because of the girl in LA. Lauren mentions getting to that someday. Lauren is inferring that there is no girl in LA. The girl that Al was and is still hung up on is Min. min just doesn't realize this.

Pages 292-310

Pages 292-310 Summary

Min includes a hangtag from the motel where Ed and she stayed on Saturday night, and where she lost her virginity. Next, goes in the wrapper from the condom. And then, another condom wrapper goes into the box.

Later that night, they are starving and order a pizza. Min puts the plastic comb in the box that she used while hiding in the bathroom while Ed paid the pizza delivery guy. Next, Min puts in the t-shirt Ed gave Min to wear after she quirts pizza sauce all over her shirt when she takes her first bite of the pizza.

Pages 292-310 Analysis

Min compares how different the experience is for her than it is for Ed. Ed acts so natural and expert at everything from the act of sex to talking to the pizza delivery guy as if the act of sex did not just occur. Min is freaking out, in a good way, and treasuring every moment and every detail of having sex for the first time. This is but one additional way that Min and Ed are so completely different from each other.



Pages 312-338

Pages 312-338 Summary

Min puts the earrings Ed put in her locker the following Monday at school into the box. Min mentions that the earrings are so not her style and wonders what Ed was thinking when he bought them.

Al and Min talk. He hands her a stack of postcards he says she can use for the party invitations. Al admits that he made up the girl in LA to make Min jealous, but that it didn't work. He indirectly admits that he is in love with Min. they agree to have coffee with each other sometime.

Min describes a time after practice when she idiotically waves at Annette. Min suggests she and Ed go to Willows, the flower shop where Ed buys flowers, to buy flowers for Lottie Carson to come to the party.

Ed slips about "her" not mentioning the earrings were formal when he bought them, when he asks Min why she isn't wearing the earrings. When they get to the flower shop, the flower guy greets Ed by name. He calls Min Annette, mentions saving the delivery charge, and hands Min a vase of a dozen red roses that are meant for Annette.

Min reads the card and it says he can't stop thinking about her. When Min confronts Ed, Ed says they never agreed not to see other people. Min runs out of the shop with something she tore off the wall in one hand and a handful of rose petals in the other. She finds Al at the coffee shop and cries and tells him everything that happens. Min writes all of the ways she was stupid, thinking that Ed was different with her and everything that she lost to him.

Pages 312-338 Analysis

Choosing earrings that Min doesn't like and would never wear is just one more point that Ed and Min are wrong for each other—and that they don't know each other as well as they think they do. Now that Min knows how Al feels, it foreshadows that as she is writing the letter to Ed and Al is driving Min to drop the box off at Ed's house that Min and Al are in fact boyfriend and girlfriend.

Min implies that Ed and Annette are cheating on Min behind her back. When Ed says "she" about the earrings, he is talking about Annette. Annette is sleeping with Ed, but she is also the one that helped Ed pick out the earrings for Min.



Pages 339-354

Pages 339-354 Summary

Min adds in a basketball game ticket that she didn't use because her friends kidnap her to make lasagna and cry instead. This is when Min mentions the box to Lauren and Al. This is the night Lauren suggests Min leave the box on Ed's doorstep, but Min says she isn't ready to do that yet.

Min adds a film book that Joan lent in the box. She asks Ed to give it back to Joan for her. The last item Min includes in the box is a jar of chestnuts she had bought to make Thanksgiving stuffing for Ed for a Thanksgiving that never happened. When Min and Al talk about a different recipe they can make with the chestnuts, Min decides to keep the jar instead of putting it in the box.

Min tells Ed she's sorry to hear about Annette. She signs the letter, "Love, Min" and then crosses out the love.

Pages 339-354 Analysis

The jar of chestnuts represents the one thing that Min has that she will not allow Ed to have or to take from her. The implication is that the relationship between Ed and Annette is over as well.



Characters

Minerva Min Green

Minerva "Min" Green is a junior in high school. She is also a huge movie buff. Throughout the novel, she relates everything that happens in her life to various scenes in various movies. Her best friend, Al, and her other friends, are also big movie buffs so they share the love for the cinema.

At Al's sixteenth birthday party, Min meets the co-captain of the high school basketball team, Ed Slaterton. Min says that she didn't realize that she wanted Ed until she met him. Even though Ed and Min lead completely different lives, Min finds herself emerged in Ed's world. While Min tries enlighten Ed on cinematic details, Ed tries to enlighten Min on basketball.

Min realizes at several points in the relationship that she and Ed are completely different. She even mentions this to Ed a few times while she's writing the letter to include in the box. Min seems to push these thoughts to the back of her mind, however, because she allows her feelings for Ed to overcome what she thinks in her head.

Ed Slaterton

Ed Slaterton is the co-captain of the high school basketball team. He likes to drink a lot with his teammates. Ed is also known for sleeping with any and all of the girls that he comes across. When Ed meets and starts to date Min, however, he keeps telling Min and all of his friends that Min is different from all of the other girls.

Compared to Min, Ed seems less intelligent. He is more concerned with basketball practice and playing basketball games. He does try to learn about movies, scenes and some of the things that Min enjoys. He also expects Min to attend his basketball practice and basketball games, even though Min isn't very fond of basketball.

While it seems as if Ed might be changing his womanizing ways, this turns out not to be true. It turns out that Ed has been continuing his relationship with Annette, one of his former girlfriends, even though Min thought that she and Ed were exclusive.

Al

Al is Min's best friend. He shares Min's love for movies. It is Al's sixteenth birthday party where Min meets Ed for the first time, and Ed asks for Min's phone number. Al tells Min that he met a girl when he was in LA. It turns out that Al told Min this to make her jealous because he is in love with Min. Al is the one that is driving Min to Ed's house so that she can drop off the box on Ed's front porch.



Lauren

Lauren is one of Min's other friends. When Lauren and Ed meet for the first time in the diner, it is Lauren's purse that Ed goes through to dig out change for the jukebox. This flabbergasts Lauren because she doesn't allow anyone to go into her purse. Lauren is one of the first people to tell Min that she and Ed are so different and that their relationship isn't going to work. Lauren is also the one that encourages Min to drop the box off on Ed's porch, but Min says she can't do it until she is ready.

Annette

Annette is one of Ed's former girlfriends. She is one of the only exes that Ed still talks to on a regular basis. Annette and Min meet at a bonfire after a basketball game. Annette tries to keep another one of Ed's ex-girlfriends, Jillian, away from Min because Jillian is drunk and being mean to Min. While Annette befriends Min, it also turns out that Annette and Ed are still dating and having sex while Ed is with Min, but behind Min's back. After Min and Ed break up, the relationship between Annette and Ed also ends.

Jillian

Jillian is the most recent of Ed's ex-girlfriends. At the bonfire, Jillian is drunk so she is being mean to Min. Annette manages to get Jillian away from Min, and Annette apologizes for Jillian's behavior. Jillian returns to where Min and Annette are with her arm looped through Ed's arm. At the Halloween party, Jillian continues to make snide comments to Min about her relationship with Ed.

Joan Slaterton

Joan Slaterton is Ed's older sister. She is in college. Initially, she was a film major. She changes majors to something more practical when their mother gets sick. Joan seems to have taken on the motherly role for Ed since their mother fell ill as well. Joan tries to tell Min, in an indirect way, that Min and Ed are moving too fast and that they are too different. Joan even takes Ed aside one night to tell him the same thing. It is while Joan is out of two that Ed and Min check into a hotel and Min loses her virginity to Ed.

Mrs. Green

Mrs. Green is Min's mom. She is a single mother. Although it never really mentions what happened to Min's dad, except that he left. Mrs. Green tries to tell Min that Min and Ed come from different worlds too. Min and her mom argue over this, with Min telling her mother that she doesn't even know Ed like Min does.



Mrs. Slaterton

Mrs. Slaterton is Ed and Joan's mother. She stays in her room throughout the novel because she is ill. When she isn't in her room, she is at a center where she receives treatment. Min never really reveals what is wrong with Mrs. Slaterton, or where Mr. Slaterton is.

Lottie Carson

Lottie Carson is the famous actress that stars in the first movie Ed and Min see together on their first date. Min thinks she spots the real, yet elderly Lottie Carson leaving the theater after the movie. Ed and Min follow her to her home, and later throw a party in honor of Lottie's 89th birthday.



Objects/Places

Box

Min finds a box in the basement of her house. She starts putting her memorabilia inside of it. She hides the box in her closet, under some shoes she doesn't wear, to keep her mother from snooping. Min places items in the box that pertain to her relationship with Ed. She writes the quote, "You either have the feeling or you don't" on top of the box. It is the box that she is about to drop off on Ed's porch with the letter inside now that she and Ed have broken up.

Letter

The entire novel is written in the form of a letter. It is a letter from Min to Ed. She plans on including the letter inside of the box of items she is returning to Ed. Min explains each of the items that she has included in the box in the letter. She also recounts the relationship between her and Ed, and all of the reasons why they broke up.

Bottle Caps

The first two items Min includes in the box and details in the letter is two bottle caps. The bottle caps are for two bottles of Scarpia Bitter Ale. These are the bottles that she and ED drank from at Al's sixteenth birthday party when they first met and started talking.

Movie Ticket

Min also includes the ticket stub to the movie *Greta in the Wild* in the box. This represents her first date with Ed. It is also the basis for several other items that are in the place, and several events that Ed and Min share during their relationship.

Motel

When Min decides to lose her virginity to Ed, they check into a motel. Min and Ed have sex for the first time together in the motel room. Additionally, they order a pizza to share after having sex. Min includes several items that pertain to their overnight stay inside the box. This includes a hang tag from the hotel, the shirt Ed gives her to wear after she gets pizza sauce on her own shirt and a comb she used while hiding out in the bathroom while Ed is paying the pizza delivery guy.



Flower Shop

Ed always uses the same flower shop to send flowers to his girlfriends. He and Min go to this flower shop to buy flowers to give to Lottie Carson when they invite her to come to the party they are throwing in honor of her birthday. It is while in the flower shop that the owner mistakes Min for Annette, and Min finds out that Annette and Ed have continued their relationship behind Min's back.

Postcards

Al gives Min a stack of postcards. He gives her these to use as invitations for Lottie Carson's party. While giving her the postcards, Al admits that he's in love with Min and he just made the girl up in LA to make Min jealous.

Recipe Book

Min and Ed buy a recipe book in a local shop. The recipes are by famous stars. Min finds a recipe by Lottie Carson in the book. She also finds a recipe that is inspired by the movie *Great in the Wild*. She and Ed plan to make both of the recipes for the party they intend on having for Lottie Carson.

Egg Cubers

Ed and Min buy several egg cubers, which are kitchen utensils that cut boiled eggs into cubes. They use the egg cubers to build the igloo recipe from the recipe book. This igloo is the recipe inspired by the first movie they saw together, *Greta in the Wild*. Ed and Min make a practice igloo using the egg cubers as a trial run before they have to make one for the party.

Park

Min and Ed wait in the park across from the shop where they buy the recipe book. They wait here until the consignment store opens where they plan to buy a coat. They intend on using the coat to steal the sugar they need for one of the recipes from the local diner. While they are in the park, Ed and Min go into the bushes to fool around to kill time.



Themes

Relationships

One of the primary themes running through the novel is relationships. The two primary relationships the novel tackles are romantic relationships and relationships between friends.

Friendship is one of the primary types of relationships the novel tackles. Ed and Min both put more stock in their relationships with their friends than they do with their own family members. Additionally, Ed's teammates are almost more important to him than anyone else. Although, many of Ed's friends are also his teammates.

The novel also delves into romantic relationships. While Min had one other boyfriend, Ed is the boy that she has had the deepest and strongest feelings for, and has lost her virginity. The novel focuses on how opposites attract because Min and Ed lead very different lives. Additionally, however, their differences is also what ends tearing Ed and Min apart. Specifically, the way that Ed and Min view the commitment of their relationship is what ends up leading Ed to continue his romantic relationship with Annette and break up him and Min.

Finally, the novel touches on the line between friendship and romance when it comes to guys and girls having relationships. Min has always thought of Al as just a friend. Al, on the other hand, has romantic feelings for Min. He even goes so far as to admit that he loves Min. While Min is with Ed, she tells Al that she cannot feel the same way about him. Whether or not they cross the line after Min and Ed break up is not clear from Min's letter.

Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age. Min struggles with her first true love and losing her virginity to the guy that turns out to be cheating on her with someone that Min started to consider as her friend. Min struggles throughout the novel with her feelings for Ed. She recognizes that they lead different lives but her emotions are drawing Min closer and closer to Ed.

Min tries to bury her feelings and doubts about her relationship with Ed. She also tries to ignore the advice that her friends, her own mother and Ed's sister all give her about taking things slow with Ed, or in that she and Ed shouldn't be together. Min comes to realize that she should have listened to her instincts, mother and friends. In the end, Min and Ed break up and Min is able to get her feelings out in the letter she includes in the box of Ed's things that she returns to him.

Family

Family is the central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of these two families—the Slatertons and the Greens. While every family has their trials and tribulations, each family has its own family dynamics that are the same and that are different from those of other families. In the end though, Min realizes that her only true family is her mother and her friends.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first-person point of view, from the perspective of the main character, Min Green. The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with the main character, Min. Min is writing a letter to her ex-boyfriend Ed, so allows the reader to get inside Min's head, thoughts and inner struggles. The reader cares what happens to the narrator. The point of view also allows the author to inject his own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Setting

It never states the specific location of the novel. The novel seems to take place in the 20th or 21st century, although this is never specifically stated either. The main characters are involved in the daily life of the relationship between Min and Ed, and the aftermath of their breakup.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware why the main character broke up with her boyfriend, or even who ended the relationship. However, as events unfold, the breakup is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters and even the outcome of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The language is from the 20th or 21st century, which is when the novel is set. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations and is detailed enough for the reader to truly understand.

Structure

The novel is in the form of a letter from Min to Ed. There are not definitive chapters in the novel, but there is some separation as it relates to the items that Min includes in the box she is returning to Ed. Each section ranges from 10 to 20 pages long. The chapters tell the story primarily in exposition and with some dialogue. The author injects his own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing his opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel. The narrator, Min, switches back and forth between the past and the present.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is that of human relationships—romantic ones and friendships. One subplot is the coming of age of the characters, primarily Min. Another subplot is family.



Quotes

"Could I call you—" (p. 19).

"We really, live in, different um" (p. 45).

"Take as many as you can. Then we'll get them developed and then we'll see." (p. 63).

"I have no opinion" (p. 78).

"Well, today I was a sidelines girl, I guess" (p. 101).

"Right. You remember something else besides an old movie now, huh" (p. 123).

"You've made, Min, everything different for me" (p. 148).

"It might be complicated, Min" (p. 169).

"Because, Min, listen, I love you" (p. 199).

"I want that. Don't shred our plan" (p. 229).

"But it's you who got him" (p. 239).

"Anything. Anything, Min. Anything, anything" (p. 262).

"Someday we'll get to that too, but tonight I guess you called to hear me guilt-trip you, right" (p. 282).

"Was that time better" (p. 303).

"Yeah, well, it didn't work, making that up. You didn't get jealous" (p. 319).

"Well, leave it on Ed's doorstep at least. We can do that tonight" (p. 345).

Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Min? Why do you think she decides to write the letter to Ed? Why do you think Min is returning all of the items from their relationship to Ed? What do you think happens to Min after she finishes the letter and delivers the box to Ed's front porch?

Discuss the relationship between Min and Ed. Do you think they are really in love or do you think it is one sided? Why do you think Min overlooks how different she and Ed are in order to pursue the relationship? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Min feel about Ed? How does Ed feel about Min? How do Min's feelings change after she finds out Ed and Annette continued their romantic relationship?

Discuss the relationship between Min and Al. Are they best friends or something else? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Min feel about Al? How does Al feel about Min? How do Min's feelings change? What does she do about it? What happens to Al?

Discuss the relationship between Min and Annette. Are they friends, acquaintances or something else? Is there true competition in their relationship? Why do you think Annette befriends Min in the first place? Why do you think Annette and Ed continue to talk to each other even after they break up?

Who is the true Ed? Why do you think he sleeps with every girl that he can? Do you think he tells Min she is different because he means it or because he is trying to sleep with her? Do you think Ed really loves Min? Why does he continue to sleep with Annette when he is with Min?

Who is Joan? Is she forced to grow up faster than she should have to? Why do you think she tells Ed that he and Min are moving too fast? What role does Joan play in Ed and Min's relationship?

Discuss Min's decision to write the letter to Ed. What impact does it have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives?