

# The Witch of Blackbird Pond



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ELIZABETH GEORGE SPEARE

Elizabeth George Speare was born in Massachusetts to Harry Allan and Demetria Simmons George. Speare started writing stories in high school and continued to study English at the university level. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Smith College before earning a master's in English from Boston University. In the 1930s, Speare taught English at several high schools in Massachusetts before marrying her husband, Alden Speare, and moving to Connecticut. They had two children together. Although Speare had always wanted to be a published author, she didn't find the time to dedicate herself to writing until her children were in junior high. Her first published works—articles about family and motherhood—were published in various magazines. Speare's first book, *Calico Captive*, was published in 1957. She gained a reputation as a children's author as she went on to write three more children's books, including *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, which won the Newbery Medal. Speare died at the age of 85 from an aortic aneurism.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*The Witch of Blackbird Pond* is set in Connecticut Colony in the 17th century and explores politics and social issues in a Puritan community. In the 1630s, the English colonized Connecticut. In 1662, King Charles II of England granted the leaders of Connecticut Colony a charter that gave the colonists of Connecticut an exceptional degree of self-governance. According to the charter, the colonists could divide up and sell Connecticut's land as they saw fit, and they could elect their own officials. But King James II, the next King of England, wanted more control over the colonies. So, in 1686, he appointed Sir Edmund Andros as Royal Governor of the colonies. This appointment invalidated all previous charters, including Connecticut's. The result was that the colonists could no longer govern themselves; they had to answer to the King of England again. This led to tension among colonists, which plays an important role in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. For example, Matthew Wood is passionate about maintaining self-governance, whereas Reverend Bulkeley is a royalist, someone who believes the King should have control over the colonies. In addition to the era's politics, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* also focuses on religion. Many of Connecticut's English colonists were Puritans, members of a religious group that was persecuted in England. Wanting to practice their religion freely, thousands of Puritans left England for the American colonies. Like many Christians in the 16th and 17th centuries, the

Puritans believed that demons existed and could possess people. It was not uncommon at this time to blame unexplained events on witchcraft, like how the Puritan townspeople in the novel blame a plague on Hannah Tupper's supposed witchcraft. In many instances—such as in the famous Salem witch trials—people killed or otherwise persecuted men and women who were regarded as outsiders or were generally resented.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

*The Witch of Blackbird Pond* is one of many literary works that takes place in Puritan New England. One of the most famous stories about Puritans is [The Crucible](#), a play by Arthur Miller. [The Crucible](#) was inspired by the real-life Salem witch trials in the 1690s and explores the effects of mass hysteria and prejudice. Another famous story about witch hunts in New England is *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem* by Maryse Condé, which explores racism and sexism in colonial New England and Barbados. At one point in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, Tituba meets Hester Prynne, the main character of Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel [The Scarlet Letter](#), which (like *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*) addresses Puritanism's hypocrisy. While those three literary works were written for an adult audience, Elizabeth George Speare mainly wrote her historical fiction for children. All but one of her children's books were set in New England. Her final children's book, *The Sign of the Beaver*, takes place in Maine in the 18th century. Although it received numerous awards around the time of its publication, it has been criticized for its problematic misrepresentation of Native Americans.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Witch of Blackbird Pond
- **Where Written:** New England
- **When Published:** 1958
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Children's Novel; Historical Fiction
- **Setting:** Wethersfield, Connecticut
- **Climax:** Kit realizes that she is in love with Nat and decides to stay with him in Connecticut instead of returning to Barbados.
- **Antagonist:** Goodwife Cruff, Matthew Wood (at times), and prejudice
- **Point of View:** Third Person

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Connecticut's Famous Oak.** According to legend, when

Governor Andros held a meeting in Hartford, Connecticut to collect the Connecticut colony's charter (as he does in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*), attendees snuck the charter out of the meeting room and hid in an extraordinarily large oak tree, now known as Charter Oak. Charter Oak became a symbol of the colony's independence from the British and is still on the Connecticut state quarter today.



## PLOT SUMMARY

In the spring of 1687, Katherine "Kit" Tyler arrives in Connecticut Colony. She's from Barbados and has been traveling on a boat called the *Dolphin* for the past few weeks. Kit isn't impressed with dreary Connecticut, but she keeps her thoughts to herself as she talks with Nat Eaton, the ship captain's son. The ship's first stop is Saybrook, where four new passengers board: Goodman Cruff, his wife Goodwife Cruff, their daughter Prudence, and John Holbrook. When Prudence accidentally drops a doll overboard, Kit jumps into the water to retrieve it. When she returns to the boat, everyone is upset—according to local superstitions, women who float are thought to be witches.

The next stop is Wethersfield, Kit's destination. During the long journey, Kit and John get to know each other: John plans to study medicine and theology under Reverend Bulkeley, who preaches in Wethersfield, while Kit has come to Connecticut to live with her Aunt Rachel and Uncle Matthew Wood. She had previously lived with her grandfather, but he recently passed away.

When Kit arrives in Wethersfield, Aunt Rachel is overjoyed to meet her sister Margaret's daughter. She introduces Kit to Matthew and their daughters, Judith and Mercy. Matthew isn't welcoming, especially after Kit informs them that she intends to stay because she has nowhere else to go. Kit offers to help with the family's chores, which she quickly regrets—work is difficult and tedious.

On Sabbath morning, Matthew forces Kit to accompany the family to the Puritan weekly service, called Meeting. Kit finds Meeting boring. After the service, she spots Goodwife Cruff glaring at her and gossiping with other hostile-looking women. Kit also meets a wealthy young man named William Ashby, who is immediately captivated by her.

Later that week, the Woods host Reverend Bulkeley and John Holbrook for dinner. The mood turns hostile when the men discuss politics: Reverend Bulkeley is a royalist, whereas Matthew resents King James of England's efforts to control the colonies by appointing Sir Edmund Andros as Royal Governor of the colonies. After the Reverend and John leave, Matthew informs the family that William Ashby wants to call on Kit. Later, Judith tells Mercy and Kit that she wants to marry John. William courts Kit, who finds their meetings awkward because

they have nothing to talk about. Nevertheless, Kit feels inclined to marry William because he won't expect her to work.

One summer morning, Judith and Kit go to the **Great Meadows** to do some weeding, and Kit is immediately enchanted by the beautiful meadows. There is one house in the Meadows, which belongs to an elderly Quaker widow named Hannah Tupper, whom the townspeople say is a witch.

Meanwhile, Kit begins to help Mercy teach young children how to read and write. One day, Kit encourages the kids to act out a Bible story, which offends Mr. Eleazer Kimberley (the school master) to the point that he cancels school on the spot. In tears, Kit runs to the Great Meadows, where she meets Hannah. Although Kit is apprehensive at first, she accepts Hannah's invitation to her house, where Hannah comforts her and gives her advice. Afterwards, Kit visits Mr. Kimberley and convinces him to let her and Mercy teach again.

Rachel and Mercy are worried when Kit tells them that she has befriended Hannah—they don't think it's a good idea to befriend Quakers. But Kit continues to visit Hannah, and on one visit, she discovers that Nat is also friends with Hannah. Meanwhile, after discovering that Goodwife Cruff has forbidden Prudence from talking with Kit, Kit invites Prudence to do secret reading lessons with her. She later introduces Prudence to Hannah, and the two become friends.

William continues to visit Kit, but she still finds their meetings boring. John has also been visiting the family frequently, so the whole family assumes he is courting Judith. But Kit finds it a strange match and realizes that Mercy is secretly in love with John. She is certain that Mercy is a better partner for John than Judith is.

One August day, Kit stops by Hannah's to find Nat already there, and she helps him complete chores for Hannah. As they work and chat, Kit feels happy and at peace. That evening, Matthew finds out that Kit has been visiting Hannah and forbids her from seeing the widow again. But Kit doesn't stop visiting Hannah. When walking back from Hannah's one evening, Kit crosses paths with John, who tells her that he is in love with Mercy. Overjoyed, Kit encourages him to confess his feelings that night. But when they arrive at the Woods' house, there's a miscommunication: the whole family thinks that John is asking Matthew's permission to marry *Judith*, not Mercy. Matthew gives his blessing to John, who is stunned into silence. Later, William tells Kit that he wants to get married soon. Panicked, Kit asks him for more time.

In October, Nat arrives again in town to trade. This time, he isn't friendly with Kit—he has just heard that she is engaged to William. Later that same day, Matthew informs the family that Governor Andros is coming to Connecticut tomorrow to collect the state's charter. But the next night, William visits the Woods' house to inform Matthew that in the middle of the meeting with Governor Andros, the colonists managed to hide the

charter. Although the Governor doesn't need the charter—he already has governing power—the colonists are pleased to hold onto it, so that they may be able to use it again one day. Shortly after, the family hears that John is leaving Wethersfield to join the militia in the north, leaving Judith heartbroken.

Around this time, an unknown sickness sweeps Wethersfield. Mercy gets especially sick. One night, a mob shows up at the Woods' house to ask Matthew to join them in running Hannah out of town—they think that she is using witchcraft to cause the illness. He refuses to join. Panicked, Kit sneaks out of the house and runs to Hannah, whom she helps hide as the mob burns her house. Thankfully, the *Dolphin* is still in town, so Kit secures Nat's help in sneaking Hannah out of Wethersfield. Nat invites Kit to come with him—he could bring her back to Barbados. Kit is tempted, but she wants to stay until she knows Mercy is well again. Thankfully, Mercy begins to recover that very night.

But the next day, a constable arrives at the Woods' house to arrest Kit—the Cruffs are accusing her of witchcraft. The following morning, Kit undergoes a public examination performed by the magistrate, Captain Talcott. Talcott informs her that she is accused of witchcraft because she's friends with Hannah. Additionally, in Hannah's house, the mob found a book with Prudence's name written in it—they think that Kit was cursing Prudence. The book was what Kit and Prudence used for Prudence's writing lessons, but Kit says nothing, worried that Prudence will get in trouble. Suddenly, Prudence arrives in the courtroom with Nat. She testifies, informing the magistrate that Kit was actually teaching Prudence how to read and write. Prudence reads aloud from the Bible and writes her name, proving her point. Feeling grateful for Nat and Prudence, Kit is let go.

Shortly after her trial, Kit tells William that they aren't a good match—they aren't interested in the same things. After the family hears that Native Americans captured John, Judith mourns his loss, but quickly begins to show interest in William, and the two make plans to get married. When John unexpectedly returns, he announces his intention to marry Mercy. Kit, meanwhile, suddenly realizes that she is in love with Nat. In the spring of 1688, Nat arrives in Wethersfield in a new boat. It's his own ship, and he hopes it will impress Matthew, because Nat wants to marry Kit.

cousins Mercy and Judith. When she arrives in Wethersfield, Kit feels like an outsider. After her carefree life in Barbados, she finds Puritan culture restrictive and resents having to do work to help the family. Kit encounters prejudice from the Puritans, particularly from Goodwife Cruff, who thinks that Kit is a witch just because she knows how to swim. But Kit also has her own prejudices: she judges the Puritans in return, and she supports and participates in racism and slavery (her grandfather's plantation relied on slave labor). After several months of feeling lonely in Wethersfield, Kit meets Hannah Tupper, a Quaker woman. Even though the Puritan townspeople believe that Hannah is a witch, Kit gets to know her and realizes that the Puritans are wrong in their prejudiced assumptions—Hannah is actually a kind woman. As their friendship develops, Hannah's cottage in the **Great Meadows** begins to feel like home to Kit. Meanwhile, Kit often thinks of her plans for marriage. A Puritan man named William courts her, and Kit is tempted to marry him because it means that she won't have to do housework—William is wealthy enough to hire servants. But Kit and William have nothing in common, so their relationship eventually dissolves. Instead, Kit falls in love with Nat, a sailor who shares Kit's adventurousness, boldness, and sense of loyalty. In fact, it is Nat who brings Prudence to testify in favor of Kit's innocence when the Puritans—judging Kit for befriending Hannah—put Kit on trial for witchcraft. In the end, Kit decides to marry Nat, with the hopes of having a home in Connecticut Colony so she can be close to her loved ones.

**Hannah Tupper** – Hannah Tupper is an old woman who becomes one of Kit's closest friends. The Puritans in Wethersfield discriminate against Hannah because of her religion (she is Quaker, not Puritan). Their prejudice betrays their hypocrisy: the Puritans migrated to from England to the American colonies so they could practice their religion freely, but they are extremely intolerant of other religions. Before Hannah and her husband, Thomas, moved to Wethersfield, Puritans in Massachusetts beat, branded, and drove the Tupperes out of the state because of their different religious beliefs. The Puritans of Wethersfield also discriminate against Hannah: they exile her to a swamp and force her to pay a fee for not attending Meeting, the Puritan service. When Kit arrives in Wethersfield, she learns that the Puritans of Wethersfield believe Hannah is a witch because she isn't Puritan and lives on her own with **cats**, which they consider to be sinister creatures. But when Kit meets Hannah, she discovers that the Puritans are very wrong in their assumptions—Hannah is actually a very kind woman, and her cats are just ordinary, friendly animals. When Kit is with Hannah, she feels comforted and supported, and Hannah's cottage in the **Great Meadows** quickly feels like home to her. Hannah is also friends with Nat and Prudence. When a sudden sickness leaves many young people in Wethersfield gravely ill, a Puritan mob accuses Hannah of using witchcraft to cause the plague. Their prejudices get the best of them, and they try to drive Hannah out of town and even burn



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Katherine "Kit" Tyler** – Kit Tyler is the novel's fiery, headstrong, loyal protagonist. Kit grew up in Barbados, where she was raised by her plantation-owning grandfather who pampered and loved her. After her grandfather dies, 16-year-old Kit can't support herself, so she moves to Connecticut in the American colonies to live with her Aunt Rachel, Uncle Matthew, and

her house in the process. In a show of loyalty, Kit and Nat help Hannah escape to Saybrook, where she lives with Nat's grandmother.

**Nathaniel "Nat" Eaton** – Nat Eaton is a sailor whom Kit meets on the *Dolphin*, the ship that brings Kit from Barbados to Wethersfield, Connecticut. Feisty, opinionated, and adventurous, Nat strikes up a friendship with—and develops a crush on—Kit, although his teasing often frustrates her. Though his family lives in Saybrook, a port city near Wethersfield, Nat spends most of his time sailing. Along with many other New Englanders, Nat believes that the colonies should have independence from King James of England. But unlike most of the Wethersfield townspeople, Nat doesn't care about conforming to Puritan norms. Like Kit, Nat is friends with Hannah Tupper, despite the Wethersfield Puritans' insistence that because Hannah is a Quaker rather than a Puritan, she is a witch and undeserving of help or mercy. And Nat is similarly loyal to Kit, despite their frequent disagreements. When the Puritans accuse Kit of being a witch, Nat brings Prudence to testify to prove Kit's innocence. Along with Kit and Nat's shared interests and temperament, it is Nat's loyalty that attracts Kit. She falls in love with him, and the story ends with Nat declaring his intention to marry her.

**Matthew Wood** – Matthew Wood is Kit's uncle, Rachel's husband, and Mercy and Judith's father. He embodies many norms of Puritan society: he is stern, unwelcoming to outsiders, and inflexible in his political and religious beliefs. At first, Kit despises him for these qualities and often wonders why her Aunt Rachel—who is mild-mannered and kind—married him. Matthew is particularly adamant that Kit end her friendship with Hannah Tupper, whom he calls a heretic because of her Quaker faith. He doesn't believe that Hannah is a witch like other townspeople do, but he is nevertheless prejudiced against her and thinks she is inferior because she is not a Puritan. He is an example of how the Puritans, who migrated to the American colonies to practice their religion freely, did not extend religious freedom to others. Matthew's political beliefs also betray his hypocrisy. Advocating for Connecticut's partial independence from King James of England, he is particularly adamant that the King should respect the colonists' land ownership. But while he defends the colonists' land grants, he doesn't acknowledge that he—and the other colonists—are living on land that they stole from Native Americans. Matthew isn't always shown in a bad light, however: Kit eventually comes to respect her uncle for his unflinching work ethic, loyalty to his family, and dedication to his community. In this way, Matthew represents how the Puritans in Wethersfield have positive characteristics, although their hypocrisy often overshadows them.

**Rachel Wood** – Rachel Wood is Kit's aunt, Matthew's wife, and Mercy and Judith's mother. Kindhearted and gentle, Rachel seems like an odd match for Matthew, who is harsh and stern.

Kit often wonders what attracted Rachel to Matthew and eventually realizes that it was likely Matthew's passion and fierceness. All the same, Rachel doesn't seem particularly happy in her marriage. Where Matthew is inflexible in his political and religious beliefs, Rachel is more lenient about certain aspects of Puritanism. This is most evident when Rachel gives Kit food to deliver to Hannah Tupper, who's a Quaker. Even though Puritanism dictates that people aren't supposed to help people who practice other religions, Rachel can't "bear to think of anyone going hungry when [their family] [has] such plenty." She doesn't always act according to Puritan principles but instead acts according to what she thinks is right. Because Rachel and Matthew don't share many similar values, their marriage is strained. Rachel also exemplifies the sexism that women in 17th-century New England faced: she is subservient to Matthew, and she is limited to being a homemaker. The one time she tries to voice her political opinions, Matthew silences her, demonstrating how Puritan society barred women from participating in government or society more broadly.

**Mercy Wood** – Mercy Wood is Kit's cousin, Judith's sister, and Matthew and Rachel Wood's daughter. She has beautiful grey eyes and uses crutches, having lost the use of one leg due to a childhood illness. But Mercy's condition doesn't define her—not only is Mercy a diligent worker, but she's also very supportive of her parents and sister and welcoming toward Kit. Mercy doesn't support Kit's visits to Hannah (who's a Quaker), however, which betrays her religious-based prejudice. Despite this, Mercy is generally kindhearted, hard-working, gentle, and deeply pious—traits that Kit admires and that Mercy shares with John Holbrook. Mercy and John fall in love, but neither one knows if the other loves them back until the end of the book. In fact, Mercy—along with the rest of the Wood family—suspects that John is courting Judith. But Mercy never shows her jealousy or pain, and her selflessness impresses Kit. John eventually expresses his feelings for Mercy, and the two of them are very happy together, demonstrating the importance of shared values in romantic relationships.

**Judith Wood** – Judith Wood is Kit's cousin, Mercy's sister, and Matthew and Rachel Wood's daughter. Judith is beautiful and materialistic, which the book makes clear when Judith fawns over the fine clothes that Kit brings to Connecticut. Judith and Kit have a rocky start to their relationship, in part because Judith is envious of Kit's fancy dresses. Judith also resents that Kit is unaccustomed to housework when Kit first arrives in Wethersfield. On top of this, Judith is romantically interested in William Ashby when Kit arrives, but William is attracted to Kit as soon as he meets her. So, Judith sets her sights on John Holbrook, whom she finds handsome. But Judith and John don't have much in common—Judith is high-spirited and interested in material goods, whereas John is solemn and prioritizes his Puritan faith over all else. When the family hears that Native Americans captured John while he is in the militia,

Judith overcomes her feelings for him and settles down with William, who shares her interests and values.

**William Ashby** – William Ashby is a wealthy and respected Puritan man in Wethersfield. He begins the book as a loyalist to England, but as soon as Governor Andros increases his taxes, William begins to advocate for Connecticut Colony’s right to self-governance—a common sentiment among Puritans. William is also a very eligible bachelor: he has a plot of land on which he plans to build his house as soon as he decides to marry. Judith is romantically interested in William until Kit and John arrive and William is immediately captivated by Kit. After this, Judith decides that she likes John instead. Given that Kit and William never have a conversation prior to his infatuation with her, it seems that her good looks and fancy clothes are what attract him. As the plot unfolds, it becomes clear that William and Kit have nothing in common, as they can’t even hold a conversation. In fact, Kit finds William’s greatest passion—planning and building his house—extremely boring. Kit eventually breaks off the relationship when William suggests that she cut ties with her friends, Hannah and Prudence, because associating with them hurts Kit’s reputation in town. More interested in being loyal than in following Puritan society’s rules, Kit realizes that she and William aren’t a good match because they don’t care about the same things. Shortly after their relationship ends, William begins to court Judith, and these two eventually make plans to marry. William and Judith are very happy together, as they share each other’s interests in social status and material goods.

**John Holbrook** – John Holbrook is a studious and deeply devout Puritan man who arrives in Wethersfield to study theology and medicine under Reverend Bulkeley. John respects Reverend Bulkeley for his knowledge, but he struggles to reconcile his (John’s) desire for Connecticut Colony’s self-governance with Reverend Bulkeley’s royalist politics. For the first half of the book, John meekly parrots Reverend Bulkeley’s ideas. But after Governor Andros arrives in Connecticut and begins to control the colony, John cuts ties with the Reverend by joining the militia. When he returns to Wethersfield, John is more certain of his beliefs, and he learns to respect the Reverend’s knowledge while disagreeing with his politics. From the beginning of the book, John frequently visits the Wood family. The family guesses that John is courting Judith, even though he never singles her out. Their assumptions may betray prejudice against Mercy; they never consider that John may be interested in Mercy, perhaps because they don’t think men would be attracted to Mercy because she isn’t as beautiful as Judith and she can’t use one of her legs. But John isn’t interested in Judith—he loves Mercy, and she loves him back. He and Mercy are quite similar in temperament and principles: they are both kind, hard-working, and pious people. The novel ends with the two of them happily planning their life together.

**Prudence** – Prudence is Goodwife Cruff and Goodman Cruff’s

young daughter. She is a timid, scrawny, and underfed child, and her mother calls her stupid and treats her cruelly. Prudence adores Kit from the beginning of the book, when Kit jumps into the ocean to retrieve Prudence’s toy, which she had dropped overboard. While the rest of the ship is suspicious of Kit’s ability to swim, Prudence is in awe of it. Although it’s clear that Prudence wants to get to know Kit, Goodwife Cruff forbids her from speaking to Kit, whom she calls a witch. But Prudence eventually meets Kit on her own, and Kit teaches her how to read. Prudence is a quick and capable learner, and she proves that her mother’s assumptions are wrong—she isn’t “half-witted” at all. When Kit introduces Prudence to Hannah, Prudence is initially frightened, as she has heard the town gossip that Hannah is a witch. But as soon as she gets to know Hannah, Prudence realizes that the Puritans’ prejudiced assumptions are wrong, and that Hannah is a kind and loving old woman. They become close friends, and Hannah’s cottage becomes a second home for Prudence. When the Puritans eventually put Kit on trial for witchcraft, Prudence proves Kit’s innocence by explaining why a book with Prudence’s name written in it was found in Hannah’s house. The Puritans—prejudiced against Hannah and Kit for their differences from the rest of the community—think that the book is proof that Kit was casting a spell on Prudence. But Prudence proves them wrong by announcing that Kit is her teacher; the book that the mob found in Hannah’s house is what they use for Prudence to practice her writing, thereby demonstrating how the Puritans’ prejudices are misguided.

**Goodwife Cruff** – Goodwife Cruff is Prudence’s mother and Goodman Cruff’s husband. From the beginning of the book, Goodwife Cruff dislikes Kit for her differences. Kit is indeed unlike many of the Puritans in Wethersfield: she grew up in Barbados, she can swim, she isn’t Puritan, and she dresses luxuriously. Because Kit can swim, Goodwife Cruff immediately assumes that she is a witch, as according to Puritan superstitions, witches can float while respectable women sink. Goodwife Cruff’s prejudices are an example of how judging someone for their differences can be misguided—Kit can swim because she grew up on an island where swimming is common. But Goodwife Cruff clings to her assumption and even encourages her husband to formally accuse Kit of witchcraft. Meanwhile, Goodwife Cruff’s marriage betrays the sexism of the time. Goodwife Cruff is the only woman in the story who has more authority in her marriage than her male partner, yet the novel criticizes Goodwife Cruff for this very reason, referring to her as a “shrew.” In fact, when Goodman Cruff silences his wife, the novel calls it the “moment her husband step[s] into his rightful place,” showing how, in 17th-century New England, gender roles dictated that men should have dominance over their wives.

**Goodman Cruff** – Goodman Cruff is Prudence’s father and Goodwife Cruff’s husband. Because Goodwife Cruff

commands more authority in their marriage, the novel calls him “too spineless to stand up [...] against his shrew of a wife.” According to 17th-century New England society, men were supposed to have more control in marriages. The novel depicts this sexism when it commends Goodman Cruff for “stepp[ing] into his rightful place” as he silences Goodwife Cruff. Goodman Cruff is notably kinder to Prudence than his wife is. When Prudence reveals that she can read and write, he is very proud of his daughter and announces that he wants Prudence to attend Kit’s school. It seems that he isn’t as prejudiced against Kit as his wife is, demonstrating that not every Puritan is intolerant of difference.

**Grandfather (Sir Francis Tyler)** – Sir Francis Tyler is Kit’s grandfather whom she grew up with and loved dearly. Kit and her grandfather live in Barbados, and Kit has to move to Connecticut after he dies because she can’t support herself. While in New England, Kit feels homesick for her grandfather and her life in Barbados. Prior to his death, Sir Francis Tyler owned a plantation, where he enslaved hundreds of Black people. Kit, who condones slavery, likely inherited her racist thinking from her grandfather. Nat criticizes Kit for supporting a practice that exploits and brutally deprives other humans of their rights, though Kit never changes her racist thinking. Kit also adopts her grandfather’s royalist politics, demonstrating how people often conform to the viewpoints they grow up around.

**Reverend Bulkeley** – Reverend Bulkeley is a Puritan reverend and a doctor. John Holbrook comes to Wethersfield to study with Reverend Bulkeley because of the Reverend’s expertise in theology and medicine. Reverend Bulkeley is also a royalist: he believes that King James of England should have full control over the New England colonies. Reverend Bulkeley and Matthew Wood disagree vehemently on politics, so much so that Matthew initially refuses to summon the Reverend to help Mercy when she is sick. But he eventually decides to put aside politics and summon the doctor. The moment he does so, Reverend Bulkeley arrives on his own—he, too, has decided that politics are less important than Mercy’s life.

**King James** – King James II was the real-life king of England from 1685 to 1688. In *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, King James wants to solidify and extend his control of the American colonies. So, he appoints Governor Andros (another real-life historical figure) as the royal governor of several New England colonies, thereby overriding the local governments that the colonists have constructed for themselves. Many colonists—such as Matthew Wood—resent this, as they want to maintain the liberties that their local governments afford them. This leads to political tensions between colonists. Some people (like Reverend Bulkeley) believe that the King should maintain his power over the colonies, whereas others (like Matthew) believe that the colonies should govern themselves.

**Governor Andros** – Governor Andros was the real-life

governor that King James of England appointed to govern a collection of New England colonies—including Connecticut Colony, where *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* takes place. Governor Andros’s appointment means that he overrides the colonies’ charters, the legal documents that grant certain rights and liberties to the colonists (such as the ability to govern themselves). Many colonists—including Matthew Wood—deeply resent Governor Andros because they want to maintain the rights that the charter affords them. Matthew, William, and other characters in the book cite two issues in particular: they want to be able to govern themselves, and they want to maintain their land ownership (under Governor Andros, the colonists risk losing their land grants).

**John Woodbridge** – John Woodbridge is a reverend in Wethersfield. Along with Mr. Eleazer Kimberley, John Woodbridge witnesses Kit’s disastrous school lesson, in which she has some students act out a part of the Bible. Puritans forbade acting, which they saw as sinful, so the play shocks John Woodbridge. Instead of trying to understand why Kit thought that acting could be a useful activity, he condemns it, betraying his prejudice against different ways of learning. He assumes that it is a sinful activity and even censures Mercy for going along with Kit’s idea.

**Mr. Eleazer Kimberley** – Mr. Eleazer Kimberley is the schoolmaster in Wethersfield. He has authority over Kit and Mercy, who both teach in the town. He is outraged when he finds out that Kit has the children acting out scenes from the Bible. Puritans believed that acting in plays was sinful, so instead of trying to understand Kit’s different perspective, Mr. Kimberley fires Kit on the spot. He assumes she is a bad teacher because she is using a technique that his religion forbids. This shows his prejudice: he condemns Kit simply because she has different beliefs and ideas than he has. When Mr. Kimberley fires Kit, she is distraught and runs crying to the **Great Meadows**. There, she meets Hannah for the first time. After her conversation with Hannah, Kit returns to Mr. Kimberley and convinces him to give her another chance at teaching.

**Thomas Tupper** – Thomas Tupper was Hannah Tupper’s husband who died before the events of the novel. Prior to arriving in Wethersfield, Thomas and Hannah lived in Massachusetts, where they were persecuted for being Quakers. The Puritans beat and branded the Tupperes and drove them across the border of Massachusetts. This traumatic event captures the cruelty of discriminating against others because of their differences; in this instance, the Massachusetts Puritans discriminated against the Tupperes for practicing a different religion. When the Tupperes arrive in Wethersfield, Connecticut, the Puritan townspeople ostracize them and force them to live outside of town. So, Thomas builds Hannah a cottage in the **Great Meadows**. Even after his death, the cottage feels like home to Hannah—she has a meaningful

connection to the place because her husband lovingly built it.

**The Constable** – The constable arrests Kit when Goodman Cruff charges her with witchcraft. The constable accepts the Cruffs’ flimsy evidence and suspects that Kit may be a witch, allowing his prejudice to get the better of him. Like many Puritan townspeople in Wethersfield, he suspects that Hannah—ostracized because she is a Quaker—may be a witch. And because Kit is friends with her, he believes that she may be a witch, too. He is wrong on both accounts, as neither woman is a witch.

**The Constable’s Wife** – The constable’s wife is kind to Kit while Kit is locked in the constable’s shed prior to her trial. Unlike the other townspeople, the constable’s wife doesn’t think that Kit is a witch, and she tries to convince her husband that he shouldn’t keep Kit locked outside in a shed on a cold night. But her words don’t change his mind, and he does keep Kit locked up. As a woman in 17th-century New England, the constable’s wife has less power than her husband.

**Captain Talcott** – Captain Talcott is the magistrate who examines Kit during her trial. He listens to all the evidence on hand before making a judgement, which allows him to reach the right conclusion: that Kit is not a witch. Through Captain Talcott’s determining the truth, the novel shows that in order to find out what is real, one must rely on factual evidence rather than prejudice.

**Captain Eaton** – Captain Eaton, Nat’s father and Mrs. Eaton’s husband, is the captain of the *Dolphin*, the ship Kit sails on from Barbados to Connecticut. When Kit arrives in Wethersfield, Captain Eaton is annoyed to discover that Kit’s Aunt Rachel and Uncle Matthew don’t know that Kit is arriving. He resents having to spend extra time bringing her directly to the Woods’ house, and he doesn’t want to be responsible for her if they don’t want to host her. From this, it’s implied that women in 17th-century New England were rarely trusted on their own and often needed chaperones. Captain Eaton fears that if something goes wrong, and the Woods refuse to take Kit in, he may have to take care of her until another solution comes along. Kit, who announces that she takes full responsibility for her arrival, resents Captain Eaton’s sexist attitude.

**Mrs. Eaton** – Mrs. Eaton is Captain Eaton’s wife and Nat’s mother. She and Kit became friends during Kit’s journey from Barbados to Connecticut, as they “share[] the bond of being the only two women aboard the *Dolphin*.” In 17th-century New England, women didn’t travel as much as men did—especially alone—and they rarely worked on ships. The scarcity of women on the *Dolphin* more broadly represents gender roles at the time of the novel, as American colonial society dictated that women be limited to domestic work. Mrs. Eaton steps into this gender role: she tells Kit that she looks forward to being “a proper housewife” during the summer, as opposed to sailing with her husband.

**Thankful Peabody** – Thankful Peabody is a woman who gets married near the end of the book. While at the wedding, Judith wistfully observes the event’s splendor—at this moment, she is planning on marrying John, who isn’t rich enough to afford a lavish wedding. Meanwhile, Kit’s loneliness at the wedding is seemingly what makes her realize that she is in love with Nat.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Redheaded Sailor** – Kit meets the redheaded sailor on the *Dolphin*. The Puritans in Wethersfield punish the redheaded sailor, along with Nat, for putting jack-o-lanterns in the windows of William’s house as a prank.

**Margaret** – Margaret was Kit’s mother, Rachel Wood’s sister, and Sir Francis Tyler’s daughter. Margaret and her husband died before the events of the novel, when Kit was too young to remember them.

**Mrs. Ashby** – Mrs. Ashby is William Ashby’s mother.

## TERMS

**Puritanism** – Puritanism was 16th- and 17th-century religious movement of English Protestants who criticized the Church of England. They sought to reform the Church, “purify” it of its Catholic influences, and ensure that its practices and beliefs strictly adhered to the Bible. But because the Church of England was part of the English government, Puritans faced prosecution for speaking out against the Church. As a result, many Puritans migrated to the New England colonies to practice their religion freely. Puritans were devout, and their religion heavily influenced their lifestyle, which had strict moral and behavioral codes. They were generally intolerant of people of other religions.

**Quakers** – Quakers are practitioners of a set of Christian denominations called the Religious Society of Friends. They generally believe in “that of God within everyone,” or the idea that every person has Jesus Christ’s presence within them. Historically, Quakers have been known for their pacificism, belief in universal human rights, and involvement in social justice causes.

**Husking Bee** – A husking bee is a festive gathering where attendees shuck corn together. According to tradition, if someone found a red ear of corn, they could kiss a person of their choosing.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don’t have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in

black and white.



## PURITAN HYPOCRISY

When Kit arrives in Wethersfield, Connecticut to live with her Aunt Rachel and her Uncle Matthew, who are Puritans, she struggles to adapt to their culture. The Puritans were an English religious group that migrated to the American colonies in the early 1600s because they felt persecuted by the Church of England, which intertwined with the English government. In the colonies, they were able to self-govern because of a charter granted by King Charles II of England—and due to what they experienced in England, Puritans (like those in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*) were obsessed with maintaining their religious and civil liberties. While the book illustrates the Puritans as hard-working and passionate, it also captures their hypocrisy, as the Puritan characters in the novel generally aren't interested in respecting others' rights or religious freedoms. The Puritans in Wethersfield discriminate against Hannah Tupper because she is a Quaker, not a Puritan. And while the Puritans are very protective of their land ownership, they stole the land they live on from the Native Americans in Connecticut. Similarly, although the Puritans advocate for the "rights of free men" for themselves, they enslave Black people and deprive them of basic liberties. By depicting these inconsistencies, the book suggests that 17th-century Puritanism was hypocritical: Puritans generally only cared about freedom as it pertained to advancing their own interests, not about ensuring that everyone had equal rights.

Given the Puritan characters' intolerance for other religions, it's clear that their belief in religious freedom pertains only to themselves. The primary reason for the Puritans' migration to the American colonies was to escape religious persecution, and the book makes it clear that the colonial Puritans value the ability to practice their religion. Puritan characters like the Wood family go to church multiple times a week, and their religion shapes their values. Kit's cousin Mercy quotes the Bible passage "the Lord loveth not idleness" to explain why the Woods work so diligently, and Rachel visits the ailing Widow Brown because the Bible teaches people to "car[e] for the poor and the widows." But many of the Puritan characters don't believe in being charitable or kind to "heretics" (non-Puritans). When Matthew finds out that Kit has visited and assisted Hannah, who's a Quaker, he forbids her from seeing Hannah again, telling her that because she is "a heretic [...]. She has no claim on [Kit's] charity." Not only are the Puritan characters discriminatory in how they practice their religious beliefs, but they also are selective in their advocacy for religious freedom. Although they know the horrors of religious persecution, they do not hesitate to persecute non-Puritans like Hannah. Because Hannah is a Quaker, the Puritans ostracize her and relegate her to a swampy part of town. They also require her to

pay a fine because she doesn't attend Meeting (the Puritan religious service), which places an unfair financial burden on her because of her religion.

The Puritans of the book also show their hypocrisy by stripping other people of the very same rights that they pursue for themselves. In the book, most Puritan characters—especially Matthew and, later, William and John—are concerned that King James of England is dismantling the colony's system of self-governance. To protect their "free government"—and, as Matthew says, the "rights of free men"—a group of Connecticut Puritans consider revolution, although they do not carry it out. But they do manage to hide their charter—the document that enshrines their right to self-governance—thereby keeping it from Governor Andros, who wanted to take back the charter as a symbol of revoking the colony's local governments. The Puritans' impassioned speeches and efforts to maintain their sovereignty illustrate how dearly they value their civil rights. Yet while Matthew passionately speaks of "the rights of free men, free and equal under God," he—and the rest of the Puritans—do not intend to share these rights with everyone. As Nat informs Kit, "there are plenty of [...] folk like [Kit] here in New England who'll pay a fat price for black flesh," which addresses the fact that the Puritan colonists enslaved Black people, depriving them of the most fundamental human rights and the very same freedom that the Puritans seek for themselves. Another example of the Puritans' hypocrisy is their relationship with the indigenous people of the land they live on. When they find out that Governor Andros has plans to nullify the Puritans' land deeds—the implication being that they will have to pay fees to obtain land new grants for the land they already live on—the Puritans are furious. But *they* have stolen land too; they are living on land that they took from the Native Americans who had lived on it prior to their arrival. In this way, the Puritans aren't concerned with protecting others' rights and civil liberties—they only care about advancing their own.

Despite all of this, the book doesn't only show the Puritans in a negative light. Although many of the Puritan characters are harsh and intolerant, Kit loves Mercy, John, and Rachel for their kindness. She even comes to respect Matthew for his hard work, passion for his community, and dedication to his family. In this way, the book adds a level of nuance to its critique of Puritan culture. It shows that the Puritans, as a group of people, are not all the same—there is variation between individuals. For example, even though Rachel feels pressured by the Puritan's religious intolerance to not help Hannah, she gives Kit food to deliver to Hannah anyway. In this way, the book suggests that along with their negative characteristics, the Puritans have good ones, too: the Puritans in the novel are depicted as hard-working, determined, and passionate people. But these positive characteristics are often lost in the Puritans' hypocrisy, as throughout the novel, the Puritans deprive others of the same rights and freedoms that they chase for themselves.





## LOVE, VALUES, AND ATTRACTION

In *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Kit spends much of the novel contemplating romantic relationships.

Early on, she develops a relationship with William Ashby, a wealthy and respected Puritan man in Wethersfield, the town she lives in. But it becomes clear that Kit doesn't actually love William—she is simply attracted to the easy, comfortable life that she could have if she married him. At the same time, Kit begins to develop feelings for a sailor named Nat Eaton. She doesn't recognize her feelings until the end of the book, however, only realizing that she loves Nat when they both risk punishment in order to protect their friends. Whereas Kit and William care about very different things, Kit and Nat share similar values—something that's important in all the romantic relationships in the novel. For instance, Mercy and John Holbrook—both of whom are kind, thoughtful, and wholly dedicated to Puritanism—become a couple. And although Judith is originally attracted to John's good looks, she eventually settles down with William, who shares her interest in material goods. By depicting the successes and failures of multiple relationships, the novel suggests that shared values are necessary for happy partnerships.

Judith's first relationship fails because she chooses her potential partner for superficial reasons, as opposed to shared values. Judith's first love interest in the book is John Holbrook. Given that Judith chooses John as her potential husband before the two of them have any significant conversation, it's implied that she only chooses him because she finds him handsome. But from the beginning, Kit sees that John and Judith don't seem right for each other—they're too different, both in personality and in interests. John's work and religious studies are the most important things in his life, and he takes no interest in discussing material objects, like houses and furniture, despite Judith's attempts to include him in planning a house with her. In fact, Judith and John are so dissimilar that John never considers Judith as a partner—he is interested in Mercy from the start of the book.

Kit's first relationship similarly fails because both she and William are attracted to each other for superficial reasons. William is immediately drawn to Kit when he sees her wearing a lavish dress. Whether it is her looks or her elegant clothes that attract him is uncertain; but what is certain is that they don't have much in common. As William courts Kit, their lack of similar interests frustrates her—they can't even carry on a conversation together. The main thing that interests Kit is William's wealth, as she figures that she won't have to work if she marries him. But eventually this promise of material comfort isn't enough for Kit to be happy. She ends her relationship with William after he suggests that she cut off her friends, Hannah and Prudence, to save her reputation. Neither Hannah nor Prudence has a good reputation in Wethersfield (most townspeople believe Hannah is a witch, and Prudence

spends a lot of time with her), so William worries that the townspeople will think less of Kit for being friends with them. But Kit cares more about being loyal to her friends than being “an example of what is right and proper” in the Puritan community. Knowing that “[she] could never care about the things that seem so important to [William],” Kit breaks off their relationship.

In the end, however, Judith, Kit, and Mercy all find successful romantic relationships with men who share their values. Where William was a poor match for Kit, he makes an excellent match for Judith. The two of them take a deep interest in planning their home, and they are both interested in maintaining their reputation (for example, Judith refuses to visit Hannah). Judith and William each tried in vain to make their original romantic interests—John and Kit, respectively—interested in material goods and planning for home life. But once Judith and William have each other—a partner who cares about the same things—they are happy. Similarly, while John wasn't a good match for Judith, he is, as Kit points out, “incredibly, utterly right” for Mercy. Mercy and John are both mild in temperament, dedicated to their work, and deeply religious. Kit also finds a genuine connection when she falls in love with Nat. While their friendship has ups and downs, they are always loyal to each other. Neither Kit nor Nat cares about maintaining a respectable reputation in the Puritan community of Wethersfield, which eventually gets both of them in trouble. Kit finally recognizes her feelings for Nat when she contemplates his fiery character and his loyalty, traits that she shares with him. He loves her in return, and the book ends with the suggestion that they will marry.

In the background of these young romances is the relationship between Rachel and Matthew, Kit's aunt and uncle. Throughout the book, Kit wonders why Rachel left her life in England for Matthew, a harsh man. Eventually, Kit figures that it was Matthew's passionate commitment to his ideals that made Rachel “cross an ocean at his side.” But despite Matthew's admirable character traits, Rachel never seems particularly happy in their marriage. As the novel unfolds, it becomes clear that Matthew and Rachel don't share the same values at heart: Matthew is severe and inflexible in his political and religious beliefs, whereas Rachel is tender and prefers to follow her instincts over obeying rules. This is clear when Rachel gives Kit food to pass along to Hannah; even though she knows that she isn't supposed to help a Quaker “heretic” like Hannah, Rachel “can't bear to think of anyone going hungry when [her family] [has] such plenty.” Rachel and Matthew's somewhat strained marriage therefore serves as an example of what happens when people form relationships with someone who doesn't share their values. Similar principles, then, are necessary for happy partnerships.



## DIFFERENCE, PREJUDICE, AND DISCRIMINATION

Throughout *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, characters are skeptical of and prejudiced against people who are different from them. When Kit moves from Barbados to Wethersfield, a Puritan town in Connecticut Colony, she experiences prejudice when people assume that she's a witch just because she knows how to swim. She continues to witness prejudice against others, such as the way Wethersfield townspeople discriminate against Hannah Tupper, whom many believe to be a witch as well. As soon as Kit meets Hannah, she realizes that Hannah isn't a witch at all—she is actually a kind woman whom the Puritans of Wethersfield treat cruelly simply because she is a Quaker, not a Puritan. Kit recognizes that the Puritans' treatment of Hannah is unjust—yet Kit herself judges the Puritans in return, and she discriminates against people of color. This is especially clear in how she condones and participates in slavery, something that Kit's friend (and eventual love interest) Nat condemns as immoral. While Kit's own character growth is limited, the book nevertheless shows how discriminating against people for their differences causes harm and is therefore unjust and cruel.

Kit's journey to an unfamiliar place demonstrates how people become prejudiced against those who are different from them. When Kit arrives in Wethersfield, Connecticut to live with her Aunt Rachel and Uncle Matthew, the Puritans in their community (even Matthew himself) are prejudiced against Kit because she's different from them. As Kit puts it at one point, "People are afraid of things they don't understand." This explains much of the treatment she receives from the Puritans: they make unfair and incorrect assumptions about her because she isn't Puritan, and some things about her are unfamiliar to them. The first example of this is when several Puritans suspect that Kit is a witch because she can swim, an activity most New Englanders don't know how to do. To them, swimming is unusual behavior, so it is easy for them to explain it with the assumption that Kit is a witch, instead of getting to know Kit and learning that swimming is common in Barbados, her home country. Kit, for her part, judges the Puritans in return: she grew up wealthy, so she is shocked when she sees the barren town of Wethersfield. She's also surprised that Puritan families like the Woods do all their own work, because she sees manual labor as beneath her and is resistant to doing chores that she believes are "the work of slaves." This racist thinking betrays Kit's own prejudices: she, a white person, believes Black people are inferior to her. While she thinks she shouldn't have to work, she readily accepts and supports the enslavement and forced labor of Black people. Another central example of prejudice in the novel is how the Puritans treat Hannah. They fear her because she is a Quaker, a follower of a religion that is unfamiliar to them. They assume that her pet **cats**, solitary nature, and refusal to attend Meeting (the Puritan religious

service) are all signs that she's a witch. Instead of trying to get to know Hannah, the Puritans of Wethersfield make assumptions about her from afar.

The book goes on to show that prejudiced people also tend to actively discriminate against people who are different than they are. Because the Puritans of Wethersfield dislike Quakers, they single Hannah out and discriminate against her. They force her to pay a fine for not going to Meeting, which means that she has an extra financial barrier that the other, Puritan townspeople don't encounter. The Puritans also essentially exile Hannah from the town, forcing her to live on the outskirts of Wethersfield. At one point, a mob of Puritans even tries to run Hannah out of town altogether, claiming that she's a witch and burning her cottage down. Kit experiences discrimination at the hands of the Puritans as well. Because Kit is an outsider—she's a stranger from Barbados who rebels against Puritan society's strictness—several townspeople (led by Goodwife Cruff) decide that Kit is a witch and bring her to trial. But Kit also discriminates against others, namely people of color. Kit condones and participates in slavery (her grandfather, who raised her, owned enslaved people), an inhumane practice that deprives Black people of their basic rights. In this way, Kit is both a victim of and a perpetuator of discrimination.

By depicting the harmful effects of this kind of treatment, the book suggests that discrimination is morally wrong. Throughout the book, Kit tries to convince her family and acquaintances that Hannah isn't a witch, but really a kind and caring woman. Not only have the Puritans completely misjudged Hannah, but their treatment of her is exceptionally cruel. As Kit gets to know more about Hannah, she learns of the horrible treatment—such as beating and branding—that Hannah has endured at the hands of Puritans. After Hannah escapes, the Puritans then turn their attention on Kit, whom they also accuse of witchcraft. Again, their prejudices lead them astray—Kit isn't a witch, either. Not only are they incorrect in their allegation, but their discriminatory actions are cruel, too. Kit undergoes a frightening trial, and she fears that her punishment will be death—something that the novel implies is deeply unjust, especially given that the Puritans don't have any real evidence that Kit is a witch. But Kit isn't a fully sympathetic character, given her racist beliefs. At one point, Nat criticizes Kit for condoning slavery by pointing out the cruelty of depriving other humans of their rights. He explains that her discrimination of Black people is inhumane and flawed. Kit, however, never appears to change her views on slavery, and it's implied that this type of racist thinking is what normalizes slavery and allows its brutality to continue. By showing how these kinds of attitudes alienate and dehumanize people, the book suggests that discriminating against people for their differences is needlessly cruel.



## HOME AND BELONGING

When Kit arrives in Wethersfield, Connecticut to live with her Aunt Rachel and Uncle Matthew Wood, she immediately feels like an outsider.

Disheartened by the bleak landscape and surrounded by strict Puritans, Kit misses vibrant Barbados, where she was raised by her beloved and now-deceased grandfather. Kit struggles to feel at home with the Woods, who require her to do chores for the first time in her life. Kit also has a hard time adjusting to Puritan culture, which she finds restrictive after a childhood of “running free as the wind in a world filled with sunshine.” So, all in all, Kit feels dissatisfied with her new life—until she comes across the **Great Meadows**, whose “sense of freedom and space and light [...] spoke to her of home.” As she falls in love with New England’s natural beauty, Kit also sparks a friendship with Hannah Tupper, a kindly old woman whom Kit feels she can trust with her thoughts and feelings. As the plot develops, Kit continues to build ties, both with the land she lives on and the people she learns to love, from Hannah to the Wood family. Most importantly, Kit falls in love with a sailor named Nat Eaton—she knows that, so long as she can be with Nat, “it wouldn’t matter where [she] went.” With this, the book suggests that home isn’t necessarily tied to a particular location or set of people—regardless of where a person ends up, they can feel at home by forming meaningful relationships with the people and places around them.

Initially, Kit feels homesick for Barbados and misses her grandfather. After the warmth and brilliance of Barbados, New England feels grim and cold to Kit. Not only does Kit miss Barbados’s natural beauty, but she misses vibrant towns as well—Wethersfield is more of a barren settlement than a city. In addition to missing her birthplace and childhood home, Kit misses her grandfather, whom she loved dearly. She looks back on their “happy days on the island,” which were full of reading, conversing, and swimming—none of which she can do in Wethersfield. She associates these fun, freeing activities with Barbados, and she feels homesick for them. Living with the Wood family is very different than living with her grandfather, in part because they expect Kit to work around the house. No one in the family—especially Matthew—pampers or spoils Kit the way her grandfather did in Barbados. Far from the carefree life she knew in Barbados, Kit feels constricted in New England.

But by forming meaningful connections with the people and places around her, Kit begins to feel more at home in New England. The key turning point in Kit’s journey is when she comes across the Great Meadows, an expansive stretch of land in Wethersfield. The Meadows’ beauty enchants her, and their “sense of freedom and space and light [...] [speak] to her of home.” This liberation and comfort are what Kit needs to feel at home, and as a result, she begins to feel attached to New England. At the same time, Kit develops friendships with various people in Wethersfield, particularly with Hannah

Tupper. With Hannah, Kit feels loved and supported, emotions she has missed since leaving Barbados. Kit’s friendship with Hannah gives her the comfort she craves, and she feels at home in Hannah’s little cottage—so much so that she feels “a pang of homesickness” after an angry mob burns it down. Kit also becomes very attached to the Wood family, especially her cousin Mercy. After Mercy falls ill, Kit chooses to stay behind when Nat offers to take Kit back to Barbados, because she wants to be by Mercy’s side until she recovers. Kit even comes to respect her strict Uncle Matthew and sees him as family as well. But the person Kit loves the most is Nat; the two have a somewhat tumultuous friendship, but they are always loyal to each other. When Kit is with Nat, she often feels “[l]ight as air,” which is “the way [she] used to feel in Barbados.” Their relationship makes her feel free and joyful, the feelings she associates with home.

Because Kit is able to connect with people and places in New England, she decides that she doesn’t want to return to Barbados when given the opportunity. Her realization comes while in the Great Meadows. When she thinks of leaving New England, she feels heartbroken, for she “does not want to leave this place, after all. Suppose she should never walk in the meadows again?” Even though New England isn’t her homeland, Kit has become attached to the Meadows, and they make Connecticut *feel* like home to her. Furthermore, when Kit thinks about how she may “never sit in the twilight with Mercy, or see Judith in the hew house, or the girl Prudence would grow up to be,” she again feels reluctant to leave New England. Even though these aren’t the family and friends she grew up with, she doesn’t want to leave her new, chosen family behind. Kit’s love for Nat also pushes her to stay. She realizes that “it wouldn’t matter where [she] went”—she will always feel at home with Nat. This realization suggests that the idea of home may not stay the same forever—it isn’t necessarily tied to one specific place or group of people. Rather, where one feels “at home” can change throughout a person’s life, as it does for Kit. For Kit, home is where her loved ones are, and where she feels free, happy, and supported. And in the end, Kit chooses not to move back to Barbados, but to marry Nat, so that she will always be with the person she loves. And as Nat and Kit excitedly plan their future, Kit expresses her desire to have a house in New England, where she can see Hannah and the Woods. In other words, she chooses to stay where she feels at home.



## SEXISM

*The Witch of Blackbird Pond* explores sexist attitudes in 17th-century Puritan New England. The book begins with Kit moving to Connecticut because, after the death of her grandfather, she needs someone to financially support her. As a woman, Kit doesn’t have the option to work, so she moves in with her Aunt Rachel and Uncle

Matthew. Sexism follows Kit to New England, where cultural attitudes forbid women from participating in various activities, from swimming to voting. While the men have a variety of job opportunities, women have almost none: they simply do domestic work in their families' homes until they marry, after which they are expected to be submissive to their husbands. Kit, like her cousins and aunt, is a product of this sexist environment. Despite the political upheaval that serves as the background of the novel, Kit's thoughts about the future are mainly limited to marriage, which is representative of the limited opportunities afforded to women in Puritan New England. Through the experiences of its female characters, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* shows how 17th-century women's personal and professional development are restricted due to sexist cultural assumptions and gender roles.

The Puritans in the novel impose gender roles on women to restrict how they behave. The novel opens with one such sexist restriction when Kit finds out that, as a woman, she isn't allowed to swim. According to a Puritan superstition, respectable women sink in the water, whereas witches float. This gendered rule sets the scene for an environment in which cultural attitudes dictate what women can and can't do. In addition to activities like swimming, the Puritans bar women from participating in civic life through voting or serving in government. When Matthew invites over men to discuss politics, the women wait outside the meeting room, which is representative of how women in their society aren't permitted to participate in politics. When Rachel tries to talk about politics, Matthew dismisses her opinion, saying that "all a woman thinks about" is "[h]er own house." Indeed, the Puritans expect women to only care about their domestic duties. While Matthew works in the fields and in the government, the women of the Wood family are primarily confined to the house (although they do occasionally work outside).

These same gender roles also restrict women's professional growth. Their opportunities for work are few, which makes economic independence very difficult for them to attain. Kit's economic dependence on men is clear from the beginning of the novel, when her grandfather, whom she relied upon, dies. As a 16-year-old young woman, Kit cannot live or work on her own. This limits her options: she can either marry an old man who wishes to exploit her financial difficulties, or she can move to Connecticut to be with her only remaining relatives. Kit decides that going to stay with her family in Connecticut is preferable, but here she finds that the Puritans value boys over girls because sons are seen as more "useful" than daughters in supporting a family. In fact, Kit overhears Judith and Rachel discussing how they wish Kit were a boy. In Puritan society, boys were able to help their fathers with agricultural and trade work, whereas women were generally required to stay at home. The only jobs in the novel that women can do are related to children. Kit teaches to earn a small wage, which she hopes will

make the family "think [she is] of some use, even if [she's] not a boy." When she's planning to move back to Barbados, she hopes to work as a governess there. When Kit decides not to go back to Barbados, she chooses the other means of financial security that Puritan society deemed acceptable: marriage. Because girls are considered a drain on a family's resources, marriage is the typical end-goal for them. Kit, Judith, and Mercy all feel this expectation; Rachel and Matthew want the girls to marry so that the "girls [will be] well provided for."

The book's female characters are products of their environment: as the Puritans restrict their behavior and professional opportunities, the women step into their prescribed gender roles and rarely challenge Puritan society's expectations for women. Throughout the novel, Kit's primary concerns revolve around her marital prospects. Marriage is her future, so as soon as William begins courting her, most of her attention is dedicated to him. She might not think about him as much if there were "anything else to break the long monotonous stretch from Saturday to Sunday," but her life consists of housework, which the novel suggests is dreary and unfulfilling. Despite the momentous political changes occurring during Kit's time in Wethersfield, she—along with her cousins and aunt—never express considerable interest in the political goings on. This lack of interest shows the impact of Puritan society's banning women from participating in the government: the women of the novel simply accept that "[t]he men can take care of the government" and carry on with the housework. In this way, Puritan society's strict gender roles prevent women from even entertaining the idea of pursuing interests outside of the home.

Notably, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* was published in the 1950s, when American society generally expected women to be obedient housewives, whereas the men had authority in the household. The book reflects these same gender roles and even implies that women *should* be submissive to their husbands. For instance, the novel repeatedly condemns Goodwife Cruff—the only female character who has more authority than her husband—for being the dominant figure in her marriage. The narration describes Goodwife Cruff as a "shrew," and her husband as "too spineless to stand up [...] against his [...] wife." In the end, Goodman Cruff silences Goodwife Cruff, an act that the novel describes as "[Goodwife Cruff's] husband stepp[ing] into his rightful place." In this way, the novel appears to be a product of *its* environment, too, as its female characters' restricted opportunities reflect the gender roles of both Puritan society and mid-20-century American society.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



## GREAT MEADOWS

The Great Meadows in Wethersfield, Connecticut represent the idea that home isn't tied to a specific place—rather, a person can feel at home simply by connecting with and appreciating their surroundings, wherever they are. When Kit first arrives in Wethersfield, she misses Barbados, her childhood home. In Puritan New England, Kit finds life dreary and restrictive, and the landscape looks grim compared to vibrant Barbados. All in all, Kit misses happy, privileged life she had in Barbados, where she “[ran] free as the wind in a world filled with sunshine.” Although New England initially seems incompatible with the sense of comfort and belonging that she associates with Barbados, Kit finds this homey feeling again in the Great Meadows.

As soon as Kit sees the Meadows, a wide-open stretch of land in Wethersfield, she immediately feels at home in them even though they're unfamiliar to her. As novel describes it, “the Meadows claim[] her and ma[k]e her their own.” She's not sure why she feels an affinity for them, but the novel suggests that it's “the sense of freedom and space and light [of the Meadows] that [speak] to her of home.” In other words, Kit feels the same sense of comfort and freedom that she did in Barbados. The implication is that home isn't necessarily limited to one's country of origin—rather, it can be anyplace a person feels liberated, comfortable, and connected to their environment. It doesn't necessarily matter *where* exactly Kit is, then, so long as she feels this way.

It's also significant that Hannah Tupper, who becomes one of Kit's closest friends, lives in the Meadows. Hannah shows Kit the kindness, love, and support that Kit has been missing while living in New England. When Uncle Matthew forbids Kit from seeing Hannah again because he believes that Hannah is a witch, Kit refuses to obey him. She knows that “[s]he ha[s] found a secret place, a place of freedom and clear sunlight and peace” in Hannah's cottage in the Meadows, and that “nothing that anyone could say would prevent her from going back to that place again.” The Meadows and Hannah become Kit's new idea of home, as they give her the feelings of peace and freedom that she associates with feeling at home. Home, then, isn't an unchanging place or set of people; home is a *feeling* that a person creates by forming meaningful connections with the people and places around them.



## HANNAH'S CATS

In *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Hannah Tupper's cats symbolize how prejudice can cause people to misinterpret innocent things. Hannah owns several cats, and the animals bring comfort and joy to her and her friends Kit, Nat, and Prudence. In fact, Nat fondly notes that “Hannah's magic cure for every ill [...] [is] Blueberry cake and a kitten.” But many Puritans in town suspect that Hannah is a witch, and they

believe that one of her cats is demonic and therefore evidence of her witchcraft. They already assume that Hannah is a witch, so the cat takes on a threatening significance in their eyes.

Yet the cat is “just an ordinary cat.” The Puritans misjudge the creature because they are prejudiced against Hannah—instead of observing her behavior and character in an unbiased way, they only ever see her actions as sinister. Had they gotten to know Hannah, the townspeople of Wethersfield would realize that their assumptions about her are wrong. She is actually a kindly old woman who lives on her own—she's not at all the scary witch they think she is. The same goes for her cat, which is an “ordinary” animal, not a demon in disguise. In this way, Hannah's cats represent the dangers of prejudice, as it can cause people to misunderstand, unfairly judge, and mistreat people (and animals).



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt edition of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* published in 2011.

### Chapter 1 Quotes

“But I thought the *Dolphin* was your home!”

“In the wintertime it is, when we sail to the West Indies. But I was born in Saybrook, and in the spring I get to hankering for my house and garden. Besides, I'd never let on to my husband, but the summer trips are tedious, just back and forth up and down the river. I stay at home and tend my vegetables and my spinning like a proper housewife. Then, come November, when he sails for Barbados again, I'm ready enough to go with him. 'Tis a good life, and one of the best things about it is coming home in the springtime.”

**Related Characters:** Mrs. Eaton, Katherine “Kit” Tyler (speaker), Captain Eaton

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 4

### Explanation and Analysis

Kit has just discovered that Mrs. Eaton is planning to disembark at Saybrook, which surprises Kit, as she thought that Mrs. Eaton only ever lived on the *Dolphin* (her husband, Captain Eaton, is the ship's captain). But Mrs. Eaton informs Kit that the *Dolphin* isn't her only home—she also feels at home in Saybrook, which is where her house is. This implies that one's idea of home can shift over time, and that home isn't necessarily defined by one specific place. For Mrs.

Eaton, her idea of home shifts throughout the year: the *Dolphin* is her home during the winter, but in the spring and summer she loves staying in Saybrook.

One of the reasons why Mrs. Eaton considers Saybrook her home is that her house and garden are there. She even tells Kit that she looks forward to doing domestic chores “like a proper housewife,” which suggests that she adheres to the gender roles that society expects 17th-century women to embody. During this time, colonial women’s lives were largely restricted to the domestic sphere. Women had very few job opportunities and were expected to serve their husbands and children first and foremost. As Mrs. Eaton happily steps into the gender role that society prescribes for her, she appears to be a product of her environment.



## Chapter 2 Quotes

☝ “How did you think they got there? Did you fancy they traveled from Africa in private cabins like yours?”

She had never thought about it at all. “But don’t you have slaves in America?”

“Yes, to our shame! Mostly down Virginia way. But there are plenty of fine folk like you here in New England who’ll pay a fat price for black flesh without asking any questions how it got here. If my father would consent to bring back just one load of slaves we would have had our new ketch by this summer. But we Eatons, we’re almighty proud that our ship has a good honest stink of horses!”

**Related Characters:** Katherine “Kit” Tyler, Nathaniel “Nat” Eaton (speaker), Grandfather (Sir Francis Tyler)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 23

### Explanation and Analysis

Kit has just complained to Nat about the smell of horses on the ship. In response, Nat angrily asks Kit if she would prefer the ship if it smelled like human bodies. When his response confuses Kit, he goes on to remind her that back in Barbados, she lived on her grandfather’s plantation, which depended on enslaved people’s labor. As such, she implicitly condones the transatlantic slave trade, during which millions of Africans were enslaved and shipped to various colonies (such as the American colonies and Barbados). As Nat tells Kit, the passage was horrific for the enslaved Africans, whom the colonizers brutalized on the way to their destinations.

Yet Kit has “never thought about [this] at all,” which implies

that she unquestioningly believes that Black people are inferior to her. But, as Nat emphasizes here, her prejudice isn’t without consequences—racist beliefs are what underpin the slave trade, meaning that Kit’s racism contributes to the way enslaved Black people are brutalized. In this way, the book implies that prejudice can do real damage, as it’s often what motivates cruelty and injustice.


In this passage, Nat also mentions that there are “plenty of fine folk like [Kit] here in New England who’ll pay a fat price for black flesh.” His use of the word “fine” is sarcastic—he is criticizing Kit and other enslavers for their inhumane treatment of Black people, whom they regard merely as “flesh” and not fully human people. This statement also emphasizes the fact that New Englanders—whom the book depicts passionately advocating for their political rights and freedoms—do not extend the most fundamental human rights to Black people. Their fight for political rights can therefore be read as hypocritical: they seek only to advance their own interests, instead of fighting for equal rights for all.

## Chapter 3 Quotes

☝ “You mean that, just on an impulse, you left your rightful home and sailed halfway across the world?”

“No, it was not an impulse exactly. You see, I really had no home to leave.”

**Related Characters:** Katherine “Kit” Tyler, Matthew Wood (speaker), Grandfather (Sir Francis Tyler)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 36

### Explanation and Analysis



Kit has just told Matthew Wood that, after the death of her grandfather, Kit left Barbados at her earliest opportunity, which is why she didn’t have time to write to him to announce that she was coming to live with the Wood family. Matthew is shocked and sees her immediate departure as a sign of her impulsiveness. But Kit informs him that it wasn’t an impulse—she left out of necessity. For one, she didn’t have a place to live anymore, since she sold her grandfather’s house to pay off his debts. Without her grandfather, Kit doesn’t have a way to support herself, since 17th-century society offered women very few job opportunities. Unable to support herself, Kit had to find someone else to support her. Instead of marrying (which is

her only other option for financial security), Kit comes to Connecticut to stay with her extended family, the Woods. Kit's statement that she "really had no home to leave" may have another meaning: she could mean that Barbados didn't feel much like home after the death of her grandfather, whom she loved dearly. The implication is that home isn't necessarily tied to a specific place—one's relationships to the people around them plays a major role in making someone feel at home. So, even though Kit has always lived in Barbados, it no longer seemed like home to her once her grandfather was gone.

## Chapter 4 Quotes

☝☝ "Why, girls! What on earth—?" Rachel Wood had come back unnoticed, and she stood now staring at her daughter in the peacock blue gown with something, half fear and half hunger in her eyes."

**Related Characters:** Rachel Wood (speaker), Matthew Wood, Katherine "Kit" Tyler, Mercy Wood, Judith Wood

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 42

### Explanation and Analysis

Rachel has come back from visiting an ailing widow to find Kit going through her trunks while Judith tries on one of Kit's dresses. Mercy is also present but much is more hesitant to join in the other girls' playfulness. As Rachel sees her daughter dressed up in an elegant gown, she gazes at her with "half fear and half hunger in her eyes." Under Matthew's authority, Rachel and her daughters have had to live a plain, industrious life—Matthew, the book reveals later, sees extravagance as a sin (he calls it "vanity") and play as idleness. Rachel's hungry gaze suggests that she misses being able to dress elegantly and engage in fun, frivolous activities, but that Matthew has forbidden it. As for the "half fear" in her eyes, it's almost certainly because she knows that Matthew will punish the girls for playing.


Furthermore, the "half fear and half hunger in [Rachel's] eyes" indicates several things about her and Matthew's marriage. On one hand, it suggests that Matthew doesn't hesitate to unleash his anger on the women in his family—Rachel's fear shows that she has been a victim of Matthew's rage. In 17th-century New England, women were expected to be subservient to men, and Matthew clearly demands that his wife and daughter obey him. Additionally, Rachel's "hunger" suggest that she's not happy

in her marriage—she fears her husband and longs for a different, less restrictive kind of life. Her wistfulness speaks to the importance of being with a partner who shares one's values; if she were with a husband who valued the same things as her, it's less likely that she would be unhappily longing for a different lifestyle.

## Chapter 5 Quotes

☝☝ An hour ago [Kit] had declined to go to Meeting, saying airily that she and her grandfather had seldom attended divine service, except for the Christmas Mass. What an uproar she had caused! There was no Church of England in Wethersfield, her uncle had informed her, and furthermore, since she was now a member of his household she would forget her popish ideas and attend Meeting like a God-fearing woman.

**Related Characters:** Matthew Wood, Katherine "Kit" Tyler

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 51

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage takes place on Kit's first Sabbath day with the Woods. Sabbath is the day that Meeting (the Puritan service) takes place. Kit doesn't want to go to Meeting—not only is she not Puritan, but she also doesn't go to religious service frequently. But Matthew doesn't tolerate Kit's different religious beliefs and forces her to go to Meeting. His intolerance is representative of how the Puritans didn't extend religious freedom to anyone outside of their community, even though they themselves migrated to the New England colonies in order to practice their religion freely. In this way, the Puritans aren't that different from the Church of England, which was very hostile to Puritans. Now that the Puritans have their religious freedom, they hypocritically deny this same freedom to others.


Matthew's intolerance also shows his prejudice against non-Puritans like Kit. He talks down to her about her beliefs, which he calls "popish ideas." "Popish" is a word that means something is Catholic; it is also typically used scornfully, which is exactly how Matthew uses it. In this way, he is insulting Kit for her different religious beliefs. Through the language he uses, Matthew makes it clear that he sees Catholicism as inferior to Puritanism, which shows his prejudice against people with different religious beliefs.

“You certainly made an impression on William Ashby,”  
Judith ventured presently.

There was no point in denying it. “Perhaps because I was someone new,” said Kit.

“Perhaps. You aren’t exactly pretty, you know. But naturally William would be impressed by a dress like that.”

**Related Characters:** Katherine “Kit” Tyler, Judith Wood (speaker), William Ashby

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 58

### Explanation and Analysis

Judith and Kit are walking back from Meeting, where Kit just met William Ashby, who was speechless with admiration for Kit. Judith mentions how captivated William was to meet Kit, and she proceeds to spitefully suggest that he likes the way Kit dresses, not Kit herself. Judith’s comment is likely fueled by her crush on William—earlier in the book, she mentions her hope that a man named William will see her wearing the elegant dress that Kit let her try on. Unfortunately for Judith, William sees *Kit* wearing a lavish dress, not Judith.

In a way, Judith is right: at this point, William can’t possibly like Kit for who she is. He hasn’t spoken a word to her, which means his crush on her is entirely based on her physical appearance. Given Judith’s comment that “naturally William would be impressed by a dress like that” suggests that William may place value in superficial things—like someone’s beauty—or even in luxury goods. Either way, William doesn’t know anything about Kit’s character, which means that, unless he puts in effort to get to know her, any relationship he pursues with her will lack genuine connection.

## Chapter 6 Quotes

“I am mistaken,” Matthew Wood challenged him, “because I do not favor knuckling under to this new King’s governor?”

“Governor Andros was appointed by King James. Massachusetts has recognized that.”

“Well, we here in Connecticut will never recognize it—never! Do you think we have labored and sacrificed all these years to build up a free government only to hand it over now without a murmur?”

**Related Characters:** Reverend Bulkeley, Matthew Wood (speaker), Governor Andros, King James

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 61

### Explanation and Analysis


At the Wood household, Matthew is arguing with Reverend Bulkeley about politics. The historical context is that King James II—who succeeded his brother, King Charles II—has recently appointed Governor Andros to manage the colonies. One of Governor Andros’s jobs is to nullify and act in place of the charters of various New England colonies, including Connecticut. In Connecticut, the colonists’ charter gave them the right to self-govern, a right that they don’t want to relinquish. Matthew passionately expresses that the colonists worked hard to create a “free government” where the colonists get to govern themselves according to their best interests, as opposed to being ruled from afar by a King who has an agenda for how to make the colonies benefit him.

But while Matthew claims that the colonists’ government is free (representative of the people it governed), that is not entirely the case. Women weren’t permitted to vote or participate in the government, and some of the colonists enslaved Black people, depriving them of their most fundamental rights and freedoms. When Puritans like Matthew defend Connecticut Colony’s government, they intend only to protect their own rights, not ensure that everyone has the rights and freedoms that they advocate for themselves.

## Chapter 7 Quotes

William seemed to find nothing lacking those evenings. For him it was enough simply to sit across the room and look at her. It was flattering, she had to admit. The most eligible bachelor in Wethersfield and handsome, actually, in his substantial way. Sometimes, as she sat knitting, aware that William’s eyes were on her face, she felt her breath tightening in a way that was strange and unpleasant. Then, just as suddenly, rebellion would rise in her. He was so sure! Without even asking, he was reckoning on her as deliberately as he calculated his growing pile of lumber.

**Related Characters:** William Ashby, Katherine “Kit” Tyler

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 73-74

### Explanation and Analysis



As William continues to visit Kit, she occasionally gets frustrated at how sure he is that she will marry him. When viewed from a practical standpoint, it perhaps makes sense that William is so sure that Kit will marry him. After all, she has no way to financially support herself, since 17th-century New England society didn't offer women many job opportunities. If Kit intends to leave her aunt and uncle's house, she will have to marry someone. And William is an extremely eligible suitor: he is wealthy and has a great reputation in town.

However, William's cold, unfeeling certainty frustrates Kit. William seems to view her as an object to acquire, not as someone with independent thoughts and feelings; the book even compares the way he views her as the way he views "his growing pile of lumber." He doesn't try to talk with Kit or get to know her—he's perfectly content just looking at her, which accentuates her feeling of being objectified. His disinterest in conversing with Kit also highlights a difference in their values. Getting to know her potential partner is clearly important to Kit, as is evidenced by her attempts to hold conversations with William. But this feeling is not returned, as William continuously passes up opportunities to get to know Kit on a deeper level. This stark difference in values isn't a good sign for their relationship—Kit is already feeling bitter about William's approach to courting.

Meadows for the first time. She immediately feels at home in them or, as the book puts it, "the Meadows claimed her and made her their own." At first, the book suggests that Kit has such an affinity for the Meadows because they look like Barbados, and that it's the Meadows' "great level sea of green" that remind her of Barbados's "fields of sugar cane" and "endless reach of the ocean to meet the sky." But then the book suggests that it isn't that the Meadows bear a physical resemblance to Barbados—it's that the *feelings* that the Meadows evoke remind Kit of her time in Barbados. As the book puts it, it's "simply the sense of freedom and space and light that [speak] to her of home." She has an immediate connection to the Meadows because they make her feel liberated and comforted, just like how she felt while living in Barbados.


This implies that home isn't necessarily a specific and unchanging place. For Kit, home is wherever she feels supported, loved, and free, which is exactly how she feels in the Meadows. It doesn't matter where she is, so long as she feels this way. This moment marks a turning point for Kit's journey to feel at home in Connecticut. After forming a connection with the Great Meadows, Kit becomes increasingly enchanted with New England—and the people she befriends there—to the extent that she eventually chooses to stay in Connecticut instead of going back to Barbados.

## Chapter 8 Quotes

☝☝ As they came out from the shelter of the trees and the Great Meadows stretched before them, Kit caught her breath. She had not expected anything like this. From that first moment, in a way she could never explain, the Meadows claimed her and made her their own. As far as she could see they stretched on either side, a great level sea of green, broken here and there by a solitary graceful elm. Was it the fields of sugar cane they brought to mind, or the endless reach of the ocean to meet the sky? Or was it simply the sense of freedom and space and light that spoke to her of home?

**Related Characters:** Judith Wood, Katherine "Kit" Tyler

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 76

### Explanation and Analysis

Kit is walking with Judith when she sees the Great

☝☝ "[...] She's been there as long as I can remember."

"All alone?"

"With her cats. There's always a cat or so around. People say she's a witch."


"Do you believe in witches, Judith?"

"Maybe not," said Judith doubtfully. "All the same, it gives me a creepy feeling to look at her. She's queer, that's certain, and she never comes to Meeting. I'd just rather not get any closer."

Kit looked back at the gray figure bent over a kettle, stirring something with a long stick. Her spine prickled. It might be only soap, of course [...] But that lonely figure in the ragged flapping shawl—it was easy enough to imagine any sort of mysterious brew in that pot!

**Related Characters:** Katherine "Kit" Tyler, Judith Wood (speaker), Hannah Tupper

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 77**Explanation and Analysis**

When Kit sees Hannah Tupper for the first time, it's from a distance. Judith, who is with her at the time, tells Kit that the townspeople of Wethersfield consider Hannah to be a witch. The reason for their accusation seems to be that Hannah isn't a Puritan. Because she doesn't practice the same religion as the rest of the people of Wethersfield (who are Puritan), they are suspicious of her—they think there must be something wrong about her to not follow their religion. This attitude illustrates how the Puritans are generally prejudiced against other religions: they think Puritanism is superior to other religions, and that people who aren't Puritan are somehow morally inferior. In Hannah's case, the Puritans suspect that she is a witch, simply because she has different religious beliefs.

Armed with this prejudice, the townspeople misinterpret other characteristics about Hannah to fit their theory that she's a witch. For example, they think that her cats are additional evidence to support that she's a witch—according to superstitions at the time, cats were creatures associated with the devil. Of course, the book later shows that these cats are just ordinary cats.

In this passage, Kit experiences this phenomenon of prejudice causing one to misevaluate evidence. As soon as Judith tells Kit that Hannah is a witch, Kit suspects that there's some kind of "mysterious brew" in the pot that Hannah is stirring, even though she acknowledges that it is probably something as mundane as soap. All these misinterpretations could be fixed if the Puritans (and Kit) simply met Hannah and got to know her, but instead they let their prejudices and fears hold them back.

**Chapter 9 Quotes**

🗨️ [Kit] looked about her. "Tis a pretty room," she said without thinking, and then wondered how that could be, when it was so plain and bare. Perhaps it was only the sunlight on boards that were scrubbed smooth and white, or perhaps it was the feeling of peace that lay across the room as tangibly as the bar of sunshine.

**Related Characters:** Katherine "Kit" Tyler (speaker), Hannah Tupper

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 93**Explanation and Analysis**

Kit is visiting Hannah's house for the first time. While there, Kit instinctively remarks that the room is pretty, but then she realizes that in reality, it is actually very plain. It is cared for—Kit notes that the "boards [...] [are] scrubbed smooth"—but it doesn't have any decoration or special design that would make Kit think it's pretty. This suggests that the pleasure that Kit derives from the house isn't from its appearance, but rather in the feeling that the house evokes.

Kit notes that there is a "feeling of peace that [lies] across the room." It is this peace that makes Kit feel a kinship to this house, and this is certainly due to the fact that Hannah is in the house with Kit. Hannah is a kindly elderly woman who comforts Kit and gives Kit the affection that she's been missing since leaving Barbados. The implication is that Kit feels at home here because she has a meaningful connection with Hannah—one's relationships are what give a place meaning.

**Chapter 10 Quotes**

🗨️ "[...] But no one in Wethersfield has anything to do with Hannah Tupper."

"Why on earth not?"

"She's a Quaker."

"Why is that so dreadful?"

Rachel hesitated. "I can't tell you exactly. The Quakers are queer stubborn people. They don't believe in the Sacraments."

"What difference does that make? She is as kind and good as—as you are, Aunt Rachel. I could swear to it."

**Related Characters:** Rachel Wood, Katherine "Kit" Tyler (speaker), Mercy Wood, Hannah Tupper

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 99**Explanation and Analysis**

After Kit meets Hannah Tupper, she tells Rachel and Mercy that Hannah is a wonderfully kind woman, not a witch. Rachel is appalled and warns Kit to stay away from Hannah. When Kit asks why the people of Wethersfield despise Hannah, Rachel informs her that it's because Hannah is a Quaker, not a Puritan. It's clear that Rachel doesn't know much about Quakers, as she can't explain to Kit why being a Quaker is wrong. The only reason that Rachel can provide is that the Quakers have different beliefs than the Puritans. In

other words, the Puritans ostracize Quakers like Hannah not because the Quakers do anything immorally wrong, but solely because they don't believe the same things as Puritans. Kit points out that simply having different religious beliefs doesn't make someone a bad person. Hannah is still a good and kindhearted person, regardless as to whether she practices the same religion as the rest of the town.

The Puritans' ostracizing of Hannah can be read as hypocritical, given that the Puritans originally migrated from England to the New England colonies because they wanted to freely practice their religion. (The Church of England wasn't tolerant of Puritanism.) Yet, now that they are the ones in power, the Puritans as bad as the Church of England, and they show this by discriminating against Hannah. It's clear that they don't support religious freedom for all—they only want to protect their own rights.

## Chapter 11 Quotes

☝☝ Sometimes Kit wanted to stop her ears. Would she have to hear the price of every nail that went into those board, and every single nail the finest that money could buy? [...]

Judith, however took a lively interest in such details. She had a flair for line and form and a definite mind of her own, and it was plain, to Kit at least, that as William planned his house Judith was comparing it, timber for timber, with the house she dreamed for herself. Her purpose was only too apparent as she made adroit attempts to draw John Holbrook into the discussion.

"I think you should have one of those new roofs, William," she said now. [...] "I think they look so distinguished, don't you, John?"

Mercy laughed at John's bewilderment. "I don't believe John even notices there's a roof over his head," she teased gently.

**Related Characters:** Mercy Wood, Judith Wood (speaker), John Holbrook, William Ashby, Katherine "Kit" Tyler

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 119

### Explanation and Analysis

As William continues to court Kit, it becomes increasingly clear that they are not a good match. In this passage, Kit finds herself losing her patience with William, who only ever seems to want to talk about the house he is building. Kit doesn't care about all the planning that goes into building a house, whereas he is passionate about the topic, which goes

to show that she and William don't care about the same things.

Judith, on the other hand, shares William's interest in material goods and home planning. She engages with William on the topic of his house, and Kit can tell that Judith's ideas for the house align exactly with William's. The fact that their dream houses match so perfectly is representative of how she and William would make a good couple—their interests and their plans for the future align.

But, at this point, Judith is interested in John, not William. John, however, is not at all interested in home planning. As Mercy points out, he doesn't pay attention to that sort of thing—he's too busy studying. John's disinterest in home planning and material items is a sign that he isn't that right partner for William. Indeed, Judith eventually switches tracks and settles down with William, and the two of them are very happy to share their interests with each other.

## Chapter 12 Quotes


☝☝ "The river is so blue today," [Kit] said sleepily. "It could almost be the water in Carlisle Bay."

"Homesick?" asked Nat casually, his eyes on the blue strip of water.

"Not here," she answered. "Not when I'm in the meadow, or with Hannah."

**Related Characters:** Nathaniel "Nat" Eaton, Katherine "Kit" Tyler (speaker), Grandfather (Sir Francis Tyler), Hannah Tupper

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 127

### Explanation and Analysis

Kit and Nat are at Hannah's house, where they are mending her roof together. While they work, Kit observes that the river that runs through Wethersfield reminds her of Carlisle Bay, a bay located in Barbados. Perhaps the river does look like the ocean, but the book implies that Connecticut feels like home to Kit not because it looks a certain way, but because she has formed meaningful relationships with some of the New Englanders, like Nat and Hannah. It's likely the case that Kit feels like the river might as well be the ocean, since she feels as happy and at peace with Nat in Connecticut as she did when she lived with her grandfather

in Barbados.



In fact, Kit never feels homesick for Barbados when she's in the Great Meadows or with Hannah—she feels happy, carefree, and at peace. So, at those moments, she doesn't ache to go back to Barbados. Her happiness with them goes to show that, while she still associates Barbados with home, her idea of home is changing. Her growing relationships with her new friends and the Meadows are what make Connecticut feel meaningful to her, suggesting that close relationships and connections to one's surroundings are what define home.


“Why should you take it upon yourself to mend a roof for the Quaker woman?” demanded [Matthew].

“She lives all alone—” began Kit.

“She is a heretic, and she refuses to attend Meeting. She has no claim on your charity.”

**Related Characters:** Katherine “Kit” Tyler, Matthew Wood (speaker), Mercy Wood, Hannah Tupper

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 132

### Explanation and Analysis


Matthew has just found out that Kit has visited Hannah and has even helped her fix her house. His furious response reflects his prejudices and the Puritans' hypocrisy. Even though the Puritans believed that they should help the poor and widowed (Mercy mentions this earlier in the book), Matthew draws the line at anyone who isn't a Puritan. He doesn't think that non-Puritans—or “heretic[s],” as he calls them—deserve help, which shows that he thinks they are somehow inferior to and less respectable than Puritans. Of course, Hannah isn't less respectable or less deserving of help than anyone else, and Kit knows this—she knows that Hannah's religion doesn't affect Hannah's goodness and kindness.


Matthew, however, is too blinded by his prejudice against non-Puritans, and he demands that Kit discriminate against Hannah by refusing to help the widowed woman in the future. Matthew's intolerance is also representative of the Puritan's refusal to grant others the right to religious freedom. Although the Puritans migrated to the New England colonies to be able to practice their religion freely, did not extend this same right to others.

## Chapter 14 Quotes

“As Kit watched, her uncle bent slowly and scooped up a handful of brown dirt from the garden patch at his feet, and stood holding it with a curious reverence, as though it were some priceless substance. As it crumbled through his fingers his hand convulsed in a sudden passionate gesture. Kit backed through the door and closed it softly. She felt as though she had eavesdropped. When she had hated and feared her uncle for so long, why did it suddenly hurt to think of that lonely defiant figure in the garden?”

**Related Characters:** Katherine “Kit” Tyler, Matthew Wood

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 147-148

### Explanation and Analysis

One morning, Kit observes her Uncle Matthew having a moment of reverence in the garden. Matthew's love for the land he loves on is evident in this moment, during which he holds the earth “as though it were some priceless substance.” To Matthew, the New England is priceless—it's where he feels at home. It's clear that he has a meaningful relationship to the land, possibly due to the many hours he has spent cultivating it. His passionate love for his home is so visceral that his hand clenches around the dirt he's holding.



The sheer amount of passion that Matthew has for the land makes Kit feel like she's walking in on something private when she sees him in the garden. But this moment helps Kit understand her uncle a little better. Now that she, too, has developed a connection to New England (especially the Great Meadows), Kit knows what it means to feel love for a place. Additionally, Kit now realizes that her uncle's passionate defense for the colonists' land ownership is driven by his love for the land he cultivates and lives on. Since learning to love the beauty of New England, she sees why he would be so desperate to maintain ownership over it.

## Chapter 15 Quotes

☝☝ Rachel searched for some words of comfort. “I know it is a disappointment,” she attempted. “But will it truly change our lives so very much? Here in Wethersfield, I mean? We will still all be together in this house, and surely we will not lose our rights as citizens of England.”

Her husband brusquely waved away her comfort. “That is all a woman thinks about,” he scoffed. “Her own house. What use are your so-called rights of England? Nothing but a mockery. Everything we have built here in Connecticut will be wiped out. Our council, our courts will be mere shadows with no real power in them. Oh, we will endure it of course. What else can we do?”

**Related Characters:** Matthew Wood, Rachel Wood (speaker), Governor Andros

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 156

### Explanation and Analysis

Matthew Wood has recently met with other Wethersfield townsmen to discuss the arrival of Governor Andros, who has come to Connecticut to revoke the colony’s charter to symbolize the end of the political rights (such as the right to self-governance) laid out in the charter. Rachel tries to comfort Matthew by reminding him that their family will still stay together in their house. To her, that’s what matters. As a woman in 17th-century New England, Rachel has never had the right to vote or participate in the colonial government—so, for her, she doesn’t see much of a difference. Her passiveness is reflective of the sexist environment she lives in: she’s never had a say in politics before, so why start now? She adheres to her gender role that society prescribes her, which means that her focus is on her home.

Matthew scoffs at Rachel’s input and mocks her for sticking to the domestic role that he (and their society more broadly) has forced on women like her. He has a lot more to lose than she does when Governor Andros revokes the charter. “Everything [the colonists] have built here in Connecticut” benefit him and other white men more than anyone else. In this way, it’s perhaps unsurprising that Rachel isn’t more upset at Governor Andros’ arrival—if the colonists were more inclusive in their fight for rights, they would likely have more support.

## Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ For Prudence was an entirely different child from the weebegone shrinking creature who had stood in the roadway outside the school. The tight little bud that was the real Prudence had steadily opened its petals in the sunshine of Kit’s friendship and Hannah’s gentle affection. Her mind was quick and eager.

**Related Characters:** Prudence, Hannah Tupper, Katherine “Kit” Tyler

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 172

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Kit reflects on Prudence’s growth since Kit started teaching her to read and write. Prudence’s blossoming illustrates the transformative power of friendships, and how overcoming prejudices benefits everyone, both the people who experience prejudice and the people who hold prejudices. Through her friendship with Kit, Prudence overcomes her prejudices against Hannah (whom she originally thought to be a witch) and her mother’s prejudices against Kit. She benefits tremendously, making meaningful, life-changing friendships that she wouldn’t have made otherwise.

In addition to proving her mother wrong about Hannah’s and Kit’s true natures, Prudence also proves her mother wrong about her own intelligence. Goodwife Cruff had always told Prudence that she was too stupid to go to school, but as she starts taking lessons from Kit, it becomes clear that that isn’t true at all. Prudence’s “mind [is] quick and eager,” which only comes to light when Kit doesn’t heed Goodwife Cruff’s assumptions. The implication is that prejudices aren’t just cruel—they’re often incorrect, too.

## Chapter 17 Quotes

☝☝ “Or you can go on to the West Indies with us.”

Barbados! The tears sprang to her eyes. “I can’t, Nat. I have to stay here [...] ‘Tis Mercy,” she stammered. “She’s terribly ill. I couldn’t go, I just couldn’t, not knowing—”

**Related Characters:** Nathaniel “Nat” Eaton, Katherine “Kit” Tyler (speaker), Hannah Tupper, Mercy Wood

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 193

**Explanation and Analysis**

Nat and Kit have just saved Hannah from an angry mob of Puritans who believe she's a witch. Nat's plan is to bring Hannah to the nearby town of Saybrook, where she'll be safe. Nat then suggests that Kit come with him—either to Saybrook or the West Indies, where Barbados is located—just in case the Puritan townspeople turn on her.

Kit is so tempted to take up Nat up on his offer that tears come to her eyes. She has missed Barbados, the country she hails from, but Barbados is no longer her only home. She has loved ones in New England that make her decide to stay. As she tells Nat, she needs to stay in Connecticut to see Mercy through her illness—she loves Mercy too much to leave without knowing whether Mercy survives. Kit's change of heart in this passage suggests that the idea of home isn't always tied to one's actual homeland—rather, home is wherever a person is surrounded by the people they love.

cares about the family, and so she deserves to be treated as one of them.

Matthew's sincere appreciation for her help makes Kit feel like a valued and loved member of the family. As a result, she wants to rise to that role, so she inwardly promises that she'll "do [her] full share, beginning this very moment." Kit's renewed energy to carry on working for the Wood family shows the transformative power of acceptance and gratitude—as soon as she knows that others value and appreciate her, she is ready to sacrifice more. Matthew's gratitude makes her feel guilty for deceiving him (she's still friends with Hannah, which Matthew has forbidden), and this emphasizes her honesty. She wants to fully earn Matthew's respect, which she feels like she doesn't deserve until she's honest. So, she decides that she will tell him that she is still friends with Hannah, but—ever loyal to Hannah—Kit knows she should wait until she knows that Hannah is safe, just in case Matthew should turn Hannah in.



**Chapter 18 Quotes**

☞ “'Tis true I did not welcome you into my house,” [Matthew] said at last. “But this last week you have proved me wrong. You haven't spared yourself, Katherine. Our own daughter couldn't have done more.”

Suddenly Kit wished, with all her heart, that she had never deceived this man. She would like to stand here before him with a clear conscience. She was ashamed of the many times—more times than she could count—when she had skipped off and left her work undone.

I shall tell him some day, she vowed to herself, when I am sure that Hannah is safe. And I will do my full share, beginning this very moment. I don't even feel tired any more.

**Related Characters:** Matthew Wood (speaker), Hannah Tupper, Mercy Wood, Katherine “Kit” Tyler

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 195-196

**Explanation and Analysis**

Kit has just thanked Matthew for standing up for her when the mob of Puritans suggested that she is a witch. In response, Matthew implies that he defended her because he now considers her to be family. He admits that he was unwelcoming to her first, likely because he assumed that she was selfish and spoiled. But she has “prove[n] [him] wrong” with all the selfless work that she has done since Mercy fell sick. Her sacrifice to him show that she loves and

☞ William could help her. Why hadn't she thought of him at once? Anything William said would carry weight in the town. His position, his character, were unquestioned [...] The thought steadied her. She thought of him coming to champion her [...] Dear dependable William! Perhaps he would come tonight [...]

It was Rachel who finally came instead.

**Related Characters:** Hannah Tupper, Rachel Wood, Goodman Cruff, Goodwife Cruff, William Ashby, Katherine “Kit” Tyler

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 203-204

**Explanation and Analysis**

The Cruffs have just accused Kit of witchcraft, so now Kit is locked up in the constable's shed, where she awaits her public examination the next day. While she sits in the dark, she tries to imagine who could help her. When she thinks of William, she is reassured—she is certain that William, who is courting her, will come to her aid. William has an excellent reputation in Wethersfield, and Kit hopes that he will use it to help her, perhaps by vouching for her character and swearing before the magistrate that Kit isn't a witch.

But William never shows up, possibly *because* of his reputation. In Wethersfield, one maintains a good reputation by forming connections with other people with good reputations. As in Kit's case, one's reputation can be

damaged by their friends' bad reputations, since the townspeople are quick to judge others based on their relationships—Kit was friends with Hannah, whom they call a witch, so they think Kit is a witch too. But Kit cares more about staying loyal to her friends and following her moral compass than abiding by arbitrary societal rules. William, it appears, does not—he doesn't visit Kit probably because he doesn't want people to think that he has connections with someone who is a witch. The fact that William doesn't come to Kit's aid shows the importance of sharing values with one's partner: because he values his reputation more than staying loyal to his potential partner, Kit left in the lurch when she desperately needs his help.


dangerous, as their incorrect conclusions may result in the magistrate declaring Kit to be guilty, even though she is innocent.


## Chapter 19 Quotes

“Is it true that you were also acquainted with a certain cat which the widow entertained as a familiar spirit?”

“It—it was just an ordinary cat, sir, like any cat.”

**Related Characters:** Katherine “Kit” Tyler, Captain Talcott (speaker), Hannah Tupper

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 211

### Explanation and Analysis


The magistrate, Captain Talcott, is questioning Kit during her examination. He wants to know if Kit knew Hannah Tupper's cat, because according to Puritan superstition, cats are associated with the devil. Puritans like Talcott let this superstition affect the way they treat facts regarding Kit's case, which shows how prejudice often leads people to the wrong conclusions. Because the Puritans want to believe that Hannah is a witch, they misinterpret any evidence to fit that theory.

Hannah's cat is one such piece of evidence that the Puritans misinterpret during Kit's trial—they think that the cat is a sign that Hannah is indeed a witch who is working with the devil. But, as Kit explains, the cat is “just an ordinary cat,” not a demonic creature. This same process of misinterpreting information continues for the rest of Kit's trial, as various townspeople associate strange events to Kit, even though she has absolutely no connection to the event. They want to believe that Kit is a witch, so they bend all evidence to fit this theory. Their prejudiced analysis of facts is unfair and

“Hold your tongue, woman,” shouted her husband unexpectedly. “I'm sick and tired of hearing about Prudence being bewitched. All these years you been telling me our child was half-witted. Why, she's smart as a whip. I bet it warn't much of a trick to teach her to read.”

Goodwife Cruff's jaw dropped. For one moment she was struck utterly dumb, and in that moment her husband stepped into his rightful place. There was a new authority in his voice.

**Related Characters:** Goodman Cruff (speaker), Goodwife Cruff

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 221

### Explanation and Analysis

Prudence has just proved to the crowd in the Town House that she can read and write. Goodman Cruff is shocked to find out that Prudence can read—apparently Goodwife Cruff has told him for years that Prudence is “half-witted.” The reader doesn't know why Goodwife Cruff thinks that Prudence is “half-witted,” but Goodman Cruff took her word for it, which resulted in him viewing his own daughter with prejudice. The book implies that Goodman Cruff treated Prudence as unintelligent her whole life, only to realize that “she's smart as a whip.”

Angry that he hadn't had more confidence in Prudence, Goodman Cruff takes out his anger on his wife and tells her to “[h]old [her] tongue.” Up until this moment, Goodwife Cruff is the only woman in the book who is more dominant than her husband in their marriage. In this passage, however, Goodman Cruff silences her with “a new authority in his voice.” The book betrays its inherent sexism by commending Goodman Cruff for subjugating his wife, which the book describes as him “stepp[ing] into his rightful place.” In both Puritan New England and the mid-20th-century U.S. (when the book was written), women were expected to be submissive to their husbands. By supporting this power imbalance in heterosexual marriages, the book shows itself to be a product of its sexist environment.

## Chapter 20 Quotes

“‘Tis no use, William,” she said now. “You and I would always be uneasy, all of our lives. We would always be hoping for the other one to be different, and always being disappointed when it didn’t happen. No matter how hard I tried, I know I could never care about the things that seem so important to you.”

“The house isn’t important to you?” he asked slowly.

“Yes, in a way it is,” she admitted. “I’d like to live in a fine house. But not if it means I have to be an example. Not if it means I can’t choose my own friends.”

**Related Characters:** William Ashby, Katherine “Kit” Tyler (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 230

**Explanation and Analysis**

After William tells Kit that she should cut off friends who may hurt her reputation, Kit ends their relationship. She realizes now that they don’t have the same values—namely, Kit follows her moral compass over arbitrary societal rules, while William sacrifices moral integrity to follow rules and ensure a good reputation. Because of his obsession with his reputation, he knows that Kit will “always be uneasy” with him, because she can’t trust that he’ll always support her—after all, he didn’t even show up to her witchcraft trial, let alone defend her.


Kit also knows that she will always let William down: she’ll “never care about the things that seem so important to [him],” such as his house or his social standing in the community. Throughout the book, William’s plans for his house bore Kit. Although she would “like to live in a fine house,” it isn’t her top priority, and it certainly isn’t more important to her than having a partner whom she can trust to be loyal to her. Because they don’t share the same values or interests, Kit knows she could never be happy with William.

## Chapter 21 Quotes

She tried to remember how it had felt to stand on the deck of the *Dolphin* and see before her the harbor of Barbados. The haunting joy eluded her; the dream shores were dim and unreal. Why had she closed her heart to the true meaning of the dream? How long had she really known that the piercing happiness of that moment had come not from the sight of the harbor at all, but from the certainty that the one she loved stood beside her?

If only I could go with Nat, she realized suddenly, it wouldn’t matter where we went, to Barbados or just up and down this river. The *Dolphin* would be home enough.

**Related Characters:** Nathaniel “Nat” Eaton, Katherine “Kit” Tyler

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 245

**Explanation and Analysis**

Kit has been contemplating leaving New England for Barbados, but at the thought of leaving Nat, she hesitates. She tries to remember her recent dream in which she was coming home to Barbados with Nat at her side. The dream filled her with happiness, so she took it as a sign that she should go back to Barbados. Now, however, she’s realizing that she misinterpreted the dream, and that the dream had felt so sweet to her because she was with Nat, not because she was going to Barbados.

In this moment, Kit realizes that not only does she love Nat, but that he has become her definition of home. This implies that one’s home isn’t necessarily a set place—a person’s idea of where and with whom they belong can change over time. Moreover, it implies that home is more of a set of feelings than a physical place. For Kit, Nat is home—she knows that, so long as she is with Nat, “it wouldn’t matter where [she] went.”





## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1

It's an April morning in 1687, and Kit Tyler is excited to see land at last. She has been traveling for five weeks from Barbados to Connecticut Colony on a ship called the *Dolphin*. Nathaniel Eaton (also called Nat), the first mate and son of the ship's captain, asks her what she thinks of her first glimpse of the colony. She finds it ugly and disappointing, but she keeps that to herself. She's relieved when he tells her that the town she sees is just the port of Saybrook, and not Wethersfield, her destination.

Nat and Kit discuss the journey. This trip has been Kit's first time on a large ship, but she grew up sailing on small boats around Barbados, so she didn't have a hard time adjusting to sailing like the other seasick passengers. There's only been one storm, which Kit found exciting, albeit scary. The worst part of the storm was needing to spend four days below deck, where it still smelled like the horses that the ship had previously transported.

There are several passengers who need to go ashore, so the ship stops, and Nat leaves Kit to prepare a smaller boat to go to shore. Kit is disappointed to see that Mrs. Eaton, the captain's wife, is one of the people who will be getting off at Saybrook. As the only two women aboard the *Dolphin*, Kit and Mrs. Eaton have become friends during the trip. Mrs. Eaton cheerfully tells Kit that she's excited to return to her home in Saybrook, where she will garden and tend to household chores "like a proper housewife." Looking at the dreary shore, Kit doesn't understand how anyone could be enamored by it.

*Kit is disappointed at her first glimpse of Connecticut Colony, likely because it looks very different from her home country, Barbados. When Nat tells her that what she is seeing is Saybrook, not Wethersfield (her destination), Kit is hopeful that she may feel more at home in Wethersfield. But given that she has doesn't seem to have a previously established relationship with either place, it's unlikely that she'll feel an immediate connection to it.*



*Kit's sense of adventure—and her adventurous childhood—are established in this passage. She grew up in Barbados with enough leisure time, freedom, and encouragement to sail around the island. As a result, she even found the storm on her present journey exciting rather than scary. The worst thing about it was that it confined her below deck, which demonstrates that she dislikes being restricted.*



*The fact that Mrs. Eaton and Kit are the only two women on the Dolphin speaks to the gender roles of 17th-century European societies (of which colonial New England and Barbados were a part). Society dictated that women stay at home to perform domestic duties, so it wasn't common for them to travel. Colonial women typically had a chaperone with them if they traveled, which makes Kit's solo journey rather unusual. In general, 17th-century women had far fewer freedoms than men. Mrs. Eaton, however, doesn't express disappointment at returning to domestic duties—in fact, she says that she misses them and looks forward to being "a proper housewife." A product of her environment, she adheres to the gender roles of her society. Meanwhile, Kit doesn't understand how Mrs. Eaton is excited to return to Saybrook, which Kit finds dreary. Unlike Kit, Mrs. Eaton has a meaningful connection to Saybrook: it's where her beloved house and garden are, and Connecticut Colony feels like home to her for this reason.*



Kit impulsively asks Mrs. Eaton if she can ride to shore with her—she wants to set foot on America for the first time. Mrs. Eaton smilingly asks her husband to let Kit join, adding that Kit is being childish for a girl who is almost 16.

*Even though Kit finds Connecticut Colony ugly, she is still excited to arrive, which illustrates her adventurous spirit. Mrs. Eaton finds Kit's request childish, which suggests that in New England society, girls are expected to be serious and mature at a young age. Kit is only 16, but Mrs. Eaton expects her to exercise more restraint. Kit's impulsiveness also hints that her childhood was carefree and perhaps even spoiled—she is used to expressing her desires and getting her way.*



Captain Eaton allows Kit to go ashore. Her spirits high, Kit enjoys the short trip. As soon as she steps on the shore, she looks around for someone to welcome her, but no one is paying her any attention. The Eatons are busy exchanging news with a crowd of people, and the other passengers are already hurrying away. The only people near Kit are three women with “sharply curious eyes.” Their stares embarrass Kit—no one in Barbados stared so boldly at “Sir Francis Tyler’s granddaughter.”

*Kit is excited to reach land, perhaps hoping that she will feel at home in Connecticut Colony as soon as she officially. But with no one there to welcome her, Kit still doesn't feel any attachment to the place. In fact, the only people paying Kit any attention are three women who stare at her curiously, likely because she doesn't look like a local (probably because, as the granddaughter of a seemingly well-known man, Kit is more elegantly dressed than the average woman in New England). The women's gazes are “sharp,” which suggests that they are not thrilled about the arrival of someone whose way of life is different than theirs.*



Nat and Mrs. Eaton cheerfully approach Kit again. Mrs. Eaton says goodbye to Kit, adding that a woman named Goodwife Cruff will be joining the ship as a passenger to Wethersfield as well. With that, Mrs. Eaton leaves, Nat following behind her with her trunk.

*Kit's loneliness is even sharper when Mrs. Eaton, Kit's closest friend from the journey, leaves. This demonstrates the importance of relationships, as friends can be a source of happiness and comfort in difficult or unfamiliar situations.*



With no familiar faces greeting her, Kit regrets going to shore and is relieved when it's time for the passengers to head back to the *Dolphin*. There are four new passengers joining the ship: Goodwife Cruff, her husband, their child, and a tall man with a wide-brimmed hat.

*Kit's trip to shore doesn't make her feel more at home (she has no friends in Saybrook and no real connection to the place). She's therefore glad to get back to the ship, which is more familiar to her.*



When the passengers are halfway to the *Dolphin*, the Cruffs' child starts to wail—she's accidentally dropped her wooden doll overboard. Goodwife Cruff slaps and scolds her while the doll floats away from the boat.

*Goodwife Cruff's unsympathetic response to her child's lost toy demonstrates her harshness, which reflects the severity of Puritan culture. Even though the Cruffs' child drops the toy by accident, her mother swiftly punishes her.*



Kit asks Captain Eaton to turn the boat around, but he ignores her. Unused to being snubbed and feeling sorry for the whimpering child, Kit angrily takes off her shoes and cloak and jumps overboard into the cold water.

Kit confidently swims toward the doll and grabs it. As she turns back to the little boat, she realizes that Nat had jumped in after her and is trying to swim toward her; he's a poor swimmer, and Kit laughs as she passes him on the way to the boat. Captain Eaton helps Kit back on board while Nat pulls himself into the boat.

Kit is still laughing when she realizes that everyone else on the boat is either furious or appalled. Goodwife Cruff chides her for getting such beautiful clothes wet, to which Kit scornfully replies that she has plenty of other clothes. Even Nat is upset with her—he got his one pair of clothes wet by jumping after her in case she didn't know how to swim. Kit haughtily tells Nat that she has been swimming since she started walking.

The other passengers regard her with suspicion, leaving Kit feeling dejected. The only people who don't seem upset with her are the man with the wide-brimmed hat and the Cruff's child; the former smiles at her, and the latter looks at Kit adoringly.

After Kit changes into a new dress, the man in the wide-brimmed hat approaches her on the ship's deck. He introduces himself as John Holbrook and tells her that he is also going to Wethersfield. He apologizes for the other passengers' cold reactions—he knows that Kit was doing a kind thing for a helpless child. He tells her that they were simply surprised to see her swim, since most New Englanders don't know how.

*Kit is clearly not accustomed to meeting resistance to her demands, which suggests a privileged childhood. She decides to help the child on her own, regardless of what the captain or other passengers (such as Goodwife Cruff) think. This suggests that she acts according to what she thinks is right, rather than according to others' rules.*



*Kit's skill shows that she has plenty of experience swimming, while Nat clearly doesn't. Kit doesn't stop to consider why Nat may not be as good a swimmer as she is, and she laughingly mocks him for this.*



*In this passage, there are two cultural differences that lead to conflict: the ability to swim, and the amount of clothes a person owns. To the New Englanders, swimming isn't common, so they judge Kit for being able to do this unfamiliar activity. But Kit is also rather judgmental about Nat's lack of skill at swimming. She uses a superior tone with him, which comes off as her shaming him. Kit's comment about her clothes could also be read as conceited and privileged—though perhaps unintentionally so. Goodwife Cruff is shocked that Kit would risk ruining her clothes, which hints that most New Englanders don't own many clothes, let alone fancy ones. In fact, Nat only has one pair of clothes with him. Not realizing how privileged she is, Kit dismisses Goodwife Cruff's comment. She and the New Englanders have very different standards for what is normal, and so they mutually judge each other.*



*The New Englanders are suspicious of Kit because her behavior is abnormal for them. Instead of asking Kit why she knows how to swim, they judge her. The man with the hat appears to be more accepting of Kit than the other passengers, which suggests he may be more open-minded than people like the Cruffs.*



*John isn't frightened or deterred by Kit's surprising behavior. He explains to her that most New Englanders don't know how to swim, which is why the other passengers are suspicious of Kit's ability. Instead of blindly judging Kit for swimming, John gives her an opportunity to explain herself. The interaction immediately characterizes John to be a kind-hearted person, someone who is willing to extend a warm welcome to an outsider.*



When Kit tells John Holbrook that she grew up in Barbados with her plantation-owning grandfather, he is shocked; he thinks the island is a heathen place. Kit firmly asserts that Barbados is a beautiful place that is “as civilized as England.” When John asks whether she’s a Puritan, she scoffs, asking if he means “[o]ne of those traitors who murdered King Charles.” His face betrays his anger, but he changes the subject.

John and Kit exchange their plans: John is moving to Wethersfield to study with Reverend Bulkeley, after which he hopes to have his own church. Kit will be living with her aunt and her uncle, Matthew Wood, who live in Wethersfield as well. John humorously notes that Kit will shock and surprise the people of Wethersfield.

Nat interrupts their conversation; he’s still annoyed about Kit’s earlier jump in the river. He tells Kit that the captain wants her to have dinner with Goodwife Cruff and her family. He adds that Goodwife Cruff thinks that Kit is a witch—according to superstitions, only witches float, whereas “respectable” women sink. Kit is furious, and John looks concerned. Nat admits that Captain Eaton was able to calm down Goodwife Cruff by informing her that in Barbados, everyone learns how to swim.

Nat then seriously tells Kit that she shouldn’t swim in New England again. Although she laughingly agrees, she feels anxious. America feels unfamiliar to her, as though the people who live there understand something she doesn’t.

*John does have some prejudices—he thinks that Barbados is a heathen place, even though it quickly becomes clear that he has never been there himself. He is assuming that Barbados is inferior to New England simply because it is different and unfamiliar to him. Kit informs him that he is wrong in his assumptions, and that Barbados is a wonderful and civilized place. But Kit betrays her own prejudices here: she uses England as her benchmark for what is civilized, which implies that she thinks places that aren’t like England are inferior. Additionally, Kit is prejudiced against Puritans. She is not one herself, nor does she seem to know much about them, other than the fact that a group of Puritans were behind the murder of the late King Charles I of England. She lets this information define her opinion of Puritans as a whole. Her scathing comment about Puritans also suggests that she doesn’t realize that Connecticut Colony is a Puritan colony. Given John’s angry look, it is likely that he himself is a Puritan and is offended by her narrow-minded views.*



*Given that Kit has already shocked the New Englanders on the boat with her ability to swim, it is likely that John is implying that Kit will continue to surprise New Englanders by flouting social norms.*



*At last, Kit discovers the main reason why the New Englanders have been so unwelcoming to her since she swam: they think she’s a witch. As Nat explains, there is a New English superstition that women who float are witches. This may be why most New Englanders don’t know how to swim—they don’t want others to accuse them of witchcraft. The other passengers are wrong in their assumption, however, as Kit isn’t a witch at all—she simply learned how to swim while living in a country with different social norms. At this moment, Kit realizes that women in New England shouldn’t swim if they want to maintain a good reputation. Because she is a woman, Kit risks societal punishment in a way that Nat—who also swam—won’t.*



*As Kit realizes how little she understands the societal rules of New England, she feels increasingly out of her element. She doesn’t understand the culture yet, and she doesn’t have any friends waiting to welcome her, so Connecticut Colony doesn’t feel like home.*

## CHAPTER 2

As soon as the *Dolphin* embarks on the river from Saybrook to Wethersfield, the wind dies down. Without wind in its sails, the ship moves at a painfully slow pace. Impatient, Kit asks a redheaded sailor if the journey usually takes so long. He genially tells her that this trip can take much longer—there is rarely any wind on this river. But he doesn't mind; the ship is his home, and he is "satisfied, wind or no wind."

Kit is frustrated. She doesn't have much patience left, and she doesn't want to be around hostile Goodwife Cruff and her husband, who is "too spineless to stand up [...] against his shrew of a wife." Kit feels terrible for their scrawny child, Prudence, whom Goodwife Cruff only feeds scraps. Sadly, Kit hasn't seen Prudence with the wooden doll since she saved it.

New Englanders, Kit has decided, do not forget easily. In addition to Goodwife Cruff's continued hostility, Captain Eaton and Nat are also still cold to her. Only John Holbrook is kind to Kit.

John spends almost all his time reading, sometimes even forgetting to eat. But as soon as the sun sets, he and Kit talk. She learns that he had wanted to go to Harvard, but he didn't have enough money. Luckily, Reverend Bulkeley, a famed scholar of both medicine and theology, accepted him as his pupil.

Kit is embarrassed to hear John talk about being poor. She grew up surrounded by luxury and never once questioned it. John is shocked to hear about childhood—didn't her parents make her do chores? But Kit's parents died when she was very young, so Kit was raised by her grandfather and the people he enslaved. Kit begins to describe her now-deceased grandfather, whom she loved very much, but she's afraid that she is going to start crying. John expresses his sympathy for her loss.

*While Kit is anxious to reach her destination, the trip to Wethersfield is drawn out, which may foreshadow that Kit's journey to feel at home will take much longer than she expects. By contrast, the sailor Kit speaks with isn't unhappy that the trip is taking such a long time. To him, the *Dolphin*—and not any particular piece of land—is his home.*

*Kit isn't a patient person, which fits with her impulsive behavior from Chapter 1. Unfortunately for Kit, her relationship with Goodwife Cruff hasn't improved, which suggests that Goodwife Cruff still thinks that Kit is a witch. Goodwife Cruff seems to be a hostile woman in general, as evidenced by her poor treatment of Prudence. The book criticizes Goodman Cruff for not "stand[ing] up" to Goodwife Cruff, who is described as a "shrew." In the 17th century (and the 1950s, when the book was written), women were generally expected to be submissive to their husbands, who were typically the more dominant figures in married couples.*



*Captain Eaton may be frosty with Kit because she acted so impulsively by jumping into the water—he may have expected a young woman to act with more restraint. Nat may still be upset that he got his clothes wet for Kit, but it is also possible that he feels embarrassed because she's a better swimmer than he is, and women at this time were often assumed to be inferior to men. John, however, remains kind to Kit, again showing his thoughtfulness.*



*John is a dedicated worker: he diligently reads all day, and he hopes to continue studying under Reverend Bulkeley. Given that John is studying under a theologian, it's likely that he's devoutly religious as well.*



*Kit is embarrassed to hear about John's struggles with poverty because she doesn't know what it means to be poor, and the striking difference between her childhood and John's makes her uncomfortable. John is surprised at her childhood in return, mainly because she has never worked before. This passage also reveals that Kit's grandfather enslaved people, which Kit doesn't seem to find abnormal or problematic.*



Kit is looking forward to meeting her Aunt Rachel, her mother's sister. Rachel left England for America after she met a Puritan man (Matthew) and eloped with him. Although Kit has never met her aunt, her grandfather told her that Rachel had been beautiful and joyful. Hearing this, John suddenly warns her that "That was a great many years ago." Kit doesn't understand his warning.

On the seventh day of the long, slow journey, Captain Eaton has then crewman pull the boat forward. Two sailors row ahead in a smaller boat and anchor one end of a long rope into the water. The men on the *Dolphin* have the other end of the rope, and they begin to pull the ship toward the smaller boat. It is very slow going, and seeing the men labor so strenuously makes Kit uncomfortable.

In the hot sun, Nat and some of the other sailors jump into the river to swim and cool off. Nat taunts Kit, telling her to join, even though he knows that she can't. When he comes aboard, Nat apologizes for mocking her. Kit genially admits that she is very jealous that he can cool off in the water, adding that she wishes she could get away from the dirty, horse-stinking ship for a bit.

Nat becomes enraged. He asks Kit whether she would like the smell if the ship's hold was "full of human bodies," tormented and locked in chains. Kit is shocked, repulsed, and confused at his words. He goes on to ask whether she ever thought about how the people who were forced into slavery got to Barbados. Kit has never thought about this.

*John's warning implies that Kit's Aunt Rachel may not be as happy as she once was. The reader doesn't know yet if this is because the Puritan lifestyle has changed or, or if her marriage to Kit's Uncle Matthew is an unhappy one. Notably, the passage implies that Rachel wasn't a Puritan before she met Matthew (since Kit and her grandfather aren't Puritans), which means that they did not originally share the same lifestyle or religious beliefs.*



*The painstaking labor that the crew undertakes to pull the ship toward its destination foreshadows how Kit's journey to feel at home in Wethersfield will be difficult work. Seeing the labor makes Kit uncomfortable, which speaks to her privilege—not only has she never done chores, but she also doesn't want to see labor in action. She grew up on a plantation, so she has always been surrounded by hard work. But her reaction here suggests that she views manual laborers—including the people her grandfather enslaved—as inferior.*



*Nat knows that Kit can't join because it would only further incriminate her to people like Goodwife Cruff, who already thinks that Kit is a witch because she can swim. The superstition that witches float (whereas "respectable" women sink) requires judging women in a way that men aren't judged. This is made clear as Kit enviously watches Nat swim—society restricts her behavior more than his.*



*Nat is angry that Kit is criticizing his beloved ship; like the redheaded sailor, Nat feels at home on the *Dolphin*. In return, Nat criticizes Kit's homeland of Barbados, an island where British colonizers enslaved many thousands of Black people to work on plantations. Nat explains to Kit that slavery is an inhumane practice that brutalizes and exploits people. Kit's participation in the enslavement of Black people (even passively by living on her grandfather's plantation) likely means that Kit believes Black people are inferior to white people and therefore don't deserve equal treatment. It has seemingly never occurred to Kit that enslaved people are tortured in the way Nat describes here.*



Nat continues, telling Kit that the slave trade still exists in New England—there are “plenty” of colonists who are willing to pay a high price for enslaved Black people. But he and his family refuse to participate, even though they could make a lot of money. He angrily snaps that he and his family are “almighty proud that [their] ship has a good honest stink of horses.”

*Nat informs Kit that there are many New Englanders who enslave people, just as Kit’s grandfather did. Nat acknowledges that his family could make a lot of money from participating in the slave trade, but they don’t because they believe that it is morally wrong. So, even though Kit has insinuated that the ship’s “stink of horses” is offensive to her as an upper-class young woman, Nat is “proud” that he and his family work in an “honest” and non-exploitative way, even if that work is hard and dirty.*



Nat stalks off, leaving Kit feeling annoyed that he ruined their chance of being friends again. She tries to be glad that at least John Holbrook still wants to be friends with her, but she admits to herself that he always seems shocked by her behavior. Just last night, she surprised him by reading from his book—he couldn’t believe that she could read, since she spent her whole childhood playing and never working.

*Kit does not take Nat’s words to heart; instead of reconsidering her racist beliefs, she is merely annoyed that Nat was short with her. In fact, the only person on the ship who still is friendly to her is John, but John’s constant shock at Kit’s behavior hurts their friendship. John seemingly has strict ideas about propriety, and though he is kind to Kit, his reactions betray his prejudices against different ways of living.*



This surprised Kit—she had never thought that reading was work. She had especially enjoyed reading plays. John flushes at her comment—the Puritans of New England do not read plays. As he tells her, “the proper use of reading is to improve [one’s] sinful nature.”

*Kit’s reading plays shocks John because, according to Puritan culture, reading should always have a religious purpose. He is set in the Puritan way of life, and Kit’s different lifestyle shocks him.*



Sometimes, Kit feels John pulling away from her, as though he is uncertain whether he wants to be friends. At the same time, his inflexible righteousness worries her—he will never understand why she loves books or why she enjoyed her carefree childhood.

*Because Kit and John do not see eye to eye on what is acceptable behavior, they struggle to be friends. Instead of trying to understand each other, they let their prejudices get the better of them—they each think they know what the “right” way to behave is, and they each believe the other person is wrong for thinking differently.*



At last, the *Dolphin* arrives in Wethersfield. Kit is again disappointed by the sight that greets her: rough wooden structures and unending forests. As the other passengers disembark, Kit overhears Prudence telling Goodwife Cruff that “the pretty lady” is also coming to Wethersfield. Kit calls out to Prudence, telling her that she hopes to see her often. Goodwife Cruff snatches Prudence away from Kit, demanding that Kit stay away from her child and adding that strangers are not welcome in Wethersfield.

*Kit is disappointed when she sees that Wethersfield is much more barren than her home in Barbados, and she doesn’t feel excited at the prospect of moving somewhere that feels so unlike home to her. Meanwhile, Goodwife Cruff makes it clear that the townspeople will not welcome Kit because she is unfamiliar to them. The implication is that the Puritans of Wethersfield are prejudiced against newcomers. Even though the Puritans are also transplants from another country (they migrated from England), they are hypocritically unwelcoming to other newcomers.*



When Captain Eaton sees that no one is welcoming Kit, he expresses his concern—he sent word to Wethersfield that the *Dolphin* was arriving today, so Rachel and Matthew should be at the shore to greet her. Knowing that she needs to tell the captain the truth, Kit informs him that her aunt and uncle don't actually know that she is coming to stay with them.

Captain Eaton is annoyed that Kit didn't tell him the truth about her voyage; now, he will have to deliver her to her relatives. He instructs Nat to carry Kit's luggage as they walk into town, and Kit begins to feel anxious.

*Kit's decision to keep her arrival a secret from Rachel and Matthew hints that she doesn't expect them to warmly welcome her to Connecticut. And given how the Puritans aboard the *Dolphin* have treated her thus far, her concerns may be well-founded.*



*Captain Eaton is upset because he is now responsible to deliver Kit safely to her aunt and uncle, which takes up more of his time. In 17th-century New England, women were rarely trusted to be on their own, so they often needed chaperones. Captain Eaton may fear that, should Kit's aunt and uncle refuse to take her in, he may have to take care of her until she can figure out another solution.*



## CHAPTER 3

Kit feels glummer the further they walk. Wethersfield is more of a settlement than a town. At last, they reach Uncle Matthew's house, which Kit is relieved to see is large and sturdy. Captain Eaton knocks on the door, and a gray-haired woman answers.

The gray-haired woman, whom Kit assumes is a servant, catches sight of Kit and calls out, "Margaret!" Suddenly realizing that the woman is her Aunt Rachel, Kit tells her that she is Kit Tyler, Margaret's daughter. The woman is thrilled.

Captain Eaton, Nat, and the other sailors leave them once they bring Kit's luggage into the house—Kit's aunt, Rachel, is shocked to see how much luggage Kit brought. Right before Nat leaves, he and Kit make eye contact, and she senses that he regrets something. Before he leaves, he jokingly reminds her that "[o]nly the guilty ones stay afloat."

*Wethersfield continues to disappoint Kit because it looks less established and wealthy than Barbados. Her idea of home is Barbados, so with every discovery of how different Wethersfield is from her homeland, Kit feels increasingly uncomfortable. She is relieved to see her Uncle Matthew's house because it looks closer to her idea of what a house should be: spacious and durable.*



*Kit at last gets her first welcome: her Aunt Rachel is delighted to meet her. Her happiness at Kit's arrival is a stark contrast to how the other Puritans have treated Kit so far, which perhaps suggests that Rachel isn't as staunch in her beliefs.*



*Rachel's shock at Kit's luggage implies that the Puritans live an austere lifestyle—they don't have many belongings, particularly luxuries. Meanwhile, when Nat leaves, he and Kit make eye-contact, which subtly hints at romantic tension between the two. But Nat doesn't express romantic feelings—instead, he reminds Kit that "the guilty ones stay afloat," which calls back to the idea that she shouldn't try to swim when living with the Puritans, lest they accuse her of witchcraft. His comment has an even greater significance: it is a reminder that she shouldn't rebel against the Puritan way of life, as the Puritans might persecute her and find her "guilty" of wrongdoing according to their beliefs.*





Rachel brings Kit into a big, bright kitchen where she excitedly introduces Kit to her Uncle Matthew—a stern and unwelcoming man—and her two cousins, Judith and Mercy. Judith is beautiful, exactly what Kit imagined Rachel would look like. Mercy has kind, clear eyes and uses crutches.

Rachel invites Kit to settle into having breakfast. When Kit takes off her cloak, Judith gasps at the extravagant dress that Kit is wearing. Kit glances around at her relatives and realizes that they are all wearing plain, gray clothes. When Judith admires Kit's glove, Kit cheerfully tells her that she can have a pair—Kit has many more in her trunk. Judith frowns.

At Rachel's prompting, Kit tells her relatives that her grandfather died, and that she came to New England alone. Rachel tearfully exclaims that Kit looks just like her sister; she was heartbroken when Margaret moved to Barbados, so far away from England. Kit silently muses that Rachel moved even further—she came to America for Matthew Wood, whom Kit finds quite frightening.

Matthew, who has been scowling the whole time, gets up from the table and announces that he will be working in the meadow for the rest of the day. On his way out the door, he notices all of Kit's trunks and coldly asks her why she brought seven trunks for a mere visit. Realizing that she must tell the truth, Kit anxiously announces that she isn't just visiting—she plans to stay. Rachel gasps as Matthew demands to know why she hadn't written to them first.

Kit tells them the whole story: before his death, Kit's grandfather was unwell and unable to manage the plantation. The overseer sold off an entire crop and vanished, leaving Kit's grandfather in shock. After he died, Kit learned that he had many debts. In order to pay them, she sold the land, the house, the furniture, and the people her grandfather enslaved. Pitying herself, Kit mentions that she even “had to sell” her own enslaved handmaid. When a ship was scheduled to go to Connecticut, Kit knew that it would be her only chance to find family. She departed immediately, with no time to send Rachel and Matthew a letter in advance.

*Matthew's reaction to Kit is particularly unwelcoming in contrast to Rachel's warmth. This is reminiscent of how the Puritans aboard the Dolphin received Kit. But although Matthew (like the Cruffs) is unwelcoming, Mercy (like John) appears to be welcoming and kind and accepting of strangers.*



*Judith appears jealous of Kit's lavish clothing, which reveals another cultural difference: Kit's Puritan relatives dress more plainly than she does. Kit eagerly offers to share her possessions, but Judith doesn't like this, perhaps because she feels like Kit is showing off or suggesting that the Wood family needs charity.*



*Kit doesn't understand why Rachel moved so far for Matthew. Because Kit's grandfather described Rachel as a joyful woman, it doesn't make sense to Kit that she would marry such a stern man like Matthew. At first glance, the two don't seem to have much in common.*



*Matthew shares Rachel's shock at Kit's many possessions. He is cold to Kit about it, which suggests that he assumes that a materialistic life is sinful.*



*Because women at this time (the 17th century) had very few opportunities to work, they relied on the men in their lives to support them. Prior to her grandfather's death, Kit relied on him for financial support. Therefore, when he dies, her stability is jeopardized, especially when she discovers that her grandfather had many debts. She has no choice but to find someone else to support her, which is why she's come to stay with the Woods. However, Kit's racist beliefs and participation in slavery arguably make her a less sympathetic character. She pays for her passage to Connecticut by selling the people her grandfather enslaved, even prioritizing her own feelings of loss over the enslaved people's humanity.*



Rachel is sympathetic toward Kit and reminds Matthew that they are Kit's last remaining relatives. Matthew is less empathetic, bluntly asking whether Kit's grandfather was a Royalist to King James. Kit admits that he was. Matthew doesn't respond, instead turning away to bring Kit's trunks into the kitchen, remarking that the town will surely gossip about such extravagance.

*Rachel knows that Kit, as a young woman in New England in the 17th century, has no other options for finding a stable life. So, she urges her husband to let Kit stay. Matthew, however, is much less sympathetic, which again shows how Rachel and Matthew have very different values. While Rachel believes they should welcome their niece, who needs help, Matthew is unfriendly and wants to check her political affiliation first. He does so by asking Kit what her grandfather believed; he likely knows that Kit shares her grandfather's politics and doesn't have her own opinions. New England women can't vote or participate in government, so Matthew probably assumes that Kit doesn't have independent thoughts regarding the current political situation.*



## CHAPTER 4

As soon as Matthew goes to work in the meadow, Rachel leaves to drop off food for a Widow Brown. After she leaves, Judith bitterly notes that her mother is always overworking herself to help others in addition to the household chores, even though she doubts that anyone would come to Rachel's aid if she needed it. Mercy gently scolds Judith for her harshness, adding that Rachel is following the Scriptures by helping others.

*The Puritan religion shapes the Woods' way of life. As Mercy reminds Judith, they strive to live according to the rules set out in the Bible (the Scriptures), which include helping those in need. Mercy's piousness is clear in this passage; she believes it is extremely important to follow the Bible's teachings. Judith, on the other hand, comes off as more cynical. She knows the Bible's teachings, but she realizes that not everyone will live by them like her mother does, which means that Rachel will overwork herself and may not receive aid from the other Puritans if she needs it. The implication is that the Puritans may be hypocritical in their beliefs: they may eagerly accept help but be unwilling to help in return.*



Judith then asks Kit if she will open her trunks—neither she nor Mercy have ever owned fancy dresses or accessories. Mercy is torn; she wants to have fun with Kit, but she also is aware of all the work they need to do. Thrilled by her cousins' excitement, Kit opens her trunks.

*Judith is very interested by Kit's fine possessions, whereas Mercy is more interested in getting to know Kit. Mercy is also clearly a diligent person—she wants to have fun, but she also wants to start on the work she needs to do.*



Judith tries on a bright blue dress. It looks beautiful on her, and she wishes that someone named William could see her in it. Kit tells her that the dress is for her. Then, Kit and Judith choose a soft shawl for Mercy, who is delighted in spite of herself.

*Judith is clearly interested in William, although neither the reader nor Kit know who this is. Kit generously gifts Judith the dress, which suggests that she enjoys sharing what she has with the people she cares about. Unlike Judith, Mercy isn't as interested in Kit's beautiful clothes, but she does enjoy the comfort that the shawl provides. With this, the book implies that Mercy isn't as materialistic as Judith is.*



Rachel comes into the room and is surprised to see her daughters all dressed up. Kit, noting the “half fear and half hunger in [Rachel’s] eyes,” instructs her aunt to try on a pretty bonnet. Rachel does so, and for a moment she looks happy. But suddenly she goes pale—Matthew has reentered the room.

Matthew is furious to see his daughters and his wife engaging in “vanity.” He commands Judith to give back the dress and silences Kit when she tries to explain that the dress is a gift. He orders them to get going on their work.

Judith is defiant, but Matthew is stern. Rachel, however, asks Matthew if Mercy can at least keep the shawl. After a moment, he gives in, and Kit realizes that Mercy is his one weakness. He coldly thanks Kit for the gift before leaving the house once more.

Kit asks whether they have servants to help with the work. Rachel tells her no; they do all the work themselves. Kit is shocked, but then she asks to be put to work as well. Judith sharply comments on Kit’s fancy dress and suggests that she work on carding with Mercy—that chore won’t get Kit’s dress dirty.

*The “half fear and half hunger in [Rachel’s] eyes” suggest that Rachel misses the joyous playfulness of dressing up, yet she’s also afraid of what will happen if she indulges in the fun. What she fears becomes clear when Matthew enters the room: her reaction implies that Matthew does not allow Rachel to indulge in frivolous yet harmless activities like dressing up.*



*Matthew’s fury suggests that “vanity” is considered sinful in the Puritan community, and that he considers Kit is sinful for having so many fancy dresses. Although Kit isn’t Puritan herself, Matthew judges her based on their cultural codes.*



*Matthew is unrelenting in his demands and inflexible in his beliefs; he does not accommodate difference in his household. Rachel, on the other hand, is more sympathetic, again showing how dissimilar she and Matthew are. But Kit does discover that he has a weakness—Mercy—which suggests that he isn’t entirely unfeeling.*



*Kit’s surprise at hearing that the Woods don’t have servants hints that her social circle in Barbados likely only included people wealthy enough to hire servants or buy enslaved people to do their work. Again, the book depicts Kit as a sheltered young woman who has only known a luxurious way of life. Nonetheless, she asks to work as well, probably to show the Woods that she’s willing to earn her place in their home. Judith is sharp with Kit, and her focus on Kit’s dress suggests that Judith is still jealous of Kit’s elegant dresses.*



Kit regrets her offer to help. Carding—the process of untangling wool—is long, tedious work. After seeing how easily Mercy accomplishes the task, Kit gets frustrated, not least at her own impatience. While carding, she confides to Mercy another reason why she had to leave Barbados: one of her grandfather’s old friends wanted to marry Kit instead of collecting the debt that Kit’s grandfather owed him. Kit didn’t want to marry the old man and is certain that she can’t return to Barbados now. Mercy assures her that Matthew will let Kit stay, so long as she proves that she can help the family thrive.

All the household chores take “skill and patience, qualities Kit [does] not seem to possess.” In the evening, Kit manages to ruin the easiest chore of all: making corn pudding for dinner. In her impatience, Kit messes up the recipe, and the corn pudding ends up a lumpy blob that the family nonetheless eats—there isn’t any other food.

After dinner, Matthew reads from the Bible. Kit finds it boring and is relieved when she can at last go to bed. On her way up to the bedchamber that she will share with Judith, she overhears Judith complaining about her, specifically saying that she wishes Kit were a boy. To Kit’s dismay, Rachel agrees that having a boy “would have been different.” Kit runs up the stairs in tears.

*Notably, Kit doesn’t spare a thought for how privileged she has been to have never had to work before, nor does she think of the people whom her grandfather enslaved to labor for him. Instead, Kit only expresses self-centered frustration at having to work now. But, as Kit tells Mercy, Kit needs to stay with the Wood family—she fears that she will have to marry an old man if she returns to Barbados. This old man tried to take advantage of Kit’s financial insecurity to pressure her into marriage, knowing that as a young woman, Kit doesn’t have the option of working to support herself. Because she doesn’t have economic freedom, she has very little control over the direction she wants her life to take; living with the Woods is seemingly her only option aside from marrying a man she finds repulsive. According to Mercy, helping the family is how Kit will eventually belong with the family, which suggests that mutual support is important in developing relationships.*



*Because Kit has never had to work before, she doesn’t have any practical skills, which means that she isn’t useful to the Wood family. Additionally, the book has indicated that she’s prejudiced against people who labor and thinks she is too important to work, so people like the Woods have far more skills to offer than she does. In fact, Kit only makes things worse: she ruins the only food they have for dinner by letting her impatience get the best of her. This fiasco shows that Kit has a lot of learning and growing to do before she will belong with the Woods, all of whom do their part in helping the family sustain itself.*



*Judith isn’t happy that Kit is staying with them, specifically because Kit is useless at chores and isn’t helping the family thrive. Because the Woods must rely on one another to survive, Kit is more of a burden than anything else—she’s another mouth to feed, but she doesn’t bring any value to the family without doing her part in sharing the family labor. In fact, both Judith and Rachel wish that Kit were a boy. At this time, boys were often considered more useful than girls. This is because boys could help their fathers with agricultural work and other forms of labor, whereas society expected women to do domestic chores. Kit is unable to even do the latter, so her presence isn’t helpful to the Woods.*



## CHAPTER 5

It's Sabbath morning, and Kit has already managed to upset Matthew twice. First, she declined to go to Meeting with them; she and her grandfather only ever went to Christmas Mass. Now that Matthew is forcing Kit to attend Meeting, he's upset that she has only extravagant silk dresses to wear. Rachel manages to calm him, reminding him that everyone will know that Kit hasn't had time to get simpler clothes. Kit notices that Judith is also furious, but out of envy, not piety.

As the family walks into town, Kit is dismayed at its bareness. They enter the Meeting House, where women sit on one side and men sit on the other. As Rachel leads the girls to their bench, Kit is aware of the disapproving silence that follows her and her luxurious outfit.

Kit finds the Puritan service boring; she spends her time looking around at the other churchgoers. While most of them are plainly dressed, there are a few elegantly dressed people as well. Kit also notices Black people whom she assumes are enslaved.

After about two hours, the service—which Kit sees as a test of endurance—finally ends. Once outside the Meeting House, Reverend Bulkeley and two of the deacons greet her, all of them mentioning that she must be grateful for her relatives' help. Kit realizes that they must all think Matthew is helping her out of charity—no wonder they are shocked at her dress.

Then, Kit sees Goodwife Cruff whispering to other hostile-looking women, all of whom glare at her. Kit takes a moment to wave at Prudence, who blushes with joy.

*Kit is still struggling to adapt to Puritan culture. She doesn't want to go to Meeting, their religious service, because she grew up in a different religion (the Church of England). But Matthew doesn't respect her different religious beliefs, and he forces her to come with the family to Meeting. This begins to suggest that the Puritans are generally intolerant of other religions. Although the Puritans migrated to the American colonies to have religious freedom (the Church of England was hostile toward them), most do not extend religious freedom to anyone else.*



*Kit continues to judge Wethersfield against her home country of Barbados. Because Wethersfield is less developed than where Kit is from, she thinks less of it. Meanwhile, many of the Puritans at the Meeting disapprove of Kit because she is dressed more elegantly than most of them. Like Matthew, they presumably think that Kit's dress represents vanity.*



*Kit dismisses the service as boring, without really listening to what is being said. While looking around the church, she realizes that Puritans are varied in their appearance—they don't all dress as plainly as the Woods. The implication is that Puritans don't all behave the same. But while the Wood family does not enslave people, it appears that other Puritan families do. Given that there were very few freed Black people in New England in the 1600s, it is likely that the Black people Kit sees in the church are indeed enslaved.*



*Kit is not what the Reverend or the deacons expect of someone in need of charity. They seem to have preconceived ideas of what someone looks like when they are in need, and Kit is dressed far more extravagantly than they expected.*



*Goodwife Cruff is still prejudiced against Kit. Given that she has already encouraged other women to gossip about Kit, it seems that she was right when she told Kit that the people of Wethersfield do not like strangers.*



John Holbrook at last walks over to greet Kit. He is very serious with her, and he comments that he found the sermon “uplifting” and “remarkable.” Kit, who found the sermon dull, is lost for words. Judith, meanwhile, gazes sweetly at John and agrees that the sermon was inspiring.

*John’s intense interest in the sermon shows that he is a serious and pious man. Judith seems to take an interest in John—she looks at him flirtatiously as she joins in conversation. Judith’s interest in the sermon may be feigned (she may simply think that John is attractive and want to impress him). Or, she may indeed be as interested in the sermon as John is, which would indicate that they share similar interests.*



When the Reverend Bulkeley joins John and the family, Rachel tells the Reverend that he must bring John to their house when he has dinner with them later this week. The Reverend agrees before leading John away. Rachel then introduces Kit to Mrs. Ashby and her son, William. William is speechless—he is clearly quite captivated by Kit.

*William is immediately enchanted by Kit, which suggests that he is attracted to her appearance. He hasn’t spoken to her at all, so whatever connection he feels can’t be because of her personality.*



As they turn to leave, Judith asks Kit whether she has “set [her] cap” for John Holbrook, whom she finds handsome. Embarrassed, Kit denies Judith’s assertion. After a moment, Judith notes that William seemed impressed by her. She cruelly adds that he probably just liked her dress, as Kit isn’t especially pretty.

*Judith’s interest in John is indeed because she finds him handsome. She asks Kit whether Kit has “set [her] cap” (is trying to attract) John, which suggests that Judith plans to woo John if Kit hasn’t already decided to do so herself. Meanwhile, her comment that William probably only likes Kit because of her dress, is spiteful—either Judith is still jealous of Kit’s dresses, or Judith is interested in William. In this case, William Ashby may be the same William that Judith mentioned previously, when she said that she hoped William would see her wearing Kit’s beautiful dress. Either way, it is clear that William is solely attracted to Kit’s looks—he hasn’t had a chance to get to know her yet.*



Kit changes the subject, asking if anyone lives in the small shacks that line the roadway to the Meeting House. Judith tells her no, those buildings are used by the families who live too far from the Meeting House to go home in between services. Realizing with horror that there’s a second service that afternoon, Kit asks herself why she ever came to Connecticut.

*Kit doesn’t feel at home in Connecticut because her idea of home is feeling carefree and unrestricted, like she did in Barbados. In comparison, her life with the Puritans is rigid and confined by strict rules.*



## CHAPTER 6

Setting down his napkin, Reverend Bulkeley compliments Rachel on the meal. Kit, who’s sitting nearby, bitterly thinks about how much work went into cleaning the house and making the dinner to please the Reverend.

*Kit is still bitter about having to work for others. She doesn’t like to sacrifice her time or effort for other people, which only increases her sense of isolation.*



The rest of the Wood family has been quiet throughout dinner. Only Judith has been animated, smiling prettily every time the Reverend looks at her. But the Reverend has spoken mostly to Kit; he knew her grandfather from his trips to Barbados. Now, he asks whether her grandfather was loyal to King James. Kit confirms that he was, adding that she shares her grandfather's views.

When the Reverend implies that Matthew will try to persuade her to drop her loyalist views, Matthew becomes furious. He insists that he isn't a traitor—he merely refuses to recognize Governor Andros, a new governor who was appointed by King James. He is certain that this governor will try to undo the “free government” that the people of Connecticut have “labored and sacrificed” for. The Reverend warns Matthew that such ideas can lead to bloodshed.

After a tense moment, Mercy asks the Reverend if he'll read aloud to them. The tension breaks. The Reverend suggests that his pupil, John, read instead. John is thrilled at this distinction. Observing John's total admiration for the Reverend, Kit unhappily reflects on how John has changed since she first met him. He seems like “a shadow” now.

Reverend Bulkeley instructs John to read a passage about remaining loyal to kings. Kit is surprised to find that she enjoys listening to John read; even if she isn't following the words, his voice is nice. During the prayer afterwards, she catches Judith intently observing John's face.

During the prayer, the Reverend asks that God “bless [their] sister in her weakness and affliction.” Kit realizes with a jolt that he means Mercy. Angry and shocked, Kit muses that the Reverend must not be paying attention to how accomplished Mercy is. Not only does Mercy do at least as much work as the rest of the family, but she is also the glue that holds the family together.

*Although the reader doesn't know for sure why the Wood family has been quiet for most of dinner, it may be because the Reverend is loyal to King James, whereas Matthew isn't (he has already scorned Kit for her grandfather's royalist views).*



*The real-life King James appointed Governor Andros (also a real person) to govern several New England colonies. Andros's appointment overrode the colonists' charters, the legal documents that granted them certain rights and liberties. The Connecticut charter granted the colonists' the right to govern themselves. Matthew fears that Governor Andros is going to dismantle the government that the Connecticut colonists have set up. To Matthew, the colonists' government is a “free” one, yet this is only true for white men—women can't participate in the government, and Black people in the colonies are enslaved and denied their rights. So, Matthew's fury could be read as hypocritical—he is upset that Andros may limit his rights, yet he (Matthew) and the other white men in town deny other people those same rights.*



*John is rather subservient to the Reverend, which Kit doesn't respect. Kit is headstrong and stubborn, which makes her temperament very different than John's. So, Kit and John no longer seem all that compatible as friends.*



*By picking a Bible passage about obeying kings, Reverend Bulkeley is implying that Matthew is wrong for wanting greater independence from the King of England. Meanwhile, Kit notices Judith looking at John's face, which suggests that Judith is more interested in John's handsome looks than what he's saying.*



*Because Mercy can't use one of her legs, the Reverend assumes that she's weaker than the rest of them. But the Reverend is wrong in his prejudice: Mercy seems to be stronger than the rest of the family. Not only does she work at least as hard as everyone else, but she is emotionally intelligent and resilient enough to keep the family together—she isn't defined by her disability.*



After the Reverend and John leave, Matthew rages that he will never again invite the Reverend over for dinner. As the women begin to clear the table, Matthew adds that, earlier that day, William Ashby asked him if he could call on Kit. As Kit blushes, Rachel tells Matthew that William has “good standing” in the town. Matthew sharply counters that William is also a Royalist before he tells Rachel that it’s time for bed.

After the adults to upstairs for the night, Kit eagerly asks Mercy and Judith what they know about William. He has a good plot of land and has plans to build a house as soon as he “makes up his mind.” Judith bitterly adds that “he was just about to make it up [...] when [Kit] came along.”

Suddenly, Kit remembers that Judith had mentioned a William on the morning of Kit’s arrival. Kit hurriedly tells Judith that she’ll tell Matthew that she isn’t interested in William; then maybe he’ll redirect his attentions to Judith. But Judith orders her to not say a word—she’s already decided that she’ll marry John.

## CHAPTER 7

Kit sits in awkward silence with William. No matter how many subjects she tries to bring up, William doesn’t seem interested in carrying the conversation. At last, Rachel stops by the company room (where Kit and William are) to invite them to pop corn in the kitchen with the rest of the family and John Holbrook, who has stopped by.

Over popcorn, the rest of the family asks William about his plans for his house, and Kit is shocked to hear him talk so much. At one point, William notes that the Assembly has declared that “there should be no unclaimed land left” in their county. Matthew thinks this is a wise move; if they wait, then the new governor will just hand the land over to his favorites.

*Matthew lets his political prejudices get the better of him when he dismisses Rachel’s comment that William is well-respected in Wethersfield. Although William has “good standing” and seems to be kind and respectable, Matthew cares less about William’s character than his political views.*



*William seems to be wealthier than the Woods—as a single man, he owns land and even plans to build a house when he knows whom he wants to marry. Given Judith’s earlier hopes of impressing a certain William, her comment here likely that she had hoped that he would marry her instead of Kit.*



*Kit’s offer to refuse William’s visit shows her loyalty to her friends and family—she prioritizes her cousin’s marital dreams over her own prospects. But Judith tells Kit that she wants to marry John. So far, the book has characterized Judith as proud and envious, so it is likely that Judith would never ask her cousin for help. She would sooner switch her sights to a different man—even though this man may not be as good a match for her as William would be.*



*Kit and William’s awkward silence during their first meeting does not bode well for their relationship—they can’t find anything to talk about. William’s disinterest in the conversation suggests that he doesn’t care to learn how Kit thinks or what she believes.*



*Kit discovers that there are topics that William will talk extensively: his house and politics. The colonists’ defensiveness over their land shows how deeply the Puritans value their rights. Many of them are upset that Governor Andros will distribute land unfairly, which is why the colonists are trying to divide up any “unclaimed land” before Governor Andros arrives to divide it up for them.*





William respectfully disagrees with Matthew, arguing that the colony might lose all their rights if they anger the king. Kit is impressed—William isn't "dim-witted," like she had assumed. He even has the courage to stand up to Matthew. Matthew is less impressed, and he argues that if they "[s]urrender [their] charter," they will lose all the rights, laws, and land that they have claimed for themselves.

*Kit is headstrong and feisty, and the book suggests that it is natural that she is attracted to William when he behaves in a similar way. Matthew doesn't appreciate William's different views, though, and stresses that losing the Connecticut charter will mean that the colonists will lose all their rights. Of course, the Puritans do not share these rights and land with everyone. Thus far, the book has shown that Puritans ban women from participating in government, and they still participate in slavery, which denies Black people of their fundamental human rights. Additionally, the land that Matthew is adamant about keeping is land that the Puritans took from the indigenous people who lived there first.*



When John interjects that the Reverend Bulkeley believes that the people of Connecticut misinterpret the charter, Matthew becomes furious. He rants that John and William are too young and "soft" to understand the sacrifice that the first English arrivals to Connecticut made. These men, Matthew declares, toiled in order to have "the rights of free men." On that note, he storms upstairs.

*The Reverend Bulkeley may argue that the Connecticut colonists have misinterpreted the charter because it was an especially lenient document in comparison to other colonies' charters. Matthew disagrees, telling the younger men that they don't understand the challenges that the first colonists faced in order to obtain "the rights of free men." Notably, these rights exclude both enslaved people and women, which suggests that Matthew and the other Puritan men want these rights for themselves only.*



Shortly after this, John and William leave. Mostly relieved, Kit announces to the remaining women that tonight was certainly the last time William will ever come by—Matthew was so dreadful to him. But Rachel and Judith disagree. They point out that William mentioned that he's already in the process of building his house, which means that he has decided that he is going to marry Kit.

*William has already decided to marry Kit, even though they haven't had a legitimate conversation yet—her appearance is all her really knows about her. Moreover, William's decision to marry Kit is also one-sided. He hasn't asked Kit about her feelings and simply assumes she will accept. This is probably because he knows that the women of this time (the 17th century) have limited options for their lives, and that in order to have financial security, they must marry.*



Panicked, Kit tells the other women that she and William can't even have a considerable conversation. Rachel tries to console her by reminding her that she and William are just getting to know each other and will have plenty to discuss soon.

*Kit is panicked because she worries that she and William aren't a good match, given that they don't seem to have anything in common. The fact that conversation is so important to Kit shows that she values getting to know her partner's thoughts and character. William, meanwhile, doesn't seem to share her values—he's decided to marry Kit based solely on her outer beauty.*



Rachel and Kit's cousins are right: William begins to visit Kit every Saturday. For the most part, Kit feels flattered that "[t]he most eligible bachelor in Wethersfield" is interested in her. But at other moments, William's confidence that she is going to marry him frustrates her—he has never so much as asked her about her feelings.

Kit finds herself thinking about William almost constantly, but she admits that she doesn't have much else to think about—all she does otherwise is work. In fact, Kit sees William as the only person in New England who doesn't expect her to "do the work of slaves," which she sees as beneath her.

*Kit is frustrated that William doesn't ever consider her feelings. His one-sided approach to their courtship again implies that he assumes that Kit is going to accept. He is an eligible bachelor, and he knows that Kit will have to get married to have a financially stable future, so he is sure that she will accept his offer because he is well-off.*



*Kit's constant thinking of William shows how she adheres to sexist gender roles. Thoughts of marriage dominate her mind because she has little else to think about; as a 17th-century woman, Kit isn't allowed to work or pursue interests outside the home, and her only option for her future is marriage. Kit considers marrying William because the doing so means she can live a comfortable life and won't have to work. Meanwhile, Kit again shows her racism when she regards her chores as "the work of slaves." While she hates working and thinks she is superior to it, she accepts that Black people are forced into labor. This indicates that she believes Black people are inferior to white people and don't deserve equal treatment or respect.*



## CHAPTER 8

One June morning, Matthew tells Judith and Kit to weed one of the fields. Both girls are thrilled to spend the day outside. Judith, who has been kinder to Kit since Rachel and Mercy made Kit a plain dress to work in, leads Kit to the **Great Meadows**, a grassy stretch of land that each landowner uses for crops.

The **Great Meadows** take Kit's breath away. She finds them beautiful and calming, as the Meadows have a "sense of freedom and space and light that sp[ea]k to her of home." Looking back from the future, she had no idea how frequently she would visit the Meadows, nor did she know that they would not always be as peaceful as she first found them.

*Judith and Kit's excitement to go outside illustrates how both girls are confined to the indoors. In 17th-century New England, women usually spent their days completing household chores while the men worked outdoors. Given Judith and Kit's excitement to work in the fields, it's clear that both women find the indoor work unfulfilling.*



*For the first time since arriving in Connecticut, Kit feels at home. The Great Meadows inspire the same sense of freedom and comfort that Kit felt in Barbados, her home country. In this way, the Great Meadows demonstrate that home is a set of feelings, not just a specific or unchanging place. But the book foreshadows that Kit will not always feel at home the Meadows—something will happen that will challenge her perception of them. Where she feels at home, then, is destined to change over time.*



Impatient with Kit's awe at the **Great Meadows**, Judith urges her onward. Kit catches sight of a little house and asks who lives there—don't the Meadows flood in the spring? Judith tells her that a widow named Hannah Tupper lives there with her **cats**. She has lived there all alone for years and never comes to Meeting; some people think she's a witch.

Kit catches sight of a figure stooped over a kettle in front of the house and immediately feels chilled. Even though she knows that Hannah is likely just making soap, it's easy to assume that she's brewing something mysterious.

As Judith and Kit begin weeding the onions, Kit feels sorry for herself—in Barbados, she thinks, “a high-class slave [...] would rebel” at such dirty manual labor. Longingly, she takes comfort knowing that William probably has his own servants, and that once she marries him, she'll never have to work.

When Kit and Judith return home that afternoon, Mercy surprises them by announcing that the Reverend wants Kit to help Mercy to teach the dame school: Mercy teaches the town's young children to read and write in the Woods' kitchen. By teaching, Kit would be earning a small wage, paid for by the children's families.

Kit is pleased—she hopes that teaching will mean that she won't have to do manual labor. Later, she confides to Mercy another reason why she looks forward to teaching: now that Kit will be earning wages, maybe the Wood family won't regret that she's not a boy.

*The Wethersfield Puritans assume Hannah is a witch because she is unlike them: she isn't Puritan, she lives alone, and she has cats, animals that many Puritans associated with the devil. The Puritans of Wethersfield don't know Hannah personally—they judge her from a distance and, because she behaves differently than they do, they are suspicious of her.*



*After hearing that many of the townspeople think Hannah is a witch, Kit finds it tempting to believe the accusation. Even though Kit herself has been a target of the Puritans' prejudice, it's easy for her to fall into the same judgmental mindset.*



*Again, Kit demonstrates her racism: she believes that there is a hierarchy to people based on their skin colors and social positions. In this case, she pities herself because she thinks that she is doing manual labor that some enslaved people would refuse to do, and she sees herself as superior to those people. Meanwhile, she looks forward to marrying William not because she has a genuine connection with him, but because she doesn't want to work.*



*Teaching was one of the few jobs that women in 17th-century New England could do. Whether completing domestic chores or teaching, women were expected to take care of children in some capacity.*



*Kit again demonstrates her prejudice against manual labor, which she still thinks is beneath her. Kit hopes to prove her worth to the Woods by teaching instead, as she will be making money for the family in this role. Although a boy would have brought in more resources for the family—boys in 17th-century New England had many more opportunities for employment—Kit will at least have something to offer the Woods.*



Mercy realizes that Kit must have overheard Judith's bitter wishing that Kit had been a boy. She quickly tells her that no one meant any malice; rather, Matthew has always needed a boy to help with the work. In fact, Rachel had given birth to two boys, but both died very young. Feeling sorry for bringing it up, Kit lets go of her anger. But she can't stop thinking of Rachel, and how her grandfather had said she was once such a joyful woman.

*As Mercy points out, it is a given that boys are more useful than girls in 17th-century New England, because society permits boys to help with agricultural work. This era's sexism didn't just limit women's opportunities—it also taught them that they were less valuable than men. But nevertheless, when Mercy explains how badly Matthew and Rachel have wanted a boy, and how the couple lost two children, Kit is able to empathize with them.*



## CHAPTER 9

At the dame school, Kit is working with several students. As they recite simple but tedious religious rhymes, Kit thinks of how her grandfather must have taught her how to read by making up his own, more interesting lessons. Inspired, she grabs a quill and piece of birch bark and writes a rhyme about Timothy Cook, one of her students.

*Because Kit has experience learning outside the Puritan method of teaching, she has some new ideas for how to keep the children engaged and learning. She spontaneously decides to change the lesson, which shows her creative and impulsive nature.*



Timothy reads the rhyme aloud, delighted. Soon, all the children eagerly await their turn for Kit to write them a rhyme about them. As the children watch her every move, Kit thinks about how much she has enjoyed teaching. Although the children started the school quite solemn and shy, they quickly warmed up to Kit.

*Kit's idea has improved the lesson—the children are immediately more engaged in her class. The students have also grown more comfortable with Kit over time. The implication is that they were nervous around her because they didn't know her, but when they learn more about her, they discovered that there was nothing to be afraid of. Their fears were rooted in the unknown.*



Eventually, Mercy calls out that it is time for the children to repeat the Catechism, and then Kit will tell them a story. Kit's storytelling had originally been a point of contention between Kit and Mercy. Mercy, who is always patient with the children, had worried that it wasn't right to have to bribe the children to be good. Kit, however, didn't see anything wrong with giving the children a treat for good behavior. At any rate, the children love the stories so much that story-time has become an integral part of the lesson.

*Following rules is very important to Mercy. She doesn't like to risk doing anything potentially impious, like encouraging children to be good because they get a treat, instead of encouraging them to be good for religious reasons. But now that story-time has been a part of the lesson for a while without disaster, Mercy isn't resistant to it anymore—she needed to see how Kit's different idea played out in the classroom to realize that her judgments about it were incorrect.*



Limited to the Bible, Kit chooses to read aloud the parable of the Good Samaritan. But as soon as she starts, she decides that it could be fun for the children to act out the tale, instead of just listening to it. The children are excited to play pretend—Mercy, on the other hand, is anxious.

*Kit wants to alter the lesson plan again, which shows her eagerness to try new things. Mercy, however, is again hesitant to adopt new methods of teaching, likely because she worries that they may be improper. Mercy fears that Kit's new ideas may have a negative effect on the children simply because the ideas are unfamiliar to her, which shows Mercy's prejudice against difference.*



Kit gives several children character roles and then instructs them to begin. Unfortunately, Kit distributes the character roles too carelessly; she makes the rowdiest students the thieves that attack the traveler, who is played by a disliked student. As soon as the play-acting begins, the “thieves” attack the “traveler” a little too aggressively. Kit and Mercy try to stop the children, but they are too slow.

Suddenly, John Woodbridge and Mr. Eleazer Kimberley, the school master, interrupt the class. Mr. Kimberley breaks up the fight and then demands to know what is going on—he had been passing by to inspect the classroom when he noticed the commotion. Kit announces that the ruckus is her fault—she decided to have the children act out a story from the Bible.

Mr. Kimberley is horrified that Kit would have the children put on a play using the Bible. He informs Mercy and Kit that the school will be cancelled until further notice. Insisting that she is the only one at fault, Kit urges Mr. Kimberley to not punish Mercy. But Mr. Kimberley is unmoved; he will consider whether Mercy is responsible enough to keep teaching.

After the men leave, Kit catches sight of Mercy crying. Panicked, Kit runs out of the house and, without a destination in mind, ends up in the **Great Meadow**. She collapses on the grass and sobs. Eventually, Kit stops crying and rolls on her back. Taking in the beauty of the Meadows, she feels comforted.

Suddenly, Kit realizes that she isn't alone. Sitting up, Kit sees a very old woman only a few feet away—it's Hannah Tupper, the woman that Judith says is a witch. Kit is immediately frightened; is the scar on Hannah's face “the devil's mark?”

Hannah calmly tells Kit that she also frequently comes to the **Meadows**—she feels a connection to them, too. Kit's fear fades away as she realizes that this old woman seemed to belong to the “quiet lonely place” and that her voice seemed to be “the voice of the Meadow itself.”

*Kit's impulsiveness comes across clearly in this passage—she perhaps should have chosen the students with more care.*



*Kit immediately takes responsibility for the chaos in the classroom, which speaks to her honesty. By saying that it is entirely her fault, Kit is trying to protect Mercy from getting in trouble, which shows that Kit is protective of her friends.*



*Mr. Kimberley assumes that play-acting is wicked because the Puritans ban plays. Instead of trying to understand why Kit believes that play-acting could be useful, he judges her according to his religious rules and assumes that she is an incapable teacher. Meanwhile, Kit continues to stand up for Mercy, which shows her dedication to helping her friends.*



*Kit is upset that she got Mercy in trouble, which shows that she doesn't like letting down her friends. Although she runs without a destination in mind, it appears that she has subconsciously decided to run to a place where she feels comforted. In the Great Meadows, Kit feels consoled and supported, the feelings that she associates with being at home.*



*Kit is wary of Hannah because she allows the Puritans' gossip to define what she thinks. Kit's assumes that Hannah's scar must have a sinister meaning, which shows how easy it is to misinterpret innocent things when one views them with prejudice.*



*Hannah also feels at home in the Meadows—perhaps she also feels comforted and supported in this place. Kit's feeling that Hannah belongs to the Meadows suggests that Kit feels comforted by Hannah's presence. The implication is that Hannah is making Kit feel at-ease and accepted—feelings that she craves and that she associates with being at home. Kit's fears fade because she realizes that her assumptions were wrong about Hannah—the old woman isn't scary after all.*



Hannah invites Kit back to her house for something to eat. Curious, Kit follows her. Inside, Kit eats some of the blueberry cake that Hannah offers her. Although Hannah's house is small and plain, Kit finds it incredibly peaceful. Hannah tells Kit that her husband, Thomas, built it long ago, after they left Massachusetts. No one in town had welcomed them once they saw "the brand on [their] foreheads," so they lived far away from everyone else.

Kit suddenly spots a coral ornament on one of Hannah's shelves. Smiling, Hannah says she received it from "a seafaring friend." Kit wonders aloud if it came from her home, Barbados. Sensing that Kit is homesick, Hannah asks her about her home. In a rush, Kit tells Hannah all about Barbados and her grandfather, whom she misses dearly. As Hannah listens intently, Kit realizes that Hannah is the first person in Wethersfield who's asked her about her grandfather.

At last, Kit admits that she hates her life in Connecticut—she feels like a burden to everyone around her. She tells Hannah about the disaster in school that morning and asks what she should do now. Gazing at Kit kindly, Hannah tells her to follow her.

Hannah shows Kit a beautiful red flower. When Hannah's seafaring friend brought it to her from Africa, Hannah was certain that it wouldn't grow. But the plant persisted, and now it is blooming. Realizing that Hannah has given her an answer, Kit tells Hannah that it's time for her to go.

As Kit leaves, she reflects that Hannah isn't a witch, but that she did work "a magic charm"—Hannah managed to calm Kit and tell her what to do. With newfound confidence, Kit marches up to Mr. Kimberley's house and knocks his door.

*Even though Hannah's house likely doesn't resemble Kit's home in Barbados—Hannah's house is simple and plain, whereas Kit grew up on an estate—Kit feels at peace in here, an emotion that she associates with home. This suggests that home isn't just one specific place—it's a set of feelings, such as (for Kit) feeling at peace. While speaking with Hannah, Kit realizes that the assumptions about Hannah (like her living alone because she's a witch) are very wrong—she is isolated because the Puritans of Wethersfield discriminated against her and her husband for their religion (though it's not yet clear why). Kit also learns that the scar on Hannah's forehead is another sign of the discrimination that Hannah has faced—her assumption that it is a "devil's mark" was totally wrong.*



*Kit is homesick for Barbados and her grandfather. Hannah invites Kit to tell her about her grandfather, and her attentiveness makes Kit feel better. Kit has been missing the love and support that her grandfather used to give her, so she feels touched when Hannah treats her with similar care and kindness.*



*Kit hates Connecticut because it is devoid of the things that made her feel at home in Barbados. She can't play and feel carefree in Connecticut, like how she did in Barbados. Additionally, she feels like a burden in Connecticut, whereas she felt loved and cared for in Barbados. But it appears that Hannah is beginning to give Kit the loving attention that she has been missing, as Hannah kindly listens to her and gives her advice.*



*Hannah uses a transplanted flower as a metaphor for Kit: just like the flower, Kit is foreign to Connecticut, where she now must live. Although Kit is struggling to adapt and thrive in Connecticut, Hannah suggests that she needs to keep trying. With persistence, Hannah suggests, Kit will be able to thrive, just like the plant.*



*Now that Kit has gotten to know Hannah, she is aware that the Puritans' gossip about her being a witch is all wrong. Hannah is actually a kind and wise old woman who makes Kit feel understood. The only "magic" at work is Hannah's gentleness and understanding.*



## CHAPTER 10

Kit tells Mercy and Rachel that she spoke to Mr. Kimberley, and that he changed his mind—Kit will have another chance at teaching. Mercy is impressed, and Kit says that she got her courage from the old woman who lives in the **Meadows**. She adds that Hannah Tupper isn't a witch at all, but a wonderfully kind woman.

Mercy and Rachel look distressed. Rachel urges Kit to keep her conversation with Hannah Tupper secret. Hannah is a Quaker, one of a religious group whose beliefs differ from the Puritans. Rachel adds that "Quakers cause trouble wherever they go." In some places, like Boston, Puritans hang Quakers. Hannah Tupper and her husband, Thomas, however, were branded and banned from Massachusetts. Rachel believes that they were grateful to be allowed to live in Wethersfield.

Rachel tries to make Kit promise to never see Hannah again, but Kit refuses. She knows that Hannah is a kind woman, and not at all the dangerous threat that Rachel believes her to be. Plus, she quietly resolves to never give up going to the **Meadows**, "a place of freedom and clear sunlight and peace."

Kit wonders whether to tell William about Hannah, but she is sure that he would only be shocked—once again—at her behavior. She considers telling John, who frequently visits them now, but they never have any time alone. John is always with the whole family, unless Judith invites him to go on private walks. The family takes this to mean that John is courting Judith, who is clearly in love with him. Kit finds it a strange match. Judith is very spirited, whereas John seems to have no mind of his own—he just adopts Reverend Bulkeley's opinions.

Two weeks later, after weeding with Judith, Kit goes to see Hannah Tupper again. She invites Judith to come along, but Judith refuses to join, scared of the house and of Matthew's reaction.

*Kit's discussion with Mr. Kimberley was successful—she and Mercy will be able to continue teaching. Kit gives Hannah credit for encouraging her to be persistent, which turns out to have been the right advice. Kit is eager to share the knowledge that the Puritans' prejudices are wrong—Hannah isn't a witch at all.*



*Mercy and Rachel hold on to their prejudices against Quakers, with Rachel saying that all Quakers "cause trouble." But Kit knows that Hannah isn't a troublemaker at all—she's a very kind and caring woman. The Puritans' terrible treatment of Quakers shows another aspect of Puritan hypocrisy. While they sought religious freedom for themselves when they migrated to the American colonies, they are very intolerant of other religions. As Rachel informs Kit, the Puritans in Massachusetts treated Hannah and her husband cruelly just because they had different religious beliefs.*



*Kit's refusing to obey Rachel shows that she follows her intuition over obeying arbitrary rules. She doesn't hesitate to stand up to authority when she knows that what she is being asked to do is wrong. She knows that Rachel's prejudices are unfair, so Kit will continue to treat Hannah with kindness and humanity. Additionally, Kit doesn't want to give up the Meadows, which feel like home to her—they are the only place in Connecticut where she feels "freedom and clear sunlight and peace," all things that she associates with Barbados.*



*William and Kit value different things: while Kit wants to maintain her friendship with a lonely woman, William cares too much about maintaining his (and Kit's) reputation among the other Puritans. This difference in values makes Kit feel uneasy about being truthful with William, which doesn't bode well for their relationship. But Kit and William aren't the only unlikely couple: Kit finds Judith and John to be a strange match. Judith is spirited and opinionated, whereas John is solemn and obedient.*



*Unlike Kit, Judith doesn't want to risk getting in trouble, even if following the rules (avoiding Hannah because of prejudices against her) is unkind.*



Kit arrives at Hannah's house to find her spinning flax. Several families pay Hannah to spin their flax for them, and Hannah uses the money to pay the taxes on her land and the fines for not going to Meeting. Kit is shocked that Hannah has to pay these extra fines—wouldn't it be better to just go to Meeting? But Hannah says no; not only would the Puritans bar her entry, but Quakers also have their own meetings. Curious, Kit asks how someone becomes a Quaker.

*A fine for not going to Meeting (the Puritan religious service) is designed to penalize people like Hannah just for being non-Puritans, which shows another way that the Puritans exercise their intolerance of other religions. This discriminatory fine places an extra financial burden on Hannah that other Puritan townspeople don't face. This outrages Kit, and she wonders whether Hannah should just assimilate to the Puritans' religion in order to avoid the fine. But Hannah knows that the Puritans wouldn't welcome her, and she also wants to stay true to her beliefs.*



At that moment, a figure appears in the doorway: it's Nat Eaton. He humorously says that he's unsurprised Kit and Hannah have become friends. Hannah introduces him to Kit as her "seafaring friend," but Nat informs her that he and Kit already know each other.

*Nat is likely unsurprised that Kit and Hannah have become friends because both of them are outsiders in the Puritan town. In fact, it's likely that this shared understanding helps Kit feel so at home with Hannah—they understand each other's struggles.*



Hannah eagerly tells Nat that she had told Thomas she was sure that he would come soon. Kit is surprised—Thomas is dead. She notes a sudden "vagueness" in Hannah's eyes. Glancing at Nat to see if he saw it too, Kit watches him wordlessly take Hannah's hand before changing the subject. The "vagueness" disappears.

*Hannah's "vagueness" suggests that her sense of reality is not solid—as in this case, she confuses the past with the present. This shocks Kit, perhaps because she hasn't seen this "vagueness" before. Nat is clearly less concerned, which implies that he has seen this happen before, but it doesn't change how he treats Hannah.*



Leaning back, Nat asks how Kit and Hannah met. Hannah chuckles and tells him that she met Kit just how she met Nat—crying in the **Meadows**. When Nat was eight years old, he was upset that he would have to stay a winter in Saybrook instead of living on the *Dolphin*. Hannah found him and invited him back to eat blueberry cake, and she gave him a **kitten**.

*The Meadows appear to have attracted Nat as well as Kit—he also sought comfort from the Meadows, and he found this comfort with Hannah. When Hannah first met Nat, she gave him a kitten to cheer him up and making him feel cared for. So, while the Puritan townspeople see Hannah's cats as a sign that she's a witch, the animals are actually a source of comfort for people who know her. The Puritans' incorrect conclusions show how it is easy to misinterpret people or situations when one views them with prejudice.*



Kit realizes that it's time for her to go home, and Nat leaves with her. After teasing her that she must have had a rough beginning in Wethersfield if she ran crying to the **Meadows**, he confides that he is genuinely glad that she met Hannah. He asks Kit to "[k]eep an eye on her."

*Nat's request that Kit watch over Hannah indicates that he's dedicated to taking care of his friends. Nat and Kit have this in common—they're both loyal to those they care about.*





## CHAPTER 11

It's the middle of summer at the dame school, and Kit is feeling dispirited. She wishes she was as patient as Mercy, who is unfailingly kind to the children. Kit remembers Mercy once telling her that she doesn't think about all the things she can't do—she focuses on the things she can accomplish.

Kit suddenly spots a figure outside. She hurries to the door and sees Prudence hiding behind a tree. Kit coaxes her out of her hiding place and asks why she doesn't come to school. Prudence wants to learn, but Goodwife Cruff says she is too stupid to learn. Plus, Goodwife Cruff has forbade Prudence from speaking to Kit.

On an impulse, Kit tells Prudence to meet her at a tree by Blackbird Pond that afternoon. Prudence immediately recognizes Blackbird Pond as being where “the witch” lives, but Kit tells her not to be afraid. Her eyes wide, Prudence says she will try to meet Kit there. She then turns and runs away.

Kit and Prudence begin to meet regularly by Blackbird Pond, where Kit teaches Prudence how to read using an old hornbook of Kit's. On the day of their third lesson, Kit invites Prudence to visit Hannah—they can keep the hornbook with Hannah for future use. At first, Prudence is frightened, but after Kit assures her that she will be safe, Prudence agrees to come along.

When they arrive at Hannah's, Hannah is delighted to have a new visitor. She shows Prudence the **kittens** that her **cat** just gave birth to, and Prudence is immediately charmed. Hannah also gives Prudence blueberry cake, just like she did with Kit and Nat.

*Kit is much more impatient than Mercy, whose resolve and patience impress Kit. Mercy goes on to tell Kit that she may not be able to use one of her legs, but her injury doesn't define her. Although other people—like Kit—may assume that Mercy feels limited all the time, their judgments are wrong.*



*Goodwife Cruff is still suspicious of Kit, whom she sees as an outsider and possibly a witch. Goodwife Cruff lets her discrimination against Kit prevent her child from learning, and her prejudice negatively affects both Kit (whom she ostracizes) and her own daughter (whom she denies the opportunity to learn).*



*Kit feels sympathetic toward Prudence, so she generously offers to do private lessons with her. Prudence's fear of Hannah's house shows that, like the other Puritans of Wethersfield, she fears Hannah, even though she doesn't know her. Prudence only knows that Hannah is different from her—Hannah is Quaker—and so she is quick to think negatively of Hannah.*



*A hornbook is a teaching aid that originated in England as a tool to help children learn to read. Traditionally, a hornbook had a page displaying text (typically the alphabet and a Christian prayer) that was attached to a tablet. When Kit wants to introduce Prudence to Hannah, Prudence is afraid—she hasn't met Hannah yet, so she still thinks the Quaker woman is a witch.*



*To Hannah and the people who know her, cats are a source of comfort, not the symbols of demonic influence that the Puritan townspeople think they are. The prejudiced Puritans misunderstand what the cats represent because they already assume that Hannah is a witch, and they allow their judgments to shape how they interpret facts.*



When Prudence and Kit leave, Prudence asks why people think that Hannah is a witch. Kit says it's because "they never tried to get to know her. People are afraid of things they don't understand." Prudence promises that she will keep visiting Hannah, who must be lonely.

Meanwhile, visits with William continue to bore Kit—all he talks about is his house. But while she finds it dull, Judith takes a keen interest in it, and unsuccessfully tries to engage John in their conversation. The one thing they all enjoy, it seems, is hearing John read aloud. When he reads, the whole family and William relax and listen. Kit only wishes that he would read something other than religious texts.

One night, while John is reading, Kit catches sight of Mercy gazing at John and realizes that Mercy loves him. Kit is shocked at first, but she realizes that it seems "incredibly, utterly right." In awe of Mercy's selflessness, Kit wonders "What must it be to care for someone like that."

## CHAPTER 12

By mid-August, dame school ends, and Kit finds herself doing endless chores. There is so much to harvest and prepare for the winter that she doesn't have time to spare to visit Hannah. Finally, one day after candle making, Rachel lets Kit and the other girls have the afternoon off. As Kit slips to the door, Rachel hands her an apple tart to give to Hannah. Even though she doesn't approve of Kit's visiting Hannah, she doesn't want anyone to go hungry.

When Kit arrives at Hannah's, she's surprised to see Nat chopping wood. Nat teases her, but she decides to "overlook his mockery" and comments on how much he has already chopped. Nat is trying to help Hannah with tasks to last her for a while—he'll be leaving for Barbados soon. When Nat moves on to rethatching Hannah's roof, Kit asks to help.

*Now that Prudence has met Hannah, she knows that Hannah isn't a witch at all. Kit explains that "people are afraid of things they don't understand," like Hannah's religion. Instead of getting to know Hannah, the Puritans explain her differences by assuming that she is a witch. Now that Prudence knows that the Puritans' prejudiced gossip is wrong, she vows to keep visiting Hannah.*



*Kit still doesn't enjoy her time with William—they don't have any of the same interests. Judith, however, does share William's interest in material goods, and the two have conversations about it. Because they enjoy talking about the same topics, Judith seems to be a better match for William than Kit is. Meanwhile, John's piousness mildly frustrates Kit—they don't have much in common either, even if she does enjoy his company.*



*Kit thinks that Mercy and John are "incredibly, utterly right together," likely because they are both kindhearted, hard-working, mild-tempered, and pious. The implication is that their similar temperament and principles are what would make them a better couple than Judith and John.*



*Even though Rachel worries about Kit's reputation—the townspeople may think less of Kit for befriending a Quaker—she still wants to help Hannah. Rachel's kindness serves as an example that not all Puritans are alike.*



*Here, Nat teases Kit just as she teased him for his lack of swimming skills at the beginning of the novel. Their similar senses of humor, as well as their mutual desire to take care of their friends, begin to hint that they're compatible (much like Mercy and John are).*



Kit and Nat work together to rethatch the roof. Afterwards, the two of them sit quietly in the sunshine on the roof, gazing out at the river. Kit notes that even though she thinks she has “been working like a slave,” she feels happy and light, like how she felt in Barbados.

*Kit and Nat’s working together to help Hannah is representative of how they both look after their friends. Although they have not professed romantic feelings for each other, they do work well as a team. Kit also thoroughly enjoys her time with Nat, even feeling as happy as she did in Barbados, implying that she feels at home with Nat. In fact, she even doesn’t mind working—she is motivated to work because she cares about Hannah. At the same time, Kit’s casual statement that she has “been working like a slave” speaks to her racist beliefs. Her casual use of this statement shows that she hasn’t taken the time to consider the horrors that enslaved Black people endure, perpetuated by people like her and her grandfather.*



Nat seriously asks Kit how she has been in Wethersfield. She feels like she doesn’t “fit in,” but at least she doesn’t feel homesick around Hannah. Nat confides that she reminds him of a bird he once saw in Jamaica. It was a beautiful, colorful bird, and Nat wanted to bring it back to Saybrook, but Captain Eaton had told him that “it wasn’t meant to live up here, that the birds here would scold and peck at it.”

*Even though Kit still doesn’t feel at home in Wethersfield—she doesn’t “fit in” with the Puritan townspeople—she does feel at home with Hannah. When Kit is with Hannah, she feels the same emotions—comfort, love, peace, and freedom—that she previously only associated with Barbados. Meanwhile, the bird that Nat mentions represents Kit, as both are lively and dynamic. Captain Eaton told Nat that such a colorful bird didn’t belong in New England because it wouldn’t fit in with the other birds. Nat fears that the same thing will happen to Kit—that the townspeople will single Kit out because she is different.*



Kit is touched and surprised that the “cocky young seaman” had such serious thoughts. Nat then teases that he never expected to see her dirty from working on a roof. The Puritans may not have managed to transform her completely, he merrily adds, but “they’ve done their best to make [her] into a sparrow.”

*Nat happily notes that the Puritans haven’t been able to change Kit from being bold and adventurous, even though they have tried to restrict her with their rules.*



Kit wonders aloud why the Puritans are so serious. Nat thinks it’s because of “all that schooling.” He admits that while he despises the Puritans’ difficult texts, he loves reading books. Kit is thrilled to hear that he likes reading the same kind of books she misses so much, like [The Tempest](#).

*Kit and Nat both enjoy reading the same kind of books. Notably, neither of them is fond of the Puritans’ religious texts. Their shared love of reading shows that they both value the same kind of excitement and adventure that one can get from books. This interest distinguishes Nat from John, who also loves reading but whom Kit can’t see eye to eye with because he doesn’t like non-religious texts.*



Kit then asks Nat another question that's been bothering her: why do New Englanders dislike the King of England? Nat explains that the King needs to respect the New Englanders' rights if they are to respect the King. As he explains, if the King breaks his own laws and goes back on his promises, the New Englanders will have no choice but to overthrow him. Aghast, Kit cries out that such thinking is treasonous. But Nat disagrees. In his eyes, "A man is loyal to the place he loves."

*As Nat explains, the New Englanders are very protective of the rights—like the right to self-govern—that they have enjoyed since the prior King (King Charles) gave the colonists their charters. If the King tries to take back the colonists' rights and liberties that were guaranteed in the colonies' charters, he will break his own laws, given that the charters were issues from the English government. Additionally, the colonists don't feel loyal to the King of England anymore because they're loyal to their new home, New England. The colonists have carved out a new way of life—including a new government—for themselves here.*



Hannah calls out that it's time for supper, which Kit takes as her cue to leave. As she and Nat climb down from the roof, Nat solemnly asks Kit to keep visiting Hannah. Kit quickly promises to do so and then asks whether Hannah is okay—she is worried that Hannah sometimes talks about Thomas as if he is still alive. Nat quickly lays these worries to rest, assuring her that Hannah may be old, but she's healthy enough. Plus, he adds, is it really so wrong that Hannah can still talk to the man she loves?

*Nat and Kit continue to bond over their affection for and care of Hannah. They both want to keep Hannah happy and safe, and they work together to make that happen.*



Nat walks with Kit all the way to the Woods' house, Kit all the while wishing that he would leave so that she won't have to explain his presence to Matthew. When they arrive at the house, she is anxious to see that William is there too—he has been waiting for her to come back.

*Nat wants to spend extra time with Kit, which suggests that he may have romantic feelings for her—after all, they have a lot in common. Kit, however, is anxious of what Matthew will think. After all, Rachel previously warned Kit that Matthew would be upset if he found out that she has been visiting Hannah, whom he dismisses as a "heretic," what the Puritans call people of other religions.*



When Matthew demands to know why Kit was gone for so long, Kit announces that she was at Hannah's house. Nat chimes in, saying that Kit's tardiness is his fault: he had asked her to help him thatch the roof. As he says this, Kit watches William and Nat make eye contact. William's jaw clenches.

*Kit doesn't lie, even though she knows that Matthew will not like the truth: she was spending time with Hannah. Nat loyally defends Kit by adding that he is at fault for making Kit late because he asked her to help him thatch Hannah's roof. This instance shows that loyalty and honesty are also traits that Nat and Kit share. Meanwhile, William looks unhappy at seeing Nat with Kit, which suggests that he sees Nat as a rival for Kit's heart.*



Furious that Kit is helping a Quaker, Matthew forbids Kit from visiting Hannah again. Even when Kit mentions that Hannah lives alone and needs assistance, Matthew cuts her off, declaring that since Hannah is a “heretic,” Kit isn’t obligated to help her.

*Like the rest of the Wethersfield Puritans, Matthew thinks less of Hannah because she’s a Quaker. The Puritans believe that the Bible instructs them to care for people in need (Mercy even reminded Judith about this earlier in the book, when Rachel was bringing food to a widow). But the Puritans also discriminate against non-Puritans based on their religion. This can be read as hypocritical, given that the Puritans also experienced religious discrimination from the Church of England and sought to escape this persecution by migrating to the colonies. But the Puritans seemingly have no intention of sharing the religious freedom they acquired by colonizing New England. They simply wanted to advance their own community’s rights, not ensure equal rights for everyone.*



## CHAPTER 13

A husking bee approaches, and Judith can’t wait. At the husking bee, there will be music and food while everyone husks corn together. She merrily tells Kit that she’ll try to make sure that William gets a red ear of corn. Suspecting the romantic implication of the red ears of corn, Kit blushes deeply.

*The husking bee is the first party that the Puritans have in the book. Although the Puritans otherwise come off as stern and grim, the husking bee shows that there is variation in their lives, and they do sometimes have festive occasions. Husking bees even provide an opportunity for romance: according to tradition, if someone found a red ear of corn during a husking bee, that person got to kiss someone of their choosing.*



Judith and Kit set out together to harvest the last of the corn from the meadow. On the way there, Judith talks about her plans to make a move on John. Judith suspects that John hasn’t brought up marriage yet because he’s a poor student, but she’s certain that he loves her all the same. When Kit begins to express her doubts, Judith cuts her off, reminding her to think about William’s intent to marry soon. William is “like [Judith]. When he’s made up his mind he isn’t going to wait forever.”

*Judith’s focus on John’s finances highlights one of their important differences: Judith cares a lot more about wealth and material goods than John does. While Judith and John don’t have much in common, she is similar to William. She even says as much to Kit when reminding Kit that William will likely propose soon—both she and William are act quickly once they make up their minds.*



Kit unhappily wishes that Judith hadn’t reminded her of William. Even though she is planning on marrying William—she would have a life of comfort with a man who is “infatuated” with her—she can’t help but feel dread when thinking about it.

*Even though Kit likes luxury and being pampered, she’s realizing that she can’t be happy with just that. She doesn’t particularly enjoy William’s company, and she dreads the thought of living the rest of her life with a man whom she doesn’t feel comfortable talking to.*



On the way back from the **Meadows**, Kit has just enough time for a brief visit with Hannah. Afterward, while walking back alone to the Woods' house (Judith has already left the Meadows), Kit comes across John. Kit explains to him that she's coming from Hannah's house. Like everyone else, John looks shocked as he reminds her that Hannah doesn't have a good reputation; Kit may tarnish her own reputation by visiting her.

*Like the rest of the Puritans in Wethersfield, John is prejudiced against Hannah because she is a Quaker (and, according to the townspeople, a witch). He is particularly worried for Kit's reputation, as he knows that the townspeople may become suspicious of Kit if she is visiting someone whom they think is a witch—they might think she is a witch as well.*



Kit launches into an argument in defense of Hannah, explaining how the lonely woman has helped her grow. John listens intently. When there's a pause, John reminisces about how much their lives have changed since when they first arrived together in Wethersfield. He congratulates Kit on her upcoming engagement and marriage to William.

*Kit is very loyal to Hannah, and she tries to get John to understand that Hannah isn't a witch—she's actually a very kind woman who has helped Kit feel at home in Connecticut. John doesn't shut her down like Matthew has—he listens to what Kit says, which shows his compassion and suggests that he may be more open-minded than many of the other Puritans.*



Not wanting to think about William, Kit changes the subject by asking John whether he'll be there at the husking bee. He hesitates and asks if Mercy will be there. When Kit points out that Mercy can't travel so far, John then says he'll just spend the evening at the Woods' instead, where he will have a chance to talk alone with Mercy.

*Kit's distaste for William makes it increasingly clear that she and he do not make a good match. Meanwhile, John seems very interested in speaking alone with Mercy, which suggests that he may love Mercy, and not Judith.*



Suddenly realizing that John's visits have all been for Mercy, Kit rejoices and urges him to tell Mercy that night. It isn't until Kit is walking home alone that she remembers Judith is planning on marrying John. Kit knows that Judith will be hurt at first, but Kit hopes that she'll get over it soon. After all, John and Judith don't really make a good match.

*Kit realizes that she and the rest of the Wood family were wrong in their assumptions that John was courting Judith. John never showed any indication that he was interested in Judith—he was simply visiting the family. Kit is pleased to discover that she and the Wood family were wrong, as she thinks that John and Mercy are a good match. John's temperament, interests, and values are more similar to Mercy's than Judith's.*



That night, Judith takes so long to get ready that John arrives at the house before the family has left. When John announces his intention to stay with Mercy instead of going to the husking bee, Judith airily says that Mercy will be fine by herself. But John insists that he wants to stay behind to talk to Matthew alone.

*Judith is pushy toward John and dismissive of her sister, telling John that Mercy won't be sad to be alone during the husking bee, even though it is likely that Mercy would enjoy company (especially John's, given that Mercy loves him). Judith's callousness in this passage further characterizes her as a poor partner for John, who is quite tenderhearted and kind.*



Ecstatic, Judith cries out to Matthew to “Say yes, now.” Smiling at Judith’s joy, Matthew gives John permission to marry Judith. Bewildered, John seems too shocked to speak. Kit watches in horror as Mercy approaches Judith and John and calmly expresses her happiness for them both.

As Judith, John, Matthew, and Kit walk to the husking bee, Kit can’t stop thinking about how John is now stuck—if he “hurt[s] Judith now [...] Mercy would never forgive either him or herself.” William interrupts her pondering to tell her he wants to talk to Matthew about their future. Panicked, Kit asks for more time. William patiently tells her that he will wait for her answer before walking on, “his hand remain[ing] on her elbow with a new possessiveness.”

When they arrive at the barn, Kit is surprised at how fun the husking bee is—the people of Wethersfield aren’t so serious all the time. When Judith finds a red ear of corn, she joyfully tosses it to William, who approaches Kit to kiss her.

## CHAPTER 14

In October, Kit is delighted by the beauty of New England in the fall. One day, she catches sight of Matthew gazing out at the gilded fields. As she watches, he scoops up some dirt and holds it “with a curious reverence.” As Kit turns away, she wonders why “it suddenly hurt to think of that lonely defiant figure” when she had despised her uncle for so long.

*Matthew and Judith misread John’s request to speak alone with Matthew—they both assume that John wants to marry Judith. Their assumptions cause a confusing moment that undoubtedly hurts both John and Mercy’s feelings, as each one thinks that the other doesn’t love them.*



*John is stuck in his engagement with Judith because if he breaks up with her, he will break her heart, which will make Mercy feel guilty. Kit is sure that Mercy is so kindhearted and selfless that she would be more upset at John and herself for hurting Judith than she would be happy that the man she loves wants to marry her. Meanwhile, Kit’s panic about marriage is a strong indicator that she doesn’t love William or want to be with him. William tells her that he will wait for her answer, but he implies that he is certain that she will answer yes. He knows that Kit needs to marry in order to be independent from the Wood family; after all, she can’t work to support herself because women had so few opportunities to work. Furthermore, the way he possessively takes Kit’s arm as they walk implies that he sees her as his possession. His attitude is reflective of 17th-century New England society, as many people in this time and place believed that women were inferior to men and expected them to be subservient.*



*The husking bee stands as proof that, while the Puritans are generally solemn, they value fun and celebration as well. Just as each Puritan is different than the next (for example, Rachel is more charitable than Matthew), there is variety in the day-to-day life of the Puritans. The reader knows that Kit probably does not want to kiss William, but she doesn’t have a choice in this situation. Kit’s helplessness is reflective of the sexism in 17th-century New England, where women were treated like objects for men to claim.*



*Matthew becomes a more sympathetic figure in Kit’s eyes. When she watches him hold the earth reverently, she admires his love of the land he lives on. The implication is that she is beginning to appreciate why Matthew is so fiercely protective of the land he owns—New England is his home. Now that Kit is beginning to feel at home in New England, she is beginning to understand Matthew’s passion for it. Additionally, now that she understands her uncle a better, Kit doesn’t hate him like she once did.*



Judith interrupts Kit's thoughts to tell her that a trading ship is on the river; they must hurry to pick up the items they ordered. Kit and Judith hurry to the river, where Kit is delighted to see that the ship is the *Dolphin*. Feeling homesick for the ocean, Kit wishes she could board it once again.

*Kit is still homesick for Barbados and the ocean. Even though she has people and places in Connecticut that she loves, she still feels that Barbados is her home—she felt freer and happier there than she does in Wethersfield.*



Kit is also excited and nervous to see that Nat is there. She lingers and is pained that he doesn't seem to notice her. As soon as they gather their items, Judith urges Kit that it's time to go home.

*Kit's attraction to Nat is growing. Even though she hasn't acknowledged her romantic feelings for him, it is clear that she likes him—she loiters by the ships, hoping that he will see her so they can talk.*



Just as they are about to leave, Nat calls out to Kit. Handing her some cloth, Nat asks Kit to give the cloth to Hannah—he doesn't have time to visit her on this trip. In a biting tone, he adds that the *Dolphin* had an interesting order from a William Ashby: the man ordered an elaborate window for his soon-to-be wife, a “hoity-toity young lady from Barbados.” Nat sharply says that Kit should have told him.

*This is another instance where Kit and Nat work together to help Hannah—since Nat won't be able to stick around Wethersfield for long, Kit will deliver the cloth for him. But Nat is also upset with Kit, as he's found out that she is supposed to marry William. He insults her, calling her “hoity-toity” (snobby). Given the romantic tension that has developed between Kit and Nat, it's implied that Nat is angry with her because he is hurt—he loves Kit, and he doesn't want her to marry anyone else.*



Kit stutters that she isn't officially engaged, but Nat dismisses her comment. With a note of mockery to his voice, he sarcastically jokes that he shouldn't have been “worried about that little bird” when it “gobble[d] up a nice fat partridge in no time.” Nat leaves Kit angry and in tears.

*Nat continues to insult Kit, even referencing his earlier story about the tropical bird that symbolized Kit and her difficult adjustment to life in Wethersfield. Now, Nat says that he shouldn't have worried about Kit struggling to adjust—in his eyes, Kit has decided to survive by marrying someone rich. The implication is that Nat thinks Kit is marrying William for his wealth, which is indeed true.*



When Kit and Judith return to the Woods' home, Rachel anxiously tells them that Matthew left. Apparently, a crowd is gathering nearby in response to something that happened regarding Governor Andros. Judith suggests that they make a good meal for Matthew when he returns and reminds Rachel that “[t]he men can take care of the government.”

*Judith's passive reaction to the political event illustrates how 17th-century women were products of their environment. Women weren't permitted to vote or participate in government in New England during this time, and Judith and the other women passively accept this by not showing any interest in the political changes taking place around them. Instead of resisting the restrictive gender roles that bar them from engaging with the political world, Judith and the other women step into their gender roles. As Judith tells Rachel, they should make dinner (a domestic duty that fell to women) while “the men can take care of the government.”*





When Matthew arrives that evening, he wearily tells them that the Governor Andros will be coming to Connecticut in a few days, when he plans to “take over as royal governor in Connecticut.” Matthew tells them to make a fire in the company room—men will come over this evening to discuss the news.

*In real life, Governor Andros visited Connecticut Colony in order to take back the colony’s charter. Doing so was a symbolic move, as he already had the power to override the colonists’ governments that they had founded based on their charter. Matthew refers to his guests as men, which further emphasizes that women are not allowed to participate in politics. Instead, the women must carry out domestic duties.*



That evening, Kit learns that the wind died down early, which means that the *Dolphin* is stranded in Wethersfield. She is spitefully glad that Nat can’t leave, and she promises herself that she won’t visit Hannah until she knows that Nat is gone.

*Kit doesn’t spare a thought for political events happening around her. She is a product of her society, which didn’t permit women to pursue interests outside the home and family. Sure enough, Kit is only thinking about Nat, not the impending meeting.*



## CHAPTER 15

It’s nighttime, and Rachel, Judith, Mercy, and Kit can overhear bits of an angry discussion going on in the company room. While the other women fret, Kit is curious as to why William, who stopped by a short while ago, joined the group of men in the room.

*The women are locked out of the company room, where the men are discussing politics. The women’s exclusion from this meeting is representative of how they are excluded from the political sphere more broadly. Meanwhile, Kit is surprised that William has joined the other men because he has previously expressed loyalist views.*



When Kit asks the others why they think William got to join the group in the company room, Judith haughtily tells her that William changed his mind about the King when his land taxes were raised. Kit is surprised that Judith knows of this and wonders why William never told her.

*William switched political sides because the Governor raised William’s taxes. The implication is that William is picking the side that suits his own interests rather than advocating for what would benefit everyone. William didn’t tell Kit that he changed his mind, but he did tell Judith, which suggests that he feels closer to Judith than he does to Kit. This may be because she has always shown an interest in William’s house and land, which is what the Governor is taxing.*



The voices increase in volume again, and Kit hears bits of their conversation. Apparently, Governor Andros refuses to acknowledge the deeds and land grants that the Native Americans signed—the New Englanders will have to buy new land grants. Yet over the other voices, Kit hears Matthew firmly reminding the other men that they want to avoid violence.

*The Puritan colonists’ possessiveness over the land can be read as hypocritical. They are angry that the Governor isn’t going to respect the colonists’ previous agreements on who owned what land, yet the land they claim to own is the same land that they took from the Native Americans who lived there prior to the colonists’ arrival. The colonists aren’t concerned with protecting the Native Americans’ land rights—they only care about advancing their own interests.*



Eventually the men leave. When Rachel sees that Matthew is dejected, she asks him if the Governor's arrival will actually have any significant impact on their lives. After all, the family will remain together in their house.

Matthew coldly dismisses Rachel's words, saying that her house "is all a woman thinks about." She isn't thinking about how the government that the New Englanders built will be wiped out. Dejected, he wishes that they could at least keep their charter instead of handing it over to Governor Andros.

That night, Kit tells Judith that she's concerned—the Royal Fleet is very powerful, so the New Englanders won't stand a chance. But Judith tells her that she doubts that there will be any fighting. In fact, Judith agrees with Rachel—their lives probably won't change much at all. At any rate, Judith is excited to see Governor Andros and his soldiers arrive. As she says, they don't usually get to see uniformed soldiers.

The next day, many people gather to watch the Governor Andros cross the river and march toward Hartford. The people remain quiet and peaceful, although some shake their fists at the soldiers' backs after the guard has passed. Kit, who loves the sight of the proud and dignified guard, guesses that "[t]he magnificence of Andros" and his men have intimidated the New Englanders. That night, the mood in the Woods' household is low.

*Rachel tries to comfort Matthew by reminding him that the family will stay together regardless of the Governors' arrival. She is focused on her family's well-being more than political changes, which is perhaps unsurprising, given that 17th-century New England society didn't permit women to vote or participate in government. Rachel thinks and acts within her prescribed gender role: she does domestic chores and takes care of the family.*



*Matthew snaps at Rachel's words, which emphasizes their different temperaments—where she is kind and tenderhearted, Matthew is harsh and inflexible. He scoffs at Rachel's attempt to engage with politics, which likely only discourages her from trying in the future. Matthew is thinking about how Governor Andros is going to undo the colonists' right to self-governance—unlike Rachel, he has actually had a chance to participate in the government. So, perhaps one of the reasons why Rachel thinks nothing will change when the Governor assumes power is because very little will change for her and the other women in Connecticut—they will still be forbidden to vote or express their opinions.*



*Kit briefly considers potential consequences of the current political changes—there may be a battle, which the colonists will certainly lose, since the British fleet is very powerful. Judith, however, doesn't have any interest in politics, probably because it's likely that her own rights will stay the same when Andros assumes power—as a woman, she won't be able to vote or participate in politics either way. Judith's comment about seeing uniformed soldiers comes off as naïve and frivolous given the severity of the current situation, but it also shows that she is a product of her environment, as 17th-century women generally weren't expected to think beyond domestic duties and marriage.*



*Like Judith, Kit is more interested in seeing the fancy British uniforms than she is in reflecting on the political significance of the moment. Kit, too, is a product of her sexist environment, where women aren't encouraged to pursue interests outside of marriage and family.*



In the middle of the night, Kit wakes up to the sound of someone knocking on the door. She and Judith scramble out of bed and hurry to the stairs, where they meet Rachel. Matthew opens the door to reveal William, who tells him that the charter is safe. According to William, the meeting with the Governor Andros largely consisted of long speeches, so the Governor wasn't able to "get in a word of business." During this time, the charter was in the middle of the table. But after the Governor made a speech about his intentions, the lights suddenly went out, plunging the room into darkness. When the candles were relit, the charter had disappeared. Knowing that he would never find the charter, the Governor proceeded with business, appointing new people to various positions.

Matthew knows that the Governor Andros doesn't really need the charter—"the power [is] in his hands without it"—but he nevertheless asks where the charter is. Noting the women on the stairs, William refuses to stay, but he reassures Matthew that it is safe. Taking a deep breath, Matthew says that someday, when times aren't so hard, the colonists will be able to use their same charter to reform their government and "show the world what it means to be free men."

Once William leaves, Matthew tells the women not to tell anyone that they heard anything. Once in bed, Kit thinks of how magnificent and fierce her uncle seemed, and she understands why Rachel left England for him.

## CHAPTER 16

The next day, Matthew bitterly announces that Governor Andros has cancelled Thanksgiving, already taking away Connecticut's authority. Judith is upset—they had planned fun festivities for the holiday. Matthew adds that some rivermen caused mischief the night before, which happened to be All Hallows Eve. When Rachel reminisces about how the holiday was celebrated in England, Matthew cuts her off, saying that "All Saints' Day is a papist feast."

*When the real-life Governor Andros arrived in Hartford, Connecticut to take the colony's charter, he met with the leaders of the colony. According to legend, the candles were extinguished partway through the meeting and, when the candles were relit, the charter was gone. Legend has it that the colonists hid it in a nearby oak tree. In the book, William tells the family this story, with the implication being that the colonists prevailed in saving their charter from the Governor. Nonetheless, the Governor dismantles the colonists' governments by appointing his favorites to the positions that community members previously held.*



*When the King of England appointed Andros to the position of Royal Governor, he effectively invalidated all the colonies' charters. Gathering the charters was a symbolic decision. This is why Governor Andros is able to undo the Connecticut colonists' local governments, even though he doesn't have the colony's charter. But Matthew (and, presumably, the other politically engaged Puritans) appreciates the symbolism of maintaining their charter and hopes that they will be able to reinstate it. Of course, reinstating the same charter will only benefit the same people that it helped before: white Puritan men.*



*Kit believes that Rachel fell in love with Matthew because she was attracted to his passion and fierceness, which Kit saw tonight during the discussions surrounding Connecticut Colony's charter. But while these traits attracted Rachel, she doesn't seem to share them. She isn't as fierce or impassioned, and Matthew constantly overrides and dismisses her in conversation. Rachel also doesn't seem particularly happy, which suggests that attraction alone isn't enough to guarantee a happy partnership—one needs similar values and temperaments as well.*



*Governor Andros is already exercising his power by cancelling the colonists' holiday. When Rachel brings up another holiday, All Hallows Eve, Matthew scolds her for talking about a holiday that is Catholic, not Puritan (All Saints' Day is the day after All Hallows Eve). Matthew's scolding again captures his intolerance for non-Puritan cultures and religions.*



Matthew goes on to say that the rivermen made jack-o-lanterns and put them in the windows of William's house. As punishment, the men will be put in the stocks (located in front of the Meeting House) during Thursday Lecture. Kit is sure she knows who the culprits are.

On Thursday, Kit goes to the Meeting House on her own, feeling anxious. Sure enough, Kit approaches the Meeting House to see Nat along with two other men from the *Dolphin* crew. The prisoners are wittily replying to the onlookers' jeers when Kit nears the stocks. Not wanting to upset a lady, much of the crowd disperses. Tearfully, Kit tells Nat that she can't stand to see him treated so horribly.

But Nat doesn't want Kit's pity. He would extend his punishment, he tells her, if he could see the outrage on William's face when he saw the jack-o-lanterns. Upset, Kit turns from him and marches up to the Meeting House door, only to see that a notice is posted there, saying that the culprits will be banned from Wethersfield. Not wanting to hear the sentence read aloud during Thursday Lecture, Kit turns races back home.

But as soon as Kit gets home, she decides to visit Hannah instead—she needs to talk to someone. Once with Hannah, Kit regretfully tells her that Nat is now banished. But Hannah isn't concerned in the least, making Kit realize that Nat has always been sneaky about his visits. Calmed, Kit notes that “things seem[] to look much less desperate” at Hannah's.

Once Hannah hears the reason behind Nat's punishment, she asks Kit about William, whom Nat never talked about. Kit hesitatingly explains that William is courting her. Hannah wants to know if Kit loves him, but Kit dodges the question, declaring that marrying William is the only way she can escape living with the Woods'. Hannah reminds her that she “has never escaped at all if love is not there.”

*Given the way Nat reacted to the news that Kit and William are getting married, it is likely that Nat is one of the pranksters. This would be additional evidence that Nat sees William as a rival for Kit's heart.*



*Kit's distress at seeing Nat in the stocks speaks to her empathy, particularly for friends or loved ones who are in pain or in trouble. Even though Nat recently hurt Kit's feelings, she still goes to see him in the stocks, which shows her loyalty—a trait she shares with Nat.*



*Nat doesn't regret his prank because he enjoyed getting petty vengeance on William, whom he sees as a rival for Kit's heart. Nat's lack of regret also shows that he doesn't care about maintaining a good reputation among the Puritans—he chooses to follow his own intuition over the Puritans' rules. Kit has this in common with Nat, as they both risk the townspeople's disapproval for being friends with Hannah.*



*Kit wants to talk through her feelings, so she visits the person she feels most comfortable and at home with: Hannah. Hannah is able to successfully calm Kit and make her feel better about the situation.*



*The fact that Kit never told Hannah, her greatest confidant, about William is a good indicator that she does not love him. Not only does Kit dislike trying to speak with him, but she avoids talking about him, as though she doesn't want to have to think about him. At this point in the book, she still insists that she will marry William because he is her option out of the Woods' house. She is right that, as a woman in 17th-century New England, her options for independence from her family are almost entirely limited to marriage. But Hannah points out that Kit won't be escaping the unhappiness she feels with the Woods if she marries a man she doesn't love. If Kit wants to escape her unhappy environment, Hannah explains, Kit must escape to one where she will feel at home and happy.*



Prudence arrives and informs Hannah that Nat won't be able to visit—as soon as he was released from the stocks, he was marched onto the *Dolphin*. In response to Kit's surprise—how does Prudence know Nat?—Prudence explains that Nat often visited while she was with Hannah. Kit feels a pang of jealousy.

*Kit feels like she is missing out on time with her favorite people. She feels most at home when she is with Hannah, Prudence, and Nat, so she is jealous to hear that they have spent time together without her.*



As Kit and Prudence start on a reading lesson, Kit contemplates how much Prudence has blossomed since experiencing Kit and Hannah's kindness. But Kit also worries about what would happen if Goodwife Cruff found out about the lessons; Prudence's safety could be compromised.

*Prudence's growth represents how kindness and friendship can transform a person, and how overcoming one's prejudices is good for oneself. Since Prudence got to know Hannah, she set aside her prejudices against the elderly Quaker woman, and Prudence herself has benefited from doing so. Kit's lessons have also helped Prudence, whose confidence has grown since learning to read. Nonetheless, Kit worries for Prudence's safety, as she knows that Goodwife Cruff is a harsh and prejudiced woman who would punish her daughter severely for befriending a supposed witch.*



Nonetheless, Kit begins to teach Prudence how to write. On a copybook, Kit writes Prudence's name and instructs her to copy it, which she does. As Kit listens to the scratching quill, she soaks in the calm of the house and finds herself wishing that Nat were there. Shaking herself from her daydream, Kit realizes that it's time to leave.

*Kit's feelings for Nat continue to grow stronger. While she feels at home in Hannah's peaceful cottage, she can't help but feel that things would feel more complete with Nat present. This again suggests that home isn't an unchanging place—a person feels at home with those they're closest to. Kit loves Nat, so she doesn't feel at home without him.*



Kit and Prudence leave. As they walk down the road, Kit thinks about Hannah's words regarding the upcoming engagement to William. She doesn't know that that afternoon will be the last one that she, Hannah, and Prudence will ever enjoy together in that house.

*Kit's uncertainty regarding her potential marriage to William is only stronger since Hannah reminded her that she needs to look for love in order to escape her current unhappiness. Meanwhile, the book foreshadows that something dire will happen to either Hannah, Prudence, or Kit, jeopardizing their friendship and the loving home they have created with each other.*



When Kit arrives, she is surprised to find Judith crying—John is leaving Wethersfield to join a northern militia. Rachel suspects this is John's way of cutting ties with Reverend Bulkeley, whose Royalist ideas he could never agree with, especially not now that he is actively promoting Governor Andros. While Rachel and Mercy commend John's decision to be true to himself, Judith resents it.

*While Rachel and Mercy respect John for staying true to his values and political beliefs by cutting ties with Governor Andros, Judith resents him. She thinks only of herself and her potential marriage, overlooking the fact that John is doing what he feels is morally right. Judith may not understand John's sense of morality, but Mercy and Rachel do. Throughout the book, Mercy strives to do what she thinks is morally right, and so she understands John's motivations better than Judith does.*



## CHAPTER 17

A few days after John leaves, Judith becomes sick. Shortly thereafter, many of the town's youth are struck by the same illness. Kit gets sick as well but recovers even before Judith does. When Mercy falls sick, however, she becomes seriously ill. Rachel suggests that Matthew ask Reverend Bulkeley to tend to Mercy, but Matthew staunchly refuses—he meant it when he declared that Bulkeley would never enter the house again.

As Mercy gets worse, the family struggles to manage. Rachel is worn out from taking care of all the girls, Matthew is tired from working all day in the fields, and Judith is still too weak to complete any chores. Only Kit is able to complete all the household tasks, so she does so on her own.

On the fourth day of Mercy's sickness, Matthew announces that he is going to leave the house. At that moment, someone knocks on the door: it's Reverend Bulkeley. The Reverend says that even if they don't agree on politics, he still wants to care for Mercy. Matthew's voice breaks—he had been about to fetch Reverend Bulkeley himself.

Reverend Bulkeley teaches them how to make a special poultice to help Mercy. Kit follows his instructions and makes the meal as well. As Kit clears the table afterward, she suddenly hears a crash at the door. There is a crowd of people outside.

*Reverend Bulkeley is a doctor as well as a reverend, so it's possible that he could help Mercy recover. But Matthew is stubborn in his prejudice against loyalists and refuses to ask Bulkeley for aid, even if it would mean saving Mercy's life. Matthew and Rachel prioritize different things at this moment, and their different values reveal the tension in their relationship.*



*Up until this point, Kit has been resistant to working in the Wood household. Now, however, she uncomplainingly completes the tasks, presumably because she knows that she is the only person who can help her family through this time of sickness. The implication is that she feels closer to the Woods now than she did at the beginning of the novel—she loves them enough to remain loyally by their side and keep the house running during a difficult time.*



*At last, Matthew overcomes his prejudices enough to go seek help from Bulkeley. The implication is that he has reconsidered his priorities, deciding that giving Mercy every chance at survival is more important than taking a stand against the doctor's political views.*



*Overcoming political prejudices ends up being the right thing to do, as Bulkeley immediately begins to help Mercy. Kit continues to show her dedication to helping the Woods by aiding Bulkeley in making the poultice and making dinner for the family. Her selflessness shows that she has begun to see the Woods as her new family. Even if her life with them is very different from her life with her grandfather in Barbados, she has come to respect and love them.*



Matthew opens the door and demands to know why people are disrupting his family at this difficult time. Someone responds to say that they are going to attack “the witch,” Hannah Tupper, whom they blame for the sickness. Matthew says they are being nonsensical—the illness is not caused by witchcraft. When someone in the crowd suggests that Kit knows something about the sickness—after all, she spends lots of time with Hannah—Matthew become enraged, telling them to stop slandering his household. He then orders them to leave the house. The crowd departs.

*The townspeople’s blaming Hannah Tupper for the illness is an example of scapegoating. The sudden illness has created fear and uncertainty, and the scared townspeople are looking for answers and solutions. They decide to explain the sickness as witchcraft, as doing so makes them feel in control of the sickness—if they know the source, then perhaps they can end the plague. So, the townspeople single out Hannah who, as an ostracized Quaker, is an easy target, as she doesn’t have many friends who will come to her aid. Even though Matthew is prejudiced against Hannah for being a Quaker, he doesn’t think she’s a witch, so he refuses to join in the witch hunt. This again shows that there is variety among Puritans—not all of them believe in mob violence and scapegoating. Matthew has also become loyal to Kit, perhaps because her hard work has shown him that she is a valuable part of their family.*



Frightened, Kit asks Matthew what the crowd plans to do to Hannah, who really is just “a poor helpless old woman.” Matthew is upset that Kit is concerned, and he tells her that the crowd will likely just bring her to trial. When Kit sees that neither Matthew nor Rachel will do anything to help Hannah, she runs from the room.

*Although Matthew won’t join in the witch hunt, he also won’t help Hannah, which shows his continued prejudice against non-Puritans. He doesn’t have empathy for someone whose religion is different than his, and he isn’t inclined to protect her from the townspeople’s persecution. His indifference shows the hypocrisy of the Puritans, who migrated to New England in pursuit of religious freedom, which they do not extend to anyone else.*



Realizing that Hannah will be facing a mob alone, Kit decides to warn her. She grabs her cloak, sneaks out the door, and runs to Hannah’s house on Blackbird Pond.

*Even though she knows that she risks punishment and danger by disobeying Matthew and trying to protect Hannah from an angry mob, she decides to put her friend’s safety above her own. She is loyal and empathetic to Hannah—she believes that the townspeople’s discrimination is unjust and cruel.*



When Kit enters the house, she sees Hannah asleep in her chair. She wakes Hannah up and urges her to leave. Realizing that she is being hunted once again because she is a Quaker, Hannah begins to cry as Kit hurries her from the house and into the underbrush.

*Kit (and the reader) know that Hannah is kindhearted and hasn’t done anything to deserve punishment. Her terror here emphasizes the cruelty and misguidedness of the townspeople’s witch hunt—she’s just as afraid of the mob as they are of her.*



The mob reaches the house and, realizing that Hannah is no longer there, decides to set the house on fire to have “light to search by.” Kit pulls Hannah toward the edge of the river, where they watch with horror at the burning house. While they hide, Kit frantically thinks of what to do next.

*Although the Puritans are very defensive of their own property, they don’t extend that same respect to people who are different from them. Hannah’s house is dear to her, but they don’t consider her feelings—they think she is inferior to them and less deserving of respect simply because she isn’t Puritan.*



The night quiets, and the hours slip by. Suddenly, Kit catches sight of the *Dolphin* on the river. Kit jumps into the water and swims to the ship. The sailors help Kit into the ship. Nat is there, and Kit quickly tells him about the mob and how Hannah is in danger. Nat immediately directs the ship toward the shore.

As soon as the ship reaches Hannah, she tells Nat that she can't leave without her **cat**. Nat immediately agrees to find the animal, though Kit pleads with him to just leave it. But Nat reminds Kit that "[t]hey've taken everything else"—Hannah should at least have the comfort of her cat. After searching together, Kit and Nat find the cat and bring it back to Hannah.

Once they are all on the boat, Nat informs Hannah that he is bringing her to Saybrook, where she can stay with his grandmother. Nat then invites Kit to come along with him to the West Indies. Kit is tempted, but she tells him that she has to stay—she needs to see Mercy through her illness. After a pained moment, Nat gets on the boat and leaves.

Kit hurries home. It's the early morning, but she manages to creep inside the house without anyone noticing her. When Kit approaches the kitchen, Rachel joyfully calls out to tell her that Mercy has made it through the worst of the sickness.

## CHAPTER 18

Later that morning, only Kit and Matthew are awake. Kit seizes this moment to thank Matthew for standing up for her against the mob of people who suggested that she's a witch. She's been a source of trouble for him, so his defending her means a lot. In return, Matthew admits that he wasn't very welcoming to Kit. But her incessant hard work in caring for the family during the illness has impressed him—he declares that she has worked as hard as any other member of the family would have. Kit silently vows to never avoid work in the future and to always do her "full share."

*Kit and Nat once again work as a team to help save Hannah. Their loyalty to their friends is an important value that they share—they know that they can trust each other.*



*The crowd has taken her home away and has treated her inhumanely, so Nat understands the importance of treating Hannah with dignity. The cat is a source of comfort for her, and Nat believes that she should be able to have this—just because the Puritans don't respect her doesn't mean that she doesn't have basic needs and desires, too.*



*Nat's invitation betrays his romantic feelings for Kit, even though he never explicitly says that he loves her. Although Kit wants to go back to Barbados, she refuses because she doesn't want to abandon Mercy during her time of need. Kit's decision to stay with Mercy shows how her sense of home has shifted; even though she still misses Barbados, she has people in Wethersfield whom she loves too much to leave.*



*In one night, Kit shows her loyalty to both Hannah and Mercy. She is rewarded for her efforts, as both women make it through the dangerous night. This night has also emphasized how Kit and Nat are similar in their staunch loyalty to their friends, as they risk danger (and, in Kit's case, give up her dreams of returning to Barbados) in order to save the people they care about.*



*By shouldering so much responsibility during Mercy and Judith's illness, Kit has shown Matthew that she is devoted to the family and cares about them deeply. During the illness, Matthew relied on Kit's help, which he is grateful for. Despite their difference, Kit has grown to love and respect the family—including Matthew—and vice versa. Now that she has developed a strong relationship with the Woods, they feel like her family. And now that she has her uncle's respect, Kit feels even more motivated to help the family, as his loyalty shows her that he feels she belongs with them.*





That day, Kit prepares lunch and continues to do household chores. Both Judith and Mercy appear to be improving, much to everyone's relief. Kit is glad that both Mercy and Hannah are safe now, but she can't stop thinking about how she declined Nat's offer to escape Wethersfield.

The moment of peace is broken by a knock at the door: it's a deacon from church, a constable, Goodwife Cruff, Goodman Cruff. They tell a skeptical Matthew that they have reason to believe that Hannah used magic to disappear—they think she turned herself into a mouse that they saw the **cat** carrying away from the house. On top of this, they think that Kit is working for Hannah. In support of this theory, the constable shows Matthew the hornbook that Kit left at Hannah's.

At this, Kit admits to visiting Hannah but insists that Hannah isn't a witch at all. But the others cut Kit off, and the constable announces that they are arresting Kit for committing witchcraft. Matthew is furious—he finds the charge ridiculous. Goodman Cruff victoriously announces that he was the one who signed the charge. Knowing Goodwife Cruff is behind this accusation, Kit is shocked that Goodwife Cruff could hate her so much.

The constable takes Kit away and locks her in a shed behind his house, where she will stay until her examination the next day. When the constable visits Kit to give her dinner and a quilt, she asks him what happened to previous women accused of witchcraft. He informs her that one woman was banished, whereas the other was hanged. Trying to comfort her, the constable says it's more likely that Kit, who is much younger, will likely just lose an ear or be branded.

*Kit is relieved that the people she loves are safe. While she doesn't regret her decision to stay with Mercy, it's implied that a part of her does regret declining Nat's offer. Significantly, it's not clear whether she is primarily sad because she missed her opportunity to go to Barbados, or because she passed on her chance to be with Nat. This ambiguity emphasizes how Kit's idea of home is intertwined with Nat.*



*The townspeople misinterpret the cat as a sign of witchcraft because they already view Hannah with prejudice. They believe that Hannah is a witch, and this assumption clouds their judgement to the extent that they misinterpret evidence to support their theory that she's a witch. Not only do they misinterpret the cat as a sign of Hannah's being a witch, but they also mistake Kit's friendship with Hannah as a sign that Kit is a witch too.*



*Kit tries to get the constable and Cruffs to see that Hannah is a misunderstood woman, not a witch. But the Puritans are too prejudiced to consider this possibility. Goodwife Cruff is the ultimate example of Puritan narrow-mindedness: ever since she saw Kit swim (an activity that marked her as a foreigner), Goodwife Cruff has been hostile toward her. Goodwife Cruff never got to know Kit, but simply hates her because she's different—culturally and religiously—from the Puritans. Meanwhile, Matthew tries to defend Kit, which shows his newfound loyalty to her since she helped the family through the period of illness.*



*The Puritans of Wethersfield have acted on the prejudices before, as the constable makes clear when telling Kit of the fates of the previous women who were accused of witchcraft. Given that Kit is unjustly accused of witchcraft, it is likely that these other women were also victims of the Puritans' biased hostility.*



When alone once again, Kit trembles with fear. Suddenly, she remembers that William may be able to save her. She hopes that he'll visit her that night, but he doesn't. The only person who visits is Rachel, who tries to comfort her through the wall of the shed, saying that the family will come up with something to help Kit's case. Kit thinks Rachel is being very brave for risking Matthew's fury.

*William's absence is a stark difference to Nat's presence when Kit needed help to save Hannah. It is possible that William is prioritizing his reputation—people might think less of him if he expresses affection for someone who is accused of witchcraft. Kit, by contrast, does what she thinks is right instead of caving to societal pressure. Although William doesn't visit Kit, Rachel does. Kit thinks Rachel is brave for risking Matthew's fury, which speaks to the sexism of 17th-century New England. Matthew expects his wife to be submissive to him, and he doesn't hesitate to unleash his anger on her. Instead of having equal weight in their partnership, Rachel is reduced to either obeying his commands or living in fear of punishment.*



Kit feels calmer after Rachel's visit. When thinking over the case, Kit knows that the townspeople can't have legitimate evidence against her, but she realizes that "it didn't seem to take much evidence to rouse these people's suspicions." She wonders how Matthew could help her but admits that she has made him look bad by disobeying him.

*The accusation against Kit is unfounded, as Kit isn't a witch. But regardless of the townspeople's lack of evidence, Kit knows that they will act on their prejudice, which could unfairly result in Kit's punishment. Meanwhile, Kit wonders if Matthew will be able to help her since she has hurt his reputation. Seventeenth-century New England society dictated that women be submissive to men, and Kit has bucked cultural expectations by disobeying Matthew, her father figure. In the townspeople's eyes, Matthew may look "weak" for not having greater control over the women in his family.*



Kit's thoughts turn to Prudence, and she desperately hopes that no one will find out that Prudence had also visited Hannah—if Prudence gets in trouble, it will be Kit's fault. Kit regrets introducing Prudence to Hannah, yet at the same time, she remembers how wonderful it was to spend peaceful afternoons with Prudence and Hannah. At last, Kit falls asleep.

*Kit's compassion toward her friends is clear, as she worries about Prudence's safety instead of her own. Even though Kit regrets putting Prudence in danger, she doesn't regret the time that she, Hannah, and Prudence spent together. Because of their close and caring friendships, Prudence and Hannah have become like family for Kit—she always feels at home with them.*



## CHAPTER 19

The next morning, the constable's wife brings Kit some breakfast. She admits to Kit that she doesn't think that Kit is a witch—Kit always seemed very decent at Meeting. She certainly thinks it was unjust to lock up a woman in a shed on such a cold night. Kit thanks her and asks when the examination will be.

*The constable's wife isn't as easily swayed by gossip and prejudice as her husband is. She doesn't think that Kit is a witch because she hasn't seen Kit act in any way that would suggest that she is one, although she does show her bias against non-Puritans by basing her judgement on the fact that Kit comes to Meeting. If Kit didn't participate in the Puritan service, the constable's wife might feel differently.*



The constable's wife informs Kit that the examination will take place in about an hour. If they find her guilty, Kit will then go to Hartford for a jury trial. Noting Kit's rumpled and dirty appearance, the constable's wife brings her water and a comb to clean herself.

When Kit arrives at the Town House for her trial, she sees that it is crowded with people. Goodwife Cruff is there with her "cronies." Her uncle is seated with the group of men who are the town selectmen. With a jolt, Kit thinks of how ashamed Matthew must feel that one of his own family is being examined. As she scans the room, she realizes that William isn't there.

The examination begins. The magistrate, Captain Talcott, reads aloud Kit's charge: by being friends with the alleged witch, Hannah Tupper, and by committing deeds that suggest that she conspired with the devil to bring about the recent illness, she is accused of witchcraft. He adds that witchcraft is an art taught by one person to another.

Captain Talcott asks Kit if she is indeed a friend of Hannah's and was therefore "acquainted" with Hannah's **cat**. Kit admits to being friends with Hannah and to knowing the cat, although she adds that the cat was just a cat. Talcott then asks if she and Hannah cast spells on people in the town. Kit immediately denies this accusation. Talcott then calls the witnesses forward; Kit is stunned as she hears numerous people—people whom she barely knows—tell "stories" of Kit enchanting them, their children, and their animals.

*The constable's wife helps Kit wash up so that she can make a good first impression when arriving for the examination. Her kindness shows that not all Puritans are the same: unlike her husband and many of the Wethersfield townspeople, she is kind to a stranger, even a stranger with a damaged reputation.*



*The fact that Goodwife Cruff has "cronies" suggests that she has been able to manipulate peoples' fears and prejudices to convince them that Kit is a witch. Meanwhile, William is again absent when Kit needs him. Although she doesn't know why, it is possible that he's avoiding associating himself with Kit because if the magistrate finds her guilty, the townspeople may go after Kit's friends and family as well. William likely doesn't want to hurt his reputation in the town by defending someone the townspeople suspect of witchcraft. He lacks the loyalty that Kit possesses.*



*The Puritans believed that witchcraft was something that one person could teach another. This belief reflects how quickly the Puritans' suspicions spread, as well as the importance of maintaining a good reputation with one's neighbors. If a person associated with someone whom other townspeople call a witch, that person could be accused of witchcraft in turn. It is likely that this encouraged people to conform to mainstream Puritan culture—if they rebelled, they could damage their reputation and risk being accused of witchcraft. Kit's experience at the witch trial also shows how these trials were based on prejudiced assumptions, not careful examination of evidence.*



*Talcott and the other townspeople allow their prejudices to influence their analysis of facts. They want to believe that Hannah is a witch, so they misinterpret evidence to fit this theory. The townspeople do the same thing at Kit's trial, as their "evidence" consists of stories in which they blame Kit for strange events. But Kit has barely interacted with these people, so it appears that they let their suspicions of a newcomer cloud their judgment.*



Matthew interjects, shouting that these “witnesses” don’t have any “lawful evidence”—it’s all merely hearsay. He offers to “vouch for [Kit’s] good character.” Talcott sharply asks whether Matthew allowed Kit to visit Hannah, and Matthew admits that he had forbidden it. He says that Kit may be “thoughtless and headstrong at times,” but that she is by no means a witch. Talcott insists that they must continue to listen to testimony. Reverend Bulkeley, who is also present, cautions that each of the testimonies so far will not hold up in court, as each event has only one witness.

At the prompting of Goodwife Cruff, Goodman Cruff announces that he has evidence. Appalled, Kit watches as he holds up her copybook, the one that Prudence wrote in. Goodwife Cruff calls out that Kit must have been trying to cast a spell on Prudence by writing out her name so many times. Talcott asks Kit if she wrote “this name.” Not wanting to get Prudence into trouble, Kit realizes with relief that she can honestly say that she wrote the name—she wrote Prudence’s name the first time. When Talcott asks why she wrote it, Kit refuses to say why.

The crowd erupts into shouts, some people demanding that Kit be hanged. Talcott exclaims that everyone deserves a trial by jury, so the case—which now has legitimate evidence—will be turned over to Hartford. But at that moment, someone calls out that a man has come with an important witness.

At first, Kit is relieved and overjoyed to see Nat. But her relief turns to fear as she sees that Prudence is with him. At once, Kit cries out that she is indeed guilty. She agrees to go to Hartford, so long as Prudence doesn’t have to get involved. But Talcott silences her and summons Prudence to speak.

*Both Matthew and Bulkeley call attention to the fact that the townspeople’s stories don’t constitute as evidence, as they are all hearsay testimonies without physical proof of witchcraft. Matthew tries to defend Kit, which again shows his loyalty to Kit and his dedication to protecting his family. The fact that Kit’s disobedience has such weight in her trial speaks to the sexism of 17th-century New England, where women were expected to be submissive and obedient to men. By disobeying Matthew to stay true to what she thinks is right (befriending an ostracized woman), Kit damaged her reputation and now risks legal punishment.*



*It’s clear that Goodwife Cruff is the one behind the accusation, even though Goodman Cruff is the one who formally signed the charge and is presenting evidence. This implication is that, as a woman, Goodwife Cruff can’t do these legal proceedings on her own. Meanwhile, the numerous times that the name “Prudence” is written in the book suggests that someone was trying to cast a spell on the child. Kit is horrified, but more for Prudence than for herself, which shows her loyalty and selflessness for her friends. But Kit realizes a way that she can protect Prudence while maintaining her honesty, although this means that she will be incriminating herself. Kit’s honesty is reminiscent of Nat’s, when he boldly owned up to putting jack-o-lanterns in William’s house.*



*The townspeople were already convinced that Kit is a witch, and this misinterpreted “evidence”—Kit wrote Prudence’s name to teach her how to write, no to put a curse on her—only further solidifies their incorrect assumptions.*



*Nat’s loyalty again shows his combability with Kit, who is in the process of incriminating herself to protect her friend. Nat is also risking punishment by helping Kit, as he is technically banned from Wethersfield. Luckily, people aren’t paying attention to him, so no one point this out.*



As Talcott questions Prudence, she reveals that Kit taught her how to read and write at Hannah's house. She admits to writing her own name in the book and to visiting Hannah's house on her own volition, after the first visit with Kit. Goodwife Cruff is appalled, and Goodman Cruff insists that Prudence must be lying—Prudence was never bright enough to learn. Kit, meanwhile, is shocked to see that Prudence looks bold and unafraid.

After Kit confirms that what Prudence said is true, Talcott asks Prudence to prove that she can write her name. She does as he asks. Upon seeing her writing, Goodman Cruff is in awe. Meanwhile, Reverend Bulkeley and Talcott acknowledge that the handwriting looks "[v]ery proper." They then ask Prudence what she can read, to which she responds, "the Bible."

Talcott opens the Bible for Prudence, and she begins to read. As Prudence reads, she becomes more confident. Kit feels proud of Prudence, and she impulsively looks over at Nat. Their eyes meet, and Kit immediately feels supported.

When Kit looks away from Nat, she sees that everyone is staring at the Cruffs. Goodman Cruff shouts at Goodwife Cruff that she always underestimated Prudence. Goodwife Cruff is shocked into silence as "her husband step[s] into his rightful place."

*Prudence shows more loyalty to Kit than her parents, which reflects how Kit—along with Hannah and Nat—appear to be Prudence's chosen family. Prudence has flourished since they've showed her attention and affection, so much so that she is now unafraid while testifying at a trial, something that would have undoubtedly terrified Prudence just a few months ago, when she was far more timid. Her growth illustrates how family isn't limited to one's blood relatives—rather, family can be any group of people with whom one has close, trusting relationships.*



*Goodman Cruff is shocked that Prudence can write because he always assumed that she wasn't smart enough to learn. But it turns out that his assumption was wrong: she couldn't write because no one bothered to teach her before Kit came along. It turns out that her parents' prejudices were what was holding her back.*



*Kit is proud of how confident and capable Prudence has become. Kit and Nat also share a moment in the Town House, even though they are far from each other. Just by knowing that Nat is there helps Kit feel supported. The fact that Nat is so loyal and supportive of Kit—he was the one who brought Prudence to testify—implies that he's a better match for her than William, who avoided the trial in order to protect himself from scrutiny.*



*Now that Goodman Cruff realizes that Prudence is smart enough to read and write, he is angry that his wife convinced him to underestimate her. When Goodman Cruff silences his wife, the book commends him for assuming more authority in their marriage. The book implies that Goodman Cruff's "rightful place" is being the more authoritative person in the marriage, which may reflect that sexism of the 1950s, when the book was published. In the 1950s, as well as in the 17th century (when the book is set), women were expected to be submissive to their husbands.*



Goodman Cruff continues to say that he always wished he could read. In the colonies, he adds, it may be necessary for women to read as well as men. Happy that Prudence will be able to read him the Bible at night, Goodman Cruff formally withdraws his witchcraft accusation against Kit. Talcott officially announces Kit as “free and innocent.”

Furious, Goodwife Cruff shouts that the seaman who brought Prudence is the same man who is banned from Wethersfield. Upon seeing Kit’s stricken face, Matthew asks Talcott to let Nat go—after all, he risked himself to “see justice done.” Talcott agrees, but Nat is already gone, anyway.

Prudence approaches Kit, who asks how she got involved. Nat had worried that Kit might get into trouble, so he snuck back into town on a small boat. After hearing about the meeting, he found Prudence and asked her to testify, as he knew that Prudence would be the only one who could help Kit.

Grateful and in tears, Kit asks Prudence if she will be alright. Goodman Cruff approaches Kit to say that Prudence will be safe with him. Next year, he adds, Prudence will attend Kit’s school.

Talcott announces that Goodwife Cruff must pay the penalty for slander: either time in the stocks or a high fine. But seeing Kit’s horror, Matthew announces that they won’t press charges and will just take Kit home.

*Goodman Cruff’s speech about how women should also be able to read suggests that his prejudices against Prudence may have been because of her gender. It’s possible that Goodwife Cruff thought Prudence was stupid in part because she is a girl, which would reflect how colonial society saw women as inferior to men. Goodman Cruff seems more open-minded than his wife, since he talks about how societal changes—like women reading as much as men—may need to take place in the developing colonies.*



*Goodwife Cruff has found a new target for her hatred: Nat. She is so prejudiced against strangers that she is willing to punish anyone who is an outsider to Wethersfield. But Matthew persuades Talcott to let Nat go, which again shows how much he cares for Kit—he can tell how much Nat means to her, just from the look on her face.*



*Clearly, Nat cares deeply for Kit. On a hunch that Kit might get in trouble, Nat came to town—even though he is banned from it—for the express purpose of helping her just in case something went wrong. His loyalty to Kit in this instance is reminiscent of how Kit came to Hannah’s aid. They both risked punishment to help the people they care about.*



*Goodman Cruff has overcome his prejudices against Kit, which he makes clear when he tells her that he wants Prudence to attend her school next year. The implication is that when a person becomes more open-minded, they don’t just help the people around them—they also become a kinder and better person.*



*Kit and Matthew show compassion for Goodwife Cruff by deciding not to press charges against her. Now that Kit has experienced the fear and anxiety of a public examination, she doesn’t want to subject anyone else to the same thing.*



## CHAPTER 20

The day of the first snowfall of the year, Mercy is well enough to cross the room to one of the windows—she loves watching the first snowfall. At first, Kit finds the snow interesting, but she doesn't like how much darkness it brings. When Kit steps outside the next day, though, she is entranced by the sight of the “glittering universe” of white snow.

William finally comes by for his first visit since Kit's arrest. He claims that his absence was “out of consideration” for Mercy's sickness. Kit hardly talks to him, instead keeping her attention on learning to spin flax like Mercy. Judith is the one who carries the conversation.

At one point, William mentions that there had been “Indian raids” near where John is stationed. Judith and Mercy both look horrified. Rachel suggests that William and Kit move to another room, but Kit coldly declines. Instead, she walks him to the door.

At the door, William tells Kit that he doesn't think any worse of her because of the trial. In fact, he's excited for her to have a fresh start, now that Hannah is gone and Kit won't have to see Prudence. He recognizes that they are supposed to help those in need, but Kit was “overdo[ing] it”—she needs to be more careful when choosing her friends.

Kit is furious at William's suggestion that she should have abandoned her friends. He claims that, as her future husband, he doesn't want to be surprised by her actions. Kit responds that it would “make a wife uneasy never knowing whether she could depend on her husband.”

*Kit continues to fall in love with New England's natural beauty. Although she found Connecticut ugly at first, she has developed an appreciation for it as she's spent more time there. The implication is that as she develops meaningful connections with the land around her, she feels more at home there.*



*William's explanation seems to be a flimsy excuse, especially considering that he still could have attended Kit's trial to provide moral support or vouch for her character. Kit is unimpressed with him and doesn't even try to converse. In fact, it's Judith who speaks with William—after all, they share similar interests. Meanwhile, the fact that Kit is learning how to spin flax suggests that she has overcome her attitude that work is beneath her. Now, she even seeks to develop practical skills through working.*



*Judith and Mercy are horrified at William's statement because they both fear that Native Americans may have captured John. At this time (the 17th century), Native Americans and colonists frequently fought, as the Native Americans tried to protect their land and dwindling resources from the colonists. The fact that the colonists are taking these things from Native Americans' implies that their anger at Governor Andros nullifying their land grants is hypocritical, since the colonists live on stolen land themselves.*



*William implies that the townspeople may continue to accuse Kit of witchcraft if she remains friends with Hannah and Prudence. He's concerned with maintaining a good reputation in Wethersfield, and he wants Kit to be the same way. He recognizes that helping others is good, but he suggests that Kit shouldn't go beyond charity to befriend social outcasts who are in need.*



*Unlike William, Kit is very loyal to her friends; she follows her heart and intuition, not arbitrary cultural rules. William doesn't like that Kit refuses to obey him, which reflects the sexism of 17th-century New England, where women were expected to be subservient to men. Kit responds that she wants to know that she can “depend on” her partner—so far, William has failed to prove to her that he is loyal and reliable.*



After a pause, Kit calmly tells William that they aren't a good match. They are too different from each other, and they don't care about the same things. William admits that he wishes Kit would have changed more to fit in, but that he knows she is right. William leaves.

A short while later, a woman named Thankful Peabody gets married. At the wedding, Kit feels restless, although she's not sure if it's because the wedding reminds her of similar, more luxurious events in Barbados, or if it's "the look in Thankful's eyes." Judith, meanwhile, wistfully notes that her wedding likely won't be as fancy as Thankful's.

The end of the wedding celebration is interrupted by two men from the militia. They somberly inform the crowd of wedding guests that the militia was attacked by Native Americans. Several of the men from the militia were killed; others were captured. They announce that John is one of the captives. Judith collapses in horror, and William drives her home.

Over the next few weeks, Kit watches Judith mourn—she assumes that John is as good as dead. Mercy, too, is grieving, although she never lets it show. As the winter months go by, Kit begins to hate the cold, dark New England winter. She finds herself thinking again of Nat's offer to take her to Barbados. One night she has a dream about going there with Nat. After that, she makes a plan.

Kit is sure that her leaving would help the Wood family—after all, she's just another unwed woman to care for. At least, she can take comfort in knowing that Judith will likely marry William—she knows that the two of them make a good match.

*At last, Kit voices the truth that has been unfolding throughout the book: she and William are not a good romantic match. The tipping point is Kit's realization that they don't share the same values—William cares about maintaining his wealth and reputation, whereas Kit cares about staying loyal to her friends and following her own moral compass.*



*Kit is feeling wistful, but the book suggests that she feels this way because she is missing Nat, not Barbados. "The look in Thankful's eyes" probably refers to Thankful's loving gaze at her partner (it's Thankful's wedding, after all), so Kit's wistfulness perhaps suggests that she wants to be in Thankful's place, happily marrying the person she loves. Meanwhile, Judith's longing for a fancy wedding betrays her fondness for luxury, a trait that she shares with William.*



*During the 17th century, colonists and Native Americans frequently battled as the colonists pushed Native Americans from their land. Judith fears that John may die. William is the one who drives her home, which perhaps suggests that he is now romantically interested in Judith.*



*Without her friends, Kit feels lonely and homesick, which speaks to the fact that meaningful relationships are what a person needs to feel at home. It is during this lonesome time that Kit dreams of going to Barbados with Nat. Although the reader doesn't know yet what Kit's plan consists of, it's likely that she has decided that moving back to Barbados will cure her homesickness. She hasn't yet realized that it's her relationships that make her feel at home, and that just being in Barbados may not make her as content as she has been with her friends in Wethersfield.*



*Kit knows that as a 17th-century colonial woman, she is considered a burden to the Wood family. Because of her gender, she can't find good-paying work to help support the family, so they must share their resources with her without getting much in return. Plus, now that she isn't going to marry William, Kit will be stuck with the Woods—marriage was her one way out of their house, and she passed it up. Meanwhile, Kit seems to be correct in her assumption that Judith and William's similar interests and values make them a good match.*





One afternoon, the day is interrupted by a knock at the door. Kit opens it to reveal John, ragged and starved. Without saying a word, he stumbles into the house and collapses into Mercy's lap.

*John's starved condition and beeline to Mercy upon entering the house suggest that the thought of being with Mercy is what sustained him through his journey back to Wethersfield.*



## CHAPTER 21

In April, John announces his intention to marry Mercy, and William announces his intention to marry Judith. John picks up his studies with Reverend Bulkeley, saying that he respects Reverend Bulkeley for his knowledge. They disagree on politics, but John feels comfortable thinking for himself now.

*At last, the Woods sisters are engaged to marry the partners that suit them best: Mercy will marry John, and Judith will marry William. Meanwhile, John's decision to continue studying with Reverend Bulkeley shows that it is possible to disagree with someone but still respect them.*



Whereas John and Mercy intend to live in the Woods' house for a while, Judith happily prepares to move. She takes a great interest in collecting items to furnish the house, and William is delighted to plan with her. Kit, meanwhile, makes her own plans to leave: she plans on returning to Barbados, where she hopes to become a governess. She knows that she will have to work now, but as long as she is in beautiful Barbados, she is sure to be happy.

*Judith and William are happy to plan their house together, which reflects the importance of having a partner who shares one's interests. Both of them appreciate luxuries and enjoy planning for their house, and they are happy now that they have someone to share those passions with. Meanwhile, in order to live on her own, Kit decides to take on one of the few jobs offered to women during this time: being a governess, or a private in-home tutor for a family's children. This job still fits within the domestic and family-centered role that 17th-century women were expected to embody.*



One day, a crowd hurries to the river to greet the first ship arriving since winter started. Kit goes to her trunks, trying to gauge how much her dresses are worth. She sets aside two dresses for Judith and Mercy, sure that Matthew will accept them now that she is offering them "with love instead of pride."

*As a woman, Kit can't easily find a job to make the money she needs to purchase a ticket to Barbados, so she plans to sell her dresses to fund her trip. But Kit plans on saving two dresses to give as gifts to Judith and Mercy. This time, her gift-giving comes from a place of love, not from pride, which implies that Kit was showing off when she offered Judith and Mercy the dresses the first time. Since then, Kit has matured, and she has also come to love Judith and Mercy as family. Now, Kit's gift is a sign of her love for them, particularly as the gift is actually a sacrifice for Kit—by giving the dresses away, she is passing up the money she could get from selling them.*



One April day, Kit walks near Blackbird Pond, feeling homesick for Hannah's house. As she observes the growing plants, Kit is struck with the beauty of the New England spring. Remembering that she is leaving, Kit is saddened. She wonders whether she will ever see Mercy, Judith, Prudence, or Nat again.

*Kit's homesickness for Hannah's house represents how one's idea of home can change. At first, Kit was only homesick for Barbados, because that's where she felt loved, comforted, and happy. Now, Kit associates those feelings with Hannah's house, and she feels homesick for the cottage. Kit's increasing appreciation for the beauty of New England also indicates that New England feels like home to her now. The more time she has spent enjoying the beauty of New England, the more meaningful her connection to the land has become. She knows that she will miss the land, just like she will miss her friends and her new family—they all feel like home to her.*



At the thought of Nat, Kit begins to tremble. She thinks again of her dream about returning to Barbados and realizes that the dream had been so sweet because she was with Nat, not because she was returning to Barbados. Remembering Hannah's words—that "[t]here is no escape if love is not there"—she realizes that she wouldn't care where she lived, so long as she was with Nat. She knows how she feels, but she doesn't know if Nat feels the same way.

*Kit realizes that she loves Nat, and that being with Nat is more important than living in any particular place. The implication is that home isn't limited to a specific and unchanging place. Rather, one's idea of home can change over time. For Kit, feeling at home means being with the people she loves, and there's no one she loves more than Nat. The book implies that Nat is the right partner for Kit, as the two of them have similar temperaments and share many of the same values.*



After that day, Kit stops planning to leave for Barbados. Instead, she anxiously waits for the *Dolphin*. One day in May, she walks toward the river landing to see a new-looking ship in the water. She suddenly spots Nat among the barrels of goods that the ship had brought. She calls out his name as she rushes toward him. He immediately asks her if she is "Mistress Ashby" yet, and she quickly tells him "No!"

*Now that Kit knows that Nat, not Barbados, is what she's been missing, she waits eagerly for Nat. As soon as they see each other, Nat checks to see if Kit is married, which suggests that he has been anxiously waiting to find out if Kit, the woman he loves, is already married to someone else. Kit hurriedly informs him that she is still single.*

Trying to appear more dignified, Kit asks about Hannah, and Nat says she's doing well. Regarding the new ship, Kit asks about the *Dolphin*. He tells her that the *Dolphin* is undergoing some repairs before adding that the new ship is his. The ship's name is the *Witch*, but it isn't named after Hannah.

*Nat's ship is named the Witch, which he implies is named after Kit. The name honors that fact that it was Kit's loyalty, fiery temperament, and determination to follow her intuition (as opposed to social norms) that earned her the name of "witch" among narrow-minded Puritans. Nat loves Kit for these traits, so he celebrates them by naming the boat after her.*



Kit asks to go aboard, but Nat firmly refuses. In a rush, he tells her that he plans to talk to Matthew immediately. Throughout winter, he hasn't stopped thinking about getting a house for the two of them and then sailing together in the winter. Kit is overjoyed, and she again asks to go aboard the ship. But Nat won't let her, saying that he wants to marry her before taking her on board. As soon as they're together on his ship, he doesn't want to have to be apart from her again.

*Nat plans on asking Matthew for permission to marry Kit. Like Kit, he has spent the winter dreaming about his idea of home: for him, that means being with Kit and traveling on his ship. By ending on this note, the book suggests that home isn't tied to one's blood relatives or even to a certain location—a person can feel at home anywhere they're surrounded by people they love.*





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