This Side of Paradise

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Born just before the turn of the twentieth century to a middle-class family, F. Scott Fitzgerald was raised primarily in upstate New York. He attended Princeton University but dropped out in 1917 to fight for the United States in World War I. While stationed in Alabama, he met Zelda Sayre, whom he later married. Fitzgerald moved to New York City after the war, where he began his writing career. His first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), is largely autobiographical; it was met with enormous commercial success. Fitzgerald and Zelda married after the novel's publication and became famous for their "Jazz Age" lifestyle in New York City. He wrote numerous short stories for popular magazines and published other novels, including his most famous, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), during the 1920s. The Fitzgeralds had a daughter together and briefly moved back to Saint Paul before moving to Europe. They had a troubled marriage— both struggled with alcoholism and mental illness—and in 1930, Zelda was diagnosed with schizophrenia and subsequently hospitalized. During the Great Depression, the popularity of Fitzgerald's work suffered, along with his finances. During the 1930s, he was hospitalized for alcoholism multiple times. Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood to become a screenwriter, but he was poorly suited to the work and didn't see much success. He later began a relationship with Sheilah Graham, a gossip columnist. Fitzgerald became sober a year before his death of a heart attack in 1940.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

F. Scott Fitzgerald and his fictional alter-ego, Amory Blaine, belonged to what has been called the "Lost Generation," a term coined by writer Gertrude Stein. Born just before the turn of the twentieth century, this generation came of age during and after World War I, and many of them were killed in the war. The period was also a time of rapid global change. In Europe and the United States, the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century had dramatically transformed society, and the invention of new technologies allowed for factories and mass production, radically altering the economy. It had also created new weapons that significantly changed how wars were fought. As a result, World War I was one of the deadliest conflicts in global history, and it was immensely traumatic for those who participated in it. After the war came the "Roaring Twenties," a decade of economic boom, expanded consumer demand, and transforming social values in the United States. Though it was considered a period of prosperity, society was still unequal, and many people were concerned about the decade's embrace of luxury, consumerism, and hedonism. Those who came of age during this period were known as the "Lost Generation" because the rapid social, economic, cultural, and technological transformations—as well as the trauma of the war— left many young people feeling aimless, lost, and adrift in modern cities.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote multiple novels and may short stories during his writing career. *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), his second novel, follows a young hedonistic couple who socialize among New York's elite during the Jazz Age. Based on his life and marriage to Zelda Sayre, the novel—like much of Fitzgerald's work—concerns themes of money, class, extravagance, love, and modern life. His next novel, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), considers similar themes. Though initially unpopular, it is now his most celebrated work. Fitzgerald's fourth and final novel, *Tender is the Night* (1934), considers alcoholism and mental deterioration; the novel was largely influenced by his own experiences and those of his wife, who was being treated in a psychiatric hospital while Fitzgerald wrote and revised the novel. Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) is about American expatriate artists and writers in Europe. Like much of Fitzgerald's work, the novel is considered a definitive account of the Jazz Age, and Hemingway was a close friend and traveling companion of Fitzgerald's during the 1920s.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** This Side of Paradise
- **When Written:** 1916–1919
- **Where Written:** Princeton, New Jersey; Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Saint Paul, Minnesota
- **When Published:** March 26, 1920
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Bildungsroman
- **Setting:** Saint Paul, Minnesota; Princeton, New Jersey; New York City
- **Climax:** Amory walks from New York to Princeton to reflect on his youth.
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Dying Regrets. Though his first two novels sold well, his final two did not, and all four became more obscure during the Great Depression. At the end of his life, Fitzgerald feared that he had become irrelevant, and he died believing himself to have

been forgotten. His novels experienced a resurgence in popularity starting in the 1940s and 1950s.

Whose Side of Paradise? Zelda Fitzgerald herself wrote a semi-autobiographical novel concerning her marriage and life during the Jazz Age, called *Save Me The Waltz* (1932). Though it sold poorly upon its publication, critics have found it interesting in the way it differs from F. Scott Fitzgerald's portrayal of their marriage and life during that period.

PLOT SUMMARY

Amory Blaine is born to middle-class, Midwestern parents. He spends most of his childhood traveling with his mother, Beatrice Blaine, and developing a taste for luxury. When Amory is 13 years old, Beatrice sends him to live with his aunt and uncle in Minneapolis. Amory struggles in school—he is well-educated and cultured, and his classmates consider him pretentious.

After two years in Minneapolis, Amory is both egotistical and insecure. Beatrice agrees to send Amory to St. Regis, a boarding school in Connecticut. Before starting at St. Regis, Amory visits Monsignor Darcy, a Catholic priest in upstate New York, a friend of Beatrice's, who immediately becomes a mentor to Amory. Amory has a difficult time at St. Regis, but his experience improves in his second year, especially as he becomes a school football star. At the end of his senior year, he decides to attend Princeton.

When Amory arrives at Princeton, he feels left out of the social scene, which is dominated by groups of upper-class boys from other elite New England prep schools. Amory soon befriends Thomas Parke D'Invilliers (Tom), who writes poetry for the school newspaper and shares Amory's interest in literature.

In his sophomore year, Amory becomes popular in the Princeton social scene. On his winter break in Minneapolis, he meets Isabelle Borgé, a beautiful young socialite. They immediately become mutually infatuated. That spring, Amory neglects his schoolwork and devotes most of his energy to partying, socializing, and maintaining a romantic correspondence with Isabelle. Amory remembers this period as one of the happiest times of his life and the high point of his youth. Near the end of the semester, Dick Humbird, a fellow student whom Amory admires, dies in a car crash. Amory travels to Long Island to visit Isabelle. After they kiss for the first time, they argue; Amory realizes that he doesn't love her, and he ends their affair.

At the beginning of the next year, Amory fails an exam and reverts to the lazy, rebellious manners of his youth. He is removed from his extracurricular activities and withdraws from the social scene. Amory's father, Stephen Blaine, dies, and Amory worries about his family's diminishing wealth. On a visit to Monsignor Darcy, Amory feels dispirited, but Darcy convinces him that he should not give up on college. World War I has begun, and Amory's friend Kerry Holiday leaves Princeton to enlist in the army. On a trip to New York City, Amory believes he sees the devil watching him.

In Amory's senior year, he becomes close friends with Burne Holiday, Kerry's strange brother. Amory begins to enjoy college again, though he develops a reputation for being eccentric. Amory visits his poor, widowed cousin, Clara Page. He falls in love with her, but she refuses to marry him. When the United States enters the war, Amory enlists and leaves Princeton with sadness.

In a brief interlude during the war, Beatrice dies, leaving Amory penniless. In a letter to Tom, Amory reveals that their friends Kerry Holiday and Jesse Ferrenby have died in the war, while Burne has gone missing. After the war, Amory moves to New York City and lives in an apartment with Tom and Alec Connage, another friend from Princeton.

Amory falls in love with Rosalind Connage, Alec's beautiful, materialistic, and selfish younger sister, and they soon talk about marrying. Amory takes a job at an advertising agency to make enough money to satisfy her, but she breaks off their engagement because of his lacking finances. Devasted, Amory spends week drinking excessively to avoid his pain. He quits his job, which he finds meaningless.

Prohibition of alcohol begins, forcing Amory to confront his feelings uninhibited. Amory revives his interest in reading literature, yet he still feels aimless and bored. Amory and Tom lament the state of contemporary writing and intellectual life.

Amory goes to visit an uncle in Maryland, where he meets Eleanor Savage, a beautiful and intelligent young woman who shares his interest in poetry. Amory and Eleanor spend much of the summer enjoying their love affair in the countryside. On the couple's last night there, they argue about marriage and atheism. In a fit of anger, Eleanor attempts suicide by riding her horse over a cliff, though she stops herself at the last minute. This event ruins their love.

In Atlantic City, Amory meets Alec and agrees to spend the night with him and another woman in a hotel room. When detectives knock on their door trying to catch an unmarried man and woman having sex with each other, Amory takes the blame for Alec. The police don't arrest them, but their misdeed is published in a newspaper. In the same newspaper, Amory learns that Rosalind is engaged to Dawson Ryder, a much wealthier man. Soon after, Amory learns both that his family's money has run out and that Monsignor Darcy has died.

In New York, as he prepares to return to Princeton, Amory reflects on his life and character. He begins to get over his egotism and wants to focus on being a better man. Amory decides to walk to Princeton because he cannot afford a train ticket. On the way, a man who turns out to be Jesse Ferrenby's

father gives him a ride. They discuss politics and modern life, and Amory declares his support for socialism and his rejection of the values of his era. At Princeton, he feels nostalgia for his youth and realizes that the only thing he can know with certainty is "himself."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Amory Blaine – Amory Blaine is the protagonist of *This Side of Paradise*. Born to parents Beatrice and Stephen Blaine, Amory spends most of his childhood traveling around Europe and the United States with Beatrice. When he is 13, he goes to live with family in Minneapolis. Two years later, he is sent to St. Regis, a boarding school in Connecticut. He then attends Princeton University but leaves in his senior year to fight in World War I, where he serves as a bayonet instructor. After the war, he moves to New York City and lives in an apartment with Thomas Parke D'Invilliers and Alec Connage, two of his friends from Princeton. By the end of the novel, Amory finds himself alone and impoverished in New York. His roommates have both moved out, leaving Amory unable to afford rent. By this point, Amory's mentor, Monsignor Darcy, and Amory's parents have died, leaving him with little money. All of his romantic affairs have been unsuccessful, and he is companionless. Despite his unfortunate circumstances, Amory demonstrates remarkable personal growth over the course of the novel. Though in his youth Amory is haughty, self-involved, lazy, and cruel, by the end of the novel, he refocuses his energy on being a better, more trustworthy, and self-aware man.

Beatrice Blaine – Beatrice Blaine is Amory's mother. Born Beatrice O'Hara, she grows up traveling around Europe and learning about art and culture. She has a love affair with Monsignor Darcy but declines to marry him because of his lower-class background. Instead, she marries Stephen Blaine, Amory's father, for money and status, and they have a loveless marriage and spend much of their time apart. Beatrice raises Amory in the manner of her own upbringing, and Amory attributes much of his haughty disposition to his mother's influence. When Amory is a young teenager, Beatrice has a nervous breakdown and sends Amory to Minneapolis to live at her father's **Lake Geneva estate**. When they reunite two years later, Beatrice reveals that her health problems were the result of excessive drinking. She also laments Amory's Americanized, bourgeois disposition, wishing that he could have attended traditional schools in England instead of St. Regis. Toward the end of her life, Beatrice invests the remainder of her money in railroads, which proves to be an unwise investment. She donates the rest of her money to the Catholic Church, leaving Amory with no inheritance except for the Lake Geneva estate. Beatrice dies during the war. Amory later compares the women he loves to Beatrice, who seems to provide a model of feminine love that influences Amory's romantic pursuits.

Rosalind Connage – Rosalind Connage, the younger sister of Alec Connage, has a brief but passionate love affair with Amory that leaves him devastated for the rest of the novel. The two meet at Rosalind's debutante ball, where they are immediately infatuated with each other. Rosalind is beautiful, clever, sophisticated, and flirtatious, and she has many male suitors whom she tires of easily. Rosalind and Amory are in some ways male and female counterparts: they are both intelligent, attractive, vain, selfish, and charming. And while they're both prone to infatuation, they're also quick to change their minds. But their different social positions ultimately leads to the disastrous end of their relationship. As a woman from a respectable, wealthy family, Rosalind is expected to marry a wealthy man who can give her a luxurious lifestyle. Amory, as an educated man from a respectable family, is supposed to provide money for his wife—but his vanishing inheritance and lack of income make this impossible. Eventually, Rosalind chooses to marry Dawson Ryder, a wealthy bachelor who convinces her that she will grow to love him. Rosalind promises Amory that he is the only man she will ever love and that their love was "the first real unselfishness" she ever experienced—however, because of his poverty, their marriage would make both of them miserable. Rosalind's abandonment sends Amory into a self-destructive drinking binge.

Monsignor Darcy – Monsignor Darcy is a Catholic priest who lives in upstate New York. He is close mentor to Amory. Monsignor Darcy had had a passionate love affair with Beatrice before she decided to marry Stephen Blaine for his background and money. This affair caused Darcy to have a "spiritual crisis" and convert to Catholicism. Amory visits Monsignor Darcy before he starts at St. Regis, and they immediately become close. They maintain a written correspondence throughout Amory's life. Monsignor Darcy helps guide Amory through the process of coming of age. Monsignor Darcy introduces Amory to the concept of a **"personality" versus "personage,"** an idea that frames Amory's quest for self-knowledge and self-improvement. Amory trusts Monsignor Darcy's advice more than anyone else's, and Monsignor Darcy considers Amory a "reincarnation' of himself, implying that he considers himself to be like a father to Amory. Amory is very saddened by Monsignor Darcy's sudden death later in the novel—much sadder than he was after his own father's death. During Monsignor Darcy's funeral, Amory realizes that he wants to be a better man whom people trust, like many people trusted Monsignor Darcy.

Thomas Parke D'Invilliers (Tom) – Thomas Parke D'Invilliers (Tom) is a close friend of Amory's at Princeton. Later, Tom, Amory, and Alec Connage live together in New York. Amory is first introduced to Tom by his poetry, published in the *Nassau Literary Magazine*, which Amory and Kerry consider pretentious. When Amory meets Tom in the dining hall, however, they

quickly establish a friendship based on their shared interest in literature. Tom is intellectual and bookish and at first disinterested in becoming part of the social scene, but Amory succeeds in Tom "conventional," encouraging him to change his appearance and discuss popular subjects. However, Tom resents his transformation and finds the Princeton social scene superficial and hierarchical, and he believes that without Amory's intervention, he could have become a great poet. After the war, Amory and Tom live together in New York, where Tom is a newspaper writer for *The New Democracy*. Tom and Amory share a sense of aimlessness and dissatisfaction. Tom moves out of the apartment when his mother becomes sick, which is the last time Amory sees him.

Burne Holiday – Burne Holiday is a close friend of Amory's at Princeton and the younger brother of Kerry Holiday. While Amory is initially closer with Kerry, Amory and Burne develop an intimate friendship during their senior year. Burne is intelligent, quiet, and eccentric, and he doesn't care about traditional markers of status at Princeton or about becoming part of the social scene, Many of his classmates consider him strange or even pretentious, but in fact he is simply contemplative. Burne also has a leadership role on the *Daily Princetonian*. In his senior year, Burne convinces much of the student body to resign from their clubs in an attempt to reform and equalize the Princeton social system. Amory has a deep admiration for Burne because of his intelligence, principles, and "earnestness," and they develop a deep friendship when Amory feels dissatisfied with and alienated from the Princeton social scene. Amory also admires Burne's sense of humor. Burne is the only person whom Amory believes is his intellectual equal. Amory also introduces Burne to Monsignor Darcy, indicating the strength of their friendship. When the war starts, Burne, a self-declared pacificist and socialist, refuses to fight. He leaves campus to return home when all his friends and classmates are enlisting in the army and is never heard from again. Amory often wonders what became of him and misses his company.

Isabelle Borgé – Isabelle Borgé is Amory's first love. Isabelle is beautiful, sophisticated, and charming, and she has a reputation for being flirtatious and kissing men. Isabelle and Amory are mutually infatuated when they first meet, and they exchange letters during the spring of Amory's sophomore year. Though Amory's letters are passionate, he finds Isabelle's lacking and "unsentimental." When Amory visits Isabelle's family in Long Island, they kiss for the first time and argue afterward. Amory realizes that he does not love Isabelle but instead is attracted by her "coldness." Isabelle, meanwhile, accuses Amory of being self-centered, "conceited," and excessively harsh. Throughout the rest of the novel, Amory compares the other women he loves to Isabelle, and he insists that Isabelle meant nothing to him "except what [he] read into her." Amory's treatment of Isabelle reveals his cruelty toward others and his obsession with chasing beauty.

Eleanor Savage – Eleanor Savage is a woman with whom Amory falls in love during a summer trip to Maryland after the war. Eleanor lives with her grandfather in the countryside. She was born and raised in France was sent back to Baltimore after her mother's death. After coming out as a debutante, Eleanor's partying and free-spirited behavior offended her relatives, and they sent her to the countryside. Eleanor and Amory have a whirlwind romance, sharing a love of literature and poetry and frolicking in the countryside together. Eleanor is highly intelligent and critical of the status quo, especially the social construct of marriage and gender norms. During their last night together, Eleanor attempts suicide by riding her horse off a cliff but throws herself off at the last minute, which causes Amory to fall out of love with her. Eleanor's beliefs, as well as the dissolution of their relationship, reinforce Amory's skepticism and pessimism about love. Amory considers Eleanor his last "wild" romance, and he credits the end of their relationship with destroying "a further part of him that nothing could restore."

Clara Page – Clara Page is an impoverished, widowed cousin of Amory's whom Monsignor Darcy urges Amory to visit in Philadelphia. Amory eventually falls in love with her. Unlike Amory's other loves, Clara is virtuous, kind, and grounded. Amory wants to marry Clara, but she refuses him because she wants to devote her time to her two children and vowed never to marry again. Clara also claims that she has never been in love and could not marry a clever man like Amory. Amory, meanwhile, considers Clara to be too good for him. Clara knows Amory well and is an excellent judge of his character, and she sets Amory on a path to becoming a "personage." Amory's relationship with Clara is the most distinct and least destructive of all his love affairs.

Dick Humbird – Dick Humbird is a classmate and friend of Amory's at Princeton. Dick comes to Princeton from St. Paul's, another elite New England prep school, and Amory initially desires his friendship. Amory tries to model his behavior after Dick's, believing that everything Dick does seems proper and effortless. Amory is eventually shocked and disappointed to learn that Dick does not come from old money—Dick's father had been poor and became wealthy through real estate in Tacoma. When Dick dies in a car crash while driving drunk near Princeton, Amory is horrified and realizes that Dick's wealth did not prevent him from dying a gruesome, "unaristocratic" death. Later in the novel, when running from what he thinks is the devil, Amory sees an apparition of Dick's face.

Kerry Holiday – Kerry Holiday is Amory's first friend at Princeton; they live in the same house during Amory's freshman year. Kerry is also Burne's older brother. Kerry and Amory bond over their initial frustrations with the Princeton social scene, feeling like they are not accepted because they are middle class. They become close and have a rowdy, lively friendship. Kerry is the first of Amory's classmates to leave

school to join the war, where he later dies.

Alec Connage – Alec Connage is a friend of Amory's at Princeton. Later on, Alec, Tom, and Amory live together in New York. Alec is also the brother of Rosalind and Cecilia. He disapproves of Amory's relationship with Rosalind, knowing that Amory is sensitive and predicting that Rosalind will break Amory's heart. Amory takes the blame when Alec breaks the law in Atlantic City, though he knows that Alec will resent him for it.

Stephen Blaine – Stephen Blaine is Amory's father. He's described as "an ineffectual, inarticulate man." Growing up, Amory is much closer with his mother, Beatrice. Amory is rather emotionless when Stephen dies. Stephen gained his money from his two older brothers, who had been successful brokers in Chicago. Beatrice marries Stephen for convenience and status, and they do not love each other.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Jesse Ferrenby – Jesse Ferrenby is a friend of Amory's at Princeton. Jesse competes with Amory to be on the board of the *Daily Princetonian*. Jesse is a passenger in the car crash that kills Dick. Jesse later dies in the war.

Fred Sloane – Fred Sloane is a friend of Amory's at Princeton. He's with Amory when Amory thinks he sees a devil. Fred, along with Jesse, is a passenger in the car crash that kills Dick.

Dawson Ryder – Dawson Ryder is an unremarkable but wealthy bachelor who is Amory's rival for Rosalind's affection. Rosalind eventually ends her relationship with Amory and decides to marry Dawson instead. Dawson convinces Rosalind that she will grow to love him.

Myra St. Claire – Myra St. Clair is the first girl Amory kisses, at a bob-sledding party in Minneapolis. Myra gives Amory his first experience of being disappointed and fickle about love: after they kiss, Amory feels disgusted by her and does not want to kiss her again, hurting her feelings.

Frog Parker – Frog Parker is Amory's friend from Minneapolis. Amory competes with Frog for girls' attention and worries what Frog thinks of him.

Rahill – Rahill is one of Amory's few friends in his final year at St. Regis. Amory considers him a "co-philosopher." Rahill is their class president. Rahill and Amory invent the concept of "**the slicker**."

Sally Weatherby – Sally Weatherby is one of Amory's friends and crushes from his time in Minneapolis. She writes him letters while he's at Princeton. She's also Isabelle's cousin and introduces Isabelle to Amory.

Mrs. Connage – Mrs. Connage is Alec, Rosalind, and Cecilia's mother. She disapproves of Amory because of his poverty and persuades Rosalind to marry Dawson Ryder instead.

Mrs. Lawrence – Mrs. Lawrence is a friend of Monsignor Darcy's with whom Amory becomes acquainted. Spending time with her makes Amory more hopeful about his life and future.

Jill Wayne – Jill Wayne is Alec's romantic companion. Amory, Jill, and Alec are in an Atlantic City hotel room together when detectives approach the room, trying to catch an unmarried couple having sex with each other. Amory takes the blame for breaking the law.

Mr. Ferrenby – Mr. Ferrenby is Jesse's father. At the end of the novel, Mr. Ferrenby offers Amory a ride to Princeton when he spots Amory attempting to get there on foot. They disagree about politics but wish each other well due to their mutual connection.

Mr. Barton – Mr. Barton is the Blaine family's lawyer. He sends Amory bad news about the state of his family's finances, especially regarding their investments and the **Lake Geneva Estate**, after Beatrice and Stephen's deaths.

Howard Gillespie – Howard Gillespie is one of Rosalind's wealthy suitors whom she rejects.

Cecilia Connage – Cecilia Connage is Alec and Rosalind's sister.

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.

YOUTH, INNOCENCE, AND COMING OF AGE

This Side of Paradise is primarily a coming-of-age novel, or *bildungsroman*: it traces Amory Blaine's development from childhood to adulthood, losing his youth and innocence along the way. Despite depicting youthhood nostalgically and romantically, the novel does not glorify youth in and of itself: rather, it suggests that losing one's innocence is necessary for self-knowledge and responsibility to others. In short, it suggests that many virtues are gained in the process of coming of age.

The virtues of becoming an adult are perhaps best exemplified by Monsignor Darcy's distinction between "personality" and "personage": "personality" refers to a person who is a constant, unchanging entity, and "personage" refers to a person who gathers experiences and learns from them. As Amory grows up throughout the novel, he becomes increasingly reflective and self-aware, and he learns to accept his flaws rather than dislike himself for them. He also dramatically shifts his attitudes regarding other people: while at the beginning of the novel he is

selfish and cruel, by the end of the novel he recognizes and regrets his cruelty and wants to be a person other people rely on. Amory also begins the novel relishing his youth and believing his years at Princeton and his romance with Isabelle Borgé are the high points of his life. After the war, feeling that his innocence has been lost and his youth abandoned, Amory feels despondent and behaves self-destructively. But by the end of the novel, while Amory still feels nostalgia for his lost youth, he knows that he does not ultimately want to return to a state of innocence: rather, he recognizes and celebrates the pleasure of maturing, realizing that he can still cherish the good times he's had while also leaving behind this youthful period of his life. There is a sense, therefore, that he has become a "personage," or at least is in the process of becoming one—that is, he accepts that reaching maturity means accepting a certain sense of continued development, change, and growth.

FRIENDSHIP AND MASCULINITY

In many ways, friendships between men are at the heart of *This Side of Paradise*. Many of Amory's deepest, most significant relationships are with his friends from Princeton, including Thomas Park D'Invilliers, Burne Holiday, and Dick Humbird. While these relationships are all platonic, the novel suggests that admiration, aspiration, and even desire are central to these friendships: Amory (as well as the rest of the boys) seems to want to *emulate* his male friends, in addition to wanting to be *around* them. The novel suggests that this particular combination of, and tension between, identification (that is, seeing oneself in the other) and desire (that is, wanting to be like the other) that exists in friendships between men creates a unique and intense form of intimacy.

Amory spends much of the novel in all-male environments—St. Regis', Princeton, and the army—that seem to create a particular atmosphere of camaraderie and masculine social life. Amory expresses a particular admiration for and desire to emulate Dick and Burne: regarding the former, Amory admires him as the center of attention of his social groups, thinking his conduct seems effortlessly proper and even aristocratic, an ideal to which Amory himself aspires, saying he never wants to seem like he has worked hard for what he has. When Dick dies, his memory continues to haunt Amory, who references him repeatedly throughout the novel. Regarding Burne, Amory wants to emulate his intelligence, principle, and idiosyncrasy. Amory and Burne take long walks at night together, an intimate activity Amory pursues with only one other character in the novel, Eleanor Savage, with whom he is romantically involved. While Amory self-consciously seeks companionship in women, then, it is in his male friendships that he is able to express himself most honestly.

WAR, MODERN LIFE, AND GENERATIONS

The experience of World War I is central to *This Side of Paradise*. Though the years of the war themselves are absent from the novel (except for the brief interlude in the middle), the years leading up to the war seem to foreshadow it, and the years following the war are thoroughly defined by the aftermath of the conflict. The novel sketches a portrait of a new generation that is profoundly distinct from its predecessors, and it explores a period marked by progress and the sense that the war has ushered in a completely new era. In this way, the novel argues that World War I was a crucial turning point in history that acutely shaped the lives of those who lived through it—and particularly those who fought in it, like Amory and his friends. On a broader level, the novel's exploration of the war and modern life gives way to an illustration of Amory's generation, which struggled to find its way forward in the midst of so much change and was therefore dubbed the "Lost Generation."

Indeed, the word "generation" appears nearly 20 times over the course of the novel, often in characters' own words referencing themselves. Exemplified by Amory and his friends, this generation, the novel argues, was defined by its disorientation, aimlessness, and rebellion against old cultural values: "My whole generation is restless," Amory explains. Amory and other characters in the novel make frequent reference to Victorian values and the rejection thereof, particularly regarding the war and sexuality. There is a sense that Amory's generation, given their historical circumstances, have a particular urge to rebel against their predecessors given the rapid technological and societal changes they witness and the traumatizing violence they experience. Indeed, World War I is often thought of as a historical turning point that reveals the horrors of modernity, and this influence on the characters in the novel is evident and profound. There is also particular sense that after the war, the world that the "Lost Generation" inhabits has undergone a complete break from the world preceding it: the world moves faster, and "progress" is the guiding concept of the era. *This Side of Paradise* thus captures the spirit of a generation that has been thrust into modern life by the war.

MONEY AND CLASS

Class status and class mobility—both upward and downward—are central concerns in *This Side of Paradise*. Amory starts the novel with a middle-class, moneyed family, but by the end he has no inheritance. The novel ultimately hints at the meaninglessness and futility of chasing money and worshipping class hierarchy: wealth is shown to be impermanent and undependable, and it's also implied in the novel that a person's financial status is no guarantee of integrity, character, or happiness—and in fact,

often quite the opposite.

Amory's views on money, class, and hierarchy shift dramatically over the course of the novel. He's initially enthralled by luxury and aristocratic tastes and values, and he wants to go to boarding school because it will gain him entrance into elite society, and he chooses Princeton because it seems idyllic and "aristocratic." But when he arrives at Princeton, he feels out of place for being "middle class," wishing that he had been born at the top of the class hierarchy and saying he does not want to appear to work for anything. Amory particularly idolizes Dick Humbird, who seems to him the model portrait of an aristocrat to which Amory aspires. But Amory is shocked to learn that Dick's father came from poverty and made a fortune, revealing the superficiality of the virtue that Amory assigned to Dick's lineage. And when Dick is killed in a car accident, Amory realizes that Dick's money didn't protect him from a gruesome death, which he views as "unaristocratic," "close to the earth," and "squalid"—in short, Amory sees that money and status could not buy Dick dignity.

Later in the novel, despite the rapid diminishing of his family's fortunes due to bad investments, Amory cannot come to terms with his vanishing wealth and quits his low-paying advertising job because he finds it meaningless. With his declining class status, Amory also learns that money often infuses a certain superficiality into romantic relationships: when Rosalind Connage leaves him to marry Dawson Ryder, a wealthier man whom she does not love, he further sees the injustice of class hierarchy. By the end of the novel, Amory believes in socialism, a system of belief that contrasts with the capitalistic, money-obsessed ethos of American culture. While he still dislikes and fears poverty, he sees that a social and economic system that prioritizes money will always punish those who live for love or other deeper, less superficial values.

LOVE AND SEXUALITY

Amory is prone to falling deeply in love and feeling passionately attracted to women. Indeed, he is enamored with four women over the course of the novel: Isabelle Borgé, Clara Page, Rosalind Connage, and Eleanor Savage. Youth sexuality and romance are increasingly permitted in Amory's surrounding cultural landscape, though they are still considered inappropriate by elders. The novel suggests that despite the relative sexual freedom that Amory, his friends, and his lovers enjoy, love and sexuality in and of themselves aren't capable of providing meaning, purpose, or comfort.

Amory comes to realize throughout the novel that love and sexuality are not exempt from any of the world's social problems. When Rosalind leaves him because he has no money, he learns that love is governed by the same rules of class hierarchy that often made him feel inferior at Princeton. What's more, Eleanor articulates the burdens that love, sexuality, and marriage place on women in this era: even though she is highly intelligent, she is destined to marriage, which will inevitably be to an upper-class man who is her intellectual inferior. For women, therefore, love is like a cage confining them in a fixed and rather unrewarding social position. And for both men and women, love essentially becomes little more than a way to achieve class mobility. Sexuality is also a tool with which the government can punish citizens, such as when the detectives in Atlantic City try to catch Alec Connage having sex with a woman who is not his wife. By the end of the novel, Amory realizes that he has been chasing love and sex for the wrong reasons: instead of seeking women for the personal fulfillment that their love and companionship could bring him, he was chasing them for their superficial beauty. Amory eventually realizes that his quest for beauty has *corrupted* rather than improved him, turning him away from his ideals and further ensnaring him in the restrictive social norms he has repeatedly tried to overcome throughout his life. The novel is, therefore, quite pessimistic about love and sexuality, emphasizing the virtues of self-sufficiency and individual personhood.

SYMBOLS

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

LAKE GENEVA ESTATE

The Lake Geneva estate symbolizes the values of inheritance and lineage in modern America—and the distinction between these values. The estate, which is in Wisconsin and originally belonged to Beatrice Blaine's father, becomes Amory's sole inheritance after Beatrice dies. Mr. Barton, the family's lawyer, reveals to Amory that Amory will not be able to make any money from the estate: any rent he collects will barely cover the costs of maintaining the house. Therefore, while Amory comes from a family with a good background, he has no money to show for it. This phenomenon—of having good lineage but no substantial inheritance—is especially possible in modern, capitalist America, where fortunes are (somewhat) easily made and lost within generations—as evidenced by characters such as Dick Humbird.

The Lake Geneva estate also reflects the Blaine family's ties to the Midwest. Early in the novel, the narrator claims that the Blaine family was "attached to no city" and were instead "the Blaines of Lake Geneva." But despite Amory's Midwestern origins, he later moves to the East Coast, literally and symbolically distancing himself from his family. Such mobility reflects the increasingly possible feat of upward mobility in modern American society. However, though a person can reinvent themselves to a degree, they can never truly leave

their past behind. Though Amory moves to the East Coast and tries to make a new life for himself there, the insubstantial inheritance of the Lake Geneva estate prevents Amory from leaving his past behind: he is tied to his family's legacy and place of origin, though he's lost all that makes it luxurious.

THE SLICKER

"The slicker" symbolizes conformity to the new dominant model of masculinity that characterizes the generation depicted in *This Side of Paradise*. Amory creates the concept of "the slicker" with his friend Rahill in their final year at St. Regis. A slicker is a person who is identifiable by his slicked-back hair and "clever sense of social values." He also "dresses well," pretending "that dress is superficial—but know[ing] that it isn't," and he does everything he can to project an outward appearance of success. The novel contrasts the slicker with "the big man," an antiquated model of upper-class masculinity. Unlike the slicker, the big man is not aware of social values and does not care about his appearance. He is also unsuccessful in life and feels nostalgia for his prep school days.

In many ways, the slicker resonates with the idea of being "conventional," or maintaining the status quo. For example, Amory tells Beatrice that Minneapolis has made him "conventional," and Tom blames Amory for making him "conventional" at Princeton. Slickers are conventional in that they conform to the customs of society increasingly defined by new class relations and gender roles. Amory, who is middle class, mixes with upper-class students at St. Regis and Princeton, but by their shared educational experience they become part of the same class and are subject to the same customs of masculinity. "The slicker," therefore, like Amory in certain periods, is a man in this time of change who knows how to mold himself to society and maintain, or improve, his class status: he acts according to social customs, he cares about how others perceive him, and he attempts to get ahead.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin edition of *This Side of Paradise* published in 1996.

Book 1, Chapter 1: Amory, Son of Beatrice Quotes

❝ All in all Beatrice O'Hara absorbed the sort of education that will be quite impossible ever again; a tutelage measured by the number of things and people one could be contemptuous of and charming about; a culture rich in all arts and traditions, barren of all ideas, in the last of those days when the great gardener clipped the inferior roses to produce one perfect bud.

Related Characters: Beatrice Blaine

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3-4

Explanation and Analysis

This quote situates Amory's cultural and class background and also introduces the theme of generational difference. Here, readers learn that while Beatrice was not from an aristocratic or upper-class family, she had an aristocratic and upper-class education: she traveled through Europe and absorbed European high culture, which set her apart from her American middle-class peers. As this quote indicates, the opportunity for such an education for a middle-class woman was ending by the turn of the 20th century: American educational institutions for the middle classes were increasing in prominence and accessibility, and the United States was further distinguishing itself from Europe as it developed as a country. As a result, American ideas of class became distinguished from European ideas of class, especially because of the possibility of class mobility in America. This shift in forms of education in part signals the generational divide that Amory and his peers come to feel between themselves and their elders: as they grow up, they develop an American, middle-class identity that wasn't yet fully formed when Beatrice was growing up.

❝ Vanity, tempered with self-suspicion if not self-knowledge, a sense of people as automatons to his will, a desire to "pass" as many boys as possible and get to a vague top of the world. (…) With this background did Amory drift into adolescence.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine

Related Themes:

Page Number: 17-18

Explanation and Analysis

This quote introduces core aspects of Amory's personality that will repeatedly be referenced throughout the rest of the novel. Later, Amory will refer to this version of himself as "the fundamental Amory," or one of the "personalities" he will pass through on his journey to becoming a "personage." This description of Amory's character is not particularly flattering; indeed, much of "the fundamental Amory" is egotistical, narcissistic, cruel, haughty, and selfish. This

portrait of Amory is also contradictory, a contradiction in his sense of self that persists throughout the novel: Amory is both self-centered and overly confident while still being self-doubting and insecure at the same time. Amory's process of becoming a "personage" does not mean completely shedding these aspects of himself, unpleasant as they are. Rather, this understanding of "the fundamental Amory" will persist throughout the novel as the core around which he develops and grows.

❝ Amory's secret ideal had all the slicker qualifications, but, in addition, courage and tremendous brains and talents—also Amory conceded him a bizarre streak that was quite irreconcilable to the slicker proper.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 32-33

Explanation and Analysis

Here, the concept of conformity to an upper-class social environment is introduced: that is, becoming "conventional," an idea that remains relevant through much of the novel. "The slicker" represents conformity to the social model of masculinity that dominates in environments like St. Regis and Princeton. This quote foreshadows what will become a central struggle for Amory: namely, that he wants to be accepted and rise to the top of the social hierarchy, even if he also disdains arbitrary hierarchies and their modes of exclusion. The "ideal" of the slicker that Amory sets up is, in many ways, the type of man he sees himself becoming, but even before he has achieved his goal, he knows that he is too idiosyncratic to want to fully be accepted as a member of his generation and social class. The "bizarre streak" that Amory identifies in himself here will always make him feel like he is fundamentally still striving, that he has not achieved social acceptance, and that he is perpetually an outsider.

Book 1, Chapter 2: Spires and Gargoyles Quotes

❝ "Oh, it isn't that I mind the glittering caste system," admitted Amory. "I like having a bunch of hot cats on top, but gosh, Kerry, I've got to be one of them."

"But just now, Amory, you're only a sweaty bourgeois."

Amory lay for a moment without speaking.

"I won't be—long," he said finally. "But I hate to get anywhere by working for it. I'll show the marks, don't you know."

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Kerry Holiday (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Amory is in his first year at Princeton and struggling to feel accepted as part of the social system. When Kerry says that Amory is "only a sweaty bourgeois," he means that Amory cannot hide the fact that he is middle class and striving to seem upper class, while many of his classmates come from upper-class backgrounds and do not have to work to make themselves seem socially conventional. Amory resents that he has to work to fit in, worrying that it marks him as inferior. But though Amory aspires to seem leisurely and moneyed, as if he has not worked for anything, this quote implicitly suggests that such an aspiration is paradoxical and impossible: by altering oneself to seem more upper-class, one necessarily must work—such a transformation cannot be effortless. Thus, by the time Amory has made himself conventional, he will certainly show that he has worked for it; that is, he will still be "sweaty."

❝ "He knows you're—you're considered beautiful and all that"—she paused—"and I guess he knows you've been kissed."

At this Isabelle's little fist had clinched suddenly under the fur robe. She was accustomed to be thus followed by her desperate past, and it never failed to rouse in her the same feeling of resentment; yet—in a strange town it was an advantageous reputation. She was a "Speed," was she? Well—let them find out.

Related Characters: Sally Weatherby (speaker), Isabelle Borgé

Related Themes:

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Sally Weatherby, Amory's childhood friend, is speaking to her cousin Isabelle about what she (Sally) has told Amory about her (Isabelle). This quote demonstrates how this new generation's attitudes about sexuality have drastically diverged from those of their parents: it is newly possible for young men and women to have relationships not supervised by adults, and they are free to kiss and express their affection for each other. The term "Speed" is a new concept made possible by these new freedoms: it refers to someone who moves quickly in romantic relationships, perhaps improperly so. It might be equivalent to the contemporary idea of calling somebody "fast" or "easy," terms that often reflect double standards in societal perceptions of women's and men's sexuality (since the terms are usually applied to women as an insult, whereas men are often celebrated for their promiscuity and sexual liberties). Isabelle evidently has a "reputation" that lets potential suitors know that she is sexually available, which she seems to consider both frustrating and beneficial in different contexts. This dynamic suggests that, while there are new sexual freedoms for young men and women, women are far from liberated and are still bound by societal notions of propriety.

> Long afterward Amory thought of sophomore spring as the happiest time of his life. His ideas were in tune with life as he found it; he wanted no more than to drift and dream and enjoy and enjoy a dozen new-found friendships through the April afternoons.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine

Related Themes:

Page Number: 67

Explanation and Analysis

Here, the narrator reflects on a crucial point in Amory's process of coming of age. This period in his life, almost halfway through his time in college, is the pinnacle of Amory's youth. The United States has not yet joined World War I, and so Amory and his peers have not yet experienced the trauma that will cause them to be aimless and depressed for much of their young lives after the war. This quote, importantly, foreshadows the moment later in the novel when Amory reflects that he doesn't "want to repeat [his] innocence" but instead wants "the pleasure of losing it again." In this moment, Amory has his innocence—what he metaphorically describes later as a "big plate of candy." Although Amory thought of this as the best time of his life "long afterward," he also in retrospect knows that he will never be able to relive this time of his life, perhaps indicating what makes it the happiest time: the fact that it is the most fleeting and most impossible to recover.

> "No," declared Tom emphatically, a new Tom, clothed by Brooks, shod by Franks, "I've won this game, but I feel as if I never want to play another. You're all right—you're a rubber ball, and somehow it suits you, but I'm sick of adapting myself to the local snobbishness of this corner of the world. I want to go where people aren't barred because of the color of their neckties and the roll of their coats."

Related Characters: Thomas Parke D'Invilliers (Tom) (speaker), Amory Blaine

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 77

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Tom describes the consequences that he has suffered from becoming "conventional." The reference to Brooks, meaning Brooks Brothers—an iconic menswear brand that defined 19th- and 20th-century Ivy League style, creating an aesthetic that was shared by middle- and upper-class educated men—symbolizes Tom's new conventionality. Clothing is significant to becoming "conventional" because it reflects an awareness of social conventions and an intentional attempt to conform. Earlier in the novel, Amory described "the slicker" as someone who "dresses well," pretending "that dress is superficial—but know[ing] that it isn't." Thus, the symbol of "the slicker" is implicitly invoked in this quote, showing that Tom has reluctantly become a slicker, against his better judgment. Tom's distaste for his conformity demonstrates the superficiality of the hierarchies and social conventions that dominate Princeton, which Amory will later come to recognize. While at this moment Amory seems to Tom a "rubber ball" (that is, someone who bounces around in his contained environment and whose path is shaped by the space), later Amory will resist such conformity.

Book 1, Chapter 3: The Egotist Considers Quotes

He became aware that he had not an ounce of real affection for Isabelle, but her coldness piqued him. He wanted to kiss her, kiss her a lot, because then he knew he could leave in the morning and not care. On the contrary, if he didn't kiss her, it would worry him… It would interfere vaguely with his idea of himself as a conqueror.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Isabelle Borgé

Related Themes:

Page Number: 84

Explanation and Analysis

Amory has this realization about his true feelings for Isabelle right after they kiss for the first time at her family's home in Long Island. This quote demonstrates Amory's troubled and even misogynistic attitude towards women and romantic relationships. It also illustrates Amory's cruelty, selfishness, and callousness toward others in his youth. Amory's desire to kiss Isabelle to feel like a "conqueror" is rooted in misogynistic ideas about sexual relationships as a form of violence and domination. In particular, his idea that achieving this form of domination will free him from emotional attachment suggests why Amory struggles to find fulfilling, reciprocal romantic relationships: he persistently treats women as objects to be conquered and not as equals with whom he can cultivate emotional intimacy. In addition, Amory's description here of what attracts him to Isabelle—that is, her "coldness"—foreshadows his later relationships, with Rosalind and Eleanor in particular. Amory will repeatedly be attracted to tempestuous women in whom he sees some of his own cruelty and indifference to others, setting himself up for heartbreak.

"A personality is what you thought you were, what this Kerry and Sloane you tell me of evidently are. Personality is a physical matter almost entirely; it lowers the people it acts on—I've seen it vanish in a long sickness. But while a personality is active, it overrides 'the next thing.' Now a personage, on the other hand, gathers. He is never thought of apart from what he's done. He's a bar on which a thousand things have been hung—glittering things sometimes, as ours are; but he uses those things with a cold mentality back of them."

Related Characters: Monsignor Darcy (speaker), Amory Blaine, Kerry Holiday, Fred Sloane

Related Themes:

Page Number: 95-96

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Monsignor Darcy introduces the concept of a "personality" versus a "personage," which shapes Amory's understanding of himself for the rest of the novel. This concept introduces to Amory the idea that growing up and coming of age is not entirely a loss, but also that in gaining new experiences he is becoming a more mature version of himself. While earlier in the novel, Amory's desire to conform has made him alter himself, this self-transformation still constitutes being a "personality" by this rubric: Amory's steadfast belief in the social system has made him "override" the part of himself that doubts its validity and views it as unjust. While still a personality, Amory's experiences are filtered through his unyielding worldview. But as Monsignor Darcy makes clear here, becoming a "personage" is not giving in to the world: it is combining one's sense of self (a "cold mentality") with the insights from one's experiences, friends, and relationships.

Book 1, Chapter 4: Narcissus Off Duty Quotes

The intense power Amory felt later in Burne Holiday differed from the admiration he had had for Humbird[…]. Amory was struck by Burne's intense earnestness[…]. Burne stood vaguely for a land Amory hoped he was drifting toward—and it was almost time that land was in sight.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Burne Holiday, Dick Humbird

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 112

Explanation and Analysis

This quote illustrates the desire and aspiration that is central to Amory's friendships with other men. Amory experiences what is described here as almost akin to an attraction to Burne, a magnetism (Burne's "intense power") that seems to mirror descriptions of romantic attraction elsewhere in the novel. That Amory's attraction to Burne is different from his earlier infatuation with Dick Humbird reflects some of Amory's maturity and development by this point in the novel: he is already coming to recognize the

superficiality of hierarchy, conformity, and money—which is what he had admired about Dick. Now, what he admires about Burne (his "earnestness") is Burne's rejection of this conformity and worship of upper-class sensibilities—in other words, Amory is starting to lean into his earlier-identified "bizarre streak" and reject the ideal of "the slicker."

Amory's description of his aspiration to be like Burne—that Burne is "a land Amory hoped he was drifting toward"—also indicates that Amory is beginning to become a personage and let his friendships shape his sense of self for the better. However, that Amory feels that the "land was in sight" of his emulation of Burne will not prove to be true: when the war begins, Amory will lose contact with Burne and will never see what their friendship could have helped them mutually become. This loss of Burne (which is foreshadowed in this section) is akin to the romantic losses that Amory experiences.

> She was immemorial.... Amory wasn't good enough for Clara, Clara of ripply golden hair, but then no man was. Her goodness was above the prosy morals of the husband-seeker, apart from the dull literature of female virtue.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Rosalind Connage, Isabelle Borgé, Eleanor Savage, Clara Page

Related Themes:

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

Amory's relationship with and attitude toward Clara is notably distinct from his other romantic relationships in the novel. Amory sees some of himself in all of his other lovers. In contrast, Amory puts Clara on a pedestal and is drawn to her because he sees her as his moral superior. Clara makes Amory want to be less haughty and self-interested. Unlike with Amory's other lovers (whom Amory feels confident in his ability to conquer), Amory does not effortlessly charm Clara, instead seeing himself as unworthy of her. While Amory demonstrates his admiration for Clara, this quote still reflects the same misogynistic attitude toward women that prevents him from seeing them as his equals. Amory frames his respect for Clara by comparing her to other women, whom he believes to be inferior to her in their femininity. For example, he dismisses other women in Clara's social position as "prosy" (meaning dull and commonplace) "husband-seeker[s]," despite the fact that in this period finding a husband was usually a necessary pursuit for women in order to have stability and safety. In addition, he describes typical "female virtue" as "dull," despite the fact that the pressures for conformity and proper behavior were perhaps even more rigid than for men at the time, forcing women to model such typical "female virtue." Later in the novel, Eleanor will point out some of these gendered hypocrisies to Amory.

> "You know," whispered Tom, "what we feel now is the sense of all the gorgeous youth that has rioted through here in two hundred years. (...) And what we leave here is more than one class; it's the whole heritage of youth. We're just one generation—we're breaking all the links that seemed to bind us here to top-booted and high-stocked generations."

Related Characters: Thomas Parke D'Invilliers (Tom) (speaker), Amory Blaine

Related Themes:

Page Number: 140

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, which Tom says to Amory on their last night at Princeton before leaving for the war, encapsulates both the emerging sense of generational identity that eventually comes to define them and the premature nostalgia for the innocence that they know they will lose in the war. While Tom knows that previous generations of Princeton men felt this time in their lives to be the high point in their youth, for Tom and Amory and their friends, this departure from college will be different because they will lose their innocence like none before them, as they are being sent into the first modern war of the largest scale the world has ever seen. Tom recognizes that they are part of a significant generation whose early introduction to adulthood will mark a historical turning point; that their generation is abruptly entering the modern world, which will mark a completely new era. More than the past generations that have "rioted through here [over] two hundred years," their generation is fully breaking from the past: they are severing "all the links that seemed to bind them" to their ancestors, who are represented by Tom's description of "top-booted and high-stocked generations," referencing older styles of fashion—unlike Tom's new Brooks Brothers, which defines his modern sensibility.

Interlude: May, 1917 – February, 1919 Quotes

This is the end of one thing: for better or worse you will never again be quite the Amory Blaine that I knew, never again will we meet as we have met, because your generation is growing hard, much harder than mine ever grew, nourished as they were in the stuff of the nineties.

Related Characters: Monsignor Darcy (speaker), Amory Blaine

Related Themes:

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears in a letter that Monsignor Darcy sends to Amory during the war. Here, from an older generation's perspective, Monsignor Darcy articulates what he sees as the significance of the emerging generational divide and beginning of the modern world. Monsignor Darcy recognizes that Amory's generation is enduring traumatic experiences that his own generation could never have imagined. "The nineties" here means the 1890s, a period in which the United States experienced unprecedented prosperity (for elites, at least) after decades of rapid industrialization. In the 1890s, the United States was gaining unprecedented global power, and a sense of perpetual progress pervaded the national culture. By the start of World War I, while many maintained this sense of progress, there was a growing understanding that industrialization was creating both vast inequality and new, more destructive ways to wage wars. These revelations, Monsignor Darcy recognizes, are making Amory's generation "hard"—that is, they are becoming cynical and desensitized by seeing and participating in the vast scope of human suffering in the world. Monsignor Darcy's belief that Amory will be completely transformed by the war also foreshadows Amory's significant evolution in the second half of the novel.

Book 2, Chapter 1: The Débutante Quotes

SHE: Well, Amory, you don't mind—do you? When I meet a man that doesn't bore me to death after two weeks, perhaps it'll be different.

HE: Odd, you have the same point of view on men that I have on women.

SHE: I'm not really feminine, you know—in my mind.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Rosalind Connage (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

This exchange between Amory and Rosalind, which takes place right after they first meet, illustrates that much of what they are attracted to in each other is their similarities—that is, they largely like each other because they see themselves in each other. They mirror each other in their self-absorption, callousness, fickleness, and charm. While the other women with whom Amory is romantically involved are perhaps more sentimental than him, Rosalind sees herself as above femininity and the sentimentality associated with it. The distinct intensity of Rosalind and Amory's relationship, and Rosalind's unique capacity to hurt Amory later, perhaps reflects this similarity they share, demonstrating the idea that perhaps of all the women in Amory's life, Amory sees Rosalind as most equal to him because they are the most alike.

All life was transmitted into terms of their love, all experience, all desires, all ambitions, were nullified—their senses of humor crawled into corners to sleep; their former love affairs seemed faintly laughable and scarcely regretted juvenalia. For the second time in his life Amory had a complete bouleversement and was hurrying into line with his generation.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Rosalind Connage

Related Themes:

Page Number: 171

Explanation and Analysis

This quote demonstrates the emotional significance of Amory and Rosalind's love affair, and it is one of the few moments in the novel when Amory is optimistic and happy about love. In fact, it is the intensity and all-consuming nature of his love of Rosalind described here that leads Amory to be so pessimistic about love later in the novel. That feelings as intimate as theirs could later be corrupted by the forces of class and social conformity provokes a dramatic reaction in Amory, leading him to dismiss love as a corrupting force. What the narrator identifies as Amory's "bouleversement" (meaning reversal or revolution) is

Amory's brief sense during his romance with Rosalind that he could live a conventional life of marriage, family, and conformity with her—a life that would align him with his peers. But this sense of feeling in "line with his generation" is only a fleeting illusion: it is the feeling of direction that his relationship with Rosalind gives him. Ironically, only later will it become clear that, in fact, it is Amory's aimlessness after his breakup with Rosalind that will actually make him representative of his generation, the "Lost Generation"—not his conformity to the traditional path of marriage.

ROSALIND: Amory, I'm yours—you know it. There have been times in the last month I'd have been completely yours if you'd said so. But I can't marry you and ruin both our lives. (...) I can't Amory, I can't be shut away from the trees and flowers, cooped up in a little flat, waiting for you. You'd hate me in a narrow atmosphere. I'd make you hate me.

Related Characters: Rosalind Connage (speaker), Amory Blaine, Dawson Ryder

Related Themes:

Page Number: 179

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Rosalind is articulating her reasons for ending her engagement to Amory and implying her future engagement to his wealthy rival, Dawson Ryder. The idea that their marriage would "ruin both [their] lives" reflects the intense pressures of class in modern society. These pressures revolved around the idea that genuine love was not enough to make a good marriage. Instead, most people believed that money and stability were necessary in order to make a relationship sustainable, regardless of whether or not spouses were in love. The fact that Rosalind feels she would be transformed for the worse by poverty further underscores her similarity to Amory: later in the novel, when Amory is truly poor for the first time, he admits to himself that he believes poverty will make him a worse man, thus reflecting the extent to which financial anxiety—as well as class-consciousness—impacted the way people navigated their lives during this period.

Book 2, Chapter 2: Experiments in Convalescence Quotes

" 'S a mental was'e,' he insisted with his owl-like wisdom. "Two years my life spent inalleshual vacuity. Los' idealism, got be physcal anmal," he shook his fist expressively at Old King Cole, "got be Prussian 'bout ev'thing, women 'specially. Use' be straight 'bout women college. Now don'givadam. (...) Seek pleasure where find it for to-morrow die. 'At's philosophy for me now on."

Related Characters: Amory Blaine (speaker), Rosalind Connage

Related Themes:

Page Number: 183

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears soon after the end of Amory and Rosalind's breakup, when Amory is suppressing his feelings by drinking excessively. Despite his state of impairment, Amory is articulating a remarkably coherent assessment of the effects that the war had on him (and, by extension, his generation). He describes how the war destroyed his sense of "idealism," part of the innocence he had in his youth. Further, he describes how the war gave him a hedonistic mentality, as he now tries to "seek pleasure" in the short term, believing that he might die the next day. Though Amory's assessment of his particular attitude toward women is evidently influenced by his heartbreak, his claims demonstrate the broader effect that the war had on men and imply that the trauma that men endured in the war have made it difficult for many of them to find meaningful relationships with women, despite the expectation that they marry and start families after returning home.

Amory had loved Rosalind as he would never love another living person. She had taken the first flush of his youth and brought from his unplumbed depths tenderness that had surprised him, gentleness and unselfishness that he had never given to another creature. He had later love-affairs, but of a different sort: in those he went back to that, perhaps, more typical frame of mind, in which the girl became the mirror of a mood in him.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Rosalind Connage, Eleanor Savage, Clara Page

Related Themes:

Page Number: 191-2

Explanation and Analysis

This quote further demonstrates the intensity of Amory's love for Rosalind, and therefore the degree to which the pain of its dissolution traumatized Amory and made it more difficult for him to have romantic relationships in the future. Despite the fact that both Amory and Rosalind are deeply selfish people, the intensity of their love does make him better and inspires him to be unselfish and tender in a way that even his love for Clara, who is a more moral person, did not. This quote therefore demonstrates the power of love, a power so strong that it scared Amory away, despite seeing how wonderful it could be. By referencing his later love affairs, the narrator foreshadows Amory's relationship with Eleanor, whose wildness and rebelliousness will serve as a "mirror" of Amory's "mood" at the time of their romance: a mood of passionate, aimless recklessness.

"[The war] certainly ruined the old backgrounds, sort of killed individualism out of our generation. (…) I'm not sure it didn't kill it out of the whole world. Oh, Lord, what a pleasure it used to be to dream I might be a really great dictator or writer or religious or political leader—and now even Leonardo da Vinci or Lorenzo de Medici couldn't be a real old-fashioned bolt in the world. Life is too huge and complex. The world is so overgrown that it can't lift its own fingers, and I was planning to be such an important finger—"

Related Characters: Amory Blaine (speaker), Thomas Parke D'Invilliers (Tom)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 196

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, which Amory says in a conversation with Tom, perhaps best illustrates the sense of generational divide and the novelty of modern life that the novel emblematizes. The notion of the death of individualism directly explains the sense of aimlessness that pervades the "Lost Generation": with the belief that they can no longer be important because the world is so "huge and complex," they are not motivated by a sense of heroism that inspired their ancestors, and they are struggling to find a sense of meaning and purpose in a world which feels increasingly vast, violent, and "overgrown." This phenomenon is intensely personal for Amory, who lacks the sense of individual purpose that he had for much of college found through literature and writing. The war, which he had earlier described in his state of drunkenness as two years of "inalleshual vacuity," has robbed him of the sense of meaning which intellectual stimulation had given him in his youth.

Book 2, Chapter 3: Young Irony Quotes

Eleanor was, say, the last time that evil crept close to Amory under the mask of beauty.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Rosalind Connage, Isabelle Borgé, Eleanor Savage, Clara Page

Related Themes:

Page Number: 204

Explanation and Analysis

The idea expressed in this quote, that the temptations of romantic love are a form of evil, is one of Amory's major realizations by the end of the novel that leads him to his pessimistic view of love and sexuality. In earlier relationships with Isabelle, Clara, and Rosalind, Amory saw the exciting possibilities of being in love. But after the end of his relationship with Rosalind, Amory comes to see love as fundamentally corrupted and dangerous, leading him away from his quest for individual fulfillment and self-knowledge. Such a belief perhaps reflects the fact that, aside from Clara, Amory is drawn to tempestuous, withholding women, but it is particularly his relationship with Rosalind that makes him believe that love is evil. Therefore, by the start of his relationship with Eleanor, he is already cynical and distrustful of love, and believes that when his pursuit of beauty is a futile quest.

"Rotten, rotten old world," broke out Eleanor suddenly, "and the wretchedest thing of all is me—oh, *why* am I a girl? (…) Here I am with the brains to do everything, yet tied to the sinking ship of future matrimony."

Related Characters: Eleanor Savage (speaker), Amory Blaine, Rosalind Connage, Dawson Ryder

Related Themes:

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

On their last night together, Eleanor points out to Amory

the double standards that govern the norms of relationships between men and women. To Eleanor, marriage seems like a dead end or, in her words, a "sinking ship": that is, something that is destined to ruin her but that she is powerless to stop or avoid. Eleanor implies here that she would rather not get married but that that option is not available to a woman of her class status. In the same way that Rosalind previously revealed to Amory how love can be corrupted by money (showing him this by choosing Dawson Ryder over him), now Eleanor reveals to Amory that love can be corrupted by misogynistic gender norms. Eleanor, like Amory, develops a cynical view of love, marriage, and sexuality, but her cynicism comes from a place of marginalization: Eleanor recognizes that marriage is a tool to force her into conformity.

Book 2, Chapter 4: The Supercilious Sacrifice Quotes

Sacrifice by its very nature was arrogant and impersonal; sacrifice should be eternally supercilious.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Alec Connage, Jill Wayne

Related Themes:

Page Number: 228

Explanation and Analysis

Amory reflects on sacrifice when he is in Atlantic City with Alec Connage and his female companion, Jill Wayne. Amory decides to take the blame for being alone with an unmarried woman in a hotel room, sacrificing himself for Alec. This moment demonstrates the extent to which Amory's character has developed and matured over the course of the novel: the fact that Amory is willing to make the sacrifice shows that he has become less self-interested, and the fact that he refuses to congratulate himself for his act of generosity illustrates his newfound humility. While Amory has been haughty and egotistical for much of the earlier part of the novel without much self-awareness, in this moment he recognizes that his behavior is not inherently selfless even when he makes a sacrifice for someone else, and he acknowledges his own superciliousness (meaning conceitedness or condescension). Much of Amory's journey of coming of age involves not changing himself, but understanding himself and accepting himself for who he is, and this moment demonstrates Amory's significant progress in this regard.

Book 2, Chapter 5: The Egotist Becomes a Personage Quotes

Q.—What would be the test of corruption?

A.—Becoming really insincere—calling myself "not such a bad fellow," thinking I regretted my lost youth when I only envy the delights of losing it. Youth is like having a big plate of candy. Sentimentalists think they want to be in the pure, simple state they were in before they ate the candy. They don't. They just want the fun of eating it all over again. (...) I don't want to repeat my innocence. I want the pleasure of losing it again.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 238

Explanation and Analysis

This back and forth, which Amory delivers to himself as part of an interior dialogue, reflects his increasing maturity by the end of the novel. Whereas for much of the novel Amory has held tight to his vanishing youth, feeling nostalgia for the innocence he had before the war, this is the first time he admits not only that he cannot prevent his youth from slipping away, but also that, even if he could relive it, he would not want to. Here, Amory acknowledges that the process of losing his innocence is what he feels nostalgia for, not his innocence itself. In doing so, Amory finally accepts his adulthood and stops clinging to his bygone youth.

Life opened up in one of its amazing bursts of radiance and Amory suddenly and permanently rejected an old epigram that had been playing listlessly in his mind: "Very few things matter and nothing matters very much."

On the contrary, Amory felt an immense desire to give people a sense of security.

Related Characters: Amory Blaine, Monsignor Darcy, Stephen Blaine

Related Themes:

Page Number: 245

Explanation and Analysis

This passage demonstrates Amory's significant character development over the course of the novel, as well as his newfound ability to relinquish some of his selfishness and

indifference to others. Amory has this realization after Monsignor Darcy's funeral near the end of the novel. This internal transformation also suggests the importance of Monsignor Darcy's mentorship for Amory. In contrast to the death of Amory's father, which did not stir much emotion in Amory, Monsignor Darcy's death and his memory inspire Amory to be a better man. Monsignor Darcy's influence also enables Amory's to break free from the aimlessness that is common to his generation: in rejecting the nihilism of his epigram that "[v]ery few things matter and nothing matters very much," it is implied that Amory stops seeing his life as purposeless.

"Well," said Amory, "I simply state that I'm a product of a versatile mind in a restless generation—with every reason to throw my mind and pen in with the radicals. Even if, deep in my heart, I thought we were all blind atoms in a world as limited as a stroke of a pendulum, I and my sort would struggle against tradition; try, at least, to displace old cants with new ones."

Related Characters: Amory Blaine (speaker), Mr. Ferrenby

Related Themes:

Page Number: 256

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Amory is speaking to Mr. Ferrenby in their car ride on the way to Princeton. Explaining his belief in socialism, Amory passionately makes the case for the radicalism of his generation. This quote further underscores the significance of generational identity, but instead of portraying his generation as lost, depressed, or directionless as he has for most of the novel, Amory—for the first time—expresses a sense of hope about what his generation's circumstances might engender or make possible. Until this point, Amory has dismissed his generation as hopeless and unable to cope with the complexity of modern life, but now he describes their drifting nature not as aimless but as "restless," suggesting that he and his peers are anxious to create a better world by rejecting tradition. For the first time, post-war life is portrayed as exciting, hopeful, and novel, and this is one of the first times since Amory returned from the war that he expresses any kind of optimism in this regard.

And he could not tell why the struggle was worth while, why he had determined to use to the utmost himself and his heritage from the personalities he had passed...

He stretched out his arms to the crystalline, radiant sky.

"I know myself," he cried, "but that is all."

Related Characters: Amory Blaine (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 260

Explanation and Analysis

These are the last lines of the novel, which encapsulate the (partial) completion of Amory's journey to adulthood and process of coming of age. Amory has returned to Princeton (the site of the happiest times of his youth) and is a transformed person, especially compared to the last time he set foot on the campus. Referencing the "personalities he ha[s] passed," the narrative makes it clear that Amory has truly become a "personage," even though much of the fundamental Amory remains. Amory has not fully succeeded in finding purpose, but he knows that life is worth living and that he has finally gained self-knowledge. The idea that self-knowledge is "all" he has gained—rather than self-improvement—suggests a mature understanding of the concept of adulthood: that is, the concept that one cannot deny their fundamental character even if that nature is selfish, and that all one can do is accept oneself and try to be better.

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.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1: AMORY, SON OF BEATRICE

Amory Blaine's father, Stephen Blaine, became wealthy through the death of his brothers, who were successful businessmen. Amory's mother, Beatrice Blaine, also came from wealth and grew up traveling around Europe. Amory is an only child and is handsome from a young age. He grows up traveling around the country with his mother, becoming accustomed to a luxurious lifestyle: staying in hotels, seeing the opera, and wearing expensive clothing. Beatrice has a very upper-class, European sensibility, and she looks down on Americans. When Amory is 13 years old, Beatrice has a breakdown and sends him to live with his aunt and uncle in Minneapolis.

The novel immediately introduces the theme of money and class, showing that Amory comes from a well-off but not upper-class family that is still fixated on status. Despite being middle class, Amory grew up with an upper-class education, thus setting the stage for his struggle to understand and accept his class status throughout the novel. It also becomes clear early on that Amory had a close relationship with his mother, who was intense but also volatile.

After two months in Minneapolis, Amory has been struggling socially in school because his classmates make fun of him for showing off in class, especially in French and history. Amory is invited to a party by Myra St. Claire. He arrives late to her house because he thinks that is fashionable, but everyone else has left to go to the Minnehaha Club already. When Myra is upset, Amory lies to her and tells her that he was in an accident and has been smoking, which she disapproves of. Amory and Myra drive to the Minnehaha Club alone, where he tells her he has a crush on her and kisses her. Afterwards, Amory suddenly becomes disgusted and refuses to kiss Myra again, which angers her.

Amory's upper-class sensibility makes him stand out from his classmates, and his arrogance makes him inclined to show off in front of his peers, which ultimately alienates them. The beginning of the novel also shows Amory's obsession with social conventions and his conflicting desire to stand out from the crowd. Amory's troubled relationship with romance is also introduced here: it is not explained why he becomes upset and disgusted with Myra after they kiss, but it becomes clear that he can be very fickle in his romantic attachments, and that he associates sexuality with disgust and evil.

Amory spends two years in Minneapolis. He becomes friends with Frog Parker and becomes interested in literature and theater. Amory is very interested in girls and prone to falling in love. He writes poetry about the girls he loves and collects their rings and locks of their hair. He dreams of becoming a celebrated general in a war. Amory is very egotistical and believes himself to be exceptionally handsome and charming and more intelligent than his peers. He can also be cruel, cold, selfish, and indifferent to the feelings of others. At the same time, he is self-doubting, sensitive, and insecure.

Amory is charming, smart, and haughty from a young age. In this part of the story, the narrator describes what is later referred to as "the fundamental Amory": the aspects of Amory at his core that persist and develop throughout the novel. The novel gives a sense early on of the contradictions in Amory's character that he struggles to resolve and accept for the rest of the novel.

At age 15, after two years in Minneapolis, Amory visits his parents at Beatrice's father's **estate in Lake Geneva**, Wisconsin. Seeing his mother again, he both admires her and feels distant from her, avoiding her at first. When he finally talks to her, she tells him that after her breakdown, she had many strange, vivid, and fantastical dreams. She also reveals that her doctors were concerned about her alcoholism, but that she is now cured. Amory feels embarrassed by what Beatrice has revealed, wondering what Frog Parker would think about his mother. He asks Beatrice if he can go away to boarding school because all of his classmates are doing it. She agrees and tells him that he will go to St. Regis in Connecticut. Beatrice tells Amory that she would have preferred to raise him abroad and send him to Eton.

Here, Amory first visits the Lake Geneva estate, which will become a symbol of his family's lineage and downward mobility later in the novel—though here it is intact and grand. In his reaction to his mother, Amory shows how highly he values the opinions of his male friends and how seriously those relationships are to him. By agreeing to send Amory to St. Regis, Beatrice is implicitly agreeing to let Amory become part of the American middle class, which is defined by its educational institutions. Eton, a historic elite boys' prep school in England, represents the institutions of European upper-class consciousness; while Beatrice would have preferred Amory to become part of that social world, she recognizes that he belongs in the United States.

In September, Amory departs for New England, where there are many boarding schools—such as Andover, Exeter, Groton, and Choate—that prepare young wealthy men to go to elite colleges. After taking his exams at St. Regis, Amory visits Monsignor Darcy, a friend and former lover of his mother who is now a Catholic priest in upstate New York. Amory and Monsignor Darcy connect immediately and have engaging conversations about literature, religion, and their emotions. Amory stays for a week with Monsignor Darcy.

Here, readers are given a portrait of the landscape of elite American educational institutions. The schools that the novel mentions are all real schools that still exist today. The beginning of Amory's relationship with Monsignor Darcy is significant because Monsignor Darcy becomes a close mentor and father figure to Amory.

Amory has a difficult time starting out at St. Regis. He is disliked by his classmates, who consider him arrogant, and his teachers, whose authority he resents. He is very dedicated to playing football but disinterested in his schoolwork despite his intelligence. He feels lonely and does not feel attached to his friends, who are not among the school's elite. A teacher offers Amory advice to connect with his classmates, which he rejects. When he returns to Minneapolis, he tells Frog that he is having a great time at school.

The start of Amory's education at St. Regis echoes his struggle to make friends in Minneapolis: Amory is very persistently arrogant, stubborn, and rebellious, and "the fundamental Amory" has not changed much since his early childhood. In addition, Amory is already obsessed with status among his peers and sees himself as worthy of socializing with the elite, upper-class boys though he himself is middle-class.

Amory begins to have a better time at school. In February, he sees a play in New York with a friend, and they both admire the beautiful lead actress. In October, Amory is the hero of St. Regis football game against Groton, which makes him happy. His time at St. Regis starts to influence his personality. Even though many of his fundamental character traits remain—his "moodiness," "laziness," and unseriousness—now younger boys look up to him. He spends much of his time reading.

Amory's experience being the star of the football game is significant: it is evident that Amory has grand dreams of being a hero, which foreshadows his later disappointments after World War I. St. Regis is starting to make Amory more conventional, and there is a sense for the first time of the extent to which these elite, all-male social environments demand conformity.

Towards the end of his second and final year at St. Regis, Amory becomes friends with Rahill, their class president, whom he considers a "co-philosopher," though Amory still considers himself to be more intelligent than Rahill. Together they invent the concept of "**the slicker**," a boy whom they consider has "social values," dresses well, excels in activities, is successful in college, and slicks his hair back. They contrast the slicker with "the big man," who is socially unaware, dresses carelessly, does activities out of a sense of duty, flounders in college, and does not have slicked hair. Amory decides to go to Princeton. After he leaves St. Regis he forgets the good times of his final year, remembering only when he was lonely and unhappy.

The symbol of "the slicker" becomes very significant for the rest of the novel because it provides a way for Amory to identify and assess a certain type of masculine conformity that becomes widespread when Amory is in college. The invention of the slicker here indicates Amory's awareness of and obsession with class status, success, and social conventions.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2: SPIRES AND GARGOYLES

Amory arrives at Princeton. He feels uncomfortable walking around campus and worried what other students think of his clothes. In his building, a large run-down mansion that houses other students, Amory meets Kerry Holiday, who went to Andover. Amory eats dinner with Kerry and his brother, Burne Holiday, and they discuss what activities and clubs they plan to join. They see a movie and get sundaes, then Amory sits outside of his house and watches a procession of acapella singers walk past.

From the start of his first year at Princeton, Amory already seems to feel a premature nostalgia for his time at college. He has romantic narratives of his experiences and is eager to make friends and become part of the social scene.

Amory loves Princeton immediately, yet he feels somewhat unhappy. He notices that the social system is dominated by groups from the New England prep schools, and that fellow students seem to be drawn to the "big man." As the only boy from St. Regis, Amory resents these social barriers. An injury prevents Amory from playing football. He misses the reputation and admiration he cultivated at St. Regis, and he wonders what activities to join in order to improve his social status. He decides he wants to join the *Daily Princetonian*, the school newspaper, and the Triangle Club, a theater group.

Like at St. Regis, Amory feels out of place immediately at Princeton: while "the fundamental"—the traits that made him initially unpopular at St. Regis—remains, the "conventional" influence on his personality has also not fully allowed him to fit in. He notices that there is a social divide that reflects class divides and favors upperclassmen from the most elite prep schools. He is trying to mold himself to the ideal of "the slicker" in order to be successful.

Amory and Kerry wonder why they have not been accepted among Princeton's elite yet. Amory is afraid that he is socially "middle class" and wishes he were effortlessly at the top of the social hierarchy. Kerry sarcastically suggests that Amory work his way up by publishing poems in the literary magazine like Thomas Park D'Invilliers, whom they both deem pretentious. Kerry wants to benefit from Burne's reputation, but Amory insists that they should make names for themselves in the social scene.

Amory's ideas about class are somewhat conflicting: while he was previously resentful about arbitrary class hierarchies, here he seems to justify them and feels jealous of those who are born on top. It becomes clear that it is class, and not education or cultural awareness, that decides the hierarchy: Tom is seen as pretentious for being interested in literature.

Amory and Kerry play pranks on their housemates, and Amory gives Kerry advice on how to appeal to girls. At Joe's, a dining hall, Amory by chance sits down across from Thomas Park D'Invilliers, and they strike up a conversation about literature. Amory is pleased to meet another person who shares his interest, but he worries that the group of boys from St. Paul's, including Dick Humbird, will think of him as a literary snob like Tom. Amory and Tom become good friends. They discuss literature and read and write poetry together. Amory tries to teach Tom about the social system and make him "conventional." In the spring, Amory enjoys Princeton's Gothic campus and vows that in his next year he will work harder. In the summer after his freshman year, World War I begins.

Amory is beginning to enjoy his youth at Princeton and make close friends. Amory's developing friendship with Tom illustrates Amory's conflicting desires regarding social conformity: on the one hand, he is drawn to Tom, who is idiosyncratic, unusual, and naturally indifferent to social conventions. On the other hand, Amory wants to make Tom "conventional" so that their friendship appears more socially advantageous for each of them. Amory's fascination with Dick Humbird is also introduced here, foreshadowing the further conflict between Amory's aspirations to upper class status and his aspirations to unconventional literary success.

Back at Princeton for his sophomore year, Amory joins the Triangle Club and the *Daily Princetonian*. He prepares with the Triangle Club a musical comedy, which they perform on tour over Christmas break. On the Triangle trip, they visit eight cities across the country, and Amory attends a number of "petting part[ies]," where young men and women dance and kiss, even though it is considered improper by their parents. The young women Amory meets fall in love many times and kiss many men, and Amory questions the nature of these new moral codes that permit young men and women to kiss and flirt in a manner previously forbidden.

Amory joins two of the most established, institutional clubs at Princeton. (Both the Triangle Club and the Daily Princetonian exist in real life: the former is a student theater group, and the latter is the student newspaper.) Amory's experience at the "petting parties" demonstrates the relative relaxation and liberation of social norms regarding sexuality in this period: before the turn of the century, such parties would have been strictly prohibited in elite society because it would have been considered inappropriate for young men and women who were not married to be alone together.

Now 18, Amory returns to Minneapolis after the Triangle trip in order to meet Isabelle Borgé, a cousin of his friend and former crush Sally Weatherby. Sally has told Amory and Isabelle about each other. Amory has heard that Isabelle is beautiful and has been kissed. Isabelle is excited to meet Amory, who seems romantic and desirable to her. At a party at the Minnehaha Club, Amory competes with Frog Parker for Isabelle's attention. Amory and Isabelle instantly connect, and they play a game of flirtation at the party. Toward the end of the evening, they escape to a private room upstairs. They discuss Princeton and the boys she knows from her home in Baltimore. Amory and Isabelle admit their affection for each other and are about to kiss when Frog barges in. Amory has to leave for the train back to Princeton.

Amory's romance with Isabelle establishes many of the tropes that reoccur in his subsequent romances throughout the book: Isabelle is wealthy (wealthier than Amory), charming, flirtatious, and somewhat haughty. In these ways, she is quite similar to Amory, and it is perhaps their similarity that attracts them to each other. Both are quick to admit their infatuation, which leads to the immediate romantic intensity of their affair. Isabelle's character is based on a real relationship F. Scott Fitzgerald had with Ginevra King, a Chicago socialite.

Amory becomes popular and well-respected because he is on the staff of *The Princetonian*. All the younger students try to get bids to eating clubs (selective social clubs where students gather to eat). He and Alec Connage join Cottage, and he is very happy during this period in college. Alec wakes Amory up one morning to skip class and drive to the beach with him, Dick, Kerry, and Jesse Ferrenby. Amory joins them despite being worried about cutting class. Amory thinks about poetry on their drive, and is thrilled to see the ocean, which he has not seen in eight years.

Eating clubs are also institutions in Princeton's social scene that exist in real life, and they dominate much of the school's social hierarchy. Therefore, gaining entry to an elite eating club is a sign of Amory's success in rising to the top of the social hierarchy. Amory's trip to the beach with his friends reflects the rebellious attitude of their generation and their willingness to defy authority.

The boys eat lunch at a hotel on the boardwalk and refuse to pay the bill. They then walk down the boardwalk, where Kerry meets a girl whom the others consider ugly—still, she joins their party. Amory notices that though Dick is quiet, he seems to be the center of attention. Amory admires Dick and thinks he is a model aristocrat, always seeming effortless and proper. Alec reveals to Amory that rather than coming from an illustrious family, Dick's father came from poverty, made a fortune in Tacoma, and only moved to New York 10 years ago. This fact disappoints Amory. The boys run out of money, but they pretend to collect charity for orphans, which they use to buy alcohol. They sneak into the movies and later sleep on the boardwalk. The next day they take group photos of themselves and then return to Princeton.

This trip to Atlantic City symbolizes the freedom and carefree joy of Amory's sophomore year at Princeton, which he will later recognize as the high point of his youth and the happiest time of his life. In addition, Amory's fascination with Dick reflects his youthful fascination with the upper class and his idealization of money and status. However, it is significant that Dick's money does not come from a long lineage of wealthy relatives but rather from his father who originally came from a lower-class background. This kind of new wealth is seen as less respectable and aristocratic; it is quintessentially American because it is possible to amass wealth quickly in the United States, whereas in Europe wealth is inherited from respectable families. This lowers Amory's estimation of Dick's background.

Back at college, Amory neglects his schoolwork and spends much of his time going to parties. Amory and his friends are climbing the social ladder: Amory is elected to the prom committee, and Alec believes that Tom could be on the senior council, even though a year ago he was considered pretentious and unpopular. Amory maintains a correspondence with Isabelle, to whom he writes long letters. He tells Alec that he is tired of college but that he does not want to get married yet. Tom tells Amory that he is tired of the snobbishness and status obsession of Princeton, even though he has adapted to it—he does not want to return to Princeton the following year. Amory tells Tom that he (Amory) will never be a poet.

This period of Amory's time in college is when he has most fully succeeded in becoming "conventional," or becoming a "slicker." Tom, too, has become conventional, which was an even greater transformation than Amory's. Amory's conventionality is why he believes he will never become a poet: he believes he is no longer unusual or highbrow enough to become a real artist.

Near the end of the semester, Amory, Alec, and others are driving back from New York when they find Dick Humbird dead on the road after a car accident. Fred Sloane and Jesse Ferrenby, who were driving with Dick, are both injured and explain that Dick was drunk and had crashed their car. Amory is upset by the grotesque tragedy and considers it "unaristocratic." The next day, Isabelle and her mother visit him at Princeton for the prom. Amory and Isabelle drive to her family's summer house on Long Island. Amory is enjoying life greatly, and he realizes that he is at the prime of his youth. He and Isabelle kiss for the first time.

Dick's death weighs on Amory for the rest of the novel. This loss reveals to Amory that wealth and status cannot protect one from violence and brutality. This moment is one of the first incidents that makes Amory doubt the virtue of money and class. Later, Dick will appear to Amory in a moment of fear and vulnerability, reminding him of the arbitrariness of this tragedy. Despite Dick's death, Amory is still able to enjoy the rest of his sophomore year and his time with Isabelle, showing some of Amory's callousness and self-absorption.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3: THE EGOTIST CONSIDERS

Amory's shirt stud bruises Isabelle's neck, and she becomes angry at him when he laughs. He realizes that he does not actually love her, but still wants to kiss her in order to be a "conqueror." Amory tells Isabelle that he plans to leave in the morning. She calls him conceited and says he talks about himself too much. When Amory is upset, he wonders if it is just his vanity that is hurt. Amory leaves early the next morning without seeing Isabelle.

Amory's immediate indifference to Isabelle echoes his rejection of Myra St. Claire when Amory was young in Minnesota. His disgust with women as soon as he has succeeded in wooing them, or has "conquered" them, suggests not only Amory's troubled method of romantic attachment, but also his misogyny. It seems that Amory's vanity is hurt and that this is because Isabelle's accusation (that he is conceited) is true, and Amory is very sensitive to criticism.

Amory returns to Princeton early in September because he failed a class in the spring and needs to take a make-up exam. Amory struggles to study conic sections in math and does not care enough to admit that he does not understand. After the end of his affair with Isabelle, Amory feels disinterested in academic success, even if it means being removed from *The Princetonian* and not being chosen for senior council. A week later, Amory finds out that he failed his exam.

Amory's refusal to study for his exam illustrates his stubbornness and tendency toward self-destruction. It seems almost as if Amory does not want to succeed in order to free himself from the rigidity of the social conventions to which he has conformed.

After failing the exam, Amory becomes aimless and idle. Alec tells him that he was lazy, but Amory feels that he was meant to fail and revert to the "fundamental Amory"—who is lazy, "rebellious," and "imaginative"—after two years of success and conformity at Princeton. Amory's father, Stephen, dies, and Amory returns to Lake Geneva for the funeral. He feels unemotional about his father's death but is worried that his family's wealth is dwindling because of bad investments in oil.

By denying himself conventional success, Amory is embracing the "bizarre streak" that he previously identified as preventing him from ever being a true "slicker." After his father's death, Amory's anxiety about his family's money becomes persistent throughout the rest of the novel, as Amory's declining class status reflects his further retreat from a "conventional" middle-class lifestyle.

Amory visits Monsignor Darcy at Christmas and admits that he wants to leave college, and that Kerry has asked him to join the army with him. Monsignor Darcy discourages him, saying that he is developing naturally and has become less vain. Monsignor Darcy explains to Amory the difference between a "personality" and a "personage": the former is a consistent and unyielding entity, while the latter gathers experiences and learns from them. Darcy convinces Amory that he can have a fresh start, and Amory returns to Princeton feeling revived. At Princeton, Amory spends much of his time reading literature and writing poetry, and he withdraws from the social scene. Kerry leaves college to enlist in the army, which Amory admires.

The introduction of the theme of "personality" versus "personage" clarifies Amory's reversion to his "fundamental" self: it is clear that Amory is still a "personality" whose core nature is overriding his developments. It will take Amory much of the rest of the novel to truly become a "personage" and stop reverting to his "fundamental" self in moments of distress. By returning to his interest in poetry and literature, Amory further retreats from conventionality and embraces the idiosyncrasy he previously tried to drill out of Tom.

Amory and Fred Sloane go to New York with two girls. At a bar, all except Amory are drinking, and Amory thinks he sees a pale, deathly man with curling pointed shoes watching him. They go up to one of the girls' apartments, where Amory thinks he sees the same man, who is the devil. None of the others see the man and think Amory is hallucinating or drunk. Amory runs out of the apartment and down an alley. He shouts into the night, asking the spirit who is haunting him to send "some one stupid," and suddenly the face of Dick Humbird appears to him. When Amory returns to Princeton, he and Tom are reading together when Tom sees the devil again behind Amory. Amory then recounts the events of the previous night.

Amory's vision of the devil is a strange moment in the novel that is quite distinct from the rest of the material. At first, it seems that the devil is a hallucination, but later, when Tom sees the same figure, it seems that something otherworldly may be occurring. What Amory truly sees is never clarified, but it is notable that it is the face of Dick Humbird that appears when Amory asks for comfort in the form of "some one stupid": the memory of Dick seems to haunt Amory unconsciously.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4: NARCISSUS OFF DUTY

In January of Amory's senior year, a large number of the junior class decides to resign from their clubs, encouraged by Burne Holiday, in order to reform the social system. Burne comes to try to convince Tom to resign from his clubs, and he stays to talk with Tom and Amory. Amory finds Burne intense, earnest and compelling. Amory is drawn to Burne, and they become close friends. Amory learns that Burne is a socialist and a pacifist, and that he is interested in literature. Lying awake at night, Amory remembers a couple of pranks that Burne had orchestrated. Amory is impressed by his simultaneous seriousness and humor.

While Amory has become less conventional during his junior and senior years of college, the rejection of conventionality has also spread throughout much of the student body at Princeton. It is Burne's charisma that inspires so many students to reject the institutions that dominate the social scene, and it is also Burne's charisma that draws Amory to him. In Burne, Amory finds something close to a new infatuation that replaces his infatuation with Dick.

Burne increasingly retreats from the Princeton social scene. He spends time reading, writing, and attending graduate classes and is often seen walking across campus deep in thought. Amory is overcome with joy seeing him lost in thought. Amory admits to Tom that Burne is the first person whom Amory believes to be smarter than himself. Tom explains that people think Burne is odd, and Amory tells Tom that he has become conventional. Amory notices that it is the most intellectual men who have the most disdain for Burne. Burne confronts Jesse over an editorial in *The Princetonian* that Jesse wrote, in which Jesse inadvertently insults Jesus.

Burne is not at all conventional, and his idiosyncrasy inspires Amory to further embrace his own "bizarre streak." Burne's friendship seems to be a good influence on Amory, prompting Amory to immerse himself again in intellectual and literary activities. While Amory previously said he would never be a poet, he now embraces his poetic nature and becomes excited about learning again.

Amory begins to enjoy college again and feels youthful and energetic. Alec tells Amory that he is getting a reputation for being eccentric, like Burne, because Amory brings strange characters to dinner at Cottage Club. Alec agrees to accept Amory in private as long as he is the same Amory as before. Amory brings Burne to visit Monsignor Darcy, and they get along well. Afterwards, Darcy, in a letter, asks Amory to visit a poor, widowed cousin of Amory's in Philadelphia, Clara Page, as a favor.

It is Amory's rejection of conventionality that allows him to enjoy college again: this rejection of upper and middle-class social norms further foreshadows Amory's ultimate rejection of the pursuit of money and status: he is beginning to realize, even in his youth, that such goals are not fulfilling to him.

When Amory visits Clara, she is not the image of poverty that he expected. Amory is enamored with her and falls in love with her. He repeatedly visits her on weekends through the spring. Clara understands Amory and tells him that while he is vain, he is truly humble at heart. Amory tells Clara that he loves her and wants to marry her. Clara tells him that she has never been in love and will never marry again. Amory admits that although Clara is the only woman he has ever known and will *ever* know, he can understand why she would prefer another man.

Amory's love for Clara is distinct from his other romantic relationships. Clara is the least similar to him, and the only woman he considers to be morally superior to him. There is a sense that, as the war is impending, it will cut off the hope of any kind of life with Clara. Further, it seems that Clara's moral goodness is what makes her so unattainable for Amory: she is too good to marry someone like her, and going to war will destroy any possibility of him becoming good enough.

The war finally reaches the United States, and Princeton men begin to join in the army. Amory goes to Washington to enlist, while Burne refuses because he is a pacifist. A week later, Burne sells all his possessions and leaves on a bicycle for his home in Pennsylvania. Amory becomes angry at the previous generation, whom he believes encouraged German aggression. During a lecture on Victorian poetry, Amory composes a poem blaming the war on the Victorians, which he hands to his professor. On their last night on campus, Tom and Amory feel the presence of ghosts, whom they think are the youth of generations past. Tom and Amory say a tearful goodbye.

The war entirely changes the course of Amory's life and that of his entire generation. The war suddenly brings the generation's youth to an abrupt end, forcing them to enter the violent, traumatic modern world. There is a sense already, even before they have left, that this will be a significant source of generational consciousness, as Amory already blames the war on the previous generation and their values. Amory's male friendships will never be the same after he leaves Princeton, as they were significantly shaped by their all-male social environment. Amory and Tom recognize this implicitly, making their goodbye very sad.

INTERLUDE: MAY, 1917 – FEBRUARY, 1919

In January 1918, Monsignor Darcy writes a letter to Amory, who is now a second lieutenant stationed in Long Island. Darcy tells Amory that Amory's generation is going through hardships that Darcy's could not have imagined, and that Amory will never be the same again after the war. Darcy also says he has a feeling that one or both of them will not survive the war, and that he sees Amory as a younger version of himself.

Monsignor Darcy's letter emphasizes how particular this experience of war is to Amory's generation; it implies that everything will be different for them after the war. Though Monsignor Darcy's prediction that one or both of them will not survive the war does not come true, there is a very ominous sense that the second part of the novel will be much less lighthearted than the first.

In March 1919, Amory writes a letter to Tom from Brest, Germany, where he's stationed. Tom, for his part, is still in the United States, where he's stationed at Camp Gordon, Georgia. Amory tells Tom that they will meet in Manhattan later that month. He says that sometimes he wishes he was English and disdains American life. He also reveals that Beatrice has died. She has not left him much money because she gave a lot to the church at the end of her life, and her investments in railroads are losing money. Amory also reveals that Kerry and Jesse have died in the war, and that Burne has gone missing.

Amory mentions his mother's and his friends' deaths rather emotionlessly, implying that such losses have become commonplace in the war and that he and his fellow soldiers have become desensitized. It increasingly becomes clear that Amory is no longer stably middle class, and Amory will have to struggle to make a living for the rest of his life.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 1: THE DÉBUTANTE

In February of the next year, Rosalind Connage and Cecelia Connage, Alec's young sisters, are preparing for Rosalind's debutante ball at the Connage house. Amory arrives and Alec wants his mother, Mrs. Connage, and sisters to meet him. Rosalind is described as a flirt who leads men on and breaks their hearts. Rosalind is beautiful, sophisticated, and self-absorbed, somewhat like Isabelle. Amory comes into Rosalind's room to greet her, and they connect instantly. They kiss after a few minutes. Rosalind reveals that she has kissed many men and thinks she will kiss many more. Rosalind sends him away and refuses to kiss him again, claiming that she has won their interaction.

Amory and Rosalind's instant mutual attraction echoes the start of Amory's relationship with Isabelle. It seems that Amory is falling into a pattern of pursuing the same type of women: beautiful, wealthy, cunning, flirtatious, and intelligent, and Rosalind is no exception. The character of Rosalind is based on F. Scott Fitzgerald's wife, Zelda Sayre. Rosalind is much like Amory, but perhaps even more charming, and it is clear that she is able to beat him at his own social game.

Mrs. Connage reveals that their father has lost money, and she urges Rosalind to meet the wealthy bachelor friends of her father's, especially Dawson Ryder, rather than wasting time with young college boys. Mrs. Connage warns Rosalind about Amory, saying he does not "sound like a money-maker." At the dance, Howard Gillespie tells Rosalind that he loves her, and he thinks that since they've kissed, he has "won" her. Rosalind spurns him and tells him that those days are over, saying that now women have the advantage after they have been kissed. Rosalind dances with Dawson and makes him admit that he loves her. Alec tells Cecelia that he does not want Amory to fall in love with Rosalind because he is sensitive, and Alec thinks she will break his heart.

Despite Amory and Rosalind's instant connection, there is immediately a sense of foreboding from both Alec and Mrs. Connage, who worry that the relationship cannot last because of their differing class status. Rosalind seems to believe herself to be empowered and liberated by new social norms of sexuality, and it does seem that Rosalind has a lot of choice and power in her relationships with men. However, the persistent anxiety about money suggests that Rosalind's relationships are not fully empowering for her.

Amory and Rosalind dance and kiss again. They admit that they are both selfish people, but Amory says that selfish people are "terribly capable of great loves." They reveal that they are in love with each other, yet Rosalind calls him "poor Amory." They fall deeply in love within weeks and start spending all their time with each other. Amory takes a job at an advertising agency to make enough money to please Rosalind. They plan to get married within months, even though he cannot give her much money.

The immediate intensity of Amory and Rosalind's relationship does not fully override the underlying tensions about money and Amory's ability to provide for Rosalind. Amory's job at the advertising agency seems disheartening and dull, and it seems like it is destroying his dream of being a writer. Therefore, his romantic prospects and his artistic fulfillment seem to be inherently in conflict.

Mrs. Connage tells Rosalind that she is wasting her time with Amory because he is poor. Rosalind ends her engagement with Amory, explaining that she will not be the girl he loves if they have no money and that their marriage would ruin their lives. She implies that she is considering marrying Dawson Ryder. Rosalind sends Amory away, ending their relationship. They are both devastated.

When Rosalind ends their relationship because Amory is poor, it seems to confirm to Amory that love is corrupted by societal pressures and that class hierarchy is unjust. Interestingly enough, Zelda Fitzgerald did initially end her relationship with Fitzgerald because he had little money and could not support her lifestyle. However, after his novels became commercially successful, she agreed to marry him because he finally had enough money.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 2: EXPERIMENTS IN CONVALESCENCE

Amory is very drunk at a bar, consuming alcohol to numb the pain of his breakup with Rosalind. Amory drunkenly laments his time spent in the war, explaining that he has lost his idealism and now has adopted a reckless, hedonistic attitude towards life and women. Amory passes out in a hotel room and starts drinking again when he wakes up in the morning, thinking about Rosalind. After more days of drinking, Amory shows up to the advertising agency drunk and quits his job, telling his boss that the work is meaningless. Amory finally returns home to the apartment he shares with Tom, who is now a magazine writer, and Alec. Tom reveals that Alec is moving out to return home and that they may not be able to afford the rent themselves.

Because of his devastation from his breakup with Rosalind, Amory's life begins falling apart. It seems that he had been using their relationship to give his life direction and without it, the aimlessness of his life is abruptly and dramatically revealed to him. This moment is also the first time that Amory admits to the impact that the war had on him, and it becomes clear that the destructiveness of the war was very traumatic for him.

Once Prohibition begins, Amory can no longer drown his sorrows in alcohol. He reveals that he will never love anyone more than he loved Rosalind. He begins writing and reading again. Amory contacts a friend of Monsignor Darcy's, Mrs. Lawrence, who reminds him of Beatrice. Spending time with Mrs. Lawrence revives Amory's interest in life. However, Amory is still bored with his life and feels ambitionless. He receives news from his family's lawyer, Mr. Barton, that the **estate in Lake Geneva**, which Amory inherited, will not make him any money.

Prohibition, which completely banned alcohol in the United States, went into effect in January 1920. It was a significant moment of transformation for the country, as well as for Amory. This portion of the novel is perhaps one of the most succinct portrayals of the mood of the "Lost Generation" and their sense of aimlessness and artistic sensibility after the war. The letter from Mr. Barton also deepens the significance of the symbolism of the Lake Geneva estate: now that Amory has lost all his family, the Lake Geneva estate is all that ties him to his origins. But while he comes from a family of good lineage, he has no wealth to show for it, demonstrating the ephemerality of money and class status.

Amory and Tom discuss the impacts of the war. Amory claims that it destroyed the individualism of their generation and the possibility for men to become heroes. Amory criticizes Tom's column in his magazine, *The New Democracy*, calling it cynical. Amory vows not to write until he clarifies his ideas, yet he feels like he is purposeless without intellectual pursuits. Tom criticizes the writers of their time, saying that none of them will be memorable. Amory tries to write about the spirit of the times and his lost youth. Amory receives a letter from Monsignor Darcy inviting Amory to visit him in Washington. When Tom's mother becomes sick, they both move out of the apartment. Amory goes to Washington, where he misses Darcy, and then travels to Maryland to stay with an uncle.

Amory and Tom's discussion of the war illustrates the degree to which their experiences in the war were part of a broader generational consciousness—a consciousness of the fact that the war significantly altered their entire way of life in the modern world and that their generation was, literally and metaphorically, on the front lines. Amory and Tom's struggles to find intellectual and literary fulfillment echo their discussions in college, in which Tom said that without Amory's influence he could have been a great poet and Amory said that he himself would never be a poet. It seems that their prediction—that they would both fail to become true artists, not just writers—has come true, perhaps because they became too conventional.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 3: YOUNG IRONY

In Maryland, Amory meets Eleanor Savage, who will be another of his strange, intense affairs: neither of them will ever again have an adventure like the other. Amory meets Eleanor while going for a walk in the rain in the countryside. He hears her singing in a haystack in a field, and she recognizes him as the blond boy who walks around reciting poetry. They sit together in a hollow in the haystack, and he finds her beautiful, with intense eyes. Eleanor shares Amory's deep interest in literature.

Eleanor, like all of Amory's other love interests, is highly intelligent, intense, and beautiful. But in Eleanor, Amory seems to find an intellectual companion in a way that is distinct from his other relationships. While Isabelle and Rosalind were both intelligent, they, unlike Eleanor, did not as deeply share Amory's interest in literature. Eleanor provides a kind of intellectual fulfillment that Amory previously only received from his friendships with men in college.

Amory learns that Eleanor grew up in France with a mother like Beatrice and came to the United States when she died. After being a debutante in Baltimore, she was sent to live with her grandfather in the country because of her rebellious behavior. Amory and Eleanor are in love and enjoy the end of summer swimming, walking in the woods, and reading poetry together.

Eleanor, like Isabelle and Rosalind, is a wealthy girl from high society, but Eleanor more clearly defies various social codes. This rebelliousness prompts Eleanor to more directly question social hierarchies and conventions; in this way, she shares Amory's "bizarre streak."

On Amory's last night in Maryland, he and Eleanor go on a horse ride in the woods. Eleanor laments being a woman and despairs that she is destined for marriage to a man less intelligent than her. When Amory tells Eleanor, who is an atheist, that she will ask for a priest on her deathbed, she gallops toward the cliff but throws herself off her horse before it goes over. Their love is ruined after this event, but they send each other poems years later in remembrance of their romance.

Eleanor is the first person to point out to Amory the gendered injustice of societal conventions of marriage and romance. Amory mocks Eleanor's total rejection of social conventions, telling her that, when push comes to shove, in moments of serious despair she will give in to religion. This shows that Amory is perhaps not unconventional enough yet to truly challenge the foundations of society. What's more, after Eleanor's dangerous stunt with the horse, Amory sees how tempestuous and impulsive she is, and this scares him.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 4: THE SUPERCILIOUS SACRIFICE

Amory meets Alec, who is driving with two women, in Atlantic City. Amory is preoccupied by the deaths of their friends, Jesse, Kerry, and Dick, as well as by his pain about Rosalind, yet he agrees to spend the night in a hotel with Alec and the two women. Later that night, detectives knock on their door looking for an unmarried man and woman sleeping together, which is a crime. Amory reflects on the arrogance and impersonality of sacrifice, remembering a boy in college who took the blame for cheating on an exam and later killed himself because of the consequences. Amory decides to take the blame to protect Alec's reputation and family, though Amory was asleep while Alec was with one of the girls, Jill Wayne (it is implied that they were having sex). Amory believes that Alec will hate him for this sacrifice.

This trip to Atlantic City echoes and contrasts with Amory's trip in college spent cutting class and wandering joyfully with his friends, many of whom are now dead. This scene highlights all that Amory has lost in only a few years, and how quickly his innocence has been stripped away. It is perhaps the case that Amory's sacrifice for Alec is selfless, but his decision to take the blame also seems to play into Amory's ego, allowing him to see himself in a positive light—and this, in turn, will most likely complicate his friendship with Alec.

Amory tells Alec to lie in the bathroom and pretend to be drunk. The detectives escort Amory and Jill out of the hotel. The hotel decides not to prosecute them but instead to publish a line in a newspaper saying that Amory was in a hotel with a woman who was not his wife. Jill asks Amory if Alec is more important than him, and Amory replies that that "remains to be seen." In the same newspaper that publishes the news of Amory's misconduct, Amory sees an announcement that Rosalind is engaged to Dawson Ryder. He considers her as good as dead. The next day, Amory receives a letter from Mr. Barton telling him that his family's money has run out. Soon after, he receives news that Monsignor Darcy has died.

Amory's punishment reveals the degree to which even in modern society, sexuality is still rigidly regulated and punished. Furthermore, the sense of all that Amory has lost is intensified when, adding insult to injury, learns about both Rosalind, Monsignor Darcy, and his family's fortunes. It seems as if Amory has hit a sort of rock bottom, where it seems, both to him and the reader, as if he has nothing else to lose.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 5: THE EGOTIST BECOMES A PERSONAGE

Amory reflects on his life in poverty in New York. He fears being poor and realizes that he detests poor people and poverty. He also realizes that he is unsympathetic to others. Amory has a dialogue with himself, considering his character and present circumstances. Amory realizes that he does not miss his lost youth, but instead wants to relive the experience of losing it. Amory reflects on his past loves and dead friends, and he considers that he probably would have died in the war had he not become a bayonet instructor. He believes that his misfortune might worsen his character.

Amory's disdainful attitude toward poverty and poor people seems to contradict his growing distaste for class hierarchy and privilege. Amory's intense dislike of poor people is offensive, but it also reflects both the intense hardships that poor people faced in this period as well as Amory's deeply rooted fear of poverty. Despite his misfortunes, Amory is still able to feel lucky for what he has (and for the fact that he survived the war). This mention of war is offhand but demonstrates the arbitrariness of such luck—Amory recognizes that he easily could have been sent to the front lines earlier, like Kerry or Jesse.

Amory realizes that he "despise[s] his own personality," regretting his moodiness, sensitivity, untrustworthiness, and cruelty to others. He feels himself overcoming his egotism, finding it unpleasant to think about himself too much. He desires an indulgent adventure in a foreign country. Amory realizes he has lost faith in others: in friends and mentors who have died, in literature, and in women. Amory questions the nature of progress, which he believes is the inheritance of his generation. At Monsignor Darcy's funeral, Amory realizes that he wants to give other people "a sense of security."

This portion of the novel demonstrates Amory's increasing self-awareness, which he has not had for much of the novel. This self-knowledge is central to his becoming a "personage," and it becomes clear here how much Amory has matured. By no longer finding direction in others—in a social scene, in his friendships, or in romantic relationships—Amory is learning to rely on himself and accept himself for who he is.

Amory decides to walk to Princeton. On the way, he is offered a ride by a man and his secretary. In the car, he proclaims his belief in socialism and attacks capitalism, arguing that society is unequal, progress should accelerate, and money is not the only thing that motivates men. He distinguishes between "spiritually married" men, who accept social problems and systems of power, and "spiritually unmarried" men, who are "natural radicals" who try to enact progress and change. He criticizes the American class and education system for reproducing inequality.

This encounter between Amory and Mr. Ferrenby seems destined to occur. In many ways, their conversation about politics stages a generational conflict: while Mr. Ferrenby believes in tradition, Amory, who represents his generation, sees the need for radical change. Amory's description of "spiritually married" versus "spiritually unmarried" men also indicates the degree to which he has lost faith in romantic relationships and believes that he can only rely on himself. He seems to now recognize what he had implicitly realized earlier during his relationship with Rosalind: that being romantically committed runs contrary to his ability to live freely as an artist.

When Amory says that he went to Princeton, the man driving the car reveals that he is Mr. Ferrenby, the father of Amory's friend Jesse, who died in the war. Mr. Ferrenby drops Amory off, and they wish each other luck. Amory accepts his selfishness and renounces his pursuit of beauty, realizing he is more interested in being "a certain sort of man" than being "a certain type of artist." When Amory arrives at Princeton, he feels sorry for the new generation of students subjected to the same old traditions. He feels nostalgia for his youth and for Rosalind. He raises his arms to the sky, saying "I know myself," "but that is all."

Amory's return to Princeton demonstrates how much he has matured. Returning to the site of the happiest point of his youth, he is able to feel nostalgia while not wanting to relive what he experienced there. Amory, for the first time, recognizes that his time has passed, and that the new generation of students will find their own ways to reject tradition. His final assertion of self-knowledge demonstrates that his quest to become a "personage" is (at least partially) complete.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Sack, Gemma. "*This Side of Paradise.*" *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 24 Mar 2023. Web. 24 Mar 2023.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Sack, Gemma. "*This Side of Paradise.*" LitCharts LLC, March 24, 2023. Retrieved March 24, 2023. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/this-side-of-paradise.

To cite any of the quotes from *This Side of Paradise* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. This Side of Paradise. Penguin. 1996.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. This Side of Paradise. New York: Penguin. 1996.