

Feed



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF M. T. ANDERSON

Matthew Tobin Anderson was born and raised in Massachusetts, and later attended Harvard University and Cambridge University (in the UK). He published his first novel, *Thirsty*, a young adult vampire tale, in 1997. Since then, Anderson has written a string of critically acclaimed books for young people, including *Feed* (2002), *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation: The Pox Party* (2006) and its sequel, *The Kingdom on the Waves* (2008), and *Dmitri Shostakovich and the Siege of Leningrad* (2015). He resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was born, and serves on the board of the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Feed alludes to relatively few historical events—indeed, one of the main points the book makes is that the characters have little to no knowledge of history. Anderson highlights his characters' ignorance of the past by showing them eagerly buying "Stonewall Clogs" and "WTO riot Windbreakers"—merchandise whose branding refers to some of the most famously violent protests and riots in American history. The WTO riots, for example, took place in 1999, when the World Trade Organization held a meeting in Seattle to discuss globalization, and more than 40,000 people showed up to protest what they saw as the hypocrisy and inherent dangers of a globalized economy. The Seattle Police Department uses tear gas and stun grenades to attack the protesters, injuring hundreds. Despite the characters' ignorance of the past, the invention and widespread adoption of the Internet is one historical event that looms large in Anderson's novel. While historians continue to disagree about when, precisely, the Internet was created, it's generally agreed that in the mid-1970s, scientists working in California, as well as other scientists working at CERN in Switzerland, succeeded in joining together multiple computers in a wireless communication network, creating an "Internet" (a term first used in 1974)—though it wasn't until 1990 that the World Wide Web was invented. While the Internet's earliest applications were scientific and governmental, the Internet went mainstream in the late 1990s with the founding of companies like Google and Yahoo. The Internet has been celebrated for its ability to foster the free flow of information, but some people have voiced concern that the Internet encourages the homogenization rather than diversification of culture and ideas, a possibility that Anderson explores in *Feed*. Others have warned of the possibility of Internet terrorism, or cyberterrorism—another

problem that shows up quite a bit in *Feed*.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Feed alludes to many works of fantasy and dystopian science fiction. At one point, Violet's father mentions the eloi, the fictional race of weak, effete pleasure-seekers in H.G. Wells's [The Time Machine](#) (1985), one of the seminal texts of the genre of science fiction. In Wells's story, modern day humans have evolved into two distinct species by the year 802,701 AD: the morlocks, who are descendants of working-class human beings, and the eloi, who are descendants of the wealthy. In all, Wells's vision of the distant future is not too far from the version of the future Anderson describes, in which wealth is distributed so unequally that the rich and the poor exist in completely separate realities. *Feed* also recalls some other notable science fiction works, especially those of Philip K. Dick. In "The Days of Perky Pat," one of Dick's most disturbing short stories, human beings live in a hellish, post-apocalyptic earth where their only amusement comes from playing a childish role-playing game that helps them forget their troubles. *Feed* also bears some tonal resemblances to the early science fiction novels of Kurt Vonnegut, especially *Player Piano* (1952), and to Ray Bradbury's [Fahrenheit 451](#) (1953), another dystopian satire of America's consumerist culture. The basic premise of *Feed* (i.e., a virtual world flourishes while the real world decays) also appears in a variety of science fiction movies, such as *The Matrix* (1999) and Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report* (released the same year as Anderson's book), the latter of which also features ads targeted to individual consumers with surgical accuracy.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Feed*
- **When Written:** 2001
- **Where Written:** Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
- **When Published:** Summer 2002
- **Literary Period:** Post-internet science fiction
- **Genre:** Science fiction, dystopian fiction
- **Setting:** United States, sometime in the not-too distant future
- **Climax:** Violet's outburst at Link's party
- **Antagonist:** Corporations, the feed
- **Point of View:** First person (Titus)

EXTRA CREDIT

Good research. To prepare for writing *Feed*, M.T. Anderson spent months reading hundreds of issues of *Teen Vogue*, *Maxim*,

Seventeen, and other similar magazines, so that he could convincingly write (and parody) a teenaged voice.

Awards. Anderson has won many major awards for young adult literature. He was nominated for the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, and in 2006 he won for Part One of *Octavian Nothing*.



PLOT SUMMARY

Feed takes place in a dystopian version of the United States of America in which the majority of the population uses a “**feed**”—a surgically-implanted device that enables the user to communicate electronically with others, look up any information, access limitless hours of free entertainment, and exposes them to endless advertisements for products. Titus of the novel, Titus, is a teenager from an upper-class family who spends his time horsing around with his friends Link Arwaker and Marty, going to School™ (corporations control the educational system, and use it to train kids to buy their products), and going on expensive vacations.

The novel begins when Titus and his friends take a trip to the **moon** over spring break, which turns out to “suck.” While they’re partying on the moon, however, they meet Violet Durn, a pretty, strange young woman who has travelled to the moon all by herself. Link invites Violet to have fun with them, and they go to a club. There, a mysterious old hacker attacks Titus and his friends’ feeds, rendering them frozen for a few hours.

Titus wakes up in the hospital, where his feed is being repaired. There, he and his friends—including Violet—have a surprisingly fun time, even though their feeds have been turned off. Titus is attracted to Violet, and she seems to like him for his thoughtfulness and occasional flights of poetry. After a week of this, Titus and his friends are released from the hospital with their feeds restored to working order. They’re so excited to have their feeds again that they laugh and cry.

Back on Earth, Titus resumes his old lifestyle of going to School™, spending time with his friends, and partying. He invites Violet to a party, and they end up kissing. Violet confesses that her feed is malfunctioning again, and sometimes she loses control of her body.

In the following weeks, Titus and Violet spend lots of time together. They go to the mall, where Violet tells Titus that she’s trying to construct a consumer taste profile for herself that’s so bizarre that no corporation will be able to advertise to her. Violet also confesses that she finds the feed lifestyle to be dull and narcissistic—because Titus and his friends are so used to having feeds, they’ve grown accustomed to getting whatever they want, whenever they want it. Titus is impressed and somewhat intimidated by Violet’s intelligence and articulacy. He also meets Violet’s father, a strange professor who speaks

with a complicated vocabulary.

Meanwhile, there are feed reports that the President of the United States is taking a hard line with the rest of the world, refusing to exercise any control over American corporations. These corporations are ruining the environment, causing devastation to the rest of the world.

Titus’s parents buy him an upcar (i.e., flying car). His mom works in design, and his dad works in banking (and doesn’t seem to have any strong feelings for Titus). Titus drives Violet around in his new upcar, and they go to various places, such as a farm and the beach, both of which are putrid and toxic. Meanwhile, there are reports of riots across the world, protesting the United States. Environmental devastation is causing people’s skin to peel off, but there’s a new fashion trend—**lesions**—that everyone seems to want.

At a party at Link’s house, Violet becomes horrified when she realizes that Link’s friend Quendy has full-body lesions now. She screams that Link and his friends are “feed”—they’re slowly falling apart while people in other parts of the world are starving. Then, she seems to have a seizure. Titus takes her to the hospital. There, Violet learns that her feed is malfunctioning, and could threaten her life. Titus begins to feel uncomfortable around Violet, and isn’t sure what to say. However, Violet begins to turn to Titus for emotional support at all times of the day and night, and tells him that he’s the most important person in her life.

Violet begins to “chat” Titus via her feed, making lists of everything she wants to do with the rest of her life. Titus doesn’t respond, or only responds after days of waiting. He gets “mal” (the *Feed* equivalent of getting high on drugs) with his friends, and then shows up at Violet’s house, enraging her. Violet scolds him for being self-indulgent while the world is gearing up for a full-scale war with the United States.

Violet sends Titus hours of memories from her early life. Titus deletes these memories from his feed without a second thought. Violet invites him to travel through the mountains with her, and he agrees reluctantly. During their trip to a hotel in the mountains, they attempt to have sex, but Titus finds that he’s no longer attracted to Violet, even after she claims she loves him.

After their trip to the mountains, Violet’s health deteriorates quickly, and Titus begins to ignore her altogether. He starts dating Quendy, and he goes on trips to other planets with his friends. Then, one day, Violet’s father contacts Titus to say that Violet is almost gone. Titus goes to visit Violet, and Violet’s father yells at him for being so self-absorbed and emotionally shallow. Meanwhile, the environment becomes almost uninhabitable, and the countries of the world prepare to go to war with the United States.

Titus stays up all night, thinking about Violet. He decides to visit her one more time. He holds her hand and tells her, “You’re still

here, as long as I can remember you.” Then, he whispers an “ad” for the movie version of their life together—a story in which a “normal guy” and a “dissident with a heart of gold” learn how to “resist the feed.”



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Titus – Titus, who is referred to by name only a handful of times throughout the book, is the protagonist and narrator of *Feed*. He acts as the reader’s guide through the terrifying, dystopian world where the book takes place. Titus, who comes from an extremely wealthy family, enjoys taking luxurious vacations to the **moon**, getting mal (or high) with his friends, and buying whatever he wants using his **feed**. For most of the novel, Titus accepts his world without question: he doesn’t see any reason why he shouldn’t have fun all the time, or why he should try to learn more about the world. As he develops feelings for Violet Durn, however, Titus begins to express doubts about his lifestyle and his society. Violet makes him feel guilty for having fun all day while millions of people starve or work hard to survive, but she also inspires him to pursue a mature, emotionally-rewarding relationship with her—which provides them both with an escape from the culture of instant gratification that most people are used to. However, while Titus may be unusually thoughtful and free-thinking by his society’s standards, he can still be apathetic, cruel, and emotionally hollow. When Violet gets sick and faces death, Titus can barely muster the interest to keep talking to her, let alone show real sympathy and compassion. Anderson leaves the ending of the novel open: perhaps Titus has learned to overcome his own indifference, or perhaps his efforts to do so are too little, too late.

Violet Durn – Violet Durn is, along with Titus, one of the novel’s two main characters. An unusually thoughtful young woman, she was homeschooled her entire life, and only got her **feed** implanted at the age of seven (which is unusually late in life). Largely for these reasons, Violet is depicted as being more imaginative, compassionate, and emotionally mature than Titus and his friends. However, Violet is also depicted as being desperate to fit in with the “normal” kids like Titus. In some ways, she despises these people, but she nevertheless wants to be accepted by them, and it’s for this reason that Violet falls for Titus: he’s a charming, spoiled, upper-class kid, but he’s also unusually thoughtful and even poetic, qualities which Violet admires and nurtures in him. In the second half of the novel, Violet’s health takes a turn for the worse when her feed begins malfunctioning, threatening to end her life altogether. As her health declines, Violet turns to Titus for help and emotional support, only to realize that Titus is reluctant or unable to give her the kind of care and love she desires. Throughout the book, Violet acts as the voice of reason in a sea of brainwashed

consumers, pointing out when Titus and his friends are being obscenely rude, immature, or spoiled. One could even say that Violet is the character with the most in common with M.T. Anderson himself, since she knows that the consumerist culture is a plague, but she’s also fascinated by this culture.

Link Arwaker – Link Arwaker is one of Titus’s friends. A rich, spoiled kid from an absurdly wealthy family, Link is unattractive, but he’s used to being treated like royalty nevertheless—since, in the materialist, consumerist society of *Feed*, being wealthy is more important than being attractive. Over the course of the novel, Link is shown to be a callow, simple-minded, self-absorbed young person—and in this way, he’s the exact kind of human being a consumerist society produces. In an amusing twist, it’s revealed that Link is the biological clone of none other than President Abraham Lincoln (explaining both his name and why Link is so tall). Link and Lincoln—the spoiled brat and the noble politician—have exactly the same genetic makeup. The difference, of course, is that Lincoln worked hard to become a great leader, whereas Link has never worked a day in his life.

Marty – Marty is another one of Titus’s friends. An athletic young man who’s good at “any game,” Marty is similar to Link and Titus insofar as he comes from a rich family, doesn’t have to work hard at anything, and spends all his time horsing around, having fun with girls, and getting “mal” (the *Feed* equivalent of getting high). While Marty doesn’t figure prominently in the second half of the book, it’s implied that he’s generally “second in command” to Link, the informal leader of Titus’s friend group.

Calista – Calista is a pretty young woman and a friend of Titus. During her spring break, she travels to the moon, and later she appears at a party with Titus, Marty, and Link (with whom she’s involved at various points in the novel). Calista is described as being rich, beautiful, and popular. Just as Link is the informal leader of Marty and Titus’s group, Calista seems to be the informal “squad leader” of her friend group (which includes Quendy and Loga). Calista can be rude and even quite cruel—for example, when she mocks Quendy for copying her latest “look.” Calista looks down on the strange, lower-middle-class Violet Durn.

Loga – Loga is a minor character in the novel, a friend of Calista and Quendy. She and Titus dated shortly before the novel begins, and like many of Titus’s friends, she often seen at Link’s parties. Loga is a typically vacuous member of upper class society: when she visits her friends in the hospital, for example, she can’t even muster the compassion or attention to show them sympathy, since she’s too busy chatting with her friends via her **feed**.

Quendy – Quendy is the final member of Calista’s group of friends. She’s somewhat shyer than Calista, and she’s perceived as being less attractive, too. Partly as a result, Quendy can be very competitive with Calista, imitating Calista’s attitudes and styles, and even getting artificial, full-body **lesions** after Calista

gets them first. By the end of the novel, Titus has begun dating Quendy—full-body lesions and all.

President Trumbull – President Trumbull, the leader of the United States of America, is mentioned a handful of times, always on feed news. A shockingly inarticulate public speaker, Trumbull seems to be more of a figurehead than an actual leader. His only purpose is to defend corporate interests, even as corporations endanger the entire world’s safety.

Dad / Steve – Titus’s dad is depicted as an emotionally distant, vacuous man—in a way, the kind of adult Titus is in grave danger of becoming. He works in banking, and is usually so immersed in talking via his **feed** that he can’t be bothered to say anything to his son. Dad takes a condescending view of anyone who dares to criticize corporations, including Violet Durn. As the novel nears its end, it’s revealed that Dad may have been having an affair with a coworker, though nothing comes of this revelation.

DelGlacey Murdoch – DelGlacey Murdoch is a B-movie actor whose face served as the model for Titus’s own (in the society of *Feed*, wealthy parents can pay to have their children designed to look like famous people). Mom and Dad chose Murdoch because they thought he’d turn out to be a famous actor—but in fact, his career languished.

Violet’s father – Violet’s father is one of the novel’s most poignant characters. A highly intelligent, often argumentative man, he teaches “dead languages” (mostly computer languages) at a university. He’s extremely critical of his own society, especially the overpowering culture of conspicuous consumption. However, Violet’s father also recognizes that having a **feed** is a necessity in America: he gets his own feed, which he carries around on his back (giving himself a permanent hunch) and arranges for a feed to be implanted in Violet’s brain. Toward the end of the novel, when complications with Violet’s feed threaten to kill her, Violet’s father personal blames himself for his daughter’s suffering. While Titus initially thinks of Violet’s father as a “weird” old man, it slowly becomes clear that he’s one of the only characters in the book who understands how horrifying the society of *Feed* really is.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Smell Factor – Titus’s little brother, referred to only as Smell Factor, is a peripheral character in the text. He’s usually so immersed in his feed that he has little to no awareness of what’s happening right in front of him, and periodically yells things that make no discernible sense.

Mom – Titus’s mom is depicted as an indulgent parent who spoils Titus no matter how badly he has behaved. Titus is vaguely aware that she does something that relates to “design,” but seems not to know much more about her—or even care much about her.

TERMS

Mal – Short for malfunctioning, being “in mal” is the futuristic equivalent of using drugs to get high. People who have feeds implanted can visit “mal websites” and download a software that makes their feeds malfunction in a way that is pleasurable. When people are “in mal,” they start to shudder, stumble and even hallucinate.

Upcar – An upcar is a flying car.



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.



CORPORATIONS AND CONSUMERISM

Anderson’s novel takes place in a futuristic version of America in which corporations have replaced the government as the most powerful societal institution. In the novel’s dystopian vision of the future, corporations exert control over American citizens by convincing them to spend all their money on products they don’t need, and all their time thinking about what to buy next. Almost all Americans have tiny devices implanted in their brains, called “**feeds**,” which corporations use to manipulate their customers through the use of advertisements. Each feed bombards its user with an endless stream of personalized ads, nudging them into a lifestyle of constant consumption. As powerful as these corporations are, *Feed* shows their position to be inherently unstable—and, as the book ends, on the verge of collapse.

Corporations seem to enjoy limitless power over the characters in *Feed*. The book’s narrator, Titus, explains that corporations are responsible for implanting feeds in babies’ brains when they’re born. Because children grow up with the feed, they become almost completely dependent on the feed for information and entertainment. But corporate control doesn’t end with the feed. Titus goes on to explain that corporations have *also* taken control over the school system—now called School™—and use it as an opportunity to train young people to be eager, loyal consumers for the rest of their lives (Titus explains, evidently blind to the irony, that corporations see education as an “investment in tomorrow”). Finally, corporations enjoy unlimited power because they use their influence to buy politicians who will protect corporations’ rights to “free trade.” The result of corporate control is that Titus and his peers spend all their money buying the products that corporations want them to buy. This, in turn, allows the

corporations to continue exercising control, by producing more products to sell, creating more education propaganda, and buying more politicians. In short, the consumption of goods fuels an endless, cyclical process of corporate expansion.

Although the widespread culture of consumerism strengthens corporations, *Feed* shows that it also runs the risk of destroying them, meaning that corporations are, in a sense, victims of their own success. The book explores this contradiction in two main ways. First, constant corporate expansion has dire consequences for the natural world. There are hints throughout the novel that unchecked pollution and development are endangering not just other species, but the human race itself, as temperatures never fall below 100 degrees, people's skin peels off, and natural disasters caused by corporate activity routinely kill thousands at a time. The implication is that the culture of consumerism is self-destructive, to the point where it kills the very consumers it's supposed to be serving. But in addition to showing that consumerism is dangerous to human life, *Feed* shows that it is a threat to human happiness, simply because in order to keep people consuming, corporations need to keep their customers *unhappy*. For example, if Titus were to buy a car that made him truly, lastingly happy, then he'd stop shopping for cars altogether, and he'd also stop giving money to corporations. From the perspective of corporations, this possibility is unacceptable. Corporations depend on people like Titus being perpetually *slightly* dissatisfied. Consumers need to be just unhappy enough that they keep buying things—not so unhappy that they give up on consumerism altogether—but happy enough to believe that the next car or shirt or sweater vest they purchase could solve all their problems. The result is that some consumers, including Titus by the end of the novel, *do* come to question the practice of consumerism itself: after years of being unsatisfied by their purchases, they become disillusioned with the corporations who've promised, and failed, to make them happy.

The dystopian corporate society Anderson writes about is powerful, yet unstable. It depends upon wreaking environmental havoc on the world, and it only works when it keeps its supposed beneficiaries (the consumers) unsatisfied. This corporation-run world is always teetering on the verge of collapse and, paradoxically, the more powerful it gets, the more precarious its position becomes. Indeed, by the end of the novel, the entire world is gearing up for war with the United States in response to its renegade corporatism, as the concrete, environmental effects of this ideology have become too serious to ignore. Anderson further implies that consumers themselves—not just the victims of consumerism around the world—might start to opt out of the consumer culture. However, he suggests that a lifetime of brainwashing may have left Titus and others like him unable to imagine life without their feeds and the mindless cycle of consumption the feeds

reinforce.



APATHY, HAPPINESS, AND SATISFACTION

Apathy is the emotion that corporations aim to produce in their consumers, and as a result it has become the default emotional state of the characters in *Feed*. Titus and his friends coast through life, spending all their money on obscenely expensive products and exotic vacations. And yet, instead of being excited by all these new trips and purchases, Titus and his friends seem to be almost constantly bored. The reason for Titus's apathy—and the crux of Anderson's insight on the subject—is that real happiness and fulfillment take time and effort to achieve. Titus's feed has conditioned him to expect nothing but constant, instant gratification—which ultimately proves not to be all that gratifying.

The reason everyone in *Feed* is so apathetic is that they're completely dependent on their **feeds** for pleasure. In the society described in Anderson's book, almost nobody knows how to make themselves happy. Since the feed can provide entertainment twenty-four hours a day (people even use their feeds to dream), people have largely abandoned some of the most basic sources of happiness—for example, family. Titus seems utterly apathetic toward his mom, dad, and brother (to whom he always refers as Smell Factor), just as they show apathy toward him. Many families bond by spending time together, arguing, and “growing together.” But for Titus's family, there's no such thing as “together”—since even when they're in the same room, they're all lost in their own little worlds, watching feedcasts and chatting via feed with their friends. To them, the idea of family time seems dull by comparison.

Even though Titus and his peers rely on their feeds for happiness, the pleasure their feeds provide them isn't actually *satisfying*. This is true for three closely related reasons. First, the feeds are unsatisfying because of the constant and inescapable barrage of ads, which means there's no time to savor the pleasures the feed offers. After Titus buys a flying car, for example, he seems to get little, if any, pleasure from his purchase, because he's too busy thinking about his next purchases. Even when he's driving his new car, he's shopping for jerseys and sweater vests. Buying a car doesn't satisfy him, it just staves off dissatisfaction until he buys something else. Second, because of the sheer quantity of pleasure the feed offers, Titus and his peers become numb to this pleasure. They have access to almost unlimited cash, so they can indulge in luxury vacations and shopping sprees whenever they want. The result is that even a trip to the moon—an incredibly exciting activity, one would think—isn't enough to jolt Titus out of his apathy. Third, the feeds are *designed* to leave its users unsatisfied, because it keeps them coming back for more. In the future, ads and entertainment have become virtually

indistinguishable. As Violet Durn explains, songs have become jingles, and feedcasts (i.e., television and movies) have become feature-length commercials. This has enormous consequences for the consumer: instead of providing satisfaction and closure, feed entertainment is only designed to generate *more desire* for products. In all, Titus and his friends don't have the imagination to have fun on their own, and their feeds are calibrated to be not quite fun enough. Titus is trapped in an endless cycle of feeling apathetic, using his feed to stave off apathy, feeling unsatisfied, and feeling apathetic once again.

Through writing about his characters' apathy and discontentment, however, Anderson implicitly suggests what real happiness might look like. First and foremost, real happiness takes time and effort—two things that are utterly foreign to Titus and his friends. The book shows that people tend to enjoy things most when they have to expend some amount of energy to achieve them. Throughout the book, Titus is never happier than when he is *pursuing* different forms of pleasure, and never more restless than when he uses his feed to achieve instant pleasure. Even when they're trapped in the hospital without access to the feed, Titus and Violet find ways of entertaining themselves, first by inventing games and later by going for walks, talking about their families, and kissing. He savors his time with Violet instead of thinking ahead to what his next source of pleasure will be. By foregoing instant gratification in this way, Titus ends up having what he describes as one of the most fulfilling days of his life. Anderson leaves the ending of *Feed* ambiguous, but he suggests that Titus may be ready to abandon his apathy and his addiction to instant gratification for good. In either case, the novel paints a disturbing picture of a society in which people's attention spans have gotten so short that they're unwilling to lift a finger to entertain themselves, and as a result have become almost completely incapable of feeling true happiness or satisfaction.



RESISTANCE

Like much science fiction, *Feed* is a thinly veiled critique of the present. Americans in the 21st century may not have chips implanted in their brains, but they're arguably the victims of corporate brainwashing, and they are certainly rampant consumers. Their government ignores evidence of environmental degradation and corporate malfeasance while sanctimoniously claiming to support "free trade." Anderson even dedicated his novel to "all those who fight the feed." This might suggest that Anderson wants to encourage his readers to fight society's problems before they get out of hand. To this end, his book studies different ways of resisting consumerism and corporate power, suggesting that, in the long run, love and respect may be the most effective means of resisting the culture of consumerism. *Feed* is full of characters who passively accept society's rules. But there are many other characters in the book who actively

resist corporate expansion and environmental devastation. First, and most obviously, Titus notes that there are various activist groups—all computer hackers—whose mission is to destroy the **feed**. Toward the end of the novel, readers learn that the governments of the world (collectively, the Global Alliance) are uniting to declare war against the United States, reasoning that "the biological integrity of the earth relies at this point upon the dismantling of American-based corporate entities." These coalitions are willing to resort to breaking the law, sometimes with acts of violence, in order to fight corporate expansion. They believe that they're justified in breaking the law because the situation is so dire, and that to sit back and do nothing would guarantee total environmental collapse. However, Anderson hints that this form of resistance, whether or not it's morally justified, is unlikely to save the world. As the novel ends, the Global Alliance's chances of winning their battle against the United States are slim. Instead, it seems more likely that, in trying to save the world from environmental destruction, the Alliance will only succeed in sowing further destruction.

While Anderson alludes to various groups who resist the feed through violence and crime, he spends more time writing about the people who resist corporate expansion "from the inside"—in other words, people who participate in consumerist activities but use their influence to weaken corporate power. For example, Violet Durn, one of the few characters in the novel who expresses strong dissatisfaction with the feed, believes that, by shopping for a mismatched array of products, she can create an unintelligible "consumer taste profile" that will confound her feed—so that it won't know how to advertise to her. However, Violet's act of resistance achieves only the most minimal success. It backfires when her feed breaks down, and the corporation that installed it refuses to pay for upkeep, since Violet is an "unpredictable" customer. In this way, Anderson suggests that a culture of consumerism can't be sabotaged through more consumption.

Anderson writes about many different forms of resistance to the feed, and to corporate control in general, but none of the forms of resistance he discusses are shown to achieve their goal—with the result that, at the end of the novel, mankind still seems headed straight for destruction. However, the novel ends with a scene that could be interpreted to point to a more effective form of resistance. In the final chapter, Titus seems to opt out of consumer culture by destroying his clothing and going to visit Violet Durn, who is nearly dead. For one of the first times in the book, Titus seems sincerely devoted to Violet. He's not thinking about shopping or planning a trip to the **moon**—he's fully *present* with Violet. He refuses to participate in a culture of apathy and casual cruelty, treating people like products. The passage presents Titus's behavior as a heroic and exemplary form of resistance to consumerism because (unlike crime, violence, and sabotage) it creates a true *alternative* to

consumerism: love and respect. If everyone were to follow Titus's lead, corporations would lose their business, and with it their power. Anderson's point isn't that Violet and Titus are going to save the world singlehandedly—it's too late for that. Rather, he suggests that the best way to resist the culture of consumerism may be to take after Violet and Titus by focusing on human relationships—rather than products—as the greatest source of fulfillment.



CLASS AND SEGREGATION

Feed is about a society in which people are so carefully classified and sorted according to their consumption habits that they only spend time with

people who are more or less exactly like them. The characters in the book aren't sorted by intelligence, race, gender, or health. Instead, they're sorted by their taste profiles—which is just another way of saying they're sorted by their economic class. By depicting a society of this kind, *Feed* argues that environmental and societal decay are both a cause and an effect of economic inequality.

Because they're surrounded by wealth and entitlement, Titus and his friends are shockingly oblivious to the way non-wealthy people live. Titus is the son of successful parents (his mom and dad work in "design" and "banking," respectively) who can afford to send their child on spring break vacations to the **moon** and buy him flying cars. Titus's friends are similarly used to a life of indulgence. Titus's friend Link Arwaker comes from an extraordinarily rich family—Link himself is a clone of Abraham Lincoln, suggesting that his family has both money and influence. Because shopping is such an important part of life in the society of *Feed*, Titus almost never has occasion to associate with people who aren't as wealthy as he is, since they couldn't keep up with his spending habits. In this way, the structure and cultural norms of his society virtually preclude him from meeting people outside his class "bubble." It's for this reason that, on the rare occasion when Titus *does* meet someone from outside the upper class, he can barely understand their way of life. Although Titus meets Violet Durn (the only important character in the book who comes from a background that isn't recognizably upper-class) in the first few chapters of the book, it takes him a long time to understand that Violet can't afford some of the things he takes for granted—for example, Violet's father had to spend a month's pay just so that Violet could go to the moon.

By the same token, because Titus and his friends live in a class "bubble," they're blissfully unaware that working-class people are starving or dying as a direct result of corporate expansion—expansion which their own consumerist habits enable. For example, they seem only dimly aware that pollution from American companies is causing hundreds and thousands of deaths around the globe. But because they are geographically and culturally isolated from the victims of

corporate expansion, Titus and his friends have no discernible reason to change their behavior, even though their behavior is directly responsible for other people's suffering. This is the crux of Anderson's most important point about economic inequality: it's a vicious cycle, where the more isolated wealthy people are from the working-class, the more oblivious they become to the consequences of their own actions, which in turn enables them to continue to act with impunity. By the same logic, Titus and his friends' wild shopping binges cause further environmental degradation and further damage to the working class, further increasing economic inequality. In short, it's important to understand the role of economic inequality in *Feed*, because it's both a primary cause and a major outcome of the global crises to which Anderson alludes throughout the book.



THE ENVIRONMENT

Throughout *Feed*, M.T. Anderson shows how the unchecked growth of technology and corporate power has ravaged the environment. Some of the effects of environmental degradation are purely physical. For instance, because of unchecked corporate expansion—in the form of factories, industrial farms, hotels, infrastructure, and so forth—there's an unprecedented amount of pollution. Constant corporate activity has sucked much of the oxygen out of the air and also raised the temperature of the planet to the point where the elderly are nostalgic for the days when the temperature never got above one hundred degrees. The consequences of these environmental changes on humans are horrifying. The escalating temperature has caused almost all animals to die off, and it is quickly becoming clear that human beings are endangered, too. In America, people's skin starts peeling off, while in other parts of the world, people die because of the toxicity of their environment.

One of the consequences of environmental degradation is that it leads to the further degradation and cheapening of mankind's *spiritual* relationship with the natural world. In the world of *Feed*, the wilderness no longer exists. As Violet Durn points out to Titus, every place she wants to explore has already been explored countless times—meaning that the human race's "fingerprints" are all over it. When the two of them go to the mountains for a few days, they find a town packed with tourists. In the future, there's nothing special about nature anymore—it's just another tourist destination. Every spot that hasn't been outright destroyed has been colonized and commodified, meaning that the feeling of peace, exhilaration, and the unknown that people have always associated with the natural world has all but vanished. In a sense, the natural world has become the human race's final "product"—something to be enjoyed and callously discarded, but not respected.

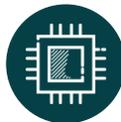
Anderson is pessimistic about the possibility of any solutions to the decay caused by corporate expansion. As he suggests, attempts to use technology to curb pollution and

environmental decay are almost by definition ineffectual and contradictory. Anderson writes, for instance, that a large corporation has torn down a nearby forest in order to build an oxygen factory—a darkly ironic way of suggesting that even “green technology” is anything but green. Corporations may engage in small, token efforts to curb pollution, but this is not enough to outweigh the massive amounts of pollution they produce. Anderson’s broader point is that corporations can use technology and clever PR strategies to mitigate or cover up the damage they do, but they can’t repair the lasting and irreversible damage they inflict on the environment. A particularly disturbing example of this principle is the way that the feed glamorizes the **lesions** that have begun to appear on people’s skin because of environmental degradation. Rather than trying to undo or slow their destruction of the environment, corporations instead find ways of making people think that the lesions are attractive. Corporations also try to obscure the damage they’ve done by making the news more “positive” (for example, Titus mentions that feednews is downplaying the seriousness of recent air pollution levels, even though the reports are miserable). All in all, *Feed* shows that corporations are locked in a “zero-sum game” with the environment, wherein the healthier one becomes, the unhealthier the other becomes. While one could argue that Anderson’s thesis about the environment is unnecessarily grim (since there might be some forms of technology that don’t cause rampant pollution), his grim outlook has a useful purpose: he hopes to galvanize readers in the 21st century into changing their own practices of consumption, thereby improving the odds that their own world doesn’t turn into the one described in Anderson’s novel.



SYMBOLS

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



FEED

The central symbol of *Feed* is the feed itself. This technology, implanted in the characters’ heads shortly after they’re born, allows the characters to communicate electronically with each other. The feed also allows them to see a constant stream of advertisements for products—everything from sweater vests to cars. Finally, the feed gives the characters constant access to information and entertainment from around the world, meaning that they never have to work hard to find stimulation. The feed is, one might say, M.T. Anderson’s idea of what the internet will be like in the future, but the feed is also a symbol for corporate control. In the future, Anderson suggests, corporations will exercise so much power over their customers that they’ll actually be able

to control what their customers are thinking at any given time, using propagandistic advertising techniques to “nudge” them into buying certain products or going to certain places. The feed is, in short, a frightening symbol for the way that people are increasingly trained to think in the same way and desire the same products.



THE MOON

Feed opens with Titus and his friends traveling to the moon, only to be underwhelmed by the experience. The moon, they find, is dull and predictable—same stores, same foods, same people, and so forth. It is, of course, disturbing to think that there might come a point in the future when people might be so thoroughly numb and apathetic that they even complain about how boring their trip to the moon was. But this is Anderson’s point: the moon is a symbol for the way the society described in *Feed* takes everything that is beautiful and mysterious about the world and transforms it into something that is tacky, banal, and above all consumable. In this way, the moon becomes an unlikely symbol of consumer malaise in *Feed*.



LESIONS

At the beginning of the novel, the characters are all suffering from mysterious lesions that cause their skin to peel away. It’s suggested that these lesions are caused by environmental devastation brought about by corporate expansion and pollution. But over the course of the book, something strange happens. Lesions come to be seen as hip and even attractive—such that young women get artificial lesions all over their bodies, and young men seem to see them as an appealing feature. The implication is that corporations, rather than slowing down their environmental destruction, have simply found a way to glamorize the wounds that their environmental destruction causes. In this way, lesions are a symbol of the decay of the natural world and of the unthinking habits of consumers in the face of marketing strategies in an age when corporations can successfully glamorize even physical deformity and illness in the interest of maximizing profits.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Candlewick Press edition of *Feed* published in 2012.

Part 1: Your Face is Not An Organ Quotes

☞ We went to the moon to have fun, but the moon turned out to completely suck.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

The first sentence of *Feed* sets the tone for the next three hundred pages. Titus, the narrator, is an apathetic, entitled teenager who spends his time buying things he doesn't need and going on expensive vacations to exotic destinations. Titus lives in a world of seemingly unlimited excitement and entertainment—but because he's so inundated with ads and products, and so pressured to have fun *all the time*, he has become almost completely numb to the entertainment his society offers him. The end result is that Titus and his friends can travel to the *moon*—one of the most exciting destinations imaginable one would think—and still think that it “sucks.”

In this way, the passage establishes the central paradox of Titus's society, and by extension Titus's life: he's constantly told (by ads, his friends, his implanted feed, and so on) that he should pursue pleasure. And yet the pleasure that Titus pursues is almost always loud, expensive, and ultimately unrewarding. As a willing consumer in a society structured around consumerism, Titus is always chasing after fulfillment, telling himself that happiness is just one purchase, or one vacation, away.

Part 2: Missing the Feed Quotes

☛☛ But the braggest thing about the feed, the thing that made it really big, is that it knows everything you want and hope for, sometimes before you even know what those things are.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Titus explains what feeds are. In the future, readers learn, the majority of Americans have tiny chips implanted in their brains. These chips allow them to communicate electronically with one another and access limitless entertainment and information, all while exposing

them to an endless stream of obnoxious advertisements for new products. The feed is, it seems, Anderson's vision of what the Internet will be like in a few decades.

The central problem with the feed, Anderson implies in this passage, is that it limits human freedom. The main purpose of the feed, though Titus doesn't really realize it, is to nudge Titus and his peers into spending their money on useless, unfulfilling “things,” while deceiving them into believing that these “things” are vital to their happiness. Put another way, the feed seems to have a foolproof “taste profile” for each one of its users, which allows it to predict what people will and won't like. The problem, which Anderson alludes to here, is that the feed uses its highly intelligent design to create new desires in its users instead of satisfying existing ones, giving way to an unquenchable thirst for new products and further purchases.

Part 2: The Garden Quotes

☛☛ She rubbed my head, and she went, “You're the only one of them that uses metaphor.”

She was staring at me, and I was staring at her, and I moved toward her, and we kissed.

Related Characters: Violet Durn (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Titus develops feelings for Violet Durn, the beautiful and intelligent young woman he meets while vacationing on the moon. After Titus, Violet, and some friends have their feeds hacked, they end up in the hospital. Momentarily liberated from their feeds, Violet and Titus develop a far more intense emotional bond than they'd be able to with the constant distraction of the feed. Titus is attracted to Violet, in part, because she's intelligent and curious about the world: she's always interested in discovering new things and seeing the world in new, exciting ways. In return, Violet seems to find Titus attractive because he's an unusually poetic and observant person. He's no genius, to be sure, but he seems more interested in finding beauty in unlikely places (hence his uses of metaphor), rather than passively consuming the fodder offered to him by his feed.

Part 3: Undervalued Truffle Quotes

☝ "It is not the will of the American people, the people of this great nation, to believe the allegations that were made by these corporate "watch" organizations, which are not the majority of the American people, I repeat not, and aren't its will. It is our duty as Americans, and as a nation dedicated to freedom and free commerce, to stand behind our fellow Americans and not cast . . . things at them. Stones, for example. The first stone. By this I mean that we shouldn't think that there are any truth to the rumors that the lesions are the result of any activity of American industry.

Related Characters: President Trumbull (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 85

Explanation and Analysis

In one of the many narrative interludes made up of excerpts from a feed broadcast (possibly the one playing in Titus's head), readers learn that the president of the United States, President Trumbull, has made a statement defending American corporations from accusations that it is destroying the environment. It is noteworthy that the President of the United States is so inarticulate he can barely string words together into a sentence. The president seems to have one job in the world of *Feed*, and it is to protect corporations. Trumbull falls back on the rhetoric of freedom and free trade to argue that nobody has the right to interfere with corporate activity. And yet *Feed* is itself a criticism of Trumbull's argument. Corporations' "free trade" causes so much pollution that it threatens to wipe out the natural world altogether, taking human beings (and their freedom) with it.

Finally, it's important to notice that President Trumbull denies that corporations have no role in the lesions that people have been getting on their bodies—however, this denial does little more than reaffirm that corporations really *do* have something to do with the lesions. In short, the passage shows a national figurehead protecting corporate destructiveness under the guise of freedom.

Part 3: The Others in Mal Quotes

☝ I feel like we're the only two of us who like remember the, like, the thing.

People want to forget.
You can't blame them.

Related Characters: Titus, Violet Durn (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

In Part Three, Titus and his friends return to earth. Even though they've just been attacked by a mysterious hacker, they return to their normal lifestyle, and spend all their time partying, "getting mal" (i.e., high), and shopping.

For Titus, however, this old lifestyle is becoming increasingly intolerable. Titus finds it peculiar that everyone else finds it so easy to forget about what happened on the moon. It is furthermore implied that Titus's dissatisfaction with his friends' behavior is indicative of his general and growing dissatisfaction with his life. Here, he confesses his feelings to Violet, who reciprocates them. The passage cements the bond between the two characters: they seem to be the only young people who are dissatisfied with the *status quo*, and for the remainder of the book they struggle to find some alternative to it.

Part 3: Lose the Chemise Quotes

☝ What I've been doing over the feed for the last two days, is trying to create a customer profile that's so screwed, no one can market to it. I'm not going to let them catalog me. I'm going to become invisible.

Related Characters: Violet Durn (speaker), Titus

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 98

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Violet shows Titus a project she's been working on, the goal of which is to confound her feed. The feed, readers will recall, is designed to assemble a foolproof taste profile for its users, with the result that it can predict exactly what people like and dislike. Violet believes that by shopping for unusual goods, she can construct a taste profile so eclectic that no feed will be able to predict her likes and dislikes. In another sense, Violet is trying to escape the influence of her feed through an act of sabotage—shopping for so many different kinds of goods

that it makes nonsense of the practice of shopping itself. The end goal of Violet's act of sabotage is personal freedom. Violet dislikes the feed and its taste profile because it implies that she's perfectly predictable. Violet wants to celebrate her uniqueness and humanity, and thinks that she can do so by battling her own feed.

Part 3: The Dimples of Delglacey Quotes

Also, it's good because that way we know that the big corps are made up of real human beings, and not just jerks out for money, because taking care of children, they care about America's future. It's an investment in tomorrow. When no one was going to pay for the public schools anymore and they were all like filled with guns and drugs and English teachers who were really pimps and stuff, some of the big media congloms got together and gave all this money and bought the schools so that all of them could have computers and pizza for lunch and stuff, which they gave for free, and now we do stuff in classes about how to work technology and how to find bargains and what's the best way to get a job and how to decorate our bedroom.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Titus explains that, in his society, corporations have bought out the school system, with the result that school (now called School™) has become a program for training students to become willing, lifelong consumers.

Perhaps more disturbing than the idea that corporations use schools as indoctrination programs is the way that Titus rationalizes this control to himself. He claims that corporations' role in education proves that they're "not just jerks out for money." This, to be sure, is one of the main reasons why corporations invest in schools: they think it's good for public relations, as well as for their own profit. But Titus confuses perception and reality: just because corporations use school to improve their "image" doesn't mean they're actually "good guys." Furthermore, Titus seems to forget that corporations are only concerned with making a profit, and educational propaganda is one of the best ways to guarantee that the next generation of Americans gives them business. Titus seems entirely

unaware of the second, darker meaning of "an investment in tomorrow," which is that, by spending money to brainwash students, corporations are quite literally investing in future customers.

"You know what he was in?" said my dad. "Remember Virtual Blast? He played the fifth Navy Seal, with the croup. You know, coughing."

"He was in the feature with all the crazy utensils," said my mother. "A few years ago? That one? He was the doorman in the pillbox hat." I had already pulled up a list of his feed-features and I was going over them. None of them got more than two stars.

Related Characters: Dad / Steve, Mom, Titus (speaker), DelGlacey Murdoch

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 117

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, readers learn that futuristic American families have the ability to design their children's looks. Titus's parents, for example, have designed Titus's face to resemble that of DelGlacey Murdoch, a forgotten movie actor whom Titus's parents believed was going to be a huge star.

Titus's parents are visibly embarrassed at having designed their child to look like a failed star. They seem to think of this as a personal failure on their part. Their embarrassment is suggestive of the general problem with designing children to look like celebrities: there's no way to predict what'll happen to those celebrities while the children are growing up (what if the celebrity becomes unpopular, or commits a crime?). More generally still, the practice of changing a child's features to resemble those of celebrities symbolizes Titus's society's obsession with the shallowest and most obvious forms of beauty.

Part 3: Lift Quotes

"He was beaten to death at the club. We saw it. The police, remember? They beat him over the head."

She reached out and took my arm.

My father walked toward us across the pavement, waving. The plastic flags were flapping in the artificial wind while Muzak came out of heaven.

I bought the Dodge.

Related Characters: Violet Durn, Titus (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 123

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Titus is shopping for a new car (courtesy of his father) with Violet Durn, his girlfriend. While he's test-driving cars, Violet mentions that the man who hacked their feeds on the moon was beaten to death by the police before he could stand trial. Regardless of the ethics of hacking, it's clear that the man's death was a horrific crime—one which Titus hasn't been aware of (both because his parents didn't tell him and because he's so oblivious to the news). The passage also conveys the extent of Titus's obliviousness—just a couple minutes after learning of a man's death by beating, Titus buys a new car and moves on with his life, seemingly indifferent to what he's just learned. The culture of constant consumption leaves him with no time to think about serious issues like death or police brutality.

are, as Violet's father suggests, a way for rich, spoiled people to celebrate their power and feel that they are the masters of "all [they] survey." The same could be said for almost any product Titus and his friends buy: they use conspicuous consumption to celebrate themselves and their unbounded power and privilege.

Part 3: A Day in the Country Quotes

☛ She said she had a theory that everything was better if you delayed it. She had this whole thing about self-control, okay, and the importance of self-control. For example, she said, when she bought something, she wouldn't let herself order it for a long time. Then she would just go to the purchase site and show it to herself. Then she'd let herself get fed the sense-sim, you know, she'd let herself know how it would feel, or what it would smell like. Then she would go away and wouldn't look for a week.

Related Characters: Violet Durn, Titus (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis

Violet is different from almost everyone else in the novel, in the sense that she is critical of the culture of instant gratification that Titus and his friends take for granted. One of the most important tenets of the society described in *Feed* is that pleasure is *most* pleasurable when it arrives immediately. Titus is used to getting whatever he wants as soon as he wants it. When he makes a purchase through his feed, for example, his order arrives almost immediately.

Violet's insight, however, is that instant gratification is, by definition, not all that gratifying. People tend to enjoy things most when they have to wait, or work—such that their anticipation builds, and they spend time trying to imagine what the objects of their desire will be like. It's for this reason that Violet tries to delay gratification for as long as possible. If she orders a product, she makes sure it ships as slowly as possible.

☛ You know, I think death is shallower now. It used to be a hole you fell into and kept falling. Now it's just a blank.

Related Characters: Violet Durn (speaker)

Part 3: Observe the Remarkable Verdure Quotes

☛ He said in a high-pitched voice, like a teensy-weensy kind of voice, "Ooooooh! Observe the remarkable verdure! Little friend, I am master of all I survey."

Related Characters: Violet's father, Titus (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 137

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Titus meets Violet Durn's father, a quirky character who speaks in an intentionally erudite vocabulary. When Titus tells Violet's father that they're going to drive around the country in Titus's new upcar (i.e., flying car), Violet's father doesn't reply in any of the usual ways—instead, he squeaks, "Observe the remarkable verdure!" (i.e., greenery).

As with much of what Violet's father says, his outburst is a bit hard to understand, but actually somewhat insightful if you think about it more. Violet's father could be interpreted to be making fun of Titus for the way he chooses to romance Violet—driving her around as a way of showing off his new purchase. Violet's father could also be making fun of upcars more generally, and the culture of machismo and consumerism that encourages people to buy them. Upcars

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis

While Violet Durn and Titus are driving in Titus's new upcar, Violet brings up a sensitive subject: the role of death in their society. Violet argues that death has become a "shallower," less impactful part of life than it was in the past. When people die, she suggests, they're forgotten quickly, and no great significance is attached to their passing. This is partly because, in the society described in *Feed*, people, like products, are evaluated in terms of the happiness they bring. Therefore, it's hard for Titus and his friends to muster emotions of sympathy or grief. It's also worth noting that, in the society of the novel, there seems to be little to no religion, at least as present-day readers think of the word. (The only time Christianity is mentioned, it's twisted into an excuse to sell luxury cars.) Rather, it seems that consumerism is the society's religion. In this way, Violet's point makes a certain amount of sense: the people in the novel practice a shallow life of constant consumption, so they'd be unlikely to pay much attention to death.

●● And we are the nation of dreams. We are seers. We are wizards. We speak in visions. Our letters are like flocks of doves, released from under our hats. We have only to stretch out our hand and desire, and what we wish for settles like a kerchief in our palm. We are a race of sorcerers, enchanters. We are Atlantis. We are the wizard-isle of Mu.

What we wish for, is ours.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

The chapter ends with an optimistic interpretation of Titus's society. An unnamed speaker argues that the feed has brought about a utopia. In this utopia, anybody with a feed (and the right amount of money, of course) has the power to achieve whatever she wants. If she wants a car, for example, she has the power to buy that car and enjoy it almost instantly. The power the feed affords its user, in short, is almost magical—nothing short of miraculous.

In a way, Anderson's book is a three hundred-page rebuttal to the argument the speaker makes in this section. What Anderson shows is that, contrary to this speaker's assertion, machines bring about a world in which people can achieve their dreams, but only by cheapening the *content* of these dreams. People can achieve their dreams of owning a car, but only because they're incapable of imagining anything other than what their feeds sell them. Creativity and imagination—arguably the essence of dreams—are almost completely absent from Titus's world. Feeds haven't created a race of sorcerers, they've created a race of passive consumers who are all addicted to the same dull products.

Part 3: Nudging Again Quotes

●● Someone once said it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich guy to get into heaven.

There is a city. A marketplace. Camels. Arabs. The upcar shoots overhead, and they duck.

Yeah, sure. Now we know that the "eye of the needle" is just another name for a gate in Jerusalem—and with the Swarp XE-11's mega-lepton lift and electrokinetic gyro stasis, [...] getting through the gate just won't be a problem anymore. The Swarp XE-11: You *can* take it with you.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

In this sardonic passage, the advertisement alludes to a famous Biblical verse in which Jesus Christ claims that a rich man has less chance of entering Heaven than a camel has of passing through the eye of a needle (i.e., the odds are exceedingly slim). Ridiculously, the ad twists Christ's criticism of excessive wealth into a way of selling a new luxury product—a car that, one can only assume, is being marketed to wealthy people. In all, the passage is a particularly vivid illustration of how traditional religions like Christianity have been subverted to strengthen the only "religion" that matters in the world of *Feed*: the religion of consumerism.

Part 3: The Real Thing Quotes

☝☝ "This top is the Watts Riot top."

Violet said, "I can never keep any of the riots straight. Which one was the Watts riot?"

Calista and Loga stopped and looked at her. I could feel them flashing chat.

"Like, a riot," said Calista. "I don't know, Violet. Like, when people start breaking windows and beating each other up, and they have to call in the cops. A riot. You know. Riot?"

Related Characters: Violet Durn, Calista, Titus (speaker), Loga

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 163

Explanation and Analysis

In the chapters leading up to this passage, there have been riots throughout South America. Suspiciously, American corporations have begun to market "riot gear" as a hip fashion accessory. Popular teenaged girls like Calista wear riot gear as a fashion statement, but without any awareness of the histories surrounding the riots their clothes are named after. For example, Calista doesn't seem to realize that the Watts Riot was in large part a response to police brutality, perhaps alluding to the deadly beating of the hacker at the moon club.

The passage illustrates a particularly insidious strategy that powerful corporations use to weaken their opposition: they try to coopt and even commodify this opposition. Riots threaten to weaken the power of corporations around the world, and so the corporations respond to glamorizing riots, "defanging" them by popularizing them among impressionable teenagers. This is, even in present day reality, a fairly familiar tactic, as politicians and corporations alike find ways to coopt and market to their own opposition—they even find ways of selling the idea of anti-capitalism! The passage is a good example of that paradoxical coopting process.

Part 3: Limbo and Prayer Quotes

☝☝ So he's the genetic clone of Abraham Lincoln.

Yeah.

Abraham Lincoln.

That's what I said.

Tell me what he's doing now.

Eh . . . the limbo. With the coaxial cable.

Related Characters: Violet Durn, Titus (speaker), Link Arwaker

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 186

Explanation and Analysis

Here, readers come to learn the shocking truth about Link Arwaker, Titus's spoiled, loutish friend: he's a genetic clone of none other than Abraham Lincoln. One might think that Link, by virtue of the fact that he's genetically identical to one of the greatest Americans of all time, would be a dignified and noble-minded leader. Of course, the exact opposite is the case: there's nothing dignified or noble about him. The difference between Link and Lincoln, it's plain to see, is that Lincoln was hard-working and self-taught, whereas Link doesn't have the first clue what work is. Link and Lincoln are identical in terms of "nature" (that is, genetically), but opposite in terms of "nurture," or upbringing. In this case, nurture proves to be the more important variable.

Part 3: Flat Hope Quotes

☝☝ The only thing worse than the thought it may all come tumbling down is the thought that we may go on like this forever.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker), Violet Durn

Related Themes:     

Page Number: 193

Explanation and Analysis

Violet and Titus attend a party at Link Arwaker's house, where Violet is disgusted by the sight of lesions on the guests' bodies. Bizarrely, lesions have become popular among young people. Although at first they were seen as a serious health risk, corporations have now found ways of glamorizing lesions and—crucially—profiting from them. Violet is so disturbed by what she sees—and by the partygoers' self-indulgent obliviousness to the suffering of others—that she angrily sums up the paradox of her society. Whether it thrives or crumbles, she suggests, mankind is doomed. Violet has a point. Her society is bringing about environmental apocalypse, even as it continues to deny doing so. It encourages young people to be cruel, narcissistic, and uncaring. If corporations continue to pollute the environment, the results will be

nightmarish—but in fact, Violet and her peers are *already* living in a nightmare.

Part 3: Our Duty to the Party Quotes

🗨️ Violet was screaming, "Look at us! You don't hate the feed! You are feed! You're feed! You're being eaten! You're raised for food! Look at what you've made yourselves!" She pointed at Quendy, and went, "She's a monster! A monster!"

Related Characters: Violet Durn, Titus (speaker), Quendy

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 202

Explanation and Analysis

At Link's party, Violet finally voices her feelings about Titus, his friends, and his way of life. Violet is horrified by what she has seen: an entire class of rich, spoiled fools who turn their backs on the suffering of others. The reason that Titus and his friends are so oblivious to suffering, Violet correctly states, is that they're obsessed with their feeds: they care so deeply about buying things that they don't have the strength to care about anything else. The result of this lifestyle of perpetual indulgence is that Titus and his friends are conditioned to think of the world as one big product—something to be purchased and consumed and then discarded. But the dark irony is that Titus, his friends, and even Violet are being consumed themselves. Pollution, rising temperatures, and natural disasters (all caused by corporate expansion) are literally tearing their bodies apart.

The contradiction in Violet's outburst, of course, is that she's tried to become a part of the very society she despises. She recognizes that Titus and his friends are enabling corporate expansion, and yet she's spent most of the novel trying to gain acceptance with this same group of people. Violet wouldn't deny that Titus's lifestyle is glamorous, but deep down, she's always known it's dangerous and immoral. Here, she can't keep her feelings to herself any longer.

Part 4: 80.9% Quotes

🗨️ 14. I want to get older.
15. I want to see the years pass.
16. Sometime, I want to wear a cardigan and have a golden retriever named ... I don't know.

Related Characters: Violet Durn (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 231

Explanation and Analysis

By this point in the novel, Violet has grown seriously ill. Because of her malfunctioning feed, she can barely move her body—indeed, her limbs sometimes “freeze” or “shut down” for hours or even days at a time. In her desperation and loneliness, Violet turns to Titus for emotional support. In this passage, she sends him a long list of all the things she wants to do with the rest of her life. Her list is heartbreaking, first and foremost, because readers understand that she'll never have the opportunity to do most of the things she names—for example, there's no way she has enough time left to “see the years pass.”

Another noteworthy element of Violet's “bucket list” is her desire to break away from cliché. This has arguably been Violet's project throughout the book (and in a way it was also the goal of her project to confound her feed's taste profile). However, number 16 on Violet's bucket list is a thoroughly clichéd description of idyllic middle age. By her own admission, Violet is at once attracted to this lifestyle and repulsed by it, because she knows that her feed is marketing it to her. She wants to give in to her desires, but she also wants to rethink these desires. To put it simply, Titus believes that the purpose of life is to get what he wants, while Violet believes that the purpose of life is to understand what she *really* wants.

Part 4: 76.3% Quotes

🗨️ You are such a shithead. You don't know what happened to me this morning. And the news. Titus—this morning . . . I can't believe in the middle of all this, you went and got malfunctioned. You are such an asshole and a shithead.

Related Characters: Violet Durn (speaker), Titus

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 242

Explanation and Analysis

This passage is notable for a couple of reasons. Leading up

to this point in the text, Titus has been ignoring Violet Durn despite (or really because of) her deteriorating condition. Violet's feed is slowly killing her, and she's faced with the likelihood of dying while still a teenager. But instead of reaching out to his girlfriend in her time of need, Titus does exactly the opposite. He buries his emotions and sense of responsibility by shopping excessively (even by his standards) and "getting mal" (the computerized, futuristic version of getting high).

While he's mal, however, Titus goes to visit Violet, who rightly lambasts him for getting mal while other people are suffering (not just Violet herself, but people around the world, as a consequence of America's polluting habits). Indeed, there's something *willfully* oblivious about Titus's behavior—since, on some level, he knows the situation is bad and is getting mal as a way of distracting himself from reality. However, Titus is clearly conflicted. He gets mal to distract himself from thinking about Violet, and yet when he's mal he goes to visit her.

This leads to the final important thing about this passage; it's one of the few in the book in which Titus's real name is used. For the majority of the book, Titus is an anonymous "I," perhaps symbolizing the way that he is defined entirely by his consuming habits. Only in a handful of passages, almost always when he's being addressed by Violet, is he "Titus." This is significant because it suggests that Violet sees Titus as a unique person, not just another blind consumer of goods.

Part 4: 59.3% Quotes

☝ I went to the kitchen to get a drink of water. I filled a glass. I looked at the window over the sink. I deleted everything she had sent me.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker), Violet Durn

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 254

Explanation and Analysis

This passage describes one of the nastiest things Titus does in the novel. Violet Durn—by this point very ill—sends him some memories of her early life. These are important, even priceless, memories, and Violet clearly entrusts them to Titus because she assumes Titus respects her enough to take care of them. But instead, Titus deletes the memories

immediately. He doesn't want an emotional bond with Violet, but rather seems to want to forget about her (meaning that, oddly enough, he needs to forget *her* memories, not just his own).

Titus's behavior is heartless and emotionally callous. Violet depends upon him, and he chooses to turn his back on her. And yet his behavior is understandable considering the "world" of the novel. For his entire life, Titus has been trained to be emotionally shallow—he's never had to perform emotional labor, since there's always been more than enough fun and entertainment to go around. Although he's a teenager, emotionally speaking he might as well be a small child.

Part 4: 57.2% Quotes

☝ I didn't want to be called her hero. I looked at her, and she was smiling like she was broken. I reached down, and turned up the fan in the climate control.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker), Violet Durn

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 263

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Titus and Violet Durn are driving in Titus's upcar. Violet, woefully unaware that Titus is neglecting her emotionally, tells him that he's her hero—a statement that clearly makes Titus uncomfortable. Titus doesn't want to be Violet's "hero," in the sense that he doesn't want her to depend upon him for emotional support. Titus is used to being emotionally independent from his peers in almost every way—he goofs off with his friends, but is never shown to give them anything remotely resembling emotional support. For Violet to request this emotional support from him now feels like a challenge—and it also reinforces how emotionally shallow he really is.

Part 4: Summertime Quotes

☝ It was like I kept buying these things to be cool, but cool was always flying just ahead of me, and I could never exactly catch up to it. I felt like I'd been running toward it for a long time.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 279

Explanation and Analysis

In this chapter, Titus has a rare moment of self-awareness. He's been drifting apart from Violet for some time now, refusing to return her messages and visiting her as little as possible. Instead, he's been immersing himself in his usual habits, drinking and dating and spending every day. Here, however, he seems to have a sudden change of heart—or at least the realization that his spending is in vain.

For most of the book, Titus has spent his money (or “credit”) with the assumption that his purchases will bring him attention, enjoyment, respect, or some other version of happiness. Here, he sees his spending in drastically different terms. He sees himself as “chasing” after cool—in a sense, chasing his own happiness. Hyperbolic ads promise that buying a car, a shirt, or a pair of pants will solve his problems—and, until now, Titus has played along with these absurd claims. But now, for the first time in the novel, he seems to sense the truth: these ads and products are designed to make him *unhappy*, so that he'll continue spending money and chasing happiness.

Part 4: The Deep Quotes

☝☝ "It's almost time for foosball. It will be a gala. Go along, little child. Go back and hang with the eloi."

"What are the eloi?"

"It's a reference," he said, snotty. "It's from [The Time Machine](#). H. G. Wells."

I stepped closer to him. "What does it mean?" I asked. "Because I'm sick of—"

"Read it."

"I'm sick of being told I'm stupid."

"So read it, and you'll know."

"Tell me."

"Read it."

Related Characters: Violet's father, Titus (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 291

Explanation and Analysis

In this tense passage, Titus faces off against Violet's father, an eccentric academic who despises his society. Violet's father blames himself for his daughter's fate (he was the

one who had a feed installed in her when she was a child), but he also seems to blame Titus for “corrupting her” and taking her to the club where her feed was hacked. Violet's father sneers at Titus and compares him to the eloi, the fictional race of weak, shallow, pleasure-seekers in H.G. Wells's early science fiction classic *The Time Machine*. Wells's novel was a major inspiration for Anderson's own—both books are set in versions of the future that magnify the class divisions of the present day. Like Wells, Anderson writes about characters who are exaggeratedly weak, brainless, and pleasure-seeking, in order to warn people in the present-day to change their ways.

Violet's father also poses a challenge to Titus—he tells him to read Wells's book, more than once. While one could interpret this as Violet's father being snooty and pretentious (as Titus seems to do), there might be a more positive side to his suggestion: Violet's father is encouraging Titus to educate himself and understand the problems with his own society.

Part 4: 4.6% Quotes

☝☝ "It's about this meg normal guy, who doesn't think about anything until one wacky day, when he meets a dissident with a heart of gold." I said, "Set against the backdrop of America in its final days, it's the high-spirited story of their love together, it's laugh-out-loud funny, really heartwarming, and a visual feast." I picked up her hand and held it to my lips. I whispered to her fingers. "Together, the two crazy kids grow, have madcap escapades, and learn an important lesson about love. They learn to resist the feed. Rated PG-13. For language," I whispered, "and mild sexual situations."

I sat in her room, by her side, and she stared at the ceiling. I held her hand. On a screen, her heart was barely beating.

I could see my face, crying, in her blank eye.

Related Characters: Titus (speaker), Violet Durn

Related Themes:     

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 297-298

Explanation and Analysis

In the final chapter of the novel, Titus and Violet have a strange and somewhat ambiguous reunion. After neglecting her for months, Titus returns to Violet's bedside, just as she's about to die. His behavior is strikingly different from what it has been earlier in the book. He's not shopping for

clothes while he's talking to her—in fact, he seems to be giving her his undivided attention. He also offers Violet information about the environment and the news, whereas previously he's been blissfully unaware of such information. While giving a dying woman one's sincere attention might not seem like much (just the bare minimum of human decency, really), for Titus these are signs of improvement.

It's unclear, however, if Titus's change of heart comes too late. As he speaks, the world of *Feed* is collapsing: the environment is in ruins, and the rest of the world is gearing up for a full-scale war with the U.S. At the very least, however, Titus's monologue reflects a sincere desire to escape the influence of the feed. The irony is that, by

expressing this desire, Titus seems to play the part of Violet's own feed: he expresses his desire in the style of the endless tacky commercials Anderson has placed throughout the book. Even if his desire to fight the feed is sincere, then, Anderson leaves it unclear whether or not Titus is really equipped to do so. In this way, the novel comes to a fairly bleak ending. But even if there may not be time for the characters in the book to change the world, there's still time for Anderson's *readers* to change *their* world. As with so many dystopian novels, the ultimate message of *Feed* could be summed up as, "change society while there's still some time, so that you don't end up like these characters."



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.

PART 1: YOUR FACE IS NOT AN ORGAN

The novel begins, “we went to the **moon** to have fun, but the moon turned out to completely suck.” The narrator of the book (whose name is later revealed to be Titus) and his friends, Link Arwaker and Marty, are bored (or, as they say, “null”) and have been spending their time shocking themselves with wires. Marty suggests they all go to the moon.

The friends go to the **moon**, and their “**feeds**” give them lots of information about what to buy. Titus thought that he’d be excited by the moon but instead he finds it “old and empty.” On the journey to the moon, Titus notices that his friends “got louder,” as if they’re making up for the emptiness of space.

In part, Titus wants to go to the **moon** to “meet someone.” He’s been feeling lonely, even when his **feed** tells him about new music. On the ride across the surface of the moon, Link makes a lot of noise by playing with his seat, preventing Titus from sleeping. Titus has been drinking a lot, and he’s feeling sick and sad.

Link keeps slamming his seat into Marty’s face. Marty complains that Link is “smashing” his “organs,” but Link ignores him. A waitress on the **moon** ship smiles at Link and calls him a “nice young man,” but only because Link bought “a slop-bucket of cologne from the duty-free.”

PART 1: IMPACT

The friends arrive at their hotel. Their **feeds** “go fugue,” telling them where to shop and eat, to the point where Titus can barely see. The messages from his feed are “goldy and sparkling,” but the actual **moon** is full of air vents “streaked with black.”

In a few short sentences, Anderson introduces readers to spoiled teenagers who are so apathetic that they can’t even recognize what’s so great about getting to go to the moon. This, in a nutshell, is the novel’s vision of the future: Titus and his friends are surrounded by technological miracles, yet are too apathetic to enjoy them. Their main source of pleasure appears to be crude violence.



Titus and his friends have feeds—what exactly these are, beyond the fact that they display ads, isn’t yet clear. Titus suggests that his friends are empty-headed and lonely to the point where they use the noise of their own voices as a kind of barrier against the emptiness of outer space.



Right away, Titus sets himself apart from his friends. He seems more observant and self-reflective than Link and Marty, and more in-tune with his deeper emotions.



Link is clearly a spoiled teenager, but because he’s obscenely wealthy, people treat him with respect. In the future, it would seem, people are so materialistic that they buy absurd and unnecessary quantities of goods (even cologne, something nobody could ever use in slop-bucket-sized portions).



The feed appears to have some kind of virtual reality feature—Titus can “see” colorful ads, even though the reality of the moon is rather ugly. This is a good example of how the society of Feed uses technology and propaganda to conceal the derelict condition of the environment.



Titus, Marty, and Link—along with three female friends, Calista, Loga, and Quendy—find their hotel rooms. Titus is tired, but Marty and Link keep him awake by yelling, “Titus! Did you fuckin’ see that?” Titus convinces himself that he’s there to do “great stuff,” not to sleep.

The friends try to have fun. They eat dinner at a restaurant which is “just like the one at home.” Titus notices the **moon** has artificial gravity that makes it “almost like normal, which is how I like it.”

Link, Titus notes, is ugly, but he’s also rich, meaning that everybody wants to be his friend. Usually, Link and his friends can get into parties, but this time, they’re turned away from everywhere they go. The friends have “the **lesions** that people were getting.”

The friends go to a place called the Ricochet Lounge, where customers can “slam” into one another. Even in the lounge, Link stands out because he’s so tall—apparently, he’s part of a “secret patriotic experiment.” Titus breaks his “arm lesion,” and it oozes everywhere. Titus and Loga dated until a few months ago, but he claims they’re friends now. Nevertheless, Titus is upset that when he slams into Loga, it doesn’t feel special.

Then, suddenly, Titus sees “the most beautiful girl, like, ever.” She’s watching Titus and his friends, and Titus can’t put into words why he finds her beautiful. As he tries to find the words, his **feed** suggests her spine is “supple.”

The chapter ends with an interlude of advertisements. One ad explains that the word on the street is “squeaky,” and another is about a new hit single called “Bad Me, Bad You.”

This is the first, and one of the very few, times in the book when Titus’s real name is used. For most of the book, he narrates anonymously, suggesting how consumerism has stripped him of his unique identity. Titus and his friends believe that they have to be active constantly, such that having a moment of rest is inconceivable to them.



The irony here is that the friends travel away from their planet, just to eat at a place identical to the one at home. Titus isn’t particularly adventurous—rather, Titus seems to want to simply enjoy the same thing again and again.



Gross materialism has become so glamorous that people are more interested in Link’s money than his looks. Additionally, Titus implies what will later be confirmed—that environmental decay is causing people to get lesions on their bodies.



Titus’s society seems to place a heavy premium on violent physical activity—that is, if crashing into someone else is seen as a meaningful form of interaction. Again, Titus seems unusually thoughtful and alienated from his society (although perhaps Link and Loga feel the same deep loneliness, and simply don’t know how to express it).



Titus is immediately attracted to this woman, but because he’s so dependent on his feed, he can’t summon the words to articulate his feelings without being prompted. Because of the feed, it’s suggested, Titus and his friends have no practice expressing emotion or describing beauty.



The feed gives its user an endless stream of news and ads, usually for vacuous new music and products. The passage suggests the inescapability of the meaningless stream of ads that users are subjected to by their feeds.



PART 1: JUICE

Titus follows the mysterious girl. He notices that her shoulders are hunched, as if she doesn't want people looking at her. While his friends continue to horse around, Titus sits at the snack bar, watching the girl drink juice. Suddenly, she lets the juice out of her mouth, and it floats in the air.

Titus isn't the most articulate person, but he does pick up on the young woman's body language. He can also find beauty in unusual places. This is part of what makes Titus a sympathetic character in comparison to his spoiled friends.



PART 1: THE NOSE GRID

In the Lounge, Link finds Titus and tells him, "This so big sucks." Titus is worried that the girl will hear them talking and think they're "dumb." Quendy, Loga, and Calista go to the bathroom to fix their hair to adapt to the new hairstyle while Titus, Marty, and Link hang back.

Titus is self-conscious about his intelligence, and wants to appear smart, suggesting he has different values than his image-obsessed friends. In the world of the book, fashions change so quickly that people must update their "looks" constantly.



Quendy comes out of the bathroom and complains that her **lesion** is "spreading." Link says that her lesion isn't noticeable, and he asks the girl for her opinion. She says the lesion "isn't bad." She adds that the face is a grid, with the nose at the intersection of the two axes. Quendy's lesion, on her neck, is good because it frames her face, drawing attention to it. The friends are stunned by the girl's analysis.

The young woman is unusually articulate, especially compared to the vacuous style in which the other characters speak. Like Titus, she has a talent for finding beauty in strange places. She can even find something nice to say about an ugly lesion.



The girl, Titus notes, is "completely youch" to him and the other guys. She seems to be attracted to Link, even though Link is a "meg asshole" to women. Titus can't stop thinking about the juice she released into zero gravity, but he doesn't know what to say to her.

Titus is obviously attracted to the young woman—not just because she's pretty, it's implied, but because she's unusually interesting—but he lacks the emotional experience to know what to say to her.



There's an interlude of ads, for a soda that tastes like "citrus and butter" and for a club called "The Rumble Spot" that advertises "the veins of the people you love bright as branches against the sky."

These feed interludes appear to show what Titus is experiencing in his head at all times—a constant stream of bizarre and occasionally disgusting-sounding products.



PART 1: THE MOON IS IN THE HOUSE OF BORING

The girl, Titus learns, has come to the **moon** without any friends, even though it's spring break. Her name is Violet. The friends invite Violet to party with them—they're all tired, but they don't want to admit it, since they're on the moon.

As before, Titus and his friends refuse to acknowledge that they need rest for fear of being seen as "lame." Violet is intriguing because she's an outsider who is nonetheless confident enough, it would seem, to go on spring break alone.



The group goes to a bar that Marty thinks might let them drink without IDs, but the bar turns out to have been replaced with a mall. They decide to shop at the mall, but soon it seems “sad and boring.” They take a cab back to the hotel, passing some kids who are “broadcasting slogans,” such as “chip in my head? I’m better off dead!”

Back at the hotel, the friends try to break into their minibar. Titus notices that Violet seems bored. The others complain that there’s no alcohol, and Marty suggests that they all “malfunction” instead. Violet becomes even more uncomfortable. Online, Calista tells the guys, “This girl is meg un-into it.” They decide to go to the Rumble Spot “unslammed” (meaning sober) instead.

At the Rumble Spot, there are lots of people wearing expensive shorts, which Titus’s **feed** advertises to him. Titus “chats” Violet, asking if she dances. He notices that she seems “uncomfortable.” She chats that she’s not used to going to the **moon**. Titus explains that he’s been to Mars, which was “dumb.” Violet seems to find this ridiculous.

Suddenly, an old-looking man bumps into Titus and yells, “We enter a time of calamity!” Link explains that the man is “completely fuguing.” The man touches Titus’s neck, and suddenly, Titus begins broadcasting, “We enter a time of calamity.” Everyone in the club begins broadcasting this message, over and over again.

The police show up and attack the old man with “stunners.” They explain that they’re going to have to “shut off” Titus and his friends.

PART 2: AWAKE

Titus regains consciousness and immediately feels “no credit.” There’s a message in his head explaining that he has disconnected from feednet. He tries to chat his friends, but, finding this impossible, decides to open his eyes.

The moon continues to “suck,” because it’s been commodified to the point where it has turned into another boring mall. The passage also shows that some people in the novel want to protest the existence of feeds (but the fact that they’re “broadcasting” their message suggests that they may also have these chips in their heads).



Marty’s suggestion about “malfunctioning” implies that, in the future, people get high by downloading software that stops their feeds from working properly. Notice, also, that the characters can communicate privately using their feeds (hence the “broadcasting” in the previous section).



This passage establishes the dynamic between Titus and Violet, with Titus being the more experienced but also less curious person, and Violet seeming to be the more creative, adventurous one. The characters’ feeds allow them to chat privately with one another instead of speaking.



The old man seems to be some kind of hacker who is interfering with Titus’s feed. Although Titus regards this person as a madman, it’s hard not to agree with his point. The society that Anderson has depicted is in a state of calamity, even if nobody seems to notice. Link’s comment about “fuguing” isn’t given any further explanation, but the term fugue connotes a dissociative mental state.



Part One ends with Titus’s feed being shut off, presumably so that they can be repaired. Because the feeds have been so central to the story so far, this ending suggests a major shift is about to occur.



For once, Titus will have to get by without his feed, something he almost never has to do. He is so used to seeing the world via feed that he is barely accustomed to using his eyes.



PART 2: COLLEGE TRY

Titus is in the hospital. He finds Violet nearby. Everyone else is asleep. Violet asks, “What should we do?” Titus has no idea.

Titus is so accustomed to being told what to do by his feed that he has no ideas of how to entertain himself, or of what to do with Violet.



PART 2: BORING

The hospital is boring. The walls are dull, and there’s a picture of a boat. Titus can’t figure out why anybody would paint a picture like that.

Titus is incredibly bored—every fun thing he has ever done, it would seem, requires a feed. He has no interest in visual art, since he’s so used to feed-based entertainment.



PART 2: STILL BORING

The friends’ parents have been contacted. The only one of them who hasn’t been “touched by the hacker” is Loga. The police confirm that the hacker is a “naysayer of the worst kind.” In the meantime, the friends’ will have to remain off-line while the authorities examine their feed history to aid in the investigation of the hacker. Titus’s head feels “real empty.”

Notice that the hacker’s real crime, according to the police, is disagreeing with the social dogma (being a “naysayer”). Titus is so dependent on his feed that he feels “empty” without it. The brevity of the chapters in this part of the book suggests that time seems to be passing very slowly without the feeds.



PART 2: MISSING THE FEED

Titus misses his feed. He’s unsure when **feeds** were invented—maybe a century ago. Before that, people used their eyes and hands to understand the world, and they had to carry computers outside their bodies. Feeds help people be “supersmart” without doing work. But nowadays, people mostly use their feeds for entertainment.

This is the chapter in which, finally, Anderson explains what feeds are—if readers haven’t figured it out by now. Feeds are personal computers, implanted in the brain, which provide unlimited information and entertainment. The feed, one could say, is the culmination of the internet—in theory, it provides infinite information, but it’s been cheapened by advertising and people’s desire for cheap entertainment.



The best thing about the feed, according to Titus, is that it knows “everything you want and hope for, sometimes before you even know what those things are.” Corporations make profiles of each feed user, and then sell these profiles to different companies, so that the companies know how to advertise to different people. Some people think corporations are “evil,” but Titus believes there’s no point “getting pissy about it,” since corporations are the only way people can get their **feeds**.

In this sinister passage, it’s strongly suggested that corporations use the feed to control the population’s behavior, “nudging” them into spending money on products they don’t need or even particularly want, and addicting them to a constant stream of entertainment. Titus is vaguely aware that corporations are bad, but he’s so dependent on the feed that he can’t conceive of a world in which large, corrupt corporations don’t exist.



In the hospital, Titus is bored. All he can do is look at the painting of the boat. He notices that there's nobody onboard "to look at the horizon."

As Titus spends more time without the feed, he actually becomes more observant of the world around him. His remark about the horizon suggests he feels a certain pessimism about the future.



PART 2: CACHE & CARRY

Titus looks at a few "pages" he saved from before his **feed** stopped. The pages show ads, and Titus regrets that he has missed so many great sales.

Titus uses his feed to find out about sales. It's darkly ironic that he regrets missing "great sales," since it's clear that there will be ads for more sales as soon as he gets his feed back.



PART 2: NIGHT. AND BORING

It's Saturday night, and the friends are still in the hospital. Link is awake, and paces back and forth. Loga has come to visit, but she is clearly chatting with her friends on Earth and laughing at jokes Titus can't hear.

Loga is so tied to her feed that she can't even express sincere sympathy for her feed-less friends—indecourously, she uses her own feed to chat with other friends instead of the ones in front of her.



That night, Titus runs into Violet in the hallway. He suggests that she sit down next to him, and he realizes, "This is nice. We're just sitting here. We don't have to say anything." Suddenly, he realizes Violet is crying. She explains, "You go try to have fun like ... a normal person with a real life ... and suddenly you're screwed." Titus tries to think of something nice to say, but can't. He just sits next to Violet, and "it wasn't bad."

Notice that Titus and Violet don't communicate through small talk. They have the kind of quiet, intimate moment that's almost impossible to have when their feeds are on. It's also here that we learn that Violet isn't accustomed to Titus's lavish lifestyle, though she is clearly interested in it.



PART 2: FATHER

Titus's dad shows up at the hospital, trying to look "businesslike." When he visits his son, he just stares for a few seconds before remembering that Titus can't "chat" right now.

The feed has alienated Titus from his father, and vice versa. They have no idea how to express compassion for one another, or even communicate without their feeds.



Titus asks his dad how "Smell Factor" is doing, and his father replies, "Your brother has a name." Titus's father continues, "Dude, this is some way bad shit." He explains that the corporation wants to subpoena Titus's memories. He keeps nodding and saying "okay," as if talking to somebody who's not there. Then, he leaves.

Titus's father, it would seem, is just as oblivious as Titus—he has no way of expressing sympathy for his son, because he's so dependent on the feed, and so wrapped up in his own life.



Violet explains that her parents are “busy with jobs,” and might not be able to come to the **moon** at all.

Violet continues to behave mysteriously, suggesting that there's some kind of tension between herself and her parents, or that perhaps they're not wealthy enough to be able to come to the moon so easily.



PART 2: SALAD DAYS, WITH SNEEZE GUARD

The next morning, the friends entertain themselves by blowing needles at a “skinless anatomy man on the wall.” The game is fun, and the day ends up being one of the best of Titus’s life. Everyone hits on Violet, but Violet only pays attention to Titus.

Without their feeds, the friends are forced to find ways to entertain themselves—disturbingly violent ways, by many standards, but at least they're exercising some creativity.



Loga visits the hospital, but has to stop talking to her friends because her favorite feedcast is on. Everybody wants to know what’s happening in the feedcast. She explains that the characters are saying that they love each other, in the moonlight. Quendy is so moved she weeps.

Quendy's crying suggests that feed entertainment, it's implied, is so cheesy that it trains its consumers to think in terms of the most clichéd emotions.



Violet and Titus sit together, talking about old music they liked as kids. Violet says, to her own surprise, “This is fun” and suggests, “Maybe these are our salad days.” Titus replies, “What’s happy about a salad?” “Ranch,” Violet replies.

“Salad days” is an idiom (from Shakespeare!) meaning a period of youthful exuberance and innocence. Violet clearly knows what the idiom means, but she's willing to play along with Titus, who doesn't. Even if Violet seems smarter and more mature than Titus, they're attracted to each other's creativity and uncommon decency.



PART 2: THE GARDEN

Still in the hospital, the friends continue to pass the time by blowing needles at the wall. Titus notices that Link and Calista are spending more time together, meaning that they’re probably hooking up again.

Titus's friends choose to pass the time with sex and violence—seemingly their two main pastimes, and both fairly mindless.



Just then, Violet returns from talking to the doctor, and says that she has to talk to Titus. They find a “huge window” overlooking what was once a garden. A broken pipe appears to be leaking air into the dead vines, making them stand straight up. Titus explains that the vines look like “a squid in love with the sky.” Violet says, “You’re the only one of them that uses metaphor.” They kiss.

Violet is attracted to Titus not just for his looks but because she admires his mind, as evidenced by the fact that she notices that he, unlike any of his friends, uses metaphors to describe the world around him.



PART 2: DEAD LANGUAGE

Still in the hospital, Violet and Titus talk about their families. Titus explains that he has a little brother, that his dad does “some kind of banking thing,” and that his mom is “in design.” Violet’s father is a professor who teaches dead languages, such as BASIC. Violet also shows Titus that she keeps a journal, which Titus finds surprising, since he can barely read or write. Violet writes in BASIC, and has been writing since she was a child. Titus asks, “Why don’t you use the **feed**? It’s way faster.”

Titus asks Violet why her father can’t come visit her. Violet admits that he’s not too busy, as she’d previously claimed.

In the future, it seems, people don’t really know how to read or write, unless they’ve learned on their own time (like Violet). Titus can’t understand why someone would want to write by hand, since in his society, the only purpose of words is to communicate as fast as possible.



Violet begins to open up to Titus, admitting that she’d lied earlier. Although it isn’t clear why, exactly, she lied, it is suggested that her family may not know where she is, or that they may not have the resources to travel to the moon.



PART 2: RELEASE

The friends are released from the hospital. One by one, they visit doctors and technicians, who examine their brains to make sure there are no “permanent hacks.” Suddenly, Titus can feel his **feed** again—there’s an ad for a “Ford Laputa,” along with hundreds of others. The ads come “pouring down” on Titus and his friends, who are so happy they laugh and cheer.

The ads explain that people have been protesting the American “annexation of the **moon**” under the leadership of the American President Trumbull. Other ads sell a “feed-sim battle game” featuring “detonation and viscera.”

There’s a clever allusion to Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels (another speculative novel that’s really a veiled satire of the present-day). Laputa is the name of the society whose emotionally crippled citizens have been blessed with superior technology, which they use to assert their control over the rest of the world—a pretty accurate way to describe the society of Feed.



The United States is so aggressively militaristic that it invades territories to which it has no right, presumably to exploit their resources and maintain global dominance. The America of the future, in this sense, is not so very different from the America of the past and present.



PART 3: NORMAL

Back on Earth, Titus falls back into his old routine of chatting with his friends. He sees his family, but doesn’t really talk to them. His father doesn’t talk much, and his mother spends most of her time with Smell Factor, sometimes taking him to work with her. Titus spends most of his time watching a show called *Take What You Can Carry*. Sometimes, Titus goes outside on errands, where he sees lots of “upcars” and suburbs “stacked on top of each other.” He’s very glad to have friends, since “friends are worth your weight in gold.”

Titus is emotionally distant from his family, and it’s not hard to see why—each family member is so immersed in his or her feed that they have little time to wonder about their family members. Similarly, Titus has only the most clichéd sentiments about his friends he doesn’t even get the idiom right (usually, it’s “friends are worth their weight in gold”).



One night, Titus goes to a party at his friend Quendy's while her parents are at a "choking party." Before the party, Titus reunites with Violet. He uses his parents' upcar to pick her up and drive her to the party—she doesn't have a car of her own. In the car, Violet explains that she was homeschooled, so she doesn't go to many parties. Titus is surprised that Violet doesn't go to School™.

Violet asks Titus if he thinks things will be different. Titus isn't sure what she means, but says, "It's good to have people again." Violet explains, "We've all been through this big thing together. It's got to change us somehow." She rests her hand on the back of Titus's neck.

PART 3: UNDERVALUED TRUFFLE

The party turns out to be "low-key." Link and Marty are playing a "zombie-mutant" virtual reality game, bumping into people because they can't see what's right in front of them.

Violet, who looks nervous, says hello to Calista while Titus talks to Quendy. Quendy chats him to ask if he thinks Calista and Link are "doing it," and Titus replies that they probably are. Quendy asks Titus if he's going out with Violet and he admits that he is. Calista, Quendy reports, thinks Violet is "stuck-up." Violet chats Titus that she used the word "picayune" while talking to Calista, and now Calista is making fun of her.

The party proceeds as if Titus and his friends were never hacked. Everything is normal.

Meanwhile, on the **feed**, there are reports that President Trumbull has attacked "corporate watch organizations" for daring to criticize corporations, and denies that **lesions** are in any ways related to American industry. He repeats that America is a "free" nation, and that it's the duty of free people to protect free commerce.

The characters' parents, like the characters themselves, seem to find perverse pleasure in grotesque acts of violence like choking. Notice, also that in the future, people go to a corporatized, commodified version of school—unless, like Violet, they opt out (and this would seem to be the reason why Violet is so much smarter and more articulate than the people around her).



Violet and Titus seem to share a desire for something to happen. They don't want to go back to their ordinary, apathetic lives, suggesting they're somehow discontent with what their society has to offer them.



The VR game is a pretty good metaphor for the characters' society itself—people are so immersed in over-the-top artificial realities that they can barely conduct themselves like adults in the real world.



The characters use chatting non-stop—even Violet, who's previously shown some reluctance to use feed technology. Often, multiple conversations are carried out at once. Violet is treated as an outcast because she's more interested in verbal expression and the art of communication than her peers.



Titus seems to resent that life is so relentlessly normal. He wants something to happen, even if he can't conceive of what this "something" would be.



The job of the President, it would seem, is to support big business in whatever it does, no matter how barbaric, while hiding behind the alibi of "free trade." Ironically, the fact that Trumbull denies it makes it clear that American industry is causing these lesions.



PART 3: THE OTHERS IN MAL

The party continues. Everybody watches a comedy called *Snowblind*, but Titus notices that Violet isn't laughing. While Titus walks to the bathroom, Link and Marty find him and tell him it's time to malfunction. Titus hesitates and says, "not tonight" because Violet won't want to. Link and Marty shrug and then "get mal." They start to shudder and stumble.

Downstairs, Violet asks Titus if he'd like to walk around, and he agrees. Violet points out that Titus seems quiet, and he admits he doesn't like that "people have just gone so quick back to like before." Violet agrees. Then she admits that her feedware has been damaged. Doctors are trying to fix it, but they're unsure how to proceed.

Titus senses that he's protecting Violet from something, and this makes him feel good. They kiss, and Titus senses that he's in love.

Titus expresses reluctance to return to his normal lifestyle, in which it's implied he "gets mal" fairly often. His attraction to Violet is causing him to question things he took for granted just a few weeks ago.



Titus admits what he has already implied: he's dissatisfied with his normal routine, and feels disturbed that everyone seems to have forgotten the traumatic event at the club. Violet trades this bit of honesty with one of her own: her feedware is malfunctioning.



Titus seems to conflate the feeling of protecting Violet with the feeling of being in love with her, suggesting that he may not have more than a clichéd notion of what love really is.



PART 3: NUDGING

After the party, Titus has what he thinks is a dream. In the dream, he plays games for free. Suddenly, he senses that somebody is "nudging" his **feed**. He asks who it is, and a voice replies that the police want to know if he's a victim of the Rumble Spot hack. Titus replies that he is, and the police tell him, "Go back to sleep." The police explain they'll be running tests on him. Titus is suspicious—it can't really be the police who are monitoring him. But the voices give him "a lizard with a nice new collar," and Titus accepts it. He thinks that he might be talking to a hacker group called "the Coalition of Pity." After Titus wakes up, he doesn't remember his dream for weeks.

The chapter ends with an interlude about a program called "Amurica: A Portrait in Geezers." People recall seeing hawks and eagles flying through the skies. They remember beautiful forests and days when the temperature never got above a hundred degrees.

Even in their dreams, it seems, the characters are controlled by their feeds. There is truly no escape from the feed's influence—day and night, characters are bombarded by ads for products they don't need. There appear to be hackers who are trying to interfere with people's feeds (though for what reason is never made clear). The passage demonstrates Titus's childish desire for new "stuff," like a lizard, but it also suggests that someone may be continuing to tamper with his feed.



The natural world, it would seem, is in ruins, and the world's temperature has risen to the point where few animals can survive anymore.



PART 3: LOSE THE CHEMISE

One day, Violet chats Titus to explain that she's working on a new project. They agree to meet at the mall. There, Titus sees that Violet is wearing a shirt to show off her new **lesion**, which Titus thinks looks cool. He remembers that celebrities have been showing off their lesions lately.

It's a sign of Violet's desire to fit in with her new friends that she shows off her lesions—which are rapidly becoming hip and even desirable, despite very recently having prevented them from gaining entrance to a club.



Violet explains that information about everything she buys is gathered by corporations and used to build a consumer taste profile for her. Violet wants to create “a customer profile that’s so screwed, no one can market to it.” She boasts, “I’m not going to let them catalog me.”

Violet clearly dislikes her feed, but she thinks that she can dismantle it “from the inside,” by shopping for things that have nothing in common. It’s a strange paradox that Violet thinks she can escape the influence of the feed by shopping more rather than less—showing how difficult it is for people to resist the consumer culture in meaningful ways.



Violet and Titus walk around the mall, trying out different products—everything from searchlights to rugs. They listen to new music, and Violet remarks that “there’s no difference between a song and an advertising jingle anymore.” They go to clothing stores and get dinner.

Violet points out that the only purpose of art anymore is to sell people products. The very fact that shopping is the characters’ primary mode of recreation is telling in its own right.



At dinner, Titus asks Violet why she never talks about her father. Violet explains that it costs a lot of money to fly to the **moon**—more than her father can afford. Then, Violet tells Titus to drop her off at the **feed** technician’s office. Titus drops her off, but just before he drives away, he notices that she’s pulling and pinching the skin on her elbow.

It’s a sign of Violet’s trust in Titus that she admits she’s from a less well-off family than his—but also demonstrates her insecurity that she felt she had to hide this. The passage also foreshadows the complications that later arise as a result of Violet’s feed malfunctions.



PART 3: SNIFFLING

That night, Titus chats Violet. Even over chat, Titus can tell something is wrong. He asks if Violet is crying, and she replies that she is. She says she wishes Titus were lying in bed next to her.

Violet is becoming increasingly emotionally dependent on Titus. It’s clear that the traumatic hacking event on the moon has disturbed her a great deal.



Then, changing the subject, Violet shows Titus the ads she’s received after her day at the mall. The ads sell her everything from dresses to endoscopy kits. Titus reports, “It was crazy.”

Violet seems to have succeeded in confounding her feed’s taste profiling. Yet this “crazy” array of products isn’t all that different from the crazy arrays of products described elsewhere in the book. Violet’s small act of resistance arguably has no meaningful effect on anything.



PART 3: A NEW PLACE

Titus reports, “Being with Violet was great.” Violet did not grow up with a **feed** because her father forbade it, and it was too expensive. She’s very new to the world of the feed, and so even though he’s not as smart as she is, Titus often plays the role of a guide. They go to the mall and make up stories about the shoppers, laughing the whole time.

Titus is conscious of his intellectual inferiority to Violet, but that’s partly why he’s attracted to her: she’s curious and creative in a way that he clearly admires. He also evidently enjoys getting to introduce her to the world of the feed.



PART 3: THE DIMPLES OF DELGLACEY

Titus isn't a good student in School™. School™ is better than it was when it was controlled by the government, he claims. Now that School™ is run by corporations, students learn useful lessons about products. Corporations run schools, Titus claims, because "it's an investment in tomorrow."

In School™, Titus thinks about Violet, who stays home and reads about how "there was less air and everything was getting toxic." The news is bad, even though it's "asked to be a little more positive." Violet realizes that the world hates America for what it's doing. Sometimes, Titus gets annoyed with Violet when she talks politics. He's also embarrassed when Violet notes that only 73 percent of Americans have **feeds**—Titus didn't realize there were so many who didn't. Violet explains that she didn't get her feed until the age of seven. Feeds, she claims, have turned the country into "a nation of ignorant, self-centered idiots."

That night, Titus comes home and asks his mom whether she thinks he is dumb. Mom tells him he's "a wonderful boy," and asks Steve (Titus's dad) to agree. Steve says, "as handsome as a duck in butter."

The next day, Titus flunks a test while Violet stays home and learns about interesting, complicated things Titus can't understand. At home, Titus's mom hugs him and says, "You're just what we asked for." She goes on to explain that he has the chin and dimples of DelGlacey Murdoch, an actor who Mom and Dad thought would become a star. After watching one of his films, Mom and Dad went to the "conceptionarium" and asked for a child that looked just like him. Dad explains, nervously, that DelGlacey didn't become a big star.

Titus can sense that his parents are getting uncomfortable because they're chatting with each other. Suddenly, they tell Titus that they're buying him a present—his own upcar. Titus is overjoyed. He cries, "You are like the best mom and dad ever!" Suddenly, he doesn't feel so stupid.

Titus is apparently oblivious to the dark undercurrents of School™. Corporations use education as an opportunity to brainwash students into becoming eager consumers for the rest of their lives—a savvy investment in tomorrow if ever there was one.



Violet is more aware of global affairs than Titus, and so she's more aware that the world is becoming a chaotic, dangerous place, in part thanks to the United States and its corporations. Titus is exiting his "bubble," with Violet's help: he's becoming aware of how different his lifestyle is from the lifestyles of others (and, implicitly, how privileged he is).



Titus senses that he's not that smart, but his parents refuse to criticize him in any way. This could be seen as the novel's satire of the "well-being" parenting movement, the implication being that indiscriminate encouragement just encourages more mediocrity.



Instead of trying to encourage their son to work harder and learn something, Titus's parents shower him in unearned praise. In the future, we learn, people can design their children to look like celebrities—although Titus's image-obsessed dad is visibly ashamed of the fact that they chose someone who turned out to be a B-list celebrity.



Titus has no incentive to study hard and learn something, because his parents shower him with gifts that he hasn't earned.



In an interlude, reporters explain that President Trumbull didn't mean to insult the Prime Minister of the Global Alliance by calling him a "big shithead." Supposedly, the President was using an American idiom to say that the Prime Minister has a "fertile mind." The speaker adds that America will take any attempts to withdraw the Alliance's presence from American soil as a sign of ill will.

The United States' relationship with the rest of the world becomes strained as the President—evidently not the most articulate politician in the world—has an angry outburst. The interlude reminds readers that the global political situation is growing more and more tense every day.



PART 3: LIFT

On Saturday, Titus and his dad go to test-drive upcars, and Violet joins. While Titus test-drives, Dad looks out the window, chatting with someone else and wincing whenever Titus or Violet says anything out loud.

Dad continues to maintain an emotional distance from his son, buying Titus lavish gifts, but seeming to get annoyed whenever Titus opens his mouth.



As Titus tries each car, his feed sends him banners showing him what it would be like to own the car—going on a romantic drive with Violet, going to the beach with bikini-clad women, etc. He gravitates toward the car that is "a little more sporty."

Titus is showered in lies about how owning a car will solve all his problems in life. These claims are so hyperbolic that the actual experience of owning a car could only be a disappointment by comparison.



Violet asks Titus why his parents are buying him the car, and Titus says it's because he went to the hospital. Violet pauses and says, "You're lucky." Titus mentions going to court to sue the hacker, and Violet looks surprised—she reminds him that the hacker was beaten to death by the police. The chapter ends with Titus announcing, "I bought the Dodge."

Violet seems to recognize how spoiled Titus is. Titus is so oblivious to (or isolated from) reality that he doesn't seem to have heard about the police beating. He's more interested in buying cars than in listening to the news.



PART 3: A QUESTION OF MORAL

That night, the family eats dinner with Violet. Dad is very proud that his son owns his own upcar. Violet suggests that she and Titus go driving in the forests near Jefferson Park, but Dad says that the forest has been removed to make way for an air factory. Violet is outraged, but Dad smiles condescendingly and says, "I remember when I was like you ... but remember. People need a lot of air."

Violet is the voice of reason in this scene, while Titus's father, like almost every other adult in the book, has clearly made his peace with corporatism, rationalizing it as the only way to produce air—when, in reality, corporations are the reason there isn't enough air in the first place. The irony of the passage is that forests—which are nature's "air factories" in the sense that they produce oxygen—are being destroyed to make way for industrial air factories.



Titus asks his parents about the hacker, and Dad confirms that he's dead, adding, "There wasn't any reason for you to know." While Dad and Titus argue, Smell Factor sings along to a song playing in his feed: "Intercrural or oral! Ain't a question of moral!" Dad, annoyed, tells Titus, "We're going to sue the nightclub" and then suggests that Titus take Violet home.

This is one of the few times in the book when Titus has in actual, face-to-face conversation with his father (though this conversation is, ironically, about their lack of communication). Meanwhile, Smell Factor sings a song whose highly sexual lyrics are inappropriate for a kid, though the words "intercrural" and "oral" may be too complex for Titus or his father to even understand.



Suddenly, Violet chats Titus that her foot isn't working. This has happened a few times since being hacked—sometimes, she can't move her hand for hours. However, she chats Titus telling him not to worry about it. A few minutes later, Violet is able to move her foot, and Titus drives her home. Before he lets Violet out, Titus wonders aloud if he chose the right car, or the right color.

Titus seems more concerned about the color of his car than about his girlfriend's serious health problems—just one of the many examples of his emotional callousness. Titus's behavior seems especially childish considering that this is one of the few passages in the novel in which a character (here, Violet) uses Titus's real name—a sign, arguably, of Violet's deep, sincere feelings for him.



The feed plays an inane song with the repeated lyrics, "Hold me tight."

It's no wonder Titus is so underdeveloped emotionally, considering how vapid everything in his culture is.



PART 3: OBSERVE THE REMARKABLE VERDURE

The next day, Titus drives to Violet's house, noting the beautiful Clouds™ in the sky. Violet's neighborhood is hundreds of miles away, and Titus notices that it has "just one sun for the whole place." All the houses are "old and flat." Inside the house, there are "words everywhere."

Violet's neighborhood is evidently less upscale than Titus's own (although, by 21st century standards, one sun seems like it should be enough). The house is full of "words"—probably books—which Titus, who can barely read, has no use for.



Violet introduces Titus to her father, who uses complex vocabulary that Titus can't understand. Titus notices that Violet's father carries an old version of the **feed** on his back, making him almost hunchbacked. Titus tells Violet's father that he and Violet will be driving through the country. Violet's father also makes "little chirpy noises" and says, "observe the remarkable verdure!"

Violet's father seems to want to celebrate language's complexities before they die out altogether. Titus's inability to understand Violet's father suggests how remarkably different Violet's upbringing was from his own.



In the car outside, Titus tells Violet that her dad is "something." Violet explains that her father thinks language is dying, and therefore tries to celebrate it. She also explains that her mother is in South America—Violet's parents were never married.

Violet continues to open up to Titus about her personal life, even as Titus sometimes seems more interested in products than in her.



PART 3: A DAY IN THE COUNTRY

Violet and Titus fly out to farm country, and during the flight, Violet talks about her family. Her parents met in grad school and had her shortly afterwards. When Violet was about seven her parents started to fight, and soon after that her mother left.

Violet's parents are unusually educated and radical compared to most people Titus knows. Remember that Violet got her feed installed around the time she was seven, suggesting that her mother's leaving was in some way tied to her decision to get a feed implanted.



Titus explains to Violet that his parents met through “some friend” and took a trip to Venus before there were “uprisings.” Titus knows that Violet’s story is more interesting than his, but he enjoys conversing with her. However, in Titus’s opinion, Violet’s father is “an insane psychopath.”

Violet and Titus decide to stop at a filet mignon farm. They see miles and miles of raw filet mignon meat connected by tubing, and they run through a “steak maze.” Violet tells Titus about her theory of delayed gratification. She tries not to eat the same foods often, and when she orders something, she has the product shipped to her at the slowest possible speed.

Later, back in the upcar, Violet asks Titus how he’d want to die if he had the choice. Titus decides that he’d like to die in a moment of intense pleasure—a “sense overload.” Violet suggests, “death is shallower now. It used to be a hole you fell into and kept falling. Now it’s just a blank.” Titus asks Violet if she’ll be around to “cut the juice” when he dies. Violet is confused, but then laughs and says, “I’ll be the first one to pull your plug.”

Titus drops off Violet and then goes home. He sees his family members using their **feeds** to dream. His parents are “going mal” and Smell Factor is dreaming about talking giraffes. On his own feed, Titus learns that **lesions** are “hip” now. As he falls asleep, the feed whispers, “All shall be well.”

In the interlude, an unnamed speaker talks about the previous “ages of man,” such as the ages of oral culture and then print culture. Man has entered a new age: an age of “oneiric culture, the culture of dreams.” “What we wish for,” the speaker explains, “is ours.”

PART 3: NUDGING AGAIN

That night, Titus has nightmares. Someone pokes his head with a broom. He sees riots in the streets and burning American flags and “fields of black,” in which tiny animals are being killed.

Titus is always conscious that Violet is smarter than he is, but he seems not to mind. He dislikes Violet’s father, another smart person, because he refuses to dumb down his speech for Titus’s sake.



In the future, parts of the cow are genetically engineered to be as big as a city. Violet understands that instant gratification is the reason why nobody else has any emotional maturity. When people wait for happiness, she realizes, they actually enjoy their experiences more.



It makes sense that Titus would want to die in a moment of pleasure—since pleasure, to his mind, is the only thing worth living for. Violet (who doesn’t answer her own question, perhaps because she’s genuinely afraid of death) seems to think of death as a more spiritual experience. That may be why she’s momentarily bemused when Titus jokes about his own death.



Titus’s society is relentlessly optimistic, even as the world is becoming increasingly tragic. Notice, also, that the corporate world, rather than abandoning the practices that cause lesions, has glamorized lesions and made them into something desirable.



This is an uncharacteristically optimistic way to describe Titus’s society. While one could argue that the speaker is right, the truth is that modernity has limited what people are capable of dreaming. Consumerism has stunted the imagination, to the point where Titus’s dreams are no more dazzling than his waking life. This passage could be considered a parody of the writings of Ray Kurzweil, the well-known futurologist who believes that mankind will eventually merge with machinery, bringing about utopia.



It’s possible that hackers are sending Titus these images, which show what is happening around the world as a consequence of excessive consumerism.



Suddenly, Violet chats Titus. She explains that somebody was “nosing around” in her **feed**, even though she put up her shield. Violet tries to call FeedTech Customer Assistance, but the automated responder just tells Violet about the products available to her and, frustrated, Violet signs off. Both Violet and Titus go back to sleep.

Titus isn't the only person having his feed hacked: Violet's feed has been hacked, too. However, Violet is unable to get any help from her feed, since the only purpose of her feed is to sell products.



In the interlude, there's a commercial that begins “Somebody once said it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich guy to get into Heaven.” Then, the ad switches to selling a new car that can get through “any gate.”

The meaning of the “eye of the needle” quote (uttered by Jesus Christ, not just “somebody”) is that wealth is an obstacle to salvation. In Titus's world, this sentiment is unthinkable, hence the absurd appropriation of Christ's words to sell cars.



PART 3: THE REAL THING

A few days after the events of the previous chapter, Titus sees an ad claiming that they'll receive free Coke for using the word “Coke” around their friends. He and his friends decide to repeat the word thousands of times, receiving a year's supply in the process. While meeting up with Calista and Loga, Titus is surprised to see that they look burned and are wearing retro “Riot Gear” designed to look like “one of the big twentieth century riots.”

Not unlike Violet Durn, Titus and his friend think they can “game” the system by playing along with the feed's rules and get an unlimited supply of Coke. However, they end up just playing into the feed's promotional scheme. Also notice that riot gear has become hip, suggesting not only that people are ignorant about the history of violent riots in America, but that corporations have co-opted populist unrest across America by branding it and selling it as fashionable.



The friends, including Violet, proceed to have conversations about Coke, over and over again. After a while, Link suggests they buy Coke, since they've started to become thirsty. Violet asks Calista and Loga about their “Watts Riot” tops, and wonders what incited the Watts Riot. Calista doesn't know, and then she and Loga make fun of Violet for using “long words that no one can understand.”

The friends wear riot gear, but they have no idea what happened at the Watts Riot (in which black and Latino people in Los Angeles rose up against police brutality). Calista seems proud of her own ignorance, both of history and vocabulary. Notice, also, that the gang's “Coke plan” backfires, when it makes them want to buy Coke, suggesting that the feed has sophisticated ways of manipulating its users' behavior.



Violet chats Titus and asks him to take her home—she can't stand Calista and Loga. Titus reluctantly agrees, and he and Violet leave while Calista shows off her WTO Riot Windbreaker.

Violet was once attracted to Titus's lifestyle, but now she's becoming disillusioned with it, as she begins to see how deprived it really is.



PART 3: FIGHT AND FLIGHT

Titus drives Violet home, making a show of being “quietly angry.” The two of them start to chat, and Violet asks what Titus is angry about. Titus suggests that Violet shouldn't show off by using big words, and Violet becomes angry.

Titus appears to be taking Calista's side, accusing Violet of being pretentious.



Suddenly, Violet explains what's really been going on: her **feed** is malfunctioning. She's been going to technicians, but nobody can fix her feed, partly because she got her feed unusually late in life. Titus isn't sure what to do, and decides to put his arm around her, even though she doesn't look very "huggable." Violet says that there's a chance her feed will begin shutting down her brain functions.

Violet is clearly going through a rough time, and will continue to have major health risks for the foreseeable future. Even so, Titus is so superficial and wrapped up in his own instant gratification that he can't look past the fact that Violet looks "un-huggable."



Suddenly, Violet cries, "I want to feel something, then adds, "Let's feel vertigo." Titus agrees, and turns off his upcar, so that they drop out of the sky. Breathing hard from the drop, Titus turns to Violet and says, "Let's go to my house."

Both Violet and Titus are hungry to have a real, exhilarating experience—they want to break out of their own apathy and ennui.



PART 3: SO MUCH TO DO

Back at his house, Titus leads Violet inside. Violet tells Titus, "I wish there was someplace we could go," and adds, "There's a whole universe out there." Violet explains that she doesn't have a lot of time and apologizes for embarrassing Titus. She exhales hard and says, "You toss something up in the air, and you expect it to come back down again." Titus has no idea what this means.

Violet is hungry to explore the world, but she isn't sure where to begin. One possible interpretation of her statement: Violet thought that Titus and his friends would reciprocate her friendliness and curiosity instead of responding with cruelty.



Suddenly, Mom and Smell Factor return home. Violet ends up staying for dinner, from which Dad is absent. Mom chats Titus about how Violet is a "great girl."

Mom barely knows Titus, but she goes through the motions anyway, praising Violet in the blandest terms.



On the drive back to Violet's home, Titus asks Violet, "Do they know how long?" and Violet says she doesn't know but adds, "It could happen anytime." Titus spends the rest of the night doing homework, thinking, "that was the only thing left to do."

Titus is oddly passive when faced with the knowledge that Violet could die soon. He's so shallow that he has no idea how to respond to this terrifying news or even how to comfort his girlfriend.



The chapter ends with a clip from the "Christian Cyberkidz network," about a dog that has died. A boy's father tells the grieving boy, "That dog was a good dog, but she wasn't like a superdog, with powers."

The clip echoes Violet's point about how society has cheapened death: in this feedcast, a child is instructed not to grieve for his dead dog, since, it would seem, there's a far superior "superdog" that he can buy instead.



PART 3: SEASHORE

Violet and Titus go to the seashore, which is "dead, but colorful." They have to wear special suits so that they won't smell it. Violet points out that the sea is dead, and Titus becomes angry. He chats Violet that she's become like the hacker—"so big negative." Titus isn't sure what to say, so he chats, "I really like you." Violet hits the back of his head and chats, "That'll do."

The sea—once a site of fun and calm—has become a nightmarish, toxic version of itself, thanks to pollution. Titus continues to struggle with his conflicted feelings for Violet: he's attracted to her, but he can't stomach her negativity (even though she's just stating the truth).



The chapter ends with excerpts from another feedcast, in which the characters repeat, “Don’t breathe in my face” and “I didn’t give it to her.”

The feedcast shows how vapid popular depictions of love have become.



PART 3: LIMBO AND PRAYER

On Monday, Titus goes to School™ and notices that Calista has a “macrolesion.” Link kisses Calista and tickles her **lesion**. Titus chats Violet about Calista’s lesion and her relationship with Link. Violet admits that the first time she saw Link she thought he was “youch” since he was the only person she knew who wasn’t beautiful. Titus explains that Link was cloned from Abraham Lincoln. As he chats this, Titus watches Link goofing around the Marty.

Lesions have become so hip that the characters choose to have them placed all over their bodies. Horrifyingly, the other characters seem to find lesions sexy, because their feeds tell them they are attractive. Because the story takes place in a future where people choose the appearance of their children, most people are beautiful, but Link is a clone of Abraham Lincoln—who, during his lifetime, was widely regarded as an unusually unattractive man.



Violet chats Titus to tell him that she’s reading about Mayan spells, because she wants to preserve them before they’re forgotten altogether. Titus invites her to a party on Friday, and she reluctantly agrees after Titus convinces her that his friends like her.

It seems to be Violet’s mission to learn as much about the world as possible before her death. She continues to be attracted to Titus, however, and seems to want to spend time with him and his friends.



In the interlude, the **feed** sends out “Hot Sex Tips for Girls,” followed by a political speech about how the U.S. has toppled many genocidal dictatorships around the world and always does what is right.

America professes to be the most morally advanced country in the world, even as it continues to pollute the world and endanger millions of lives.



PART 3: FLAT HOPE

On Friday, Titus drives Violet to the party. On the ride, Violet talks about what she has been reading about the natural world.

Violet continues to be fascinated with the natural world, perhaps because it represents a place where materialism hasn’t yet sunk in.



At the party, people shuffle around “with no music on the floor,” but they broadcast music into their **feeds**. Quendy’s entire body is covered in **lesions**, which Violet finds horrifying. Violet chats Titus that “the only thing worse than the thought it may all come tumbling down is the thought that we may go on like this forever.”

Violet’s remark could be said to sum up the entire book. The society Anderson describes is horrifying in so many different ways that it seems the only thing worse than this society’s collapse would be its survival.



Titus takes Violet to the attic of the house and explains that he and his friends used to play here with Link. They would play a game in which everyone had to hide in the same place until, eventually, there would be only one person left who hadn't found the hiding place. Titus liked this game because, even if you were the last person, you knew that "more people were thinking about you than ever before." Violet finds some paintings of Link's ancestors, all of whom have old-timey names like "Ezekiel" and "Hope." Hope is a "fat old woman with a little dog."

Link's game is a poignant metaphor for Titus's society, but also for what makes Titus different from his friends. While kids in the 21st century play hide-and-seek (a game that arguably encourages independence), the children in this book play a variant that stresses togetherness and exclusion. What makes Titus different is that he finds something positive and even poetic in the experience of being alone.



PART 3: OUR DUTY TO THE PARTY

Violet and Titus come down from the attic, passing people making out and other people "in mal." Downstairs, they find Link and other friends playing spin the bottle. Quendy spins, and the bottle points at Link, and when they kiss, Quendy kisses him on the mouth—Link is too afraid of her **lesions** to push back. Marty chats Titus that Quendy looks great, but Titus tells him that her lesions are disgusting.

It seems people are divided over whether Quendy's lesions are disgusting or attractive. Originally, everyone thought that lesions were horrifying, but thanks to corporate propaganda, some have come to think of them as attractive.



Just then, Calista says to Quendy, very loudly, "Don't let anyone tell you you look stupid." She accuses Quendy of altering her body just to get "someone's boyfriend."

Calista is being sarcastic, of course: her point is that Quendy is just aping her own fashion choices because she's jealous of her (Calista's) relationship with Link.



Marty spins the bottle, and it points to Violet. Before they kiss, however, Violet bursts out, "Stop it! People are starving. We're playing games, and our skin is falling off." She continues, shrieking, "You don't have the **feed!** You are feed! You're feed! You're being eaten!" She calls Quendy a monster. Titus tries to calm Violet, but she scratches at him. Then, Violet realizes that her hands aren't working. She's drooling, and her eyes roll around. Someone calls an ambulance, and Titus rides to the hospital with Violet as his feed whispers about lawyers and malpractice suits. All he can think is, "The fucking party is over."

Violet says everything she's been keeping bottled up: Titus's society is a nightmarish place, in which people are encouraged to think of the world as a product to be consumed, and in which they themselves are ultimately "consumed" by corporations that rely on their financial support. She points out that their bodies are being ripped apart by pollution. Violet also criticizes the obliviousness and incredible selfishness of Link and his wealthy friends, who are seemingly ignorant of other people's suffering.



PART 4: 52.9%

Titus sits in the hospital waiting room. He tries to ask a nurse for information about Violet, but she just tells him to rest his eyes. He listens to **feed** ads for cars and movies, pacing around the room. As he does so, people rush in and out of the room, wheeling helpless, wide-eyed patients.

Chapter One foreshadows Titus's growing alienation from Violet. For the time being, he seems to want to help her, but it's suggested that his feed is distracting him and preventing him from being emotionally available.



PART 4: 87.3%

Violet's father arrives at the hospital shortly after Titus gets there. After speaking to a doctor, he notices Titus and reports that the doctors are fixing the malfunction. The two sit in the waiting room. Violet's father shows Titus that he can monitor her **feed** function—if her efficiency rises above 98%, then she'll be fine.

Titus thinks about what Violet said just before she collapsed. He wishes Violet could be “uninsane” again. Just then, the nurses announce that Violet is awake. Violet's father goes to see her, leaving Titus alone.

Afterwards, Titus is allowed in to see Violet. She begins apologizing to him. Titus replies that he's worried about her. Violet is weeping, and she asks, “Why are you standing so far away?”

Titus's mom picks him up from the hospital. Titus eats dinner and tries to do some homework, but ends up watching his **feed** instead. He falls asleep and has a strange dream in which he counts beads of water on a string, only to have Violet ask him, “How many do you need before you're done?”

PART 4: 87.1%

The next day, Titus visits Violet in her home, to which she's been moved from the hospital. He sits by her bed, chatting silently. Violet asks Titus to tell Quendy she's sorry, and then she explains that she lost memories—she can't remember what it was like to be six years old. Then, she tells Titus, “Don't worry, Titus ... No matter what, we'll still be together.”

Violet tells Titus that she wants to do many things with what's left of her life. But then she realizes that everything she wants to do is a “sitcom opener”—the kind of things characters would do at the beginning of a TV show. Titus asks her what it was like to scream at Link's party, and Violet admits it felt good.

This passage explains the chapter titles in Part Four—they refer to Violet's feed function and, therefore, her health. Violet is “chained” to her feed, meaning that if her feed were to die, she'd die, too.



Titus's responses to Violet's misfortune are becoming increasingly callous and childish. It's important to notice that he doesn't wish for Violet to get well (suggesting that he's concerned for her well-being)—rather, he wishes for her to get “uninsane” (implying that he's more concerned with the way Violet is perceived and the way she interacts with him and his friends).



Titus feels physically uncomfortable around Violet, which is why he's keeping his distance.



Titus's dream mirrors the basic difference between his personality and Violet's. Violet believes in moderation, and in the dream she questions Titus's unquenchable thirst for more.



Although one of the purposes of the feed is to preserve memory, Violet's malfunctioning feed has ravaged her own memories. This is one of the only times in the book when Titus is referred to by his real name. This might suggest that Titus is gaining a sense of self through the act of caring for Violet. Or it could suggest that Violet sees Titus differently than his friends do: she sees him as a person with his own unique identity, not as just another pleasure-seeker.



Violet wants to make the most of her remaining months, or days, but because she has grown up with a feed, she struggles to think of a truly original way to spend her time. Even when she's on the verge of death, then, Violet is trying to break away from the feed and achieve true originality.



Titus watches as Violet and her father try to petition FeedTech for free repairs, since Violet's father can't pay for the tests himself. However, Violet's **feed** warranty expired a long time ago. Violet's father claims that he'll give his business to another corporation unless FeedTech pays for Violet's feed repairs immediately. FeedTech sends a reply, and afterwards, nobody says much.

Violet's father believes that he can use his influence as a consumer to lobby for better treatment for his daughter. This is supposed to be how capitalism works: when there's healthy competition between companies, one of the companies will provide optimal service to the customer, and the other companies will follow suit. However, it's implied that the feed corporations don't treat Violet so kindly.



PART 4: 86.5%

The next day, Titus talks with Quendy, and tells her that Violet is sorry. Quendy says she understands. Titus explains what's happening to Violet, and Quendy, suddenly angry, tells Titus that she hopes he isn't sulking around Violet and making her feel "low-grade." She puts her hand on his leg, and Titus notices that the blood in her veins is blue.

Titus is overcoming his initial revulsion, as it's hinted that he's beginning to find Quendy's lesions attractive, foreshadowing the events of the following chapters.



PART 4: 52.0%

The next morning, Titus wakes up to find a message from Violet. In it, she explains that her mother never had a feed because she didn't want a "brain mole." Violet's father's parents didn't have the money to buy **feeds**. So both of Violet's parents went through school without feeds, which was challenging.

As Violet's condition deteriorates, she continues to turn to Titus for emotional support, giving him information about herself and her family that she previously guarded.



Violet reports that her body isn't working properly. She can't move her legs, sometimes for hours at a time. But currently, she's savoring the feeling of being able to move her toes. She imagines being a child, wiggling her toes in mud. She concludes, "I hope you're okay this morning, too."

Even when she's on the verge of death, Violet finds a way to savor the simplest pleasures in life. Unlike the other characters in the book, Violet doesn't seem to be perpetually dissatisfied, even though she arguably has more reason to be.



PART 4: 82.4%

Titus listens to Violet's message while driving to School™. He's surprised to realize that he can still smell the hospital. As he parks, his hand lingers over the "lift shift," as if he's about to "fall upward into the sky."

Titus finds it hard to shake his memories of Violet in the hospital, and his confusion and disorientation are reflected in the imagery of the passage—the oxymoronic description of the car "falling up."



PART 4: 80.9%

Violet makes a list of everything she wants to do in life. She wants to see oceans, volcanoes, and art museums, and she wants to “see the years pass.” She wants great artists and writers to come to her house, where she lives with Titus. She wants to have grandchildren who help her make dinner. Above all, she wants to forget about her hours in the hospital, and the feeling of not being able to move her limbs.

Violet believes she's coming to the end of her life. Instead of giving up, she wants to fill her final days with joy and discovery. At the end of the day, however, Violet's “bucket list” is a fantasy: it's composed of the things she aspires to do, but senses she never will, demonstrating that even when she's faced with death, she has the courage to dream.

**PART 4: 78.6%**

Titus is unable to concentrate at School™ where there have been funding cuts lately (no more school band, and only living teachers). He doesn't reply to Violet, just listens to her message again and again. He stares at his hologram teacher, who looks “just like an empty shell.”

In Part Four, there are various subtle signs that the U.S. is falling apart—the school system is collapsing (even though, supposedly, it's supported by all-powerful corporations). The image of an empty shell is an apt way to characterize Titus's hollow, apathetic emotional state.

**PART 4: 77.8%**

Violet chats Titus again, saying, “I wish I was with you” and “Did you get my list?”

Titus is afraid to respond to Violet, perhaps because he's never had to deal with such intense emotional intimacy.

**PART 4: 76.3%**

After School™, Link asks Titus how Violet is doing, and Titus says he hasn't talked to her in a few days. Violet chats Titus, but he doesn't reply. Titus and his friends play volleyball. Then, Titus suggests that they all get mal. Link and Marty are surprised, but they agree.

Where before Titus was ready to give up “getting mal” to spend quality time with Violet, he now wants to drown his feelings by getting mal with his friends. He's making himself emotionally unavailable, perhaps because, odd as it sounds, he's afraid of his own emotional connection with Violet.



The three friends go inside and go to a mal site. They download the mal, and suddenly Titus feels like colored bricks are falling down. He, Marty, and Link begin to laugh. They realize they're now sitting in an ice cream store.

Titus's feed malfunctions, which it seems is supposed to be a euphoric, disorienting feeling—the futuristic version of getting high.



The three friends go to the mall, and Titus shows Marty and Link the list Violet sent him. Marty asks Titus why he's not responding to Violet, but Titus insists that he will.

Even though Titus may have gotten mal to avoid his feelings for Violet, he can't stop thinking about her, and even shows his friends her list.



Titus hears a strange banging sound, and begins laughing again, thinking, “It was good to be with friends.” Violet chats him, and he replies, “Shut the fuck up,” but luckily he says it out loud rather than chatting her.

Titus is at once attracted to Violet and afraid of her—as evidenced by the fact that he tells her to shut up and yet thinks about her constantly. He’s never been in a position where someone he cares about has been so miserable, and he’s simply not emotionally capable of supporting her.



Violet asks Titus if he’s out of school, and this time Titus chats back that he is. He repeats Violet’s name again and again, and Violet asks, “are you in mal?” Titus says he’s going to come to Violet right now, but Violet tells him not to drive. She adds that hundreds of people have been found dead in Mexico, covered in “black stuff.” The Global Alliance is blaming the U.S. Titus continues to repeat Violet’s name, and Violet chats back, “I can’t believe in the middle of all this, you went and got malfunctioned. You are such an asshole.”

Violet’s outburst in this passage is similar to her outburst at the end of Part Three: while the whole world is falling apart, Titus is having a good time, lost in his own little world. Although she’s right, her critical view of the world is one of the reasons why Titus has been avoiding her. Titus feels that, unsatisfying as it may be, the comfort of the feed is still preferable to the painful reality of what’s going on in the world.



Titus announces that he’s going to drive to Violet, using the autopilot function. He finds his upcar and drives to Violet’s house. As he drives, he dreams about sweater vests, and his **feed** says that the Prime Minister of the Global Alliance has stated, “the biological integrity of the earth relies at this point upon the dismantling of American-based corporate entities.”

The Global Alliance appears to be gearing up for war with the U.S., since the further growth of American industry will bring about the destruction of all life on the planet. In short, America’s reckless consumerism and corporatism have finally caught up with it.



Titus arrives at Violet’s house, and she’s waiting outside. She tells him not to come in, since her father will know he’s mal. Titus tells Violet that her to-do list will take about five days in total. Violet tries to tell Titus about the recent news but he ignores her. He turns and buries his face in the grass, falling asleep.

Titus doesn’t understand that Violet’s “bucket list” was a reflection of a life she’ll never have, and which she herself knows she’ll never have. In typical form, he just wants to gratify Violet’s desires as soon as possible. Willfully oblivious to the news of the world, Titus buries his head in the sand—or rather, the grass.



PART 4: 76.2%

While Titus sleeps on the lawn, Violet forwards him a message from FeedTech. While he’s still sleeping, Titus opens the message. He experiences Violet’s sensations from earlier that day—sometimes, he’s unable to move his legs or speak. While he, as Violet, struggles to breathe, an automated response explains, first, that there are great new deals on deodorant, and second, that FeedTech has turned down Violet’s request to pay for her repairs, because her purchasing history makes her an unreliable investment.

Violet’s attempts to confuse the feed with her unreliable taste profile have succeeded—and backfired. Because she’s made a point of being an eclectic shopper, FeedTech has concluded that she’s not a worthwhile business investment—if the company were to pay for her repairs, it wouldn’t reap any economic benefits in the long run.



When Titus wakes up, he has a headache. He finds that he’s still on the lawn, next to Violet. Violet’s father stares out the window, clearly unhappy that his daughter is spending so much time with “some malfunctioning asshole.”

Titus knows that he has behaved irresponsibly by getting mal.



Titus tells Violet he had no idea she got a refusal from FeedTech that day. Violet replies by saying, “You didn’t ask.” There’s a long pause, and then she asks if he has to go. He replies that he should.

Titus walks to his upcar. As he climbs in, Violet waves to him. But the next day, her arms stop working, and she’s given a sedative for panic.

PART 4: 59.3%

Late at night, Titus gets a message from Violet. Violet has been listening to requiems and burial rites from around the world. She’s terrified of losing memories, and tells Titus that, since he’s the most important person in her life, she’s going to tell him everything. She proceeds to send him her memories, everything from her parents to her favorite foods. Instead of experiencing the memories, Titus ignores them. He drinks some water and then deletes everything she’s sent him. A while later, Violet chats Titus, asking, “what’s your answer about the weekend idea?” He has no idea what this means, and doesn’t answer. He just sits in bed, unable to sleep.

PART 4: 57.2%

Titus’s dad hasn’t been home in weeks, and his mom is angry. Smell Factor runs around, crying and throwing things. Titus stays in his room.

One afternoon, Violet shows up at Titus’s house. She walks into his room and asks him if he wants to come to the mountains—this was the weekend plan she had been asking about earlier. She also asks if he got her memories. He shakes his head. She asks about the mountains again, and he says he’s “kind of busy.” Violet seems angry and asks what else he could be doing. Titus hesitates and then agrees.

Violet and Titus drive away in Titus’s upcar. During the ride, Titus asks if Violet has been okay. She explains that she can’t move for hours at a time. She’s worried that Titus hasn’t gotten her messages—this might mean something else is wrong with her. She confesses that she wants to live without her **feed**. However, she can’t turn off her feed right now, because it controls too many vital functions.

Titus is feeling guilty about having abandoned Violet, and yet in this scene he chooses to abandon her again. At a loss for how to respond to the news that Violet’s condition will likely continue to deteriorate, Titus simply exits the interaction.



Violet’s condition continues to deteriorate, and Titus continues to be unable to cope with any type of “problem.” Instead, he flies away.



Titus’s behavior becomes increasingly callous and cruel. Instead of treasuring the memories Violet trusts him with, he deletes them without a second thought. He doesn’t want a deep emotional connection with his girlfriend—and in fact, he’s doing everything in his power to avoid such a connection. Perhaps this is because Titus’s society hasn’t prepared him for deep intimacy—and in many ways seems to actively discourage it.



Not only is Titus’s society falling apart; his own family seems to be on the verge of collapse.



Titus neglects Violet emotionally, even though she’s clearly reaching out for him in her time of need. Titus is reluctant to offer Violet support because he’s been trained his entire life to pursue pleasure with total, selfish abandon, and has no idea how to handle anything remotely unpleasant.



Surprisingly, this is the first time in the book that Violet has explicitly claimed she wants to live without her feed. By the same token, Violet wants to live outside the culture of consumerism and reckless capitalism that dominates her society.



Violet says that her **feed** has been recommending new requiem masses for her. To Violet's chagrin, she likes some of them. She wants to get to the point where her feed can't predict what she does and doesn't like. She smiles at Titus "like she was broken." Titus says nothing, but turns up the fan.

Escaping the feed is harder than it seems. Violet has tried to confound her feed by constructing an unreadable consumer taste profile, but her feed has managed to "read" her taste accurately despite this. Titus continues to behave dismissively toward Violet and seems to have no interest in taking care of her.



PART 4: 54.1%

Violet and Titus drive to some mountains, where they've made a hotel reservation. The hotel is ugly, and they joke about there being dead bodies sewn into the mattress. They walk around the town near the hotel, and Titus thinks, "maybe it wouldn't be so bad, being with her." Titus and Violet go out to dinner at a restaurant with people protesting outside—but nobody in the restaurant knows what they're protesting.

Titus and Violet want to "get away." As they've done before, they try to escape into the natural world (the mountains). However, even the mountains have become a consumerist playground where political unrest has taken root.



Back in their hotel, Violet tells Titus that she wants to experience everything before her death. She's done some things with an old boyfriend, but never "the main event." As they kiss, Violet tells Titus she admires him for leading a completely normal, carefree life. She says, "I love you, Titus."

Violet wants to lose her virginity to Titus before her death. As before, the fact that she uses Titus's real name (and says, "I love you") suggests that she's trying to be emotionally intimate with him.



Titus tries to enjoy his time with Violet, but finds that he can't even smile. Violet asks what the problem is. Titus hesitates and says, "I keep picturing you dead already." Violet gets quiet. She remembers going to the **moon** for spring break, and how she had thought that she could have a "normal" life for once. She wanted to date Titus so that she could finally understand what "living" was. Titus protests that he didn't know Violet was so serious about him. He claims he would've broken up with her weeks ago if she hadn't gotten sick.

Titus can't savor his time with Violet because he's too fixated on the fact of her inevitable death. While this is perfectly understandable, the next words out of his mouth are deeply unkind. However cruel, Titus's behavior could also be interpreted to self-protective, as he is reluctant to grow closer to someone he knows may die any day.



Furious, Violet asks Titus if he has any idea what's happening in Central America. She explains that the rest of the world is preparing to fight the United States. People's skin is falling off. Almost nothing grows on the earth anymore. But instead of paying attention to these problems, Violet snaps, Titus and his friends just have fun.

As before, Violet is far more aware of what's happening around the world than Titus is (even though she's been occupied with her own very serious health issues). In part, this is because Violet hails from lower on the socioeconomic totem pole than Titus, and is more likely to question the culture of consumerism (instead of just naively accepting and enjoying it).



Titus drives Violet home. He notices that she looks ugly when she cries, and decides, "it wasn't working anymore." While driving, he orders a jersey. When he and Violet have returned to Violet's house, Violet climbs out of the upcar, and her arm freezes. Violet's father tries to help her, but she insists on climbing down from the upcar on her own.

Titus continues to behave cruelly toward Violet, judging her for her appearance when she's at her most vulnerable. Even so, Violet continues to conduct herself with great dignity, refusing the help of others.



Later on, Titus realizes that the last words he ever hears Violet speak with her own mouth are “Oh, shit.”

Titus’s relationship with Violet seems to end “not with a bang but a whimper”—just two banal words.



PART 4: 51.5%

The next day, Violet chats Titus to say that she loves him. She knows Titus is different from everyone else—he’s “someone people could learn from.” Instead of replying, Titus goes to play basketball with Link.

Violet was attracted to Titus because he seemed unusually sensitive and poetic. But perhaps Violet was always wrong—perhaps Titus is just as cruel and unfeeling as his friends.



PART 4: SUMMERTIME

The school year ends, and Titus goes to one of Jupiter’s moons with Marty and Link. By this time, he’s dating Quendy.

Titus seems to have moved on from Violet, dating new people and once again unthinkingly pursuing pleasure for the sake of pleasure.



Back on Earth at the end of the summer, Titus goes to lots of fun parties. Marty gets a Nike speech tattoo, meaning that everything he says automatically begins with the word “Nike.”

As the book comes to an end, the characters’ consumerism and “branding” becomes increasingly grotesque, to the point where they can’t even speak normally.



People’s skin begins to peel and their hair begins to fall out. People have begun freezing in the middle of the street due to something called Nostalgia Feedback, in which people become nostalgic to the point where they’re nostalgic for the moment they’re living in right now. At night, Titus thinks of Violet.

Societal decay reaches a point where it can no longer be obscured, fetishized, or glamorized. Corporate America has brought about its own collapse, and it appears to be taking its customers down with it.



Titus realizes that nobody wants to ride in his upcar for some reason. He keeps trying to buy things to be cool, but he feels that he can’t “catch up.”

For one of the first times in this book, Titus seems to sense that consumerism is inherently unsatisfying. He’s been conditioned to believe that buying things will make him happy, and yet nothing he buys ever quite brings him this happiness.



PART 4: THE DEEP

At dinner, Titus’s dad shows his family **feed** memories of his latest “corporate adventure,” in which he and his coworkers went whale hunting. Titus experiences memories of Dad and his friends stabbing whales and getting covered in blood. Dad’s interns—“real good kids”—render the whale blubber.

The extreme violence of Titus’s father’s memories matches the violence inflicted on people and the environment alike by American capitalism.



Titus gets sick to his stomach. Just then, someone chats him, “She wanted me to tell you when everything stopped.” Because he’s experiencing Dad’s memory, he’s forced to look down a middle-aged “V.P. lady”’s blouse and get “completely turned on.” Dad says, “Never mind the rest.” Mom wants to know who the lady is, but Dad refuses to say.

Titus appears to have received a message from Violet’s father concerning Violet’s condition. Also, it’s suggested that Titus’s dad is having an affair with a coworker (or at the very least is attracted to her). Because he’s sharing his memories with his whole family, even his most private experiences are exposed to his family.



Titus drives out to Violet’s house. In the upcar, he listens to news about riots in California and mysterious explosions in New Jersey. When he arrives at Violet’s house, Violet’s father lets him inside and takes him to Violet.

As Titus goes to Violet, the U.S.—not just the rest of the world—finally seems to be coming apart.



PART 4: 4.6%

When Titus sees Violet in her room, he notices that she’s very pale. Her head is shaved and covered in scars, and he feels very uncomfortable, as if he’s seeing a wooden prop version of Violet.

At first, Titus is repulsed by Violet. He seems to feel no sympathy or emotional connection with this person he used to date.



Violet’s father explains that Violet can barely speak anymore. He recalls how, years ago, he decided that Violet would never have a **feed**—after all, he didn’t, and neither did his wife. Then, he went to a job interview where his interviewers were clearly making fun of him via feed chat. It was then that he decided to give Violet a feed. By installing the feed so late, Violet’s father says, he may have endangered his daughter’s life.

Violet’s father is one of the more poignant characters in the novel, since he blames himself for Violet’s demise. He believed that Violet’s best chances of success in life involved her receiving a feed—and yet her feed is bringing her life to a premature close, implying that capitalism really is an ideology that ultimately cannibalizes even its own proponents.



Titus can only say, “I’m sorry,” but Violet’s father replies, “Sorrow comes so cheap.” He accuses Titus of taking Violet to the club and tells Titus to run off and “play your games.” He says that, like all Americans, Titus has no interest in what happens to a product after he throws it away. “Go back and hang with the eloi,” he hisses, refusing to explain what this means when Titus asks him. As Titus leaves, he hears Violet’s father crying and telling Violet, “I’m sorry.”

Violet’s father alludes to H.G. Wells’s [The Time Machine](#), in which upper-class humans evolve into a weak and foolish pleasure-seeking species, the eloi (while the working class evolves into fearsome morlocks). But even though Violet’s father has a point (namely, that Titus and his friends are shallow and selfish), there’s nothing constructive about his rage—he just wants someone to blame for Violet’s sickness. Indeed, the passage closes with Violet’s father offering the same ineffectual words—“I’m sorry”—that he’d previously attacked Titus for using.



Back at home, Titus sits in his room, naked. He orders endless pairs of pants, until he’s out of money. He thinks he can feel the pants being packed, shipped, and distributed. He doesn’t sleep at all, just waits for the “shit-stupid sun” to rise.

Titus comes to a crossroads. His shopping binge could be interpreted as a way of repressing his feelings of guilt for Violet’s death. It is significant that Titus thinks carefully about his pants being packed—suggesting more concern for products than Violet’s father suggested he was capable of feeling. It’s as if Titus has reached a new low, but whether he’ll turn his back on consumerism is unclear.



Two days later, Titus goes to visit Violet. He has an hour before he's supposed to meet Quendy. He tells Violet that he's been listening to the news, and tells her stories about what he's been doing. He also mentions that the Global Alliance is issuing threats of war with America.

Titus tells Violet, "You're still there, as long as I can remember you." He begins to weep. He promises to tell Violet a story about the **feed**. In this story, a normal guy meets a "dissident with a heart of gold." The story, he claims, is "heartwarming and a visual feast." At the end of the story, the characters learn to resist the feed. He reaches in to hold Violet's hand. Her heart is barely beating.

The chapter, and the book, ends with a **feed** ad for a blue jeans sale. The ad repeats, "Everything must go" again and again, and the letters get smaller on the page until they're barely visible at all.

Titus shows more initiative in visiting Violet than he has previously. He also shows more interest in current events than he has elsewhere in the book.



In this final, ambiguous scene, Titus appears to show real emotional depth around Violet. He doesn't think of her as a product, to be discarded as soon as he loses interest. Instead, Titus seems to be trying to take care of Violet by telling her a story. The story is clearly modeled off of their relationship, and it suggests that, moving forward, Titus might try to resist the feed (even if Violet will die). Yet it's utterly unclear what Titus's resistance would consist of. In fact, one could argue that Titus becomes Violet's feed in this passage, whispering an ad for a kitschy, cliché-ridden movie about their love. Perhaps the best way to interpret this scene is to see it as Anderson's plea to his readers in the 21st century. Even if it's too late for Violet and Titus to do anything to save their world, or even themselves, Anderson hopes that Feed, his dark fable of consumerism, will inspire readers to resist the rampant culture of consumerism.



The book ends with a feed ad slowly "fading away." There are many ways to interpret this passage: it could be emblematic of the inevitable destruction of Titus's unsustainable society, but it could also represent Violet's death—or, more optimistically, Violet and Titus's attempt to escape the feed's constant, pestering influence. The passage is an ending as well as a beginning, but of what Anderson wisely refuses to say.





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