

Voyage in the Dark



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JEAN RHYS

Ella Gwendolyn Rees Williams was born in 1890 to a Welsh doctor and a Creole woman of Scots ancestry on the Caribbean island of Dominica (then a British colony). At 16 she was sent to England, where she studied to be an actress. Williams was ostracized for her Caribbean heritage and accent—she was eventually taken out of school because her instructors deemed her unable to rid herself of the West Indies accent that would prevent her from getting significant stage roles. She then lived in Britain for nearly a decade, surviving on small acting roles and chorus parts. After having a near-fatal abortion paid for by a former lover, Williams began to write. In 1924, in the midst of a tumultuous marriage, Williams met the acclaimed English novelist Ford Madox Ford. Ford took her in as both a protégé and mistress, suggesting that she change her name to Jean Rhys and eventually facilitating the publication of her work, which often dealt with her own experiences of alienation as a woman at the hands of unjust lovers and an exclusionary society. The three major novels that Rhys wrote during the 1930s—*After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, *Voyage in the Dark*, and *Good Morning, Midnight*—were met with mixed critical success. It wasn't until 1966 (after several decades of anonymity marked by two more marriages and an increasingly serious alcohol problem) that Rhys published *Wide Sargasso Sea* and rocketed to literary fame. *Wide Sargasso Sea* remains her most acclaimed work, having garnered her several major literary awards and a place in the canon of postcolonial literature. Rhys died in 1979, in Exeter, England.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Voyage in the Dark features a covert abortion, which taps into England's anti-abortion history. Although abortion is now legal in the United Kingdom, it was outlawed until 1967, which is why Anna Morgan is forced to secretly find somebody willing to perform the procedure. Abortion was officially banned in England in the Malicious Shooting or Stabbing Act of 1803, in which it was declared that anyone who performed or somehow aided in an abortion would be subject to the death penalty or 14 years in a penal colony. In the coming years, there were a number of changes to this law, most of which simply added new specifications. The Offences Against the Person Act of 1861, for instance, upheld that it was also illegal to give a pregnant woman any sort of drug with the intent of inducing abortion. This provision would seemingly have applied to Anna, since the doctor who ends up treating her after the abortion indicates that she was given the anti-malarial drug quinine, which was

sometimes used in an attempt to induce abortion during the first trimester. (Modern medicine suggests that this is not, in reality, an effective method.) Despite the stringent laws against abortion, though, it was certainly not uncommon for women to seek out the procedure—in fact, it was so common at the beginning of the 20th century that induced miscarriages are said to have made up a sixth of all pregnancies at the time.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Voyage in the Dark is similar to several of Jean Rhys's other novels, which also feature young women leading lonely lives in places that are foreign to them. The protagonist in *Good Morning, Midnight*, for instance, is a young woman from England trying to establish herself in Paris. Both novels also explore the relationship between money and romance—or, more specifically, between money and sex, as the novels highlight the complex power dynamics that come along with paying someone for sex and romantic affection. Furthermore, *Voyage in the Dark*'s focus on Anna's upbringing in the West Indies—and the way she conceives race—aligns with Jean Rhys's most famous novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which is widely considered one of the most influential postcolonial novels set in the Caribbean. To that end, *Voyage in the Dark* ought to be considered alongside other books about migrating to England from the Caribbean. Novels like Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and George Lamming's *The Emigrants* follow the lives of Black characters who move from the West Indies and try to find stability in the racist environment of London in the mid-20th century. Of course, *Voyage in the Dark* specifically features a white woman's experience, so it would be especially helpful to think about the novel within the context of *The Lonely Londoners* and *The Emigrants*, which approach many of the same topics from a different perspective.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Voyage in the Dark*
- **When Published:** 1934
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Expatriate Literature, Stream of Consciousness
- **Setting:** England in the early 20th century
- **Climax:** Anna has an abortion that leads to medical complications, leaving her in terrible pain throughout the night.
- **Antagonist:** Because of his indifference to Anna's emotional well-being, it's arguable that Walter is the novel's antagonist. More broadly, though, the primary antagonistic force in *Voyage in the Dark* is the sense of exclusion and isolation that

Anna experiences in England.

EXTRA CREDIT

Alternate Ending. In the original draft of *Voyage in the Dark*, the novel ends with Anna's death after the botched abortion. Rhys revised the ending for publication so that the novel concludes in a more ambiguous manner.



PLOT SUMMARY

Anna Morgan is a young white woman who was born and raised in the West Indies. After her father died, her British stepmother, Hester, moved her to England, where she now works as a chorus girl in a traveling theater troupe. Anna longs for the West Indies and often loses herself in childhood memories, fantasizing about her home's sights, sounds, and smells—all of which seem vibrant and lively compared to life in England, which she finds bleak and monotonous. One day, she and her friend Maudie go shopping in a small town. They meet two older men on the street who are obviously wealthy, and one of them—Walter—takes a liking to Anna, though she's only 18. He buys stockings for her and then comes back to her and Maudie's small room, where they have drinks and make awkward conversation. Before he leaves, they arrange to get together again when the theater tour passes through London. Anna claims after he leaves that she doesn't like him, but Maudie urges her to go out with him, since he has money. She tells Anna about a relationship she had with an older man named Viv, who gave her lots of money but ended up breaking her heart.

Anna goes out with Walter when she comes to London. He takes her to a strange restaurant where each dining party has its own private room. She finds it difficult to connect with Walter, who makes a show of sending back a bottle of wine because it's not to his satisfaction. Later, she tries to stop him from kissing her, but he doesn't stop right away. Eventually, though, he backs off and apologizes, at which point Anna opens a door she hadn't noticed before. It leads to a bedroom. When she expresses her surprise, Walter laughs. She gets her coat and shuts herself in the bedroom, lying down on the bed and waiting for him to come in, but he never does. When she finally comes out, he orders her a taxi and says goodbye.

The next day, Anna receives a letter from Walter, who insists that he's worried about her. The envelope contains some money, which he hopes she'll use to buy herself some clothes—which is exactly what she does, going out to purchase a new dress and a nice **coat**. When she returns, her landlady scolds her for coming home so late the night before after spending time with a man, and then she criticizes her for buying nice clothes, suggesting that Anna is promiscuous. She adds that Anna has until Saturday to find a new place to stay.

Anna starts to feel sick. She quickly loses her energy, but before she's too ill to move, she mails a letter to Walter asking him to visit her. He comes as soon as he receives the note. Seeing the condition Anna is in, he runs out again and brings back food and wine. He also mentions that he's going out of town for the next few days but that he's going to have his doctor visit her. Before he leaves, he talks to Anna's landlady and convinces her to let Anna stay.

Once Anna gets better again, she starts seeing Walter more frequently. She goes to his house one evening and has sex for the first time, though she initially tries to stop things from progressing too far—but then Walter tells her to be "brave," so she lets down her guard. Afterward, she watches in the mirror as he slips money into her handbag. She doesn't want him to do this and is about to tell him not to, but then she lets it go, deciding not to interfere with his desire to pay her.

Anna starts living in a much nicer boardinghouse. During this period, Walter introduces Anna to his cousin, Vincent, who is eager to put her in touch with people he knows in the theater. Both Walter and Vincent are excited about the idea of helping Anna become successful, and Walter even starts paying for Anna to have singing lessons. On her 19th birthday, Anna spends the day with Maudie because Walter is out of town. Maudie is impressed with her new living arrangements and her stylish new haircut, but she hints that it doesn't bode well that Walter seems like the "cautious" type—that is, the type of man who always wants Anna to come over to *his* house at night but never visits her at her apartment. Maudie's former lover, Viv, used to do the same thing. But Maudie doesn't press the issue, instead simply telling Anna to get as much money out of Walter as she can.

Shortly after she sees Maudie, Anna visits Hester, who's in London for a short stay. Hester says she thinks Anna would be better off returning to the West Indies, and then she shows her a letter from her Uncle Bo. It's a response to a letter Hester sent, in which she asked Bo to pay for half of Anna's passage back to the West Indies. In his response, Uncle Bo makes it clear that he resents the implication that he should have to financially support Anna. After all, Hester sold the family estate in the West Indies, so she should have plenty of money to pay for Anna's passage. Hester tells Anna that this is ridiculous, claiming that she didn't even make that much from selling the estate. Either way, she doesn't have enough money to keep supporting Anna, but Anna tells her she doesn't *need* her support. She's about to explain why, but Hester stops her, saying that she doesn't want to know. She also makes a number of racist comments about how Anna speaks like a Black person, and she implies that Anna's mother was multiracial—something that Anna refutes. The two women then part ways after a tense farewell.

Not long after her conversation with Hester, Anna goes away for the weekend with Walter, who has arranged for them to

take a short vacation in the countryside with Vincent and a French woman named Germaine. Anna and Walter spend the beginning of the vacation by themselves, exploring the countryside and having sex as they wait for Vincent and Germaine to arrive. Anna feels overwhelmingly happy, but soon Vincent and Germaine's arrival shatters her bliss. Throughout the weekend, Germaine makes rude comments about Vincent because they're in the middle of a fight. Eventually, Walter explains to Anna that Germaine is mad because Vincent is going away for a while, and Germaine thinks he's not leaving enough money for her. In the course of telling Anna what happened between Vincent and Germaine, Walter reveals that he, too, is going away. Both he and Vincent are traveling to New York and will be there for an extended period. Anna is hurt and upset, but she doesn't say anything. When they go back to the city, she has sex with Walter without bringing up her feelings.

Walter has been gone for several weeks when Anna receives a letter from Vincent. It informs her that Walter no longer loves her. Vincent explains that Walter asked him to write this letter, wanting to make sure Anna knows she will be provided for financially—for a little while, that is. If she needs anything, she should write to Vincent. He also asks her to send any letters she might have kept from Walter. Distraught, Anna writes to Walter (who is apparently back in London), and he agrees to meet her that evening in a public place. It doesn't go well. She tries to convince him to go somewhere private, but he refuses. The next day, Anna moves to a new address and doesn't update Walter, making it impossible for him to send money.

Anna gets sick in her new boardinghouse, where a slightly older woman named Ethel befriends her. Ethel is very impressed by Anna's beautiful coat and won't stop talking about how expensive it must have been. She then talks about how she's only in this depressing boardinghouse because her flat in a nicer part of town is under renovation. She's trained as a nurse, but she's opening a massage and manicure company that will operate out of her flat—and she wants Anna to live there and work as a manicurist, even though Anna doesn't know how to do manicures. Ethel tells her not to make any decisions before she sees the flat.

The next day, Anna bumps into her theater friend Laurie and two men. The men are named Carl and Joe, and they—along with Laurie—invite her to dinner. Anna spends the evening with them and gets quite drunk. Carl leaves after dinner to go gambling, but Joe takes Laurie and Anna to a hotel. It seems likely that Laurie is a sex worker, but Anna appears to not have picked up on this. When Laurie tries to undress her in front of Joe, Anna starts an argument and storms out of the room, eventually going to sleep in the room across the hall. Joe has left by the time she wakes up the next morning, but Laurie is still there. She and Anna make up with each other, and then Anna goes to see Ethel's flat.

Ethel was telling the truth: her flat is very nice. Anna agrees to

live there and work as a manicurist. Ethel is overjoyed and speaks extensively about how respectable her business is. And yet, men often come to the massage parlor with the intention of having sex. Ethel claims that this isn't what she wants the business to be, but she also encourages Anna to be very friendly to these male clients. When Carl comes and takes her out one night, Ethel says that Anna can go out with men and bring them back to the apartment whenever she wants, as long as she's willing to pay a little extra rent. Anna agrees. But living at Ethel's isn't easy, since Ethel gets jealous when Anna goes out and frequently finds ways to get money out of Anna.

After a while of casually seeing several men, Anna gets pregnant, but she doesn't tell anyone for three months. When she finally reveals her pregnancy, Ethel kicks her out, fearing that the pregnancy will attract negative attention to her business. With nobody to turn to except Laurie, Anna writes to Walter asking for money so that she can get an abortion from a woman Laurie knows. Walter arranges for her to meet with Vincent, who assures her that she will be taken care of. Before he leaves, though, he makes her hand over all the letters Walter ever sent, including one in which he wrote, "Shy Anna, I love you so much."

Anna's abortion does not go well. She wakes up that night in excruciating pain, so her landlady calls Laurie. But when Laurie arrives, she's angry and wants to know why the landlady got her involved when she really should have called a doctor. The landlady, for her part, didn't want a doctor to know what happened. But she eventually summons one, and Laurie tells Anna to claim that she had a nasty fall. The doctor immediately sees through this lie, but he still treats Anna, who drifts in and out of a dream state full of memories from her childhood in the West Indies. At one point, she hears the doctor scornfully say that she'll be all right and that she'll surely be ready to "start all over again" in no time—a phrase that echoes in her mind as she drifts to sleep.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Anna Morgan – Anna Morgan, the protagonist of *Voyage in the Dark*, is a young woman who recently moved to England from the West Indies, where she was born and raised. Anna is white, but she has always wished she were Black, finding herself more connected to Black culture in the West Indies than to her own family background. She's incredibly homesick in England, which she thinks is oppressively gray, monotonous, and cold. She originally moved with her stepmother, Hester, after her father died, and though Hester gives her some financial support, she mostly keeps herself afloat by working as a chorus girl in a traveling theater troupe. While on tour, she and her friend Maudie meet two wealthy older men on the street, and Anna

starts a relationship with one of them. His name is Walter, and though Anna doesn't like him at first, she agrees to go to dinner with him. Anna ends up having sex for the first time with Walter, at which point she develops strong feelings for him. Over the next few months, she spends a lot of time with Walter. Each time they have sex, he puts money into her handbag. Anna doesn't necessarily *want* him to pay her, since she has real feelings for him, though she takes the money anyway. Walter, however, eventually loses interest in their relationship and abandons Anna, who plunges into a deep depression. She spends her time reminiscing about the West Indies and going out with men she meets through her friend Laurie. She works for a little while as a manicurist for a woman named Ethel, who dislikes her mopey attitude. Before long, Anna gets pregnant and doesn't know who the father is, so she's forced to borrow money from Walter for an abortion. The procedure doesn't go well, and the book ends with her in a painful dream state in which she fantasizes about the West Indies and thinks about the idea of "starting all over again" in life.

Walter Jeffries – Walter Jeffries is a wealthy middle-aged man who takes an interest in Anna when he meets her walking on the street one day. He uses his wealth and influence to endear himself to her, especially when she falls ill shortly after having dinner with him for the first time. He not only visits her and brings food but also sends his personal doctor to see her and convinces her landlady not to kick her out. Gestures like these seem to resonate with Anna because they suggest that Walter legitimately cares about her, which is significant because she has so few people she can rely on in England. And yet, it's clear to most of Anna's friends that Walter is interested in her because she's young and beautiful—not because he's truly in love with her. Anna, however, appears unwilling to consider the possibility that he'll abandon her someday, instead letting herself develop a dependency on Walter that is both financial *and* emotional. Sure enough, though, Walter coldly breaks things off with Anna, delivering the news through his cousin, Vincent, who bluntly tells Anna that Walter doesn't love her anymore. He will, however, continue to give her money, though not forever. The way Walter ends his relationship with Anna is quite transactional, as if he's terminating a business contract. To that end, he seems to think money is the only thing that matters, and that offering to pay for Anna's expenses will make up for breaking her heart.

Hester – Hester is Anna's stepmother. Originally from England, she married Anna's father and moved in with him and Anna in the West Indies, but she never liked living there—most likely because she's quite racist and always disliked that Anna was interested in the West Indies' predominantly Black culture. After Anna's father died, Hester took her to England, but she now thinks this was a mistake, since she disapproves of how Anna has been leading her life in England. She claims that she wants Anna to return to the West Indies because that's what

would be best, but it's obvious that this is mainly an attempt to stop financially supporting her stepdaughter. She writes a letter to Anna's Uncle Bo, asking him to pay for half of Anna's passage back to the West Indies, but he refuses. When Hester tells Anna about this exchange, Anna assures her that she doesn't need to keep giving her money. This seems to please Hester, though she doesn't want to know *how*, exactly, Anna will support herself. After this conversation, Anna and Hester lose touch, but the loss of this relationship isn't terribly upsetting to Anna, since Hester's judgmental, racist attitude makes it clear that she was never a positive figure in her life anyway.

Maudie – Maudie is one of Anna's friends in the traveling theater troupe. She's 10 years older than Anna and knows what it's like to live without much money, which is why she encourages Anna to indulge Walter's affections. Maudie herself has had relationships with rich older men, so she knows it's important to seize the opportunity to live a financially comfortable life whenever the chance presents itself. What's more, she tries to get Anna to see that such opportunities are fleeting, since rich older men eventually lose interest in the young women they so eagerly pursue at first. This is exactly what happened to Maudie with a man named Viv, for whom she ended up developing strong feelings. Maudie's experience with Viv serves as a cautionary tale of sorts, but Anna doesn't pay much attention to her friend, ultimately choosing to ignore the likelihood that Walter will one day abandon her.

Laurie – Laurie is one of Anna's friends in the traveling theater troupe. An older woman, she's very experienced when it comes to dating wealthy older men. She likes Anna, but she's also eager to use Anna's youthful beauty to her own advantage. Although it's never made explicit in the novel, Laurie seems to earn money through sex work when she's not engaged in the theater. When Anna runs into her one evening shortly after Walter leaves her, Laurie invites her to spend time with her and two men, Carl and Joe. The ensuing evening is full of alcohol and sexual tension, and Laurie even tries to undress Anna in front of Joe at one point. But Anna stops her and starts an argument. Her behavior annoys Laurie, who thought Anna understood the sexually explicit (and transactional) nature of the evening. Nonetheless, the two friends forgive each other the following morning, and Laurie counsels Anna to get as much money out of Walter as she can while he's still willing to send financial support.

Ethel Matthews – Anna meets Ethel Matthews at a rundown boardinghouse shortly after Walter leaves her. An entrepreneurial and opportunistic person, Ethel immediately notices Anna's expensive **coat** and makes a point of befriending her. She claims to be a trained nurse, though what she really wants to do is open a massage parlor. She insists that she's only living in the rundown boardinghouse because her flat in a much nicer part of town is under renovation. She also goes on at length about how respectable her massage and manicure

business will be, eventually convincing Anna to rent a room in her flat and work as a manicurist—that is, if she puts up some money in advance. Anna isn't particularly interested in becoming a manicurist, but she takes Ethel up on her offer. At first, Ethel is kind and excited, but she soon turns on Anna and berates her for always moping around. All the while, Ethel maintains that she runs a respectable business, insinuating that other massage businesses are really covert sex-work operations. And yet, she subtly urges Anna to entice the customers, and when Anna goes out late with Carl one night, Ethel suggests that she should go out with men as much as she wants and even bring them back to the flat—as long as she doesn't mind paying extra in rent. The implication is that Ethel wants Anna to become a discreet sex worker. When Anna gets pregnant, though, Ethel kicks her out, claiming that she's disreputable and that she owes her money.

Uncle Bo – Uncle Bo is Anna's uncle who lives in the West Indies. He's a heavy drinker who often finds himself at odds with his Anna's stepmother, Hester, who disapproves of the life he leads. Hester reveals in a conversation with Anna that Uncle Bo has impregnated many Black women in the West Indies. He apparently makes no secret of this, even giving these children his last name—something Hester finds inexcusable, as she's quite racist and thinks Uncle Bo is dishonoring the family name. When Hester asks Uncle Bo to pay for half of Anna's passage back to the West Indies, Uncle Bo writes a letter refusing to give her any money. He points out that Hester should use the funds she received from selling her late husband's estate, taking issue with the implication that Anna is his financial responsibility. Although Anna reads this somewhat hurtful letter, she still has fond memories of Uncle Bo, who at least says he'd be happy to have her live with him, as long as Hester pays for her to do so.

Francine – Francine is a young woman who frequently appears in Anna's fond memories of her upbringing in the West Indies. Anna always felt very connected to Francine, who worked as a housekeeper for her family. Her bond with Francine is possibly one of the reasons Anna always wanted to be Black, since Francine herself is Black. At the same time, Anna sometimes wondered if Francine resented her because she came from a white, affluent family that settled down in the West Indies. The fact that Anna thinks about Francine so often underscores not just her intense longing for home, but also her fetishization of Blackness.

Vincent – Vincent is Walter's cousin. He claims to be very fond of Anna, though he tends to disparage and patronize her. When he hears that she's a chorus girl, for example, he insists on helping her improve her theatrical skills and putting her in touch with influential figures in the theater world—but then he laughs when he discovers that she has only ever been in small shows. When Walter decides to break things off with Anna, he does so through Vincent, who writes to Anna on Walter's

behalf. He acts like he wants the best for Anna, but it's clear that he just wants to help Walter ensure she won't make a big deal out of how he treated her. In the end, he's the one to arrange for Anna to receive money for an abortion.

Germaine – Germaine is a French woman who's romantically involved with Vincent. Anna and Walter go on a short vacation in the countryside with Germaine and Vincent, but the entire weekend is ruined because Germaine and Vincent got into an argument shortly before arriving. Germaine spends the weekend berating Vincent and suggesting that he doesn't care about women, but Anna doesn't know why—until, that is, Walter explains that Vincent is going away for a while and didn't tell Germaine until the last minute. Germaine is also angry because she thinks Vincent isn't leaving her enough money. In the course of this conversation, Anna learns that Walter is *also* leaving with Vincent. She thus understands Germaine's anger. Unlike Germaine, though, she keeps her disappointment to herself, ultimately responding in a much more passive manner.

Carl Redman – Carl Redman is an attractive American man whom Anna meets through Laurie. Carl met Laurie while he and his friend Joe were traveling in Europe, and she told them to look her up if they ever come to London. The implication is that Laurie's relationship with both Carl and Joe is of a sexual and transactional nature—meaning, in other words, that she's a sex worker and they are her clients. When Anna lives in Ethel's flat, Carl comes to see her and takes her out. Ethel takes a liking to Carl and tells Anna that she can spend as much time as she wants with men like him—if, that is, she pays extra rent. Ethel thus implies that she wants a cut of the money Anna might receive from having sex with wealthy men.

Joe Adler – Joe Adler is an American man whom Anna meets through Laurie. He and his friend Carl are seemingly interested in paying Laurie and Anna to have sex with them, though Anna doesn't pick up on this when she goes out to dinner with them. Later, though, Joe takes Laurie and Anna back to a hotel, where Laurie tries to undress Anna in front of him. Anna refuses, and though Joe doesn't force her to do anything, he implies that she shouldn't go around with Laurie if she doesn't want to have sex with rich men for money.

Viv – Viv is a wealthy older man Maudie used to see quite frequently. He used to shower her in money and gifts, but he soon lost interest. Unfortunately for Maudie, though, she developed strong romantic feelings for him. She talks about him quite often, trying to warn Anna about the fact that rich older men usually lose interest in their young lovers and abandon them.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Mr. Jones – Mr. Jones is Walter's friend. He's present when Walter first meets Anna on the street, and though he technically pairs off with Maudie, he's clearly uninterested in

her. As Walter flirts with Anna, then, Mr. Jones behaves quite rudely to Maudie.

Mrs. Robinson – Mrs. Robinson is a French woman who gives Anna an abortion. The procedure doesn't go very well, leaving Anna in excruciating pain later that night.



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.



HOMESICKNESS, MEMORY, AND BELONGING

Voyage in the Dark is a portrait of the loneliness and disorientation of leaving home. Anna Morgan experiences intense social isolation after moving to England from her home in the West Indies. Living in England makes her feel like everything in her life is new, but she doesn't see this transformation as positive or rewarding. To the contrary, she feels as if a “curtain ha[s] fallen” over her life, suggesting that she doesn't see her move to England as the beginning of something new but rather as an ending of sorts. She has, in other words, been estranged from everything she once knew and loved, and this estrangement makes her feel like her life has drawn to a close. Still, she eventually gets used to England—or so she claims. And yet, she frequently finds herself slipping into daydreams about her upbringing in the West Indies, often basking in the memory of the sights, sounds, and smells of her childhood. In doing so, she idealizes her birthplace and essentially makes it impossible for her current circumstances to live up to her past. Although nostalgia after leaving home is to be expected, then, it's arguable that Anna's intense yearning for the West Indies interferes with her ability to fully engage with her current surroundings. To that end, she's emotionally removed from her present life because she's always thinking about her past.

To make matters even more difficult, nobody in England seems to know much about the West Indies, nor are they interested in hearing about Anna's memories. For instance, when she talks to her lover, Walter, about the flowers that bloom in the West Indies, he dismisses the conversation by saying he thinks the island climate would be too “lush” for him. Anna thus has no outlet to express her intense longing for home, and this makes her feel even more isolated and alone. When Walter demonstrates his indifference about listening to Anna talk about home, it becomes clear just how difficult it is for her to connect with people in England, since nobody can relate to her upbringing (nor do they seem to *want* to relate). Therefore, as

Anna struggles to invest herself in her current life, she experiences homesickness not just as a pang of nostalgia but also as an acute *loss*—a loss she has no choice but to mourn all by herself.



SEXISM, LOVE, AND POWER

Voyage in the Dark features many sexist, transactional relationships between wealthy men and younger women. The novel tacitly criticizes men who treat women as if their only purpose is to provide fleeting moments of pleasure, but it also suggests that the women in these toxic relationships can still develop real romantic feelings—or, at the very least, feelings that *seem* real. Anna, for instance, becomes enamored of Walter, an older man who initially uses his wealth to endear himself to her. Although it's quite clear to everyone around her that Walter has no intentions of starting a long-term relationship, Anna comes to see him as one of the great loves of her life. She's consequently devastated when he abruptly breaks things off. Other women in the book undergo similar experiences. Anna's friend Maudie, for example, often talks about a man named Viv who showered her with affection and money and then, once she developed feelings for him, abandoned her. Maudie's story serves as a cautionary tale, but Anna doesn't listen, a fact that suggests it's very difficult to exercise caution while in the throes of romantic infatuation. Even though everyone around her warns her that Walter will eventually lose interest, Anna is shocked when it actually happens. And yet, the novel's intention isn't to make her look foolish or naïve. Rather, *Voyage in the Dark* underlines her heartbreak as a way of showing that even unhealthy, imbalanced relationships can still produce strong romantic feelings—feelings that overshadow everything else in life and make it hard to move on.

Furthermore, the novel illustrates that dysfunctional romantic relationships are often quite emotionally complex. For example, the exact nature of Anna's attachment to Walter is hard to understand. She doesn't like him when they first meet, finding his forward advances off-putting. But something about their relationship slowly transforms, and though the reasons for this shift remain ambiguous, it's reasonable to infer that her strong feelings have something to do with a sense of dependency on Walter. After all, he not only gives her financial stability and a comfortable life but also a feeling of companionship—which, of course, her life in England otherwise lacks. In many ways, he becomes a paternal figure in her life, often patronizing her by acting like he knows what's best for her career and trying to make sure she's set up for success. In other words, he pretends to take an active interest in her life, which is significant because Anna has so few people who really care what happens to her. There is, then, a significant element of manipulation at play in their relationship, as Walter targets Anna's vulnerabilities—namely, her poverty and her loneliness—to

make sure she'll continue to see him. Through Walter's predatory treatment of Anna, the novel shines a light on why it can be so difficult to get over toxic relationships that are founded on manipulation.



RACE AND IDENTITY

Anna Morgan's cultural identity in *Voyage in the Dark* is hard to define. In some ways, her social positioning seems straightforward: she is, after all, a white woman living in England. However, she doesn't identify with British culture, nor does she feel connected to her own whiteness. Having grown up in the West Indies, she doesn't relate to British ways of life, finding everything in England drab, monotonous, and overly modest. She's also unaccustomed to being surrounded by white people, despite the fact that she herself is white. Indeed, her relationship with her own whiteness has always been strained, as she grew up wishing she were Black. "Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad," she says at one point while fondly remembering her family's Black housekeeper, Francine. Sentiments like this one suggest that Anna has fetishized Blackness by relating it to happiness and joy—an association that fails to take into account that to be Black is to be *human*, which obviously encompasses an entire range of experiences that go far beyond simplistic feelings of joy. What's more, her romanticization of Blackness also fails to recognize the many hardships that unfortunately come along with being Black in a racist world. Interestingly enough, Anna is seemingly aware of these hardships, since she suggests at one point that Francine probably resents her and her family for their whiteness and their privileged societal position in the West Indies. And yet, her acknowledgement doesn't seem to impact her desire to be Black, perhaps because she grew up feeling like she didn't fit into the surrounding culture in the West Indies. Her desire to fit in therefore leads her to view Blackness in overly simplistic, fetishized ways.

The irony, though, is that when Anna moves to England, she actually *does* experience some of the hardships of being Black (albeit in mild, subtle ways). Because she's from a predominantly Black part of the world, for example, the other chorus girls in her theater troupe call her "the Hottentot," which is a racially charged term originally used to refer to the Khoekhoe people of South Africa (and later applied to a Khoekhoe woman who was displayed at "freak shows" under the name Hottentot Venus). The fact that this term doesn't even apply to people from the West Indies only emphasizes the racist ignorance of the people surrounding Anna in England, ultimately underlining just how little they know—or care—about where she's from. What's more, Anna's British stepmother, Hester, subjects her to racist remarks when she tells her—in a disapproving tone and using the n-word—that she has always spoken like a Black person, which Hester argues is not the way a respectable "lady" should behave. Hester also

scornfully implies that Anna's mother was secretly multiracial, and even though Anna has previously suggested that she wants to be Black, she immediately refutes Hester's implication by categorically stating that her mother was white. Her fetishization of Blackness therefore only goes so far: for Anna, the idea of being Black is more of a romanticized fantasy than a genuine identification with Blackness. When she feels white, she wishes she were Black. But when people treat her like she's Black, she fights the suggestion that she isn't white. On the whole, her lack of identification with both white and Black culture underscores her broader feeling of alienation and isolation in life.



MONEY AND HAPPINESS

The majority of the characters in *Voyage in the Dark* view money as a path to happiness and satisfaction. Laurie and Maudie, for instance, focus most of their energy on finding men who will be able to give them a measure of financial security. Even Anna—who seems rather skeptical of this practice—recognizes the transformative effect money has on her life, noticing that she sounds more confident and assertive after her lover Walter gives her cash for the first time. "That's because of the money," she thinks when she notes her newfound self-assurance, implying that even small amounts of wealth can alter how a person moves through the world. At the same time, though, she's also aware that the rewarding feeling of possessing money is fleeting, since people become "accustomed to it so quickly." In other words, suddenly obtaining some cash can change a person's immediate circumstances, but it won't necessarily have a profound long-term impact on how that person goes through life.

When Anna sees Walter slipping cash into her handbag after they have sex for the first time, her impulse is to stop him, though she ends up letting him do it because she can tell he actively *wants* to pay her. But the fact that he gives her money fundamentally alters the nature of their relationship, essentially ensuring that their bond is based on a monetary transaction instead of mutual affection. Although money can lead to certain kinds of happiness and contentment, in this case it actually *interferes* with Anna's chances of establishing a genuine romantic connection—and she seems aware of this, which is why she doesn't like seeing Walter slip money into her purse. As a result, the financial stability Walter gives her is a constant reminder of their lacking mutual affection instead of a source of happiness or satisfaction. While there's no avoiding the unfortunate fact that daily life is harder without money, then, it's also the case that wealth doesn't always get rid of broader forms of unhappiness. To the contrary, the topic of money can add a complex dynamic to a person's life, ultimately making it that much harder to find genuine contentment.



SYMBOLS

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



ANNA'S COAT

The coat Anna buys after Walter gives her money for the first time symbolizes the worldly comforts and luxuries that she gains from dating a wealthy older man. Walter sends her money in an envelope after their first dinner together and includes a note saying that he's worried about her. He hopes she'll use this money to go shopping, and that's exactly what she does. When he later abandons her, the coat she bought with this money is one of the only things she has to show for their relationship. Because it was so expensive, it confers a certain amount of societal status onto her, but not necessarily in a way that brings good things into her life. For instance, the coat attracts Ethel Matthew's attention because she can immediately tell that it cost a lot of money. And though Ethel shows Anna kindness at first, her main motivation is to get as much money out of her as possible. In fact, Ethel ends up showing an utter lack of empathy for Anna by kicking her out of her flat when she learns that she's pregnant, at which point Anna has no choice but to sell the coat in the hopes of using the money to pay for an abortion. And yet, she doesn't even receive enough money to fully cover the procedure. Although the coat started out by representing the rich and luxurious lifestyle that comes along with dating wealthy older men, then, it ends up symbolizing the fact that such relationships seldom amount to much. In the same way that Anna's intense romance with Walter crumbles into nothing but sorrow, the coat's expensive allure leaves Anna with nothing but selfish companions and a measly 10 quid.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

As the opening lines of *Voyage in the Dark*, these words shed light on Anna's intense longing for her home in the West Indies. Living in England feels extremely foreign to her—so foreign, in fact, that life itself seems deeply unfamiliar. She feels cut off from everything she has “ever known”; the simile she uses about a curtain falling over everything she ever knew in life suggests that she feels like her life itself has come to an end, as if her upbringing in the West Indies was a theatrical performance that has just finished. But she also experiences a more general feeling of homesickness, since everything about her new life feels “different” and strange. To that end, even her emotions and the way she processes the world have changed, as she notices a difference in the way she's “frightened” and the way she's “happy.” The defining feeling of moving to England, then, is one of utter unfamiliarity—an unfamiliarity so disorienting that it changes how Anna moves through the world on a fundamental level, making her feel estranged not just from her homeland but also from herself.

☝ Sometimes it was as if I were back there and as if England were a dream. At other times England was the real thing and out there was the dream, but I could never fit them together.

After a while I got used to England and I liked it all right; I got used to everything except the cold and that the towns we went to always looked so exactly alike.

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 4

Explanation and Analysis

One of the most upsetting things for Anna about moving to England is that the country feels so monotonous to her, at least compared to her life in the West Indies. Because she works as a chorus girl in a traveling theater troupe, she has the chance to visit multiple towns, thus giving her life a certain amount of variety and change that one would assume might keep her from falling into a monotonous life. And yet, she thinks that all of the towns she visits look



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the W.W. Norton edition of *Voyage in the Dark* published in 2020.

Part One: Chapter 1 Quotes

☝ It was as if a curtain had fallen, hiding everything I had ever known. It was almost like being born again. The colours were different, the smells different, the feeling things gave you right down inside yourself was different. Not just the difference between heat, cold: light, darkness; purple, grey. But a difference in the way I was frightened and the way I was happy.

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker)



“exactly alike.” To a certain extent, this viewpoint might stem from the fact that she comes from the Caribbean, which is made up of a number of different islands. There is, then, a certain amount of variety inherent to this area of the world, and though the islands are certainly similar in many ways, they also have their own unique characteristics. The English countryside, on the other hand, is a lot more geographically and culturally uniform, which is why Anna feels like everything looks and feels the same in England. However, she still gets used to England, suggesting that people can become accustomed to almost anything.

☝ We paired off. Maudie went on ahead with the tall man. The other looked at me sideways once or twice—very quickly up and down, in that way they have—and then asked where we were going.

‘I was going to this shop to buy a pair of stockings,’ I said.

They all came into the shop with me. I said I wanted two pairs—lisle thread with clocks up the sides—and took a long time choosing them. The man I had been walking with offered to pay for them and I let him.

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker), Maudie, Walter Jeffries

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

When Anna first encounters Walter, he glances at her “very quickly up and down.” She immediately recognizes what kind of glance this is, identifying it as a sort of assessment—one in which Walter takes stock of her, objectifying her and clearly deciding whether or not he thinks she’s pretty enough to spend money on. Needless to say, this is a sexist and unkind thing to do, but Anna brushes it off. When she says that Walter looks at her “in that way they have,” she implies that she’s quite accustomed to men who ogle her as if her looks are the only thing about her that matters. Walter, for his part, apparently decides that he’s attracted to Anna, so he wastes no time showing her that he’s willing to give her money. This, it seems, is what he has to offer: wealth and material comforts. From the very beginning, then, their relationship is transactional, and this first encounter sums up Walter’s emotionally detached approach to their entire relationship.

☝ ‘She’s always cold,’ Maudie said. ‘She can’t help it. She was born in a hot place. She was born in the West Indies or somewhere, weren’t you, kid? The girls call her the Hottentot. Isn’t it a shame?’

Related Characters: Maudie (speaker), Anna Morgan, Walter Jeffries

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

When Maudie and Anna bring Walter and his friend back to their boardinghouse, Maudie tells them that Anna is “always cold” because she was born in a warm climate. As she explains that Anna was born in the West Indies, she adds the words “or somewhere,” revealing that she doesn’t actually know much about Anna’s upbringing or family roots. To the contrary, she can’t be bothered to speak accurately about Anna’s background, acting as if the only thing that matters is that she’s not from England.

To that end, Maudie notes that everyone in their theater troupe calls Anna “the Hottentot,” which is a racist term used to refer to the Khoekhoe people of South Africa. Of course, Anna isn’t from South Africa, but the women in her theater troupe don’t care. To them, she’s from a predominantly Black area of the world, so they carelessly associate her with a racial slur for certain people living in South Africa—another place where many Black people live. It’s likely that the other chorus girls are familiar with the term “Hottentot” because of a famous Khoekhoe woman named Sarah Baartman, who was displayed at sideshows under the name “Hottentot Venus.” Either way, the fact that Anna’s fellow chorus girls call her the “Hottentot” highlights their casual racism while also complicating Anna’s own racial identity, since she’s white but still finds herself subject to racism when she comes to England.

Part One: Chapter 2 Quotes

☝ There was a door behind the sofa, but I hadn’t noticed it before because a curtain hung over it. I turned the handle. ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘it’s a bedroom.’ My voice went high.

‘So it is,’ he said. He laughed. I laughed too, because I felt that that was what I ought to do. *You can now and you can see what it’s like, and why not?*

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker), Walter Jeffries

Related Themes: **Page Number:** 19**Explanation and Analysis**

After meeting Walter in the street for the first time, Anna agrees to meet him for dinner when she's in London. The dinner they end up having is in a strange restaurant designed to give the guests complete privacy. In fact, each table has its own room, and attached to this space is a separate little bedroom—a clear sign that Walter has taken her here with the intention of having sex with her.

But Anna doesn't necessarily catch on right away. At one point, Walter kisses her somewhat aggressively, so she pushes him away and walks around the room, and it's only then that she finds the door to the bedroom. When she laughs about finding it, she only does so because she thinks it's what she "ought to do"—in other words, she senses that Walter has certain expectations for how she should behave. And though she's apparently willing to satisfy these expectations to a certain extent, it's also the case that she's quite young and inexperienced, so she's hesitant to have sex with him. She has, after all, never had sex before, which is why she thinks to herself, "*You can now and you can see what it's like, and why not?*" In this moment, it's almost as if she's actively trying to convince herself to do something she's not ready to do, which is yet another sign that she feels pressured to live up to Walter's selfish expectations.

●● My arms hung straight down by my sides awkwardly. He kissed me again, and his mouth was hard, and I remembered him smelling the glass of wine and I couldn't think of anything but that, and I hated him.

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker), Walter Jeffries

Related Themes: **Page Number:** 19**Explanation and Analysis**

As Anna dines with Walter for the first time, she finds him very off-putting. Her distaste for him becomes especially strong when he kisses her for a second time, after having already come on a bit too strong earlier in the evening. Even her body language in this scene reveals her discomfort, as she lets her arms hang "straight down" at her sides, thus

standing in a rigid pose as he embraces her. Furthermore, she feels as if his mouth is "hard"—an unappealing, unromantic thing to feel. She also thinks about how he sent back the bottle of wine he ordered for the table because he claimed it was "corked" (spoiled), and the memory of him sniffing his glass adds to her overall feeling of disgust toward him.

Anna's thoughts in this moment are especially noteworthy because they're so different than the way she feels about him later in the novel. Although she eventually becomes enamored of Walter and is heartbroken when he abandons her, their relationship begins in an incredibly unromantic way, ultimately suggesting that her feelings for him possibly develop out of a sense of dependency and not because she finds him particularly appealing.

●● Soon he'll come in again and kiss me, but differently. He'll be different and so I'll be different. It'll be different. I thought, 'It'll be different, different. It must be different.'



Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker), Walter Jeffries

Related Themes: **Page Number:** 21**Explanation and Analysis**

After Walter forces himself on Anna and she pulls away, she goes into a bedroom attached to the restaurant's private dining room. She originally threatened to make loud noises if he didn't stop kissing her, but now she reconsiders her choice. As she lies alone on the bed, she wishes he would come in and kiss her, "but differently." Her emphasis on everything playing out "differently" between them is an indication that she wants to have a relationship with him, but not necessarily the relationship that *he* wants to have with her. To put it another way, she doesn't want him to obsess over having sex with her and nothing else. She's only 18 and hasn't had much experience when it comes to adult romantic relationships, which is partially why she turns away from Walter even though she *is* interested in kissing him. Her conflicting feelings are a good reminder that she's still quite inexperienced and doesn't necessarily know what she wants out of a relationship with someone like Walter. It's unsurprising, then, that his forward and aggressive advances are so unwelcome.

●● About clothes, it's awful. Everything makes you want pretty clothes like hell. People laugh at girls who are badly dressed. [...] As if it isn't enough that you want to be beautiful, that you want to have pretty clothes, that you want it like hell. As if that isn't enough.

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker), Walter Jeffries

Related Themes:  


Page Number: 22

Explanation and Analysis

On Anna's way home from dining with Walter for the first time, she passes a shop window displaying a beautiful dress. She wants the dress, but she doesn't have any money, so she reflects on the frustrating nature of consumerist desire and how it intersects with society's expectations of women. She wants the dress because she wants to be "beautiful." And she wants to be beautiful, of course, because "people laugh at girls who are badly dressed." In a way, then, Anna doesn't want beauty simply for the intrinsic feeling of being pretty or attractive—she wants it because beauty makes it easier to live in the context of a cruel and superficial society. She recognizes that beauty is an advantage as well as a way of fitting in and avoiding criticism. Given that she feels alienated and alone in England, it makes sense that she would yearn for the social acceptance that comes along with wearing "pretty clothes." The problem, however, is that merely *wanting* to be pretty isn't enough, since fine clothing is expensive. These thoughts shed more light on why she enters a relationship with Walter, as he will eventually give her all the money she needs (for a little while, at least).

●● I took the money from under my pillow and put it into my handbag. I was accustomed to it already. It was as if I had always had it. Money ought to be everybody's. It ought to be like water. You can tell that because you get accustomed to it so quickly.

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker), Walter Jeffries

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 24


Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after Anna has dinner with Walter and refuses his

sexual advances, she receives a letter from him. The letter includes some money, which she stores away beneath her pillow and then, later, in her handbag. She's not used to having cash suddenly appear, but having the money doesn't feel all that novel to her. Instead, she quickly gets used to it. As soon as she has it, the money loses its allure, going from something to covet and chase to something mundane and ordinary. Indeed, Anna reduces the money to a simple necessity and nothing more, viewing it as a resource that everyone needs—like potable water. Her attitude toward money partially explains why she doesn't fixate on it like some of the other characters in *Voyage in the Dark*. She recognizes that she needs it but doesn't necessarily romanticize it—though she also knows that it can be extremely transformative, since it opens the door to more comfortable lifestyles.

●● I wanted to be black, I always wanted to be black. [...] Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad.

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

While reminiscing about her upbringing in the West Indies one day, Anna considers the fact that she grew up surrounded by Black Caribbean culture. She is white, but she has always "wanted to be black." It becomes clear in this passage that she has romanticized what it means to be Black by suggesting that Black people are categorically "warm and gay." Her intention is to simply communicate her own desire to distance herself from her whiteness, but what she actually ends up doing is fetishizing Blackness. She simplifies what it means to be Black—and, for that matter, what it means to be *human* in general. Being Black, after all, isn't *always* "warm and gay," nor is being white *always* "cold and sad." People of all races experience both joy and sadness, and to suggest otherwise is to group people of different races into reductive categories.



It doesn't matter, then, that Anna admires Blackness; what she says here is still problematic because it strips Blackness of the many complexities of what it means to be human. Overall, though, her desire to be Black doesn't just highlight her problematic views about race—it also underlines the fact that she has never felt a sense of belonging, since she doesn't fully relate to her white family but also can't integrate herself into the Black community because she isn't

Black.

Part One: Chapter 4 Quotes

“Only, don’t get sappy about him,” she said. “That’s fatal. The thing with men is to get everything you can out of them and not care a damn. You ask any girl in London—or any girl in the whole world if it comes to that—who really knows, and she’ll tell you the same thing.” “I’ve heard all that a million times,” I said. “I’m sick of hearing it.” “Oh, I needn’t talk,” Maudie said, “the fool I made myself over Viv! Though it was a bit different with me, you understand. We were going to be married!”

Related Characters: Maudie, Anna Morgan (speaker), Walter Jeffries, Viv

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

Anna spends the day with Maudie after not seeing her for a little while. Maudie is impressed by her new haircut and her nice boardinghouse, and she realizes that Anna is receiving money from Walter. This development doesn’t surprise Maudie—instead, she offers Anna advice about dating wealthy older men, ultimately warning her about getting too hung up on Walter. When she says that Anna shouldn’t “get sappy about him,” she means that she shouldn’t become too emotionally attached, which would be a “fatal” mistake. Instead of forging a genuine connection with Walter, Maudie implies, Anna should approach the relationship in the same way that Walter himself approaches it—that is, as a transaction of sorts. She should “get everything” she can out of him before it’s too late. But Anna resents this suggestion because she has already developed feelings for Walter. And though Maudie thinks this isn’t a good idea, she knows what it’s like, since she herself ended up falling in love with a wealthy older man named Viv, indicating that it’s quite common for ostensibly transactional relationships to become emotionally complex.

Part One: Chapter 6 Quotes

“Unfortunate propensities,” she said. “Unfortunate propensities which were obvious to me from the first. But considering everything you probably can’t help them. I always pitied you. I always thought that considering everything you were much to be pitied.”


I said, “How do you mean, “considering everything”?”

“You know exactly what I mean, so don’t pretend.”

“You’re trying to make out that my mother was coloured,” I said.

“You always did try to make that out. And she wasn’t.”

Related Characters: Hester, Anna Morgan (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 62



Explanation and Analysis

In this conversation between Hester and Anna, Hester suggests that Anna has “unfortunate propensities” because she’s partially Black. The mere fact that she makes this comment highlights her racist worldview, since she uses bigotry to express her disapproval of Anna’s behavior. In reality, of course, Hester simply dislikes Anna, whose lifestyle she would disapprove of regardless of Anna’s race. What’s interesting, though, is that Anna immediately refutes the implication that her mother was Black. The novel has previously shed light on Anna’s desire to be Black, as well as the various ways in which she romanticizes and fetishizes Blackness and Black culture.

When it comes down to it, though, Anna goes out of her way to assure Hester that she *isn’t* Black. The novel therefore sends conflicting messages about Anna’s approach to race—she wants to be Black, but only in the abstract. She associates Blackness with joy and contentment, which is why she fantasizes about being Black herself. However, she’s uninterested in facing the discrimination that Black people often have to deal with, so she changes her mind about wanting to be Black as soon as Hester implies that she’s not entirely white.

“My conscience is quite clear. I always did my best for you and I never got any thanks for it. I tried to teach you to talk like a lady and behave like a lady and not like a nigger and of course I couldn’t do it. Impossible to get you away from the servants. That awful sing-song voice you had! Exactly like a nigger you talked—and still do. [...]”

Related Characters: Hester (speaker), Anna Morgan

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 63

Explanation and Analysis


Hester says this to Anna in a conversation about how Anna was raised and who should be responsible for supporting her now that she's a young adult living in England. If it weren't already clear before she said this, the sentiments she expresses here make it quite obvious that Hester is racist. She made a point, she says, to show Anna how to behave like a "lady" and not like a Black person—a statement that emphasizes just how racist Hester really is, since she uses the n-word and suggests that Blackness is dishonorable.

Furthermore, Hester's comments about Anna spending time with and speaking like the family's Black housekeepers align Anna with Black culture, which is interesting because it sheds light on her feeling of cultural alienation. She doesn't fit into Hester's idea of white British society, but neither does she fit into Black Caribbean culture. This lack of belonging has followed her into her adult life in England, where her fellow chorus girls call her by racist names because she's from the West Indies. In a way, then, Anna has a rather complex cultural and racial identity, even if her skin is white.

Part One: Chapter 8 Quotes

☝☝ Walter is still very fond of you but he doesn't love you like that any more, and after all you must always have known that the thing could not go on for ever and you must remember too that he is nearly twenty years older than you are. I'm sure that you are a nice girl and that you will think it over calmly and see that there is nothing to be tragic or unhappy or anything like that about.

Related Characters: Vincent (speaker), Anna Morgan

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 91

Explanation and Analysis

Not long after Walter leaves London for a trip to New York, Anna receives this letter from Vincent. In the letter, Vincent informs her that he's writing on Walter's behalf, and then he tells her that Walter no longer loves her. The fact that Walter can't even bring himself to write this letter is a good sign of his selfish and cowardly approach to his relationship

with Anna. He clearly doesn't care very much about her feelings, but he doesn't want to have to deal with her sadness, so he has Vincent break things off for him.

Vincent, for his part, is extremely patronizing in the letter, especially when he says that Anna "must always have known that the thing could not go on for ever"—a statement that undercuts Anna's right to feel sad and upset about this sudden breakup. What's more, he points to the age difference between Anna and Walter as a reason they aren't suited to be together in a long-term relationship, but this is a hypocritical reason for Walter to end things with Anna, since her youth is one of the things about her that initially appealed to him. Indeed, he *liked* that she was only 18 when they first met, but now Vincent tries to make it seem like Anna would be unreasonable to think she could ever have a serious relationship with an older man.

Part Two: Chapter 1 Quotes

☝☝ 'I hate men,' Ethel said. 'Men are devils, aren't they? But of course I don't really care a damn about them. Why should I? I can earn my own living. I'm a masseuse—I'm a Swedish masseuse. And, mind you, when I say I'm a masseuse I don't mean like some of these dirty foreigners. Don't you hate foreigners?'

'Well,' I said, 'I don't think I do; but, you see, I don't know many.' 'What?' Ethel said, looking surprised and suspicious, 'you don't hate them?'

Related Characters: Ethel Matthews, Anna Morgan (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

As Ethel explains to Anna for the first time that she's a masseuse, she goes out of her way to imply that she isn't a sex worker. The intensity with which she insists on her own professional legitimacy is a little suspicious, as if she's actively trying to hide her true intentions. Nevertheless, she emphasizes that she's an honorable professional, and as she says this, she makes a xenophobic remark about "dirty foreigners" (whom, she implies, use massage businesses as a front for sex work).

Her comment about foreigners fails to take into account that Anna herself is a foreigner, since she's from the West Indies. In fact, Anna most likely has a West Indian accent,

since that's where she grew up. The fact that Ethel doesn't consider her a foreigner therefore suggests that she only applies her xenophobic bigotry to people of color. Because Anna is white, then, Ethel doesn't subject her to the same unkindness she might show a Black West Indian person. In this moment, then, the novel spotlights how Anna benefits from her own whiteness, despite the fact that she wishes she were Black.


☞ 'Well, I don't need to be here either,' I said. 'I can get as much money as I like any time I like.' I stretched, and watched my swollen shadow on the wall stretching too.

She said, 'Well, I should say so—a lovely girl like you. And well under twenty, I should say. I've got a spare bedroom in my flat. Why don't you come along and live with me for a bit? I'm looking for somebody to share with me. As a matter of fact I'd almost fixed it up with a pal of mine. She'll put in twenty-five pounds and do the manicure and we'll start a little business.'

'Oh yes?' I said.

'Well, just between ourselves, I shan't mind if I don't fix it up with her. She's a bit of a Nosey Parker. Why don't you think it over? I've got a lovely spare room.'

Related Characters: Ethel Matthews, Anna Morgan (speaker), Walter Jeffries, Vincent

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 112

Explanation and Analysis

In one of her first conversations with Anna, Ethel sizes her up to get a sense of whether or not she has money. Ethel herself says that she has an expensive flat in a nice part of town and that she's only living in the rundown boardinghouse because her flat is under renovation. Anna, in turn, says that she can get "as much money as [she] likes any time." She's most likely referring to the fact that she *could*, if she wanted, write to Walter and ask for some financial support, since Vincent originally said that Walter would continue to give her money for a little while after their breakup. It's unclear, however, how long he would be willing to send this money.



But Ethel doesn't know any of this—she's too hung up on the idea of taking Anna in, but her kindness is suspicious. She wants to start a business, and she implies that she would let Anna work for her if only Anna pitched in 25 pounds. Their relationship thus begins with Ethel trying to get money out of Anna. As she does this, though, she acts like she's doing

Anna a favor, essentially preying on her vulnerability because she seems to recognize that Anna is someone she might be able to take advantage of.

Part Two: Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ 'D'you know,' she said, 'I never pay for a meal for myself—it's the rarest thing. For instance, these two—I said to them quite casually, like that, 'When you come over to London, let me know. I'll show you round a bit,' and if you please about three weeks ago they turned up. I've been showing them round, I can tell you....I get along with men. I can do what I like with them. Sometimes I'm surprised myself. I expect it's because they feel I really like it and no kidding. [...]'

Related Characters: Laurie (speaker), Anna Morgan, Carl Redman, Joe Adler, Walter Jeffries

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 116

Explanation and Analysis

Anna runs into Laurie one day not long after her breakup with Walter, and Laurie tells her all about how she has been supporting herself by spending time with wealthy men. She explains how she met Carl and Joe, and her story about "showing them round" London hints that she's a sex worker. She also says that she "get[s] along with men," noting that "they feel [she] really like[s] it." She doesn't say what she means by "it," but she's probably referring to sex. If this is the case, then her remark confirms that she's a sex worker—or to be more precise, an escort who's paid to spend time with wealthy men and occasionally have sex with them. This, it seems, is how she manages to support herself, and though Anna's experience with dating a wealthy older man left her in a position of sorrowful vulnerability, Laurie appears to have harnessed a certain form of power and independence from her ability to attract men and convince them to pay her.

Part Two: Chapter 4 Quotes

☝ She came over and helped me to undo it. She seemed very tall and her face enormous. I could see all the lines in it, and the powder, trying to fill up the lines, and just where her lipstick stopped and her lips began. It looked like a clown's face, so that I wanted to laugh at it. She was pretty, but her hands were short and fat with wide, flat, very red nails.

Joe lit a cigarette and crossed his legs and watched us. He was like somebody sitting in the stalls, waiting for the curtain to go up.

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker), Laurie, Joe Adler

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

After Anna goes to dinner with Laurie and her American friends (or, rather, clients), Laurie and Joe take her to a hotel, where she drunkenly lies on the bed. Laurie uses this opportunity to try to take off Anna's dress. As she does so, Anna looks at her friend's face and notes the way she looks up close, apparently surprised by her wrinkles. She compares Laurie's face to a "clown's face"—a description that makes her friend's appearance seem somewhat grotesque, as if Anna thinks Laurie looks garish and absurd. This description also reveals Laurie's attempt to look youthful and pretty, and the fact that Anna notices the way her makeup is caked into her wrinkles subtly hints that she's trying to be someone she's not—that is, trying to be *younger*. Meanwhile, Joe sits back and watches as Laurie tries to undress Anna, making it quite clear that Laurie is a sex worker and that he's her client.

☝ 'How old is she?' Joe said.

'She's only a kid,' Laurie said. She coughed and then she said, "She's not seventeen.'

'Yes—and the rest,' Joe said.

'Well, she's not a day older than nineteen, anyway,' Laurie said. 'Where do you see the wrinkles? Don't you like her?'

'She's all right,' Joe said, 'but I liked that other kid—the dark one.'

'Who? Renée?' Laurie said. 'I don't know what's happened to her. I haven't seen her since that evening.'

Related Characters: Joe Adler, Laurie (speaker), Anna Morgan

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

In the hotel that Laurie and Joe take her to after dinner, Anna gets so drunk that she needs to lie down on her own. Laurie tries to take her dress off in front of Joe, but Anna resists, so Laurie retreats, at which point she talks to Joe about Anna as if she's not there. She tries to lie about Anna's age, claiming that she's not even 17 when, in reality, she's 19. Joe doesn't believe her, but the mere fact that Laurie makes this claim in the first place reveals that she wants Joe to think Anna is very young. This, in turn, is yet another sign that she's a sex worker, and that she invited Anna to dinner not just to socialize, but to please her clients (who apparently have an unsettling desire to sleep with underage women). She even explicitly asks Joe if he likes Anna, and he responds by saying that he preferred another young woman Laurie introduced him to. It's quite clear, then, that Laurie has a transactional relationship with Joe.

Part Three: Chapter 1 Quotes

☝ 'Of course,' she said, 'you must be a bit nice to them.'

'Why not ten bob?' she said. 'That's all right. Everybody's got their living to earn and if people do things thinking that they're going to get something that they don't get, what's it matter to you or me or anybody else? You let them talk. You can take it from me that when it comes to it they're all so damned afraid of a scene that they're off like a streak of lightning at the slightest...'

Related Characters: Ethel Matthews (speaker), Anna Morgan

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 142

Explanation and Analysis



When Anna moves into Ethel's flat and trains to be a manicurist, Ethel teaches her the tricks of the trade. In particular, she urges Anna to be "nice" to the male clients—a somewhat suggestive piece of advice, considering that it later becomes clear that Ethel hopes Anna will have sex with male clients and share the profits with her. In this moment, though, she simply implies that Anna should make it *seem* like she might have sex with the clients and then charge inflated prices based on their lustful expectations. When

they realize she won't have sex with them, Ethel claims, it won't be a big deal—nobody will make a fuss because they'll be too afraid of causing a “scene,” since they'll surely be sheepish and embarrassed about their original intentions. This little trick reveals Ethel's overall desire to use sex appeal to her advantage, whether that means tricking men into thinking they're visiting a brothel or convincing Anna to discreetly sleep with the clients.

Part Three: Chapter 3 Quotes

☝ ‘Did you have a good time? I bet you did. Redman's a nice man. He knows his way about, you can tell that. Oh, I bet he knows his way about. You know, kid, I've been thinking you'll want to go out more with your friends and not feel you've got to be in all day. I don't mind, but we may have to talk it over a bit about the rent.’

Related Characters: Ethel Matthews (speaker), Anna Morgan, Carl Redman

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 158



Explanation and Analysis

While Anna is living at Ethel's flat and working as a manicurist, Carl visits her one day and takes her out for the night. She doesn't return until quite late, but Ethel doesn't mind. In fact, she seems *pleased* that a man like Carl is interested in Anna. She insinuates that Carl must be an experienced lover, saying that he probably “knows his way about.” The main reason she's not mad at Anna for staying out so late, though, is that she wants to encourage her to indulge wealthy men's attention. To that end, she suggests that Anna should “go out more with [her] friends” instead of staying in the flat all day and working as a manicurist. In other words, she wants Anna to entertain rich men—that is, as long as she shares some of the profits with Ethel herself by paying a bit more in rent than she currently pays. By suggesting this setup, Ethel finally gets what she has wanted all along: namely, to financially benefit from Anna's youthful good looks.

☝ She was sure she could get him to marry her if she could smarten herself up a bit.

She said, ‘Isn't it awful losing a chance like that because you haven't got a little money? Because it is a chance. Sometimes you're sure, aren't you? But I'm so damned shabby and, you know, when you're shabby you can't do anything, you don't believe in yourself. And he notices clothes—he notices things like that. Fred, his name is. He said to me the other day, “If there's anything I notice about a girl it's her legs and her shoes.” Well, my legs are all right, but look at my shoes. He's always saying things like that and it makes me feel awful. He's a bit strait-laced but that doesn't stop them from being particular. Viv was like that, too. Isn't it rotten when a thing like that falls through just because you haven't got a little cash? Oh God, I wish it could happen. I want it so to happen.’

Related Characters: Maudie (speaker), Anna Morgan, Walter Jeffries, Viv

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis



Shortly before finding out that she's pregnant, Anna runs into Maudie, who tells her that she's in a new relationship with a wealthy older man. She claims that everything is going well, that he's a great partner, and that she might even be able to get him to marry her—if, that is, she had a little bit of money to make herself look more stylish. The fact that her new partner cares so much about looks is somewhat concerning, since it suggests that he's interested in superficial matters instead of focusing on Maudie's personality. This is a potential sign that he's no different than men like Walter or, for that matter, Viv, but Maudie remains optimistic. Of course, she previously mentioned that she and Viv were going to get married before they broke up, so there seems to be something of a pattern developing in her love life: she falls in love with a rich older man who makes all kinds of promises but doesn't actually care much about Maudie in the long run. Perhaps because she sympathizes with this predicament, though, Anna lends Maudie money to buy new clothes.


Part Three: Chapter 5 Quotes

☝ ‘Yes,’ I said. ‘I sold my fur coat, I could give her ten quid.’

‘It's not enough,’ Laurie said. ‘She won't do it for that. My dear, she'll want about fifty. Don't you know anybody who'll lend it to you? What about that man you talked about who used to give you money. Won't he help you? [...]’

Related Characters: Anna Morgan, Laurie (speaker), Walter Jeffries

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 172

Explanation and Analysis



Upon finding out that she's pregnant, Anna tries a number of natural remedies in the hopes that she'll manage to terminate her pregnancy. But nothing works. Consequently, she goes to Laurie, who agrees to put her in touch with a woman who performs abortions (which were illegal in early 20th-century Britain, where the book is set). Because Anna is nearing the end of her first trimester, though, the procedure will be more expensive. Anna thinks she'll be able to cover the expense with the money she received from selling the nice fur coat that she bought with Walter's money at the beginning of their relationship, but Laurie says that she's gravely mistaken: the woman performing the procedure will want as much as 50 quid, and Anna only received 10 for her coat. The fact that the coat only sold for 10 is noteworthy, since the coat itself was symbolic of the lavish material luxuries available to Anna when she was dating Walter. The coat even attracted Ethel's attention because it made Anna seem wealthy and cultured. When it comes down to it, though, Anna doesn't get much for the coat—an illustration of how little she ends up benefitting from her relationship with Walter.

Part Three: Chapter 6 Quotes

●● 'Poor little Anna,' making his voice very kind. 'I'm damned sorry you've been having a bad time.' Making his voice very kind, but the look in his eyes was like a high, smooth, unclimbable wall. No communication possible. You have to be three-quarters mad even to attempt it.

'You'll be all right. And then you must pull yourself together and try to forget about the whole business and start fresh. Just make up your mind, and you'll forget all about it.'

Related Characters: Vincent (speaker), Anna Morgan, Walter Jeffries

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

When Anna realizes she doesn't have enough money to pay for an abortion, she contacts Walter for help. Instead of meeting with her himself, though, he sends Vincent, who takes a very condescending tone with her. The mere fact that he calls her "poor little Anna" is a perfect illustration of his patronizing, haughty attitude. He treats her as if she's a naïve, helpless child when, in reality, the baby in her womb could easily have belonged to his close cousin, Walter. His cloying display of kindness and sympathy doesn't go unnoticed by Anna, who realizes it would be impossible to forge a genuine connection with him, since he's so conceited and sexist. What's more, he tries to tell her to "forget about the whole business" of getting an abortion, urging her to "start fresh" once the procedure is over. By saying this, he demonstrates his insensitive lack of understanding about what it would be like to have an abortion. Instead of recognizing that having an abortion can be quite emotional, he selfishly wants Anna to cheer up because he doesn't want to have to worry about her.

●● I went and got the letters. I didn't look at them, except the one on the top, which was, 'Will you be in a taxi at the corner of Hay Hill and Dover Street at eleven tonight? Just wait there and I'll pick you up. Shy Anna, I love you so much. Always, Walter.'

Related Characters: Anna Morgan (speaker), Walter Jeffries, Vincent

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 179

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of Vincent's meeting with Anna, he asks her to hand over all the letters she kept from her relationship with Walter. At first, it's not all that clear why Vincent—and, in turn, Walter—wants these letters back. But it soon becomes obvious when Anna glances at the letter on the top of the stack and sees a random line that Walter has written. "Shy Anna," he wrote, "I love you so much. Always, Walter." Both Walter and Vincent have tried to act like the relationship between Anna and Walter was never anything more than a casual, passing affair—the sort of thing that nobody would ever take seriously. But this excerpt from one of his letters proves that this wasn't the case. Not only does Walter say that he loves Anna, but that he loves her *so much*. He also signs the letter with the word "always," which—to be fair—is

a somewhat standard way of ending a letter to a loved one. But that's just it: Walter clearly considered Anna a loved one, so it's ridiculous for him and Vincent to act like she has nothing to be upset about when it comes to him suddenly

abandoning her. By making sure Anna doesn't keep the letters he sent her, then, Walter essentially takes away the proof that he toyed with her emotions.



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 ONE: CHAPTER 1

Anna dislikes England. Compared to her home in the West Indies, it feels colorless and drab. Everything, in fact, feels different, even the emotions she experiences. She misses the vibrancy of life outside her window at home, where Black women used to carry trays on their head and sell salt fishcakes. These days, though, her upbringing in the West Indies sometimes feels like a dream—but at other times, her new life in England feels like the dream, and her memories of home feel real. Either way, she can't seem to make the two parts of her life cohere.

Anna eventually gets used to London, but she still dislikes the cold. It also troubles her that every town she travels to as a chorus girl looks exactly the same. She and one of the other chorus girls, Maudie, rent a room in Southsea from a landlady who initially doesn't want to give them a room, saying that she doesn't rent to "professionals." But Maudie convinces her to let them stay, though the landlady later regrets it because Anna and Maudie sleep late. Maudie comes downstairs in a nightgown one day, and the landlady yells at both of them for giving her house a "bad name."

Maudie is 28. Anna thinks she's very knowledgeable about the world, noting that she's had all sorts of experiences. From time to time, Maudie will give Anna advice, like that she should "swank" as much as possible—if Anna can learn to "swank" a bit, life will be easier for her.

While walking on the street one day, Maudie notices two men trailing behind her and Anna. They stop and talk to the men, and then they pair up with them—Maudie starts walking with the taller one, and Anna walks with the other one, who quickly looks her up and down out of the corner of his eye. Anna and Maudie were planning to go to a store for Anna to buy some stockings, so the men accompany them, and the one walking alongside Anna pays for them.

It's apparent from the very beginning of Voyage in the Dark that Anna is living in a sort of limbo, or an in-between phase in which she doesn't feel invested in her present life but also feels alienated from her past. Her homesickness seems to define her life, as she spends her time passively dreaming about the West Indies in a romanticized way, all but assuring that her daily life in England will pale in comparison.



The landlady's scorn for Anna and Maudie spotlights the judgment that single, working-class women often dealt with in British society in the first half of the 20th century (when the book takes place). The landlady's comment about not renting rooms to "professionals" suggests that she would rather her tenants have some sort of family wealth, but it also possibly hints that the landlady thinks Anna and Maudie are sex workers. This suspicion is unfounded in this moment, but it will follow Anna throughout the entire novel, as she enters into highly transactional romantic relationships with wealthy older men.



In British slang, to "swank" is to show off one's wealth or elegance. Although Maudie and Anna don't have much money, Maudie thinks it's important to make it seem like they do. This implies that pretending to be rich is a good way of attracting wealthy people—who, in turn, might share some of their money.



When the man on the street glances at Anna, it becomes clear that he's mainly interested in her because of her looks. His glance is an appraisal of sorts, as he calculates whether or not he wants to pursue her as a romantic interest. Given that he ends up buying her stockings, it's evident that he decides that he does, in fact, want to endear himself to her. His intentions are therefore quite clear from the very beginning of their interaction, and it's obvious that he has no problem spending money on Anna to win her affection.



Maudie invites the men to their rooms. The tall one is hesitant to take her up on the offer and even seems a bit nervous, but the other one—the one who bought Anna the stockings—accepts the invitation and buys some port to take back with them. When they reach the apartment, the landlady doesn't say a word, simply opening the door and staring contemptuously at them.

Once inside the room, Maudie tries to make conversation, but the tall man, whose name is Mr. Jones, is very stilted and quiet. The other one, Walter Jeffries, makes up for his friend's brusque attitude by asking Anna how old she is. When she tells him she's 18, he admits he thought she was younger. Then Jones makes a joke about Maudie's age, saying that women who are older than 18 always claim they're 22, even if they're actually much older.

When Mr. Jones refills Anna's glass, he touches her hand and remarks how cold and clammy it feels. Maudie jumps in and explains that Anna is always cold because she was born in a warm climate in the West Indies. All of the other chorus girls call her "the Hottentot" (a racial slur), but Mr. Jones doesn't understand why they say that.

Maudie tries to get the two men to talk about what they do for work, but Walter just says he works in London and that he works very hard. Mr. Jones, though, won't say what he does. Before long, the men prepare to go, but Walter makes a point of telling Anna that he'd like to see her when the show she's in comes near London. She gives him her stepmother, Hester's, address and says that she'll be in the city soon.

The fact that Maudie's invitation makes the taller man nervous suggests that he thinks there's something illicit about spending time with her and Anna. To that end, it's quite possible that he assumes—much like their landlady—that they are sex workers. The man interested in Anna, however, has no qualms about spending time with her, suggesting that he doesn't mind the prospect of starting up a transactional romantic relationship.



Age appears to be important to Walter and his friend. More specifically, Walter is clearly interested in young women, and the fact that he thought Anna was younger than 18 and was still interested in her hints that he sees no issue being involved with a minor. There is, then, an obvious imbalance of power between them. What's more, the rude remark Mr. Jones makes about Maudie's age shows that he—and, by association, Walter—thinks it's fine to insult women in a very sexist, patronizing way.



That the other chorus girls call Anna "the Hottentot" reveals their racist ignorance. Anna herself is white, but she was born in the West Indies, which is a predominantly Black area of the world. Because she grew up surrounded by Black culture, the British chorus girls call her "the Hottentot," which is a racist term for the Khoekhoe people of South Africa. Of course, Anna has no connection to South Africa, so the nickname simply accentuates her fellow chorus girls' ignorance and insensitivity—they not only use racially charged terms but do so inaccurately. Maudie's comment thus illustrates how little anyone knows about Anna's upbringing in the West Indies, adding to the alienation she feels in England.



Mr. Jones's unwillingness to divulge information about his life demonstrates just how uneasy he is about spending time with Maudie and Anna. He clearly wants nothing to do with them, perhaps because he thinks that embarking on a relationship with them would be taboo. Walter, however, is eager to see Anna again, ultimately suggesting that he doesn't care about their age difference or anything else—all he wants is to seduce her.



After the men leave, Maudie talks about how rude they were. Anna agrees, saying she didn't like them, but Maudie points out that Anna gave her address to Walter without hesitation—which, of course, Maudie approves of, since the man is obviously wealthy. She advises her young friend to go out with him again if he asks her. Then she goes on at length about an old lover of hers, Viv, and how he gave her the nice coat she now wears. She was in love with Viv for a long time. In fact, she still goes to see him sometimes when she's in London, but she can tell he wants to end things.

Walter's intentions with Anna are obvious: he wants to seduce her by buying her clothes (like the stockings he purchases) and taking her out to dinner. While this might seem off-putting to Anna, Maudie encourages her to indulge the transactional nature of his interest in her. She doesn't tell Anna to go out with Walter because he's attractive or appealing—rather, she tells her to accept his invitation because he has money, thus indicating that it can be very lucrative to get a wealthy older man's attention. At the same time, though, the fact that Maudie talks so extensively about her own older lover, Viv, hints that she might have developed true feelings for him. In this way, simply taking advantage of a wealthy man's passing affection comes with a certain amount of emotional risk.



Anna tunes Maudie out and thinks about her home in the West Indies, comparing it to England. She used to be excited to see snow, but now she's unimpressed by winter in England. When she first arrived, her stepmother, Hester, told her she would get used to England even though she felt out of place. These days, Hester sends her money on occasion. Anna has also saved some money of her own, and together with the small amount Hester will send her for Christmas, she plans to rent her own place when the theater company arrives in London. She doesn't feel like staying in the depressing hostel that all the other chorus girls stay in.

Anna's homesickness is still quite strong, as thoughts about the West Indies manage to sneak into her everyday life. Even while talking to Maudie about a completely unrelated matter, she finds herself daydreaming about her home and upbringing. On another note, it also becomes clear in this section that Anna hopes having some money will improve her current lifestyle, since receiving cash from Hester will help her avoid the depressing hostel she'll otherwise have to stay in.



Anna gets in touch with Walter when she reaches London. Maudie and Laurie—who does Anna's makeup—tell her what to say to him in her letter, insisting that she say she's busy when he asks her to dinner. She follows their advice and then agrees to meet him on a different date.

Maudie and Laurie's advice suggests that they're experienced when it comes to dealing with wealthy older men. They urge Anna not to seem too available, thus giving Walter an extra incentive to court her. Simply put, he'll probably be more willing to spend money on her if he isn't sure whether or not she likes him—which, of course, would be a legitimate concern for him to have, since Anna doesn't actually seem to like him all that much yet.



PART ONE: CHAPTER 2

Anna has dinner with Walter. Each table at the restaurant he chooses is in its own isolated room, giving him and Anna complete privacy—except, that is, for the waiter. Walter orders the waiter around with confidence, demanding that he bring them a new bottle of wine because he claims that the first one is corked. Anna feels herself wanting to laugh but tries to hide her smile, since Walter would know right away that she's laughing at him. After dinner, Walter compliments Anna by saying that she has the “loveliest teeth.” He also talks about how “pathetic” she looked while shopping for stockings, and then he starts kissing her.

The way Walter orders the waiter around suggests that he wants to impress Anna. Sending back the bottle of wine because it's “corked”—or spoiled—is most likely his way of posturing as wealthy, powerful, and important in front of Anna. He also doesn't do a particularly good job of trying to charm her; it's a bit unusual, after all, to compliment a person's teeth. Furthermore, he says that she looked “pathetic” while shopping for stockings, effectively insulting her. The only conceivable reason he would say such a thing is to make Anna feel inferior, thus cementing the power imbalance between them.



After kissing Walter for a moment, Anna gets up and explores the room. She discovers a door she hadn't noticed and realizes that it opens into an attached bedroom. Walter chuckles at her surprise. She laughs, too, thinking that's what she's supposed to do. He kisses her more passionately and doesn't let go when she tries to push him away. Finally, after she threatens to make a lot of noise, he lets go and apologizes, saying he behaved stupidly. As soon as he's not holding her anymore, though, she stops disliking him so much.

Anna wishes kissing Walter had gone differently. She gets her coat and walks into the bedroom, shutting the door behind her and then waiting to see if he follows. She expects him to come in and start kissing her again, and maybe it will feel different than it did before—but he doesn't come. After a while, Anna leaves the bedroom, and Walter says he thought she fell asleep. They then leave the restaurant, and he takes her home. All the while, she can't stop thinking about how much the other chorus girls would laugh if she told them what happened.

In bed that night, Anna thinks about her clothes. Walter pointed out that she was wearing all black, which made her self-conscious. She wishes she had better clothes and thinks about how frustrating and sad it is to yearn to be beautiful. *Wanting* to be beautiful should be enough, but it never is. She doesn't have enough money to buy new clothes, so she wonders if she'll always be poor—maybe this is just what her life will be like; maybe she'll be one of those people who never has enough money but still manages to survive.

The next day, Anna receives a letter from Walter that says he's worried about her. He wants her to buy some nice stockings with the money he has enclosed—that is, as long as she won't look sad while buying them (like she did last time). That day, she buys a beautiful dress and a **coat**, and the woman at the store treats her with respect, urging her to return soon because they're getting a shipment of stylish new dresses from Paris.

The existence of a hidden bedroom clarifies the illicit nature of the restaurant Walter chose, making it obvious that he assumed Anna would have sex with him. When she laughs about the bedroom, she does so because she thinks that's what she's expected to do, thus indicating that she feels pressured to behave in a certain way. Her impulse makes sense: Walter does pressure her into physical intimacy, and though he eventually stops, he doesn't immediately listen to her when she resists his advances—a sign that he doesn't care what she wants.



What Anna wants out of her relationship with Walter is unclear. After meeting him for the first time, she told Maudie that she didn't like him, but she still sought him out in London and accepted his invitation to dinner. Her feelings, it seems, are mixed: she's curious about the possibility of being romantic with him, but she's not ready to do so. She is, after all, only 18. It's unsurprising, then, that she finds his extremely forward sexual advances startling and unwelcome. Even though she might be interested in Walter as a potential romantic partner, she's not ready to dive headlong into a sexual relationship, especially when he behaves so forcefully.



The topic of money looms large for Anna, who recognizes that wealth can open up all kinds of doors in life. To that end, she views money as something that could have a major impact on how she moves through the world, ultimately making it easier for her to present herself as beautiful. Without money, though, all she can do is wish she had attractive clothes. Her thoughts along these lines help make sense of her interest in Walter—although her interest in him doesn't seem to be purely motivated by his wealth, there's no overlooking the fact that being in a relationship with him would make her life a lot easier from a financial perspective.



Anna has already begun to financially benefit from her dealings with Walter, despite the fact that they're not even in an official romantic relationship. When the woman at the store shows her so much respect, Anna effectively assumes the role of a wealthy woman with a certain amount of societal power and charisma—something she didn't have before Walter gave her money.



Back at her room, Anna starts to feel sick. The landlady hasn't lit the fire in her bedroom, even though she asked her to. When the landlady finally comes upstairs, Anna asks her to light the fire and bring some tea, but the landlady insists that she's not there to be ordered around. She also tells Anna that she will have to leave the room on Saturday, and when Anna protests, the landlady says that she and her husband don't put up with women like her. She knows that Anna came "crawling" in at three in the morning, and now here she is bringing back fancy new clothes. "I don't want no tarts in my house, so now you know," she says as she leaves.

The word "tart" is a derogatory term for a woman who behaves in an overtly sexual way. A dated term, it was also sometimes used to refer to sex workers at this time (the early 20th century). The landlady therefore implies that Anna is a sex worker and that Walter is one of her clients. She makes this assumption based on the fact that Anna stayed out late with him and now has enough money to buy expensive clothing. Of course, Anna isn't a sex worker, but it is the case that her relationship with Walter has a transactional aspect to it, since he's eager to use his money to endear himself to her. Unfortunately for Anna, though, this arrangement leads the landlady to judge her and kick her out of the boardinghouse.



Anna writes a letter to Walter telling him that she has fallen ill and asking him to visit. She mails it and then returns to lie down. She feels so terrible that she no longer cares if Walter comes. In a feverish state, she thinks about her home in the West Indies, missing her family's housekeeper, Francine. Francine is Black, and when Anna was growing up, she always wished she were Black, too. "Being black is warm and gay, being white is cold and sad," she thinks. Lying in bed, she remembers riding in a boat and watching the West Indies recede in the distance, which was the first time she realized she was leaving home.

Anna's fond memories of home are wrapped up in her complicated thoughts about race. As a white woman, she has idealized Blackness to the point of fetishizing what it means to be Black, claiming that "being black is warm and gay." This sweeping categorical statement simplifies the many complexities of what it means to be human in general, let alone what it means to be Black. The fact that Anna associates Blackness with nothing but happiness and joy suggests that she has romanticized the idea of being Black, perhaps because she never felt very connected to her identity as a white person living in a predominantly Black community in the West Indies.



Walter arrives and gives Anna a heavy blanket, a bottle of wine, and some nourishing food. He kisses her and says he has to leave town the next day, but that he will arrange for his doctor to come see her this evening. He also promises to speak to her landlady so that she doesn't have to find a new place to stay. When he leaves, it seems to Anna that the room feels bigger.

For all of Walter's off-putting behavior, he shows Anna genuine kindness in this scene by caring for her when she's ill. She has nobody else willing to look after her, which only emphasizes her sense of isolation in her new life in England. Walter's kindness, then, is quite significant and has a notable impact on Anna's overall outlook on her current life, as evidenced by her feeling that the room is bigger after he leaves.



PART ONE: CHAPTER 3

The next time Anna sees Walter, she's feeling much better. He asks if she always gets sick during the winter, and she explains that it's not uncommon. She didn't get sick the first winter she was in England, but she *did* get quite sick last year. After going to an orchestral recital, they both go back to Walter's house, where they become a bit more intimate. Walter insists that he never thought he'd see Anna again after giving her money. But she reassures him by saying that she *wanted* to see him again. He then starts talking about how she's a virgin, which completely ruins the romantic moment for Anna.

It's unclear whether or not Walter is telling the truth when he says that he never expected to see Anna again. The fact that he sent her money suggests otherwise, as if he was hoping to entice her back to him despite his blunt and off-putting behavior. He, however, wants her to believe that he sent the money simply out of a sense of good will. But what Anna really wants, it seems, is to forget about the money altogether, perhaps because she now wants their relationship to feel organic and natural, not transactional and forced.



When Walter kisses Anna, she starts crying and saying she has to go, but then he tells her to be “brave.” After they have sex, Anna lies in his bed realizing she’ll always remember this moment. Eventually, she gets up and has some whiskey while looking into his mirror, which is how she sees him pick up her handbag and slip some money into it. Her initial impulse is to tell him not to give her money, but she doesn’t say anything, instead letting him do whatever he wants. As he puts her in a taxi, she asks him to write to her the following day, wanting him to send the letter early so she receives it as soon as possible. The taxi driver winks at her on the way home.

Anna isn’t ready to have sex, but Walter pressures her into doing it. While he might seem like someone who wants to care for her, then, it’s clear that he’s mainly interested in getting what he wants. Still, Anna’s attitude toward him appears to have changed, as she seems to actually want to pursue a romantic relationship with her. To that end, she doesn’t want him to give her any money, since doing so turns their relationship into a transaction rather than a bond of mutual affection.



PART ONE: CHAPTER 4

Anna now lives in a much nicer boarding house, spending her time waiting for letters. She thinks often about having sex with Walter, which she now does quite often. On Sundays, however, Walter always leaves the city, so Anna hates Sundays—which is unfortunate, since her 19th birthday happens to fall on a Sunday in January. She doesn’t spend it completely alone, though, since Maudie comes to visit. She compliments Anna’s appearance, since Anna recently changed her hair style. Maudie is also impressed by her “swanky” new apartment and happily accepts the nice vermouth Anna serves her. But she also teasingly says that all the chorus girls always knew Anna would end up with a rich man. When Anna takes offense, though, Maudie says there’s nothing to be ashamed of.

Anna’s daily life has vastly improved now that she’s with Walter, though these improvements don’t have much to do with him—they have to do with the fact that he gives her money. Their relationship is based on an exchange of physical intimacy (on Anna’s part) and financial security (on Walter’s part). Maudie understands this all too well, which is why she teases Anna. But her teasing is friendly and harmless, since she knows it’s not uncommon for a younger woman to date an older man for his wealth.



The best advice Maudie can give Anna is that she shouldn’t get too attached to Walter. Doing so would be a deadly mistake, she says. She should simply try to get as much out of Walter as she can without developing real feelings for him. Of course, Maudie knows she’s hardly in a position to dispense such advice, since she herself went crazy for Viv. She even thought he would marry her. When Anna catches her friend eyeing her narrow bed, she explains that Walter never comes to her apartment—they always go to his place. From this detail, Maudie notes that Walter is “the cautious sort.” Viv was like that, too, she says, adding that it doesn’t bode well when a man acts like that.

Maudie’s experience with Viv taught her that it’s possible to develop genuine feelings in otherwise transactional, unromantic relationships. She herself fell in love with Viv, but he was uninterested in pursuing an actual romantic bond. This, it seems, is exactly what’s happening with Anna, which is why Maudie tries to warn her about men who seem like “the cautious sort,” referring to men who are emotionally guarded and hesitant to develop legitimate connections with the young women they’re seeing.



Maudie urges Anna to demand more from Walter. If he's rich, he should be paying for her to live somewhere even nicer. But at least he has already bought her some nice clothes, like the **coat** Anna has been wearing around—having such things will at least give her *something* in the long run. A man recently made a cruel joke to Maudie about how women's clothing is often more expensive than the women who wear them. Although this was a rude thing to say, Maudie sees what he meant: a man can sleep with a woman for as little as five pounds, and many men don't even need to pay for sex. But nice clothing costs a lot more than five pounds. Feeling uncomfortable, Anna tells her friend to shut up.

Anna might not come back as a chorus girl when the new season starts. Maudie wants to know what she'll tell her stepmother, Hester, if she decides to quit the troupe, but Anna doesn't know. Hester will be visiting London in February, so she'll have to think of something good to say by then—but the entire thought of seeing Hester only depresses her. When she and Maudie part ways, Maudie says that Anna should at least be “careful” if she chooses not to behave herself.

PART ONE: CHAPTER 5

Anna goes out to dinner with Walter and his cousin, Vincent. Afterwards, she's surprised to hear from Walter that Vincent is very fond of her. Apparently, he even wants to help her career on the stage by putting her in touch with some powerful people he knows in the entertainment industry. Walter thinks this is a great idea and wants to pay for Anna to take singing lessons. The whole time he talks, though, Anna wonders when he's going to start kissing her. But Walter is too hung up on the idea of Anna developing a successful career. She tells him that all she wants is to be with him, but he laughs at such an idea, saying that she'll surely grow tired of him soon enough—a comment that upsets her.

As Anna drinks whiskey, she tells Walter about her life in the West Indies. Her Uncle Bo is a big drinker, she explains, but it's hard to tell when he's drunk. She used to mix him drinks when she was just a little kid, which is when she had her first sips of rum. Walter, for his part, thinks Anna is *still* too young to be drinking quite as much as she does, but he doesn't stop her from having whiskey. She tells him about finding an old list of enslaved people at her family's estate in the West Indies. There was one 18-year-old woman named Maillotte Boyd who was a “house servant,” and though Anna doesn't mention her name aloud to Walter, she often thinks about Maillotte.

Maudie's point is that Walter's affection for Anna will most likely wane at some point, leaving Anna with nothing more than the few things he bought her. For that reason, she wants Anna to take advantage of the financial stability she now has. Her story about women's clothing highlights the rampant sexism that women in their society (early 20th-century England) face. If clothing is so important to everyone, Maudie implies, then Anna should leverage her relationship with Walter to ensure that he at least buys her expensive, sought-after clothes.



When Maudie tells Anna to be “careful,” she insinuates that Anna should try to avoid getting pregnant. Maudie recognizes that Walter probably doesn't legitimately care for Anna and will inevitably leave her at some point, which would be especially difficult for Anna if she were to get pregnant. With this in mind, Maudie tries to warn her young friend about the dangers of dating wealthy older men.



Walter's insistence that Anna will tire of him suggests that he doesn't expect their relationship to last very long. In fact, he probably likes the idea that she'll be the one to break things off, since this would make it easier for him to eventually pull away. As it stands, though, Anna seems to have fallen deep into their relationship, so the suggestion that it won't last very long startles and upsets her.



Walter reveals his own hypocrisy when he implies that Anna is too young to drink as much as she does. If she's not old enough to drink, it's unlikely that she's old enough to be in a relationship with a much older man. But Walter is apparently unconcerned about the age difference between them. On another note, the existence of a list of enslaved people at Anna's family estate associates her family with oppressive white colonizers in the West Indies—her family either enslaved people themselves or, at the very least, bought property from enslavers. Either way, it's evident that her family history is fraught with racist privilege.



Anna's family used to own a small estate called Morgan's Rest. Her father was a planter who used to have a much larger estate, but he sold it when he married Hester. Anna drunkenly tells Walter that she's a "real" West Indian, since she's the fifth generation on her mother's side to have been born there—a detail she has already told Walter several times throughout the night. Finally, Walter starts kissing her, noting as an aside that she seems pretty drunk.

Anna has complicated ideas about race: she claims to be a "real" West Indian because she and her mother (and generations before her mother) were all born there. But she's also white and lived in what seems like a former plantation owned by an enslaver. She also benefits from the many privileges that come with being white, though she's eager to distance herself from her white European ancestry in order to feel more like a "real" West Indian. On another note, Walter disparagingly comments that Anna is drunk, but this doesn't stop him from making a sexual advance on her. He mentioned earlier in the conversation that he didn't think she was old enough to drink so much, but now that she's drunk, he apparently has no problem with the idea of having sex with her. This contradiction is yet another indication that he really only cares about satisfying his own desires.



PART ONE: CHAPTER 6

Hester arrives in London, so Anna visits her at a boardinghouse. She's upset and has a pressing matter to discuss with Anna—it has to do with correspondence she's had with Uncle Bo about Anna's future. Hester originally wrote him a letter saying that Anna would be better off living back in the West Indies. Hester explains that she has been worried about Anna, especially after Anna got so sick last winter. Plus, taking care of Anna is too much of a responsibility for Hester, so she thinks Anna should go home. Her letter to Uncle Bo laid out these reasons, but it also said that Hester would only pay for half the price of Anna's return trip.

Hester shows Anna the response from Uncle Bo. He opens by noting that he never approved of Anna's new life as a chorus girl, though he didn't interfere because he thought Hester knew what was best. Now, though, he can hardly believe she wants him to pay for half of Anna's return. He resents Hester's attempt to shift the responsibility of caring for Anna onto him, especially since Hester sold Morgan's Rest even though Anna's father originally intended the property to be Anna's inheritance. If Anna is to live in the West Indies with Uncle Bo, Hester will have to provide Anna's fair share of the money from selling Morgan's Rest.

Before Anna started seeing Walter, she cobbled together a semblance of financial stability by working as a chorus girl and accepting money from Hester. Now, though, Hester informs her that she doesn't want to keep paying for her to live in England. What Hester doesn't know, though, is that Anna no longer needs her financial support, now that she has Walter to pay for everything.



Uncle Bo's letter to Hester gives the impression that nobody wants to be responsible for Anna. And yet, it also suggests that Hester hasn't been all that fair in how she has used the money she earned from selling the family estate, thus framing her as somewhat selfish and unwilling to help Anna with money—money to which Anna should be entitled. The mere fact that Hester shows Anna this correspondence highlights just how little she cares about her stepdaughter, since she clearly doesn't mind letting Anna discover that nobody cares enough about her to want to care for her.



Enraged, Hester insists that Uncle Bo is being unreasonable and that he only wrote the letter to hurt her. She claims that Morgan Rest was a terrible piece of property and that it's not her fault that she had to sell it at a loss. She hated living in the West Indies, though Anna's father loved it. He even said in his final years that he never felt the need to visit England again, which made Hester think he was crazy. She, for her part, thinks England is far superior to the West Indies, saying that it was very difficult for her to live in a place where it was so rare to see white people. She scornfully adds that Anna grew up as if she were Black.

Hester claims she only had 300 pounds when she left the West Indies, most of which went toward paying for Anna's journey to England and the clothes she needed for school. She asked Uncle Bo for money, but he only sent five pounds and said he had his own three children to support. His response infuriated Hester, who implies that Uncle Bo has fathered a number of Black children in the West Indies. All in all, Hester thinks it's unfair that *she* has to support Anna, especially considering that she disapproves of Anna's lifestyle. She doesn't want to know the details of Anna's life, but she still has a good sense of what's going on.

Hester declares that she's going to write one more time to Uncle Bo and then never contact him again. She's going to tell him he's not a gentleman. Anna can't help but laugh—she knows Uncle Bo will get a kick out of receiving an angry, snooty letter from Hester about how he's not a gentleman. Hester doesn't appreciate Anna's laughter, saying it was a disgrace that her father acted like it wasn't a big deal for Uncle Bo to have so many "illegitimate" children. She also disapproved of everyone telling Anna that these children were her cousins.

Hester's comments here make it quite clear that she's racist. Whereas Anna has idealized—and even fetishized—Blackness, Hester finds it unacceptable that her stepdaughter grew up so far removed from her white family roots. Hester and Anna therefore have opposing views when it comes to race, though it's arguable that both of their viewpoints (and not just Hester's) are rather problematic, since Anna's romanticization of Blackness reduces what it means to be Black into a very simplistic idea.



Hester's allegations about Uncle Bo further reveal her own racism. She's appalled by the fact that he has impregnated other women, but her issue doesn't necessarily have to do with the fact that he committed adultery—rather, her scorn specifically stems from the fact that the women he impregnated are Black.



Hester's disapproval of Anna is wrapped up in her racist worldview. She dislikes the West Indies because it's a predominantly Black part of the world, and she disapproves of the fact that Anna was raised within—or at least surrounded by—Black Caribbean culture. And though Anna is white, Hester now reveals that she has non-white relatives, because Uncle Bo fathered many Black children. Hester, for her part, thinks it's disgraceful that everyone told Anna these children were her cousins, but this viewpoint only further reveals her racist bias. After all, they literally are Anna's cousins, and to ignore that fact would be nothing more than a racist impulse to distance the Morgan family from its Black relatives.



On the whole, Hester thinks Anna was always destined to behave disgracefully, “considering everything.” When Anna asks what she means by this, Hester implies that Anna’s mother was Black. Anna immediately refutes this claim. But Hester pretends that’s not what she meant, insisting that Anna always accuses her of terrible things. In reality, she says, she has always tried to *help* Anna, making an effort to keep her from speaking like a Black person (she uses the n-word). But it was no use, Hester says, since Anna always spoke just like Francine. To add to this, Hester resents that she’s the one held responsible for the fact that Anna’s adult life is turning out disgracefully.

Anna informs Hester that she won’t have to support her anymore. She starts to tell her why, but Hester stops her—she doesn’t want to know how Anna will support herself. Anna has previously suggested that she’s going to try to join a show in London in the fall, so Hester is going to assume that’s how she’ll to make ends meet.

After leaving Hester’s boardinghouse, Anna thinks about Francine. Whenever she spent time with her, she always felt happy. She now remembers Francine eating mangoes, how she never wore shoes, and how she would carry things on her head (something Hester used to criticize). But there were also times when Anna suspected that Francine resented her for being white. In fact, Anna resented her own whiteness, especially because it seemed to link her to Hester, who in her eyes was “old and sad.” Anna always thought of white people as “old and sad,” so she wished she were Black.

PART ONE: CHAPTER 7

Anna becomes anxious about her relationship with Walter. She feels strongly for him and worries he’ll eventually lose interest in her, which is what everyone says always happens. One summer day, Walter tells her to pack her things, because they’re going to spend the weekend in the countryside with Vincent and his girlfriend. Anna is overjoyed, especially because being in the countryside is a refreshing change from spending all her time in her apartment. On the first night of the trip, she feels truly happy for the first time in a long while, as she and Walter relax and have sex. But then Vincent and his girlfriend, Germaine, arrive the next morning. Germaine is in a foul mood and keeps insulting Vincent, but Anna doesn’t know why—all she knows is that it ruins everyone’s good time.

Anna has previously said that she wishes she were Black, but now that Hester suggests that she might be, Anna apparently changes her mind: she doesn’t want to be Black, it seems, indicating that she’s only interested in the vague idea of what she thinks Blackness stands for—namely, a life that is “warm and gay.” Needless to say, Anna’s life is not “warm and gay,” so it’s inconceivable to her that she could be Black. It’s also possible that Anna wanted to be Black while living in the West Indies because she wanted to feel a sense of belonging. Now that she’s in England, though, being Black would further expose her to prejudice and alienation. Because she no longer finds the idea of Blackness convenient and alluring, then, she stops romanticizing it.



Hester senses that Anna doesn’t actually intend to return to the theater. But she doesn’t want Anna to confirm her suspicions, since she’s so concerned with things like respectability and reputation. It’s obvious to her that Anna has found a man to support her, and the fact that she assumes their relationship is clandestine and taboo only illustrates her low opinion of Anna.



Again, Anna romanticizes Blackness. She legitimately misses Francine because she felt connected to her. And yet, she also recognizes that Francine most likely resented her, implying that the Morgan family was a powerful white family in the West Indies that attracted scorn from the Black community. Anna’s idealization of Blackness, then, is partially a desire to disassociate herself from her family in order to better fit into her surroundings.



The time Anna spends with Walter in the countryside makes their relationship seem more emotionally rewarding than it previously has been. Until now, their bond has been primarily transactional, even if Anna’s feelings for Walter have continued to grow stronger and stronger. On this short vacation, though, she and Walter actually have a romantic time together, giving Anna reason to hope that their relationship will become more heartfelt and genuine.



At dinner, Germaine—who's French—openly insults Vincent. She turns to Anna and says English men don't care about women. They don't know how to make women happy, so they dislike them. She eventually storms off, and Vincent tells Walter that she's mad because he didn't tell her earlier, though neither he nor Walter specify to Anna what, exactly, Vincent should have told her. But Anna finds out later that night, when Walter suggests that they cut the vacation short. He explains that Germaine is mad because Vincent is going away for a while, and she thinks he isn't leaving her enough money. When Anna asks where Vincent is going, Walter says that he and Vincent are actually *both* leaving for New York next week.

Anna doesn't say much when Walter tells her he'll be leaving soon. They eventually rejoin Vincent and Germaine, who ask Anna about her theater career when Walter steps away for a moment. She tells them she was part of a troupe in Southsea, which makes them both laugh. Vincent previously thought she was a serious actor, but now he seems to reconsider. When Walter returns, Vincent says that Anna has given him away and asks him what on earth he was doing "on the pier at Southsea." Flustered, Walter tells Anna not to let Vincent interrogate her so freely.

Furious because she doesn't understand why everyone seems to be laughing at her, Anna tells them all to shut up and then puts her cigarette out on Walter's hand. Walter yelps and takes his hand away, but Germaine congratulates Anna, saying, "Bravo, kid." Shortly thereafter, they all pile into a car to back to London, and when they reach Walter's house, she finds herself saying goodnight to Vincent and thanking him, though she doesn't know why and wishes she hadn't.

Anna and Walter talk about Vincent and Germaine once they go inside. Anna thinks Germaine is pretty, but Walter says she's quite old—of course, she's only 31, but he says that's old "for a woman." He also chastises Anna for being honest about her theater career, though she doesn't see the problem. They eventually have sex, and after they finish Anna tells him not to forget her. He promises not to and slips some money into her purse, urging her to take a vacation on her own while he's gone.

It becomes clear that Germaine and Vincent's relationship is very similar to Anna's, at least insofar as it's transactional—Germaine, after all, is primarily upset because Vincent isn't leaving her enough money to use in his absence. But her anger in this regard also highlights the difference between her and Anna. Whereas Germaine seems mostly focused on the financial aspect of her relationship with Vincent, Anna cares more about the romantic and emotional elements of her relationship with Walter. For this reason, it's undoubtedly quite hurtful to discover that Walter is leaving, and that he gave her even less notice than Vincent gave Germaine.



Vincent has previously expressed an interest in Anna's career in the theater. Now, though, he implies that Walter exaggerated her acting credentials. The fact that Walter made her seem more accomplished than she actually is suggests that he doesn't like the idea of publicly dating somebody like her—that is, an average working-class person. He doesn't mind providing for her, but he apparently wants people to think he's doing so because she shows great promise as an actress. His ego is therefore wrapped up in his relationship with Anna, suggesting that he's with her for mostly superficial reasons.



Anna stands up for herself by putting her cigarette out on Walter's hand. However, she quickly goes back to behaving passively and politely, especially when she thanks Vincent before leaving the car—an illustration of her tendency to accommodate others and put them at ease before thinking of herself.



Walter reveals his sexist worldview when he says that 31 is old "for a woman," thus blatantly admitting that he has different standards for men and women. He also tries to make Anna feel better about the fact that he's leaving her on such short notice, telling her to take a vacation with the money he gives her. In doing so, he acts like she should be glad he's leaving, as if she's the one benefitting from this arrangement. In reality, though, she's obviously disappointed by his insensitive decision to not tell her until the last minute that he's leaving.



For an entire week after Walter leaves, Anna doesn't leave her apartment. Her landlady eventually chastises her for staying in so much, insisting that leading such a sheltered existence is no life for a young person. This comment annoys Anna, who suddenly wishes she were old, so that she at least had an excuse to be sad and tired. Nonetheless, she accepts an offer to visit the coast and stay with her landlady's cousin for three weeks. When she returns, she finds a letter waiting for her, but she doesn't recognize the handwriting on the envelope.

Anna does end up taking a vacation with Walter's money, but it doesn't seem particularly fun or rewarding. Rather, she leaves town simply to busy herself while he's gone, as if she needs a distraction from the fact that he's not there. She has not only developed a financial dependency on Walter, but also an emotional one, as evidenced by the fact that she initially has trouble motivating herself to leave her boardinghouse when he's gone.



PART ONE: CHAPTER 8

The letter waiting for Anna is from Vincent, who informs her that he's writing on behalf of Walter. This is a very difficult letter for him to write, he claims, but the fact of the matter is that Walter is no longer in love with Anna. However, he thinks that Anna has nothing to be too upset about—she has her entire life ahead of her, after all, and love isn't the only important thing in life. He tells her to enjoy the outdoors and read good books, both of which he thinks will bring her happiness. But he apologizes for preaching and adds that he and Walter have included 20 pounds for her to use for now. Walter, for his part, also wants her to feel like she'll be supported financially—for a while, at least.

Anna's friends have already hinted that wealthy older men tend to lose interest in their younger lovers after a while, but Anna hasn't paid much attention to these warnings. Sure enough, though, Walter abandons her. Worse, he doesn't even have the courage or dignity to break things off himself, instead having Vincent do it for him. And Vincent, for his part, informs Anna of Walter's feelings in a very callous, patronizing way, essentially acting like Anna has no reason to feel sad or hurt by what has happened.



Vincent asks Anna to write back to him instead of making direct contact with Walter. It's better if they don't see each other for now. As for Vincent, he still wants to help Anna's theater career—he thinks she could succeed with some hard work. Before ending his letter, he requests that Anna send him any letters she received from Walter.

Vincent's request for Anna to give back all of Walter's letters suggests that Walter wants to effectively erase any evidence of their relationship. It's unclear why he'd want to do this, other than that he perhaps doesn't want Anna to have any sort of power over him—if, for instance, he said things in those letters that might embarrass him, he doesn't want Anna to use them against him. The end of their relationship is therefore just as transactional as the beginning, with Walter breaking things off with Anna in the same way that he might terminate a business deal.



After reading the letter, Anna reminisces about the West Indies and then decides to contact Walter. She sends him a telegram saying that she wants to see him as soon as possible. He responds quickly, saying that they can meet at a nearby hotel at 9:30.

Anna doesn't listen to Vincent when he asks her to go through him when contacting Walter. Instead, she immediately reaches out to Walter, illustrating how little she cares about what Vincent says, regardless of his conceited attempt to control how she responds to this turn of events.



PART ONE: CHAPTER 9

When Anna meets Walter, she smiles to reassure him that she won't give him any trouble. She seems to appease him by doing this, but what she really wants to do is tell him that she needs him—it's all right if they only see each other every so often, but if she never sees him again, she's sure she will die. They start talking about the letter from Vincent, which Walter confirms he knew about. He avoids making eye contact with her. She asks if they can go back to his house, but he refuses. He claims to be worried about her and insists that she should let Vincent visit her to sort everything out, but she expresses her dislike for Vincent.

Anna and Walter part ways without any sort of closure. The next day, she decides to find a new place to live. She writes Walter a letter telling him not to write to her old address. She doesn't care where she lives, as long as nobody knows where it is.

Walter wants to insulate himself from Anna's misery by pawning her off on Vincent. Instead of recognizing that he's being insensitive by suddenly abandoning Anna, he patronizingly acts as if he has made thoughtful arrangements for her. In reality, though, he's just trying to avoid Anna by connecting her with Vincent. His lack of empathy thus underscores how little he ever cared about her on an emotional level.



Instead of accepting Walter's financial assistance in the aftermath of their breakup, Anna decides to strike out on her own. In doing so, she refuses to take Walter's false and condescending pity. She also challenges the transactional nature of their relationship—after all, if Walter doesn't know where she lives, it's impossible for him to send her money. In this way, she deprives him of his ability to feel good about himself by providing for her, thus asserting a certain kind of power over Walter for the first time.



PART TWO: CHAPTER 1

In her new lodging, Anna falls ill. As she slowly recovers, she tries to draft a letter to Walter but finds herself unable to find the right words. She tries to show him that she truly loves him, apparently sensing that he doesn't believe she feels so dearly for him. Every time she writes a draft, she ends up discarding it. Finally, another boarder at the house interrupts her efforts by entering her room and introducing herself as Ethel Matthews. A slightly older woman, she claims to be a trained nurse, which is why she makes an effort to clean up Anna's room, chastising the landlady for being so sloppy and not taking better care of Anna during her illness. As Anna talks to her, Ethel keeps her eyes on Anna's expensive **coat**.

Ethel takes Anna to the movies. Anna isn't particularly interested in the film, but Ethel wants to see it because she knows the lead female actress. Afterwards, she disparages the young woman and hopes Anna will agree with her criticisms, but Anna thinks the actress did a good job. Back at the boardinghouse, Ethel invites Anna into her room and asks what's really wrong with her—is she pregnant? If so, Ethel might be able to help her. But Anna assures her she's not pregnant. Ethel later mentions that she's a masseuse, though she goes out of her way to insist that she's a *respectable* masseuse, unlike "some of these dirty foreigners" who do massage.

Ethel's interest in Anna's coat is a sign that she's mainly drawn to Anna because she thinks she has money. At the same time, Anna isn't necessarily in a position to turn away kindness at this moment in her life, since she's living alone after a sad breakup and doesn't have much to keep herself occupied. She therefore doesn't turn away from Ethel's attention, and it's unclear whether or not she recognizes her new friend's interest in money.



Ethel's comment about "dirty foreigners" underscores her prejudiced worldview. Her prejudice would surely apply to Anna, too, if it weren't for Ethel's interest in Anna's money (which, of course, is misguided, since Anna doesn't actually have much money). Because Anna is from the West Indies, she's technically a "foreigner." Because she's white, though, Ethel doesn't see her as such, which spotlights Ethel's racism as well as Anna's ability to benefit from her own whiteness (despite the fact that she would rather be Black).



Ethel talks about how much she dislikes foreigners, but Anna doesn't know what to say in response. Eventually, Ethel wonders why Anna is staying in such a terrible boardinghouse even though she has a beautiful and expensive **coat**—a coat she could easily sell in the markets for a large amount. When Anna points out that Ethel is staying in the same exact boardinghouse, Ethel says that she's only there because her flat—which is in a better part of town—is under renovation.

Anna says she doesn't *need* to be in this boardinghouse, claiming that she can get as much money as she wants whenever it suits her. Her comment interests Ethel, who speaks admiringly about Anna's youthful looks and then suggests that she should live in one of her spare rooms once the flat is fully renovated. She wants to start a manicure and massage business—she was going to start it with one of her friends, as long as the friend put 25 pounds into the business. But she'd rather partner with Anna instead of her friend. Anna says she doesn't have 25 pounds, though, so Ethel suggests that she sell her fancy **coat**. When Anna refuses, Ethel drops the matter, though she urges Anna to at least come see the flat when it's done.

PART TWO: CHAPTER 2

The next day, Anna runs into Laurie on the street. Laurie is with two men from the U.S. named Carl Redman and Joe Adler, and they all convince her to come back to Laurie's flat. Laurie has been quite busy since the tour ended, having apparently traveled a lot, which is how she met Carl and Joe. She has also changed her hair, and she's wearing a lot of makeup. After having some whiskey, the two men leave, though not before making plans to meet up with both Laurie and Anna that night for dinner. In their absence, Laurie brags that she never pays for her own meals anymore. She finds it easy to get along with men, who she assumes must think she “really like[s] it” (though she doesn't clarify what she means by “it”).

Laurie notices that Anna doesn't look great, and then Anna starts crying. She immediately assumes that Anna is pregnant, but Anna says she's not. She explains that she fell in love with a man who abandoned her. When Anna says she's still able to get money from him, Laurie urges her to ask for more as soon as possible. Anna ignores her and explains how the relationship ended, but the story doesn't have much of an impact on Laurie, who says that such relationships always end up like this. Laurie, for her part, saves half of all the money she receives from men.

Finally, Ethel brings up what she's really interested in: Anna's expensive coat. Her question makes it clear that she has gravitated toward Anna because she thinks she's wealthy. Before taking Anna under her wing, though, she has to figure out why, exactly, a wealthy woman would be staying in a rundown boardinghouse.



Ethel's intentions are pretty obvious: she has targeted Anna as someone who might give her money to help start a massage business. But she doesn't push Anna too hard at first, most likely recognizing that this would only scare her off. Instead, she plants the idea in Anna's head and then gives her some space, undoubtedly hoping that Anna will eventually take her up on her offer. Once again, then, Anna has entered into a transactional relationship.



Laurie's comments about never paying for her own meals imply that she has fully embraced the idea of using transactional relationships with men to her benefit. Whereas Anna is still reeling from becoming emotionally entangled in a transactional relationship, Laurie has no problem with spending time with men in exchange for financial stability—in fact, she hints that she does a lot more than simply spend time with men, suggesting that she has sex with men like Carl and Joe, who are convinced that she “really like[s]” having sex with them. The implication, then, is that Laurie is a sex worker.



Laurie isn't interested in Anna's emotional response to what happened with Walter. Instead, she urges Anna to focus on the financial aspects of her former relationship, recognizing—from experience, most likely—that Walter probably still feels bad about what happened and will, as a result, continue to give her money. But his financial assistance won't last forever, so Laurie tells Anna to take advantage of it while she still can. Her money-minded advice stands in contrast to Anna's approach: whereas Laurie focuses on the money, Anna focuses on her own heartbreak.



Trying to cheer Anna up, Laurie encourages her to come to dinner that night, adding that Carl is really quite nice, though he's obsessed with gambling. She agrees to lend Anna a dress, since the one Anna is wearing has holes underneath the arms. Meanwhile, she has a housekeeper run a bath for Anna, which finally helps Anna relax and feel a bit more at peace, though she knows her heartache will soon return.

Despite Laurie's somewhat callous advice about Walter, she seems to have a soft spot for Anna. After all, she urges Anna to come out with her, Carl, and Joe, perhaps because she thinks Anna needs something to distract her from her sorrow. It's also possible, though, that Laurie has an ulterior motive for inviting Anna to dinner—a motive related to the fact that Joe and Carl are really more like clients than friends.



PART TWO: CHAPTER 3

At the restaurant that night, Laurie asks Carl if he likes Anna—didn't Laurie find "a nice girl" for him? He graciously says that Anna is nice, but Joe talks about how he doesn't like the way British women dress. Carl seems to agree, though he's a little less straightforward about it. Still, he makes it clear that he doesn't like the dress Anna has on, which slightly offends Laurie, since it belongs to her. In fact, Laurie is becoming quite drunk and a bit rude, yelling at the waiters and generally causing a scene by telling a woman dining at a nearby table not to look at her. When Carl and Joe ask Anna to chime in by saying what she thinks of the woman at the other table, Anna admits that she finds her judgmental expression frightening.

When Laurie asks Carl if he thinks she found a "nice girl" for him, it becomes clear that she invited Anna in the hopes of pleasing Carl—whom she appears to have met while working as a sex worker, though this is never made explicit in the novel. Either way, it's obvious that Laurie's relationship with both Carl and Joe is transactional: they pay for a fancy dinner, and she provides them with company. Whether or not the transactional nature of this setup will extend beyond dinner remains unclear. For now, Carl, Joe, and Laurie spend their time objectifying Anna and talking about her as if she's not there, which is yet another indication that none of them care much about her feelings.



Before leaving the restaurant, Anna goes to the bathroom—not because she needs to use the toilet, but because she's so drunk that she needs a moment to collect herself. When she returns, she discovers that Carl has left. Joe claims that an urgent matter arose to take Carl away, but Laurie says it's obvious that Carl left to gamble. Joe doesn't challenge this idea, instead saying that Anna and Laurie don't need to worry about Carl's departure, since they still have Joe for the night.

Carl's departure suggests that he was not, in the end, all that taken by Anna. Instead of spending the evening with her, he would rather gamble. In either case, he is using his money to chase pleasure.



PART TWO: CHAPTER 4

Joe takes Anna and Laurie to a hotel, but the concierge won't give them a single room, so they have to get two separate ones. They continue to drink together in one of the rooms. Anna gets so drunk that she feels the need to lie down, at which point Laurie says she should take off the dress, claiming that Anna will wrinkle it. She comes over to the bed and starts undoing the dress for Anna while Joe watches. Up close, Anna notices the many wrinkles in Laurie's face, as well as the vast amount of makeup trying to hide those wrinkles.

The fact that Joe takes Anna and Laurie to a hotel aligns with the idea that Laurie is a sex worker and Joe is her client. This becomes even more evident when Laurie tries to take off Anna's dress while Joe watches. Although the novel doesn't necessarily cast negative judgment on sex workers, Anna notices Laurie's wrinkled face and the makeup she has used to look younger, and this observation subtly hints that Anna senses a certain amount of hardship that Laurie has had to endure in her life. Although Laurie is very pretty and confident, Anna seems to recognize that her life—which could, it seems, easily become the life Anna herself might lead—is not so easy.



Anna says she feels sick, so she pulls the bedcovers over herself and closes her eyes. She then hears Laurie and Joe talking over by the fireplace. Joe asks how old Anna is, and Laurie claims she's 17. But Joe doesn't believe her, so she relents and admits that she's 19, though she points out that 19 is still quite young. Doesn't Joe like her? Joe says he thinks Anna is fine, but he *really* liked a different young woman Laurie introduced him to—a woman with dark skin. But Laurie says she hasn't seen that woman since the evening they all spent together.

Joe comes to the bed and touches Anna's hand. She tells him her hands are always cold because she's from the West Indies. He perks up when he hears this, claiming to know all of the islands in the West Indies. He also insists that he once knew Anna's father, but Anna can tell he's lying. She gets up from the bed and starts insulting both Joe and Laurie, demanding that Laurie give her back the dress so she can leave. But Laurie refuses to let her leave with the dress, since it belongs to her, so Anna goes across the hall to sleep in the second room, which is cold and depressing.

After Anna drunkenly lies in bed for a while, Joe appears and apologizes for teasing her. He tries to kiss her, but she stops him, at which point he asks why she spends time with Laurie. "Don't you know she's a tart?" he asks. She tells him to go away and then starts to cry. Taking pity on her, Joe brings a heavier blanket and tucks her in before leaving. He's gone by the next morning, but Laurie is still there. She and Anna make up as they go back to Laurie's apartment, where they have breakfast and Laurie says that, though Anna's behavior was misleading last night, she doesn't care how she acts. She still likes Anna, even if it's clear that Anna doesn't know how to behave around people.

PART TWO: CHAPTER 5

Anna leaves Laurie's apartment and walks home, but she doesn't want to go back to her depressing room. She walks by a pretty dress in a shop window and thinks about how the impulse to buy attractive clothing is really a desire to improve one's future. When women consider buying a pretty dress, Anna thinks, they do so because they think the dress will somehow change their circumstances. With these thoughts in mind, she decides to go Ethel Matthews's flat.

Joe and Laurie's conversation aligns with the suggestion that Laurie is a sex worker. The fact that she lies about Anna's age indicates that she wants to convince him to like her, as if she's making some sort of sales pitch. What's more, she has apparently set him up with other young women. It becomes evident, then, that Laurie didn't invite Anna to dinner simply because she wanted to help her forget about Walter. Rather, she invited her for financial reasons.



Joe's interest in Anna's West Indies upbringing suggests that he has fetishized Blackness or, at the very least, Caribbean culture—an idea that aligns with his previous comment to Laurie that he liked a dark-skinned young woman she introduced him to. In a way, then, both Joe and Anna have romanticized Blackness, though in different ways. Whereas Anna wants to be Black, Joe wants to have sex with Black women. Both desires fetishize and simplify Blackness.



The word "tart" is a derogatory term for a sex worker, but it can also be used more broadly to refer to somebody who behaves in an overtly sexual way. As such, the fact that Joe calls Laurie a "tart" doesn't necessarily confirm that she's a sex worker, though it does make this possibility seem even more likely than it already did. Either way, both Laurie and Joe suggest that Anna has behaved somewhat hypocritically by entering into an obviously transactional relationship and then trying to back out at the last minute. In other words, they think Anna should have known that everyone expected her to have sex in exchange for some money and a nice dinner.



Although Anna often seems indifferent when it comes to money, she still recognizes how financial stability can improve a person's life. Everything related to money, she realizes, is aspirational; wanting an expensive dress is really just a yearning to find something that will improve her life. It makes sense, then, that her transactional affair with Walter felt so meaningful—although their connection was mainly based on money, it still felt significant to Anna because wanting money is just a form of hoping for a better life.



After ringing the wrong bell and encountering Ethel's grumpy downstairs neighbor, Anna goes upstairs with Ethel and is impressed by her spacious flat. Ethel shows Anna the room she would be staying in and even says she could have a gas fireplace put in. As Anna considers moving in and working for Ethel's manicure business, she reminds Ethel that she doesn't have 25 pounds. But Ethel doesn't mind. She proposes that Anna should pay eight pounds per month for room and board. Anna will work as a manicurist, and half her pay will go to Ethel. Anna agrees, and then Ethel adds that she'll need the eight pounds upfront because she put so much money into renovating the flat. Anna agrees, though it doesn't leave her much money.

Ethel brings Anna some food and sits by the bed while she eats it. She goes on at length about how respectable her business will be and brags that she's the best masseuse in London. She repeatedly notes that everything is "straight and above-board" when it comes to her business, and then she asks if Anna can bring in any of her own clients. Anna can't think of anyone she could bring to the business, but Ethel dismisses the topic by telling her to rest.

PART THREE: CHAPTER 1

Anna's first weeks working for Ethel are mostly characterized by Ethel's frequent tirades about how "respectable" her business is—especially compared to some other people she knows in the massage business. Within days of putting her advertisements in the paper, several detectives come to investigate the operation. When Ethel teaches Anna to give men manicures, she tells her to be especially nice to them. If she does everything correctly, there's no reason she can't ask for a shilling or even more for her work. It's not Anna's fault, Ethel adds, if the men think they're going to get something more than a straightforward manicure. And if a man gets angry that Anna hasn't done enough, he surely won't make a fuss, since he'll want to keep his original intentions quiet and discrete.

After three weeks at Ethel's, Anna stops going out, preferring instead to sleep and think about Walter. Her mopey attitude displeases Ethel, who's very happy when Laurie comes to visit Anna. Ethel is impressed by Laurie's good looks, remarking that she must be the kind of woman men want. Once in private, Laurie asks Anna what it's like to work as a manicurist, and Anna tells her that only one man has asked her to go to bed with him. When she refused, he left immediately. Laurie laughs, saying that Ethel must have been upset; she thinks Ethel probably *wants* Anna to have sex with the customers, despite what she has said.

Ethel is interested in Anna because she thinks she can squeeze money out of her. Even though Anna doesn't have 25 pounds to help her open the business, she seems to have identified Anna as someone she'll be able to manipulate into giving up a fair amount of cash. To that end, she makes Anna pay in advance for the room. She also plans to take half of Anna's wages for herself. In a way, then, she takes advantage of Anna's vulnerable position as a young woman without many resources, acting like a kind and helpful friend when, in reality, she clearly wants to cheat Anna out of her earnings.



Ethel's insistence that her business is "straight and above-board" might seem unremarkable, but the fact that she goes out of the way to emphasize the business's legitimacy hints that it's actually not exactly as she says. In other words, her massage company might not be as legal as she's suggesting, perhaps meaning that she intends to turn it into a discrete brothel, though this intention is never made explicit.



Ethel insists that her massage business is a straightforward, respectable operation, but she also has no problem letting her male customers think they might be able to pay for more than a massage (that is, to pay for sex). Even her advertisements are seemingly suggestive, considering that detectives come to investigate the business after seeing them. Ethel therefore uses the power of suggestion as a way of charging high prices, knowing that she'll be able to get away with this because nobody will want to admit they were hoping to pay for sex.



The fact that Ethel likes Laurie so much is telling, considering that Laurie is—for all intents and purposes—a sex worker. When Ethel remarks that Laurie must be the kind of woman men want, she reveals her desire to hire women who will attract men with their beauty and sex appeal. In keeping with this, Laurie can tell that Ethel wants her business to operate like a brothel, even though Ethel has gone to such great lengths to claim otherwise. Her unspoken expectations for Anna, then, are much different than she originally suggested.



Anna goes out with Laurie and two men. She doesn't return until very late that night, which makes Ethel angry. The next day, Ethel confronts her and says it was very inconsiderate of her to not say she'd be back so late, since Ethel waited up so long for her. She also complains about the business. Nobody ever comes for a manicure until five in the evening. She's so angry that she pours herself multiple drinks and then goes to sit alone and mutter to herself about how bad business is. That evening, a man comes at five.

Suddenly, Anna hears a huge commotion and runs into the massage room, where she learns that the massage couch broke and the client's foot landed in a bowl of hot water. Ethel blames Anna for making the water in the bowl too hot. The man, for his part, is very upset and in visible pain. After he leaves, Anna starts laughing. Ethel is enraged. She says that Anna is always so glum and depressing to have around; now that something serious has happened, though, she's laughing. Ethel tells her to find another job and another place to live. She thought Anna would be nice to the clients and useful to have around, but she was wrong.

Anna accepts the idea of leaving and is, for all intents and purposes, unfazed by what Ethel has said. Just as she's about to go, though, Ethel bursts into tears. She mentions that Anna didn't even invite her to go out with Laurie and the others, which made her feel like she wasn't good enough for them. She also says she desperately needs to make some real money. She's always alone, too, and her life is wretched. She takes back everything she said earlier—she doesn't want Anna to leave. In fact, if Anna leaves and doesn't come back soon, Ethel vows to kill herself. Anna assures her she's just going for a walk, and Ethel reiterates that she'll kill herself if Anna isn't back in an hour.

On the street, Anna imagines going to Walter's house. As she thinks about him, she slips a bracelet he gave her over her knuckles. When a man passes and mutters something inappropriate, she follows him and imagines punching him with the bracelet around her fist. But then she sees a police officer eyeing her, so she turns around. Feeling that she's about to cry, she gets on a bus and returns to Ethel's flat, where Ethel has undergone a total transformation. She warmly welcomes Anna back and apologizes for her behavior, but Anna doesn't care—all she wants to do is go to sleep.

Ethel sends conflicting messages. On the one hand, she insists that her business isn't a brothel. On the other hand, she insinuates that she wants Anna to have sex with the male clients. And yet, she also complains that nobody comes for a manicure until the evening—which, of course, is a way of complaining about how everyone thinks her business is a brothel. In a sense, then, the business she's running isn't respected as an "above-board" operation, but she still doesn't even get to reap the financial benefit of running a brothel.



Anna hasn't lived up to Ethel's expectations. Ethel clearly thought Anna would attract clients because she's young and beautiful, but that hasn't been the case. Therefore, she has no reason to keep Anna around, especially now that she laughs at this mishap with a customer.



Ethel's emotions are all over the place. Although she mainly cares about having Anna around for financial reasons, it also becomes evident in this scene that she depends on her for a sense of companionship. Still, though, their relationship remains very transactional: Ethel gives Anna a job and a place to live, and in return she expects to make money off of her and—short of that—to feel a little less alone.



Anna experiences a violent impulse when a passing stranger makes a lewd remark about her. Her reaction is a sudden bubbling up of anger, as if all of the sexism and mistreatment she has put up with throughout the novel have finally reached a breaking point.



PART THREE: CHAPTER 2

Anna feels ill the next morning, so she stays in bed all day. She knows she should figure out a way to move out of Ethel's flat, but all she can do is lie there, so she distracts herself by thinking about her home in the West Indies. She tries hard to reconstruct the details of her hometown, remembering how the roads wound and what it was like to ride along them on a horse. At one point, Ethel comes in and says that Carl and Joe have come to see her. Carl comes in for a manicure, but he can immediately tell that Anna isn't very good at it—he doesn't mind, though, because he came to see her. He apologizes for leaving early the other night at dinner, and then he kisses her.

When Carl touches her, Anna can tell he thinks she'll have sex with him—and, she realizes, she will. But then he tells her to get dressed and promises to take her to dinner without Joe. They spend the evening together and then return to Ethel's flat. Ethel herself isn't there, but she has left out two bottles of champagne for them. Anna and Carl have sex, and then Anna falls asleep. She doesn't notice when he leaves.

PART THREE: CHAPTER 3

In the morning, Ethel wakes Anna and asks about her time with Carl. She likes Carl and doesn't mind what Anna does with him, but she tells her to be careful about letting their neighbors see them sneaking around at all hours of the night. She then suggests that Anna could spend even more time going out with her friends—that would all right with her, she says, though it might mean she and Anna might have to renegotiate the cost of Anna's rent. Anna, for her part, just lies there in bed and agrees with everything Ethel says. Later, she gets up and finds five quid from Carl in her handbag.

Carl doesn't return for several days, which seems to make Ethel nervous. Finally, he calls and invites Anna to dinner, and they develop a regular routine of going out to dinner and returning late at night to Ethel's flat. Meanwhile, Ethel raises the rent and insists that it's a reasonable amount to charge, especially since the flat is such a good place for bringing back all sorts of friends.

Carl's renewed attention in Anna is somewhat confusing. And yet, his seemingly random visit makes sense in the context of their relationship: Carl is looking for pleasure and female companionship, not love or an enduring relationship. He therefore seeks Anna out when he feels like it, though he has already demonstrated that he has no problem with suddenly abandoning her if that's what he wants to do. Once again, then, a man tries to endear himself to Anna for purely selfish reasons.



Carl wants one thing and one thing only: sex. Anna knows this, but she doesn't resent it. Instead, she goes along with his desire, though it's unclear whether or not she herself genuinely wants to have sex.



Anna isn't a sex worker, and yet her relationship with Carl is similar to the kind of relationship a sex worker might have with a client. Ethel, for her part, recognizes this and urges Anna to embrace the role of a sex worker. When she suggests charging Anna extra rent to use the flat as a place to bring back the men she sees, Ethel essentially gets one step closer to running the secret brothel she has seemingly wanted to open the whole time.



Ethel has finally managed to benefit from Anna's youthful good looks. She encourages Anna to go out with wealthy older men and bring them back to the flat to have sex, ultimately benefiting from Anna's new unofficial source of income.



In a conversation with Carl one day, Anna learns that Joe is married. The discovery prompts her to ask if Carl is married, too, and he admits that he is. He also has a young daughter, but he refuses to tell Anna anything about her. Not long after this conversation, Anna goes out with him for the last time. He gives her 15 quid, and then she never sees him again. She does, however, run into Maudie, who tells her that she's been seeing a successful man who likes her quite a bit. She even thinks he'll marry her if only she manages to make herself look presentable, but she doesn't have the money to do so. Anna agrees to give her just under 10 pounds.

PART THREE: CHAPTER 4

Anna has dinner with a man and takes him back to her room in Ethel's flat. She's quite drunk and decides to throw her shoe at a frame hanging on the wall, since the dog in the painting annoys her—it's always staring at her. She and the man then start dancing, but she tells him to let her go. He doesn't, so she hits him on his wrist, which is in a bandage because he injured it. Enraged, he calls her a "bitch," though he stops when he sees that she's vomiting. When she comes back from the bathroom, he's gone. Alone, she thinks about why she doesn't feel well and tries to tell herself it's not because she's pregnant.

It's important to note that Voyage in the Dark isn't necessarily about sex work. Rather, the novel explores the ambiguity of sexual relationships between young women and wealthy older men—relationships, of course, that resemble sex work. But Anna doesn't think of herself as a sex worker, and neither does somebody like Maudie. Instead, they simply become involved in relationships that happen to be with emotionally unavailable men who use their wealth to make up for a lack of genuine connection.



This tumultuous scene with a random man hints that Anna has been socializing with quite a few different men and taking them back to Ethel's flat to become physically intimate. In other words, she has been doing exactly what Ethel wanted her to do, using her youthful good looks to attract wealthy older men. And though it's arguable that she's never all that happy at any point in Voyage in the Dark, it's especially clear that her current lifestyle hasn't brought her much in the way of contentment, as evidenced by her edginess when she throws her shoe at the painting of a dog—a sign that she strongly dislikes her immediate circumstances and, in turn, the life that has come along with those circumstances.



PART THREE: CHAPTER 5

Laurie reads Anna a letter she received from Ethel, who contacted her to complain about Anna. A week ago, Ethel forced Anna to move out because she's a "very deceiving girl" who's both mopey and disreputable. The final straw came when Anna told Ethel that she's three months pregnant. Ethel doesn't know why Anna didn't "do something about it" earlier, but she refuses to help her with the situation, especially since—according to Ethel—Anna already owes her money. Anna, for her part, doesn't know who the father is, so she can't ask him to give her money for an abortion. Ethel wraps up her letter by telling Laurie that she respects her and hopes she'll convince Anna to pay back the money she owes.

Ethel encouraged Anna to have sex with as many men as she could, as long as doing so would be profitable. But now that Anna is pregnant because of this arrangement, Ethel no longer wants to stand behind her. To the contrary, Ethel suddenly wants to cut ties with Anna because she fears she'll bring dishonor and shame to her business. To put it another way, she worries that people will think her business revolves around sex work—which, of course, it does. But she doesn't want to admit this. Once again, then, Anna finds herself alone and without much emotional support.



Anna tells Laurie that she doesn't owe Ethel money. In fact, Ethel owes *her* money, since she borrowed some and never paid it back. But Anna doesn't care. She's too preoccupied by the fact that there's a baby growing inside of her. Laurie knows somebody who might be able to give her an abortion, but she would only do so for quite a bit of money. Anna sold her nice **coat** for 10 quid, but Laurie insists that she'll need 50 to get an abortion, meaning that she'll have to ask Walter for help.

Anna's decision to sell her coat is significant, since it's the only thing she still has from her relationship with Walter. Because their bond was so transactional, the coat is all she has to show for the heartache and sorrow she endured after he abandoned her. Tragically, though, she doesn't even make much money when she finally sells it, which means she has to go back to him to ask for the only thing he was ever willing to give: money.



PART THREE: CHAPTER 6

Anna meets with Vincent. When she contacted Walter, he explained that he was in Paris but that Vincent would meet with her. She tells Vincent that she's pregnant, clarifying that the baby isn't Walter's. He makes a display of taking great pity on her, assuring her that she can have money for an abortion and telling her that everything is going to be all right. Even though he's consoling her, Anna feels as if it would be impossible to actually connect with him.

Yet again, Walter uses Vincent as a buffer between Anna and himself. Of course, it might be true that he's in Paris, but it's still quite fitting that Anna has to go through Vincent in order to get money from Walter, who is—for all intents and purposes—completely inaccessible to her now that they're no longer in a romantic or sexual relationship.



Vincent wonders aloud why Anna disappeared without telling Walter how to contact her, noting that he would have provided her with money earlier if he'd known where to reach her. She jokes that Walter probably would have sent receipts attached to the money, but Vincent tells her not to talk like that—after all, he points out, she must be pretty glad to have that money available to her now. Before they part ways, he makes her hand over all the letters she received from Walter. She glances at the one on top, which includes the words, “Shy Anna, I love you so much. Always, Walter.”

The excerpt from one of Walter's letters sheds light on how, exactly, he was able to endear himself so thoroughly to Anna. Even though he broke things off in a very cold, unfeeling way, it's now clear that he led her to believe that he was genuinely in love with her. “Shy Anna,” he wrote, “I love you so much.” It's understandable, then, why Anna was so blindsided by his cruel and sudden decision to abandon her.



PART THREE: CHAPTER 7

In the moments before having the abortion, Anna tries to speak French with Mrs. Robinson, who will be performing the procedure. Laurie has assured her that Mrs. Robinson is extremely smart, but Anna is still nervous. She asks if Mrs. Robinson will stop if it starts to hurt too much, and Mrs. Robinson assures her that she will. In the middle of the procedure, though, she doesn't listen when Anna asks her to stop. Eventually, the procedure is over, and Mrs. Robinson tells her she'll be all right in two or three weeks. But Anna still has to recover from the procedure. For this reason, she's not supposed to be alone that night, but Laurie won't stay with her.

Anna's utter isolation in England is on full display after she gets an abortion and can't find anyone willing to stay with her. Although Laurie is her friend and seems to care about her on some level, she can't be bothered to make sure Anna is all right, most likely because she doesn't want anyone associating her with a young woman who has had an abortion, since the procedure was illegal at this time (the early 20th century). Consequently, Anna has no choice but to endure whatever happens on her own.



PART FOUR: CHAPTER 1

Anna has a terrible night in her new boardinghouse. Something seems to have gone wrong with the abortion, but there's nobody there to help her. She slips in and out of dreams about the West Indies, remembering a masquerade she used to watch. Later, she hears Laurie's voice in her bedroom—the landlady apparently called her for help, though she's unhappy about this, pointing out that the landlady should have called a doctor instead. But the landlady didn't want a doctor finding out that one of her tenants had an abortion.

Finally, Laurie and the landlady call a doctor and instruct Anna to say she had a bad fall. When he arrives, though, he immediately knows what really happened, recognizing that Anna was given quinine. "You girls are too naïve to live, aren't you?" the doctor says, but he assures Laurie and the landlady that Anna will be better soon. He adds in a sarcastic, scathing tone that she'll surely be ready to "start all over again" in no time. His words reach Anna in her dream state, and she drifts off while thinking about starting "all over again."

Again, Anna is more or less on her own as she endures the frightening aftermath of an abortion gone wrong. Laurie's presence (when she finally gets there) isn't all that helpful or soothing, though she at least seems to urge the landlady to call an actual doctor. Both Laurie and the landlady's impulse to distance themselves from Anna is due to the fact that abortions were illegal in England at this point in history. Therefore, nobody wants to help Anna for fear of being implicated in the illegal procedure.



Quinine is an anti-malarial drug that was believed to induce miscarriages in the first trimester of a pregnancy (the efficacy of this method has since been disproven). The doctor realizes that Anna has been given a large dose of quinine and instantly figures out that she has had an abortion. He responds with a sexist kind of condescension, as if Anna—and, in turn, everyone else present—is stupid. By saying that Anna will be ready to "start all over again" soon, he implies that she'll continue having extramarital sex as soon as she's healed. Anna, however, interprets his words differently, latching onto the idea of starting her entire life "all over again"—an idea that undoubtedly seems appealing, given the lonely, bleak existence she has been leading in England.





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