

the occupants of memory

quote "The occupants of memory have to be protected from strangers."

speaker/s- narrator/the reader
spoken to

where? no specific location

when? part one, chapter one

what is happening? the narrator is describing the archivist's first ventures into Robert's history. in this particular paragraph he is depicting the responses of those that knew Robert when asked about him.

impact on character/plot?

importance?

where was the world he had known?

quote "Where, in this dark, was the world he had known? And where was he being taken to so fast there wasn't even time to stop?"

speaker/s- narrator/the reader
spoken to

where? Robert is on a train going to Regina

when? part one, chapter 18

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

i am ashamed to be alive.

quote "But that night - surrounded by all that dark - and all those men in pain - and the trains kept bringing us more and more and more - and the war was never, never, never going to end - that night, I thought: I am ashamed to be alive. I am ashamed of life. And I wanted to offer some way out of life - I wanted grace for Robert Ross".

speaker/s- marian turner/the archivist
spoken to

where? in ms. turner's apartment

when? part five, chapter 14

i am ashamed to be alive. (cont)

what is happening? the archivist is interviewing Ms. Turner as she recounts her time as Robert's nurse in the hospital. Robert is suffering from grave injuries and is in constant pain. feeling an immense amount of guilt and grief from the events of the war, Ms. Turner describes how she wanted to give Robert at least a painless death as a way out of the horror of living at the time.

impact on character/plot? Ms. Turner describes how hopeless she felt about the war. To live in a society that had devalued the significant of a human life to the extent that was reached during WWI was shameful to Ms. Turner. though she did not know Robert very well, she still wished to give him solace from the horrible world that he lived in currently. by this point of the novel, Robert's sanity has taken a steep decline and he has gone as far to even kill innocent soldiers and officers. yet, Marian still sees him as someone who deserves grace.

importance? WWI lasted much longer than people anticipated it to. the number of soldiers who died only continued to rise with every passing day of the war, causing people to lose hope and faith in humanity; Marian was no exception. looking at the state of the soldiers and witnessing the immense pain they have to endure is a gruesome sight for Marian, who becomes ashamed of life itself and the world she has to live in.



there cannot be a war.

quote "Robert saw a small white farm with a cow in the yard and he thought: there cannot be a war."

speaker/spoken to

where?

when?

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

this was not an act of anger

quote "Robert sat on the mutilated mattress and opened his kit bag. Everything was there - including the picture of Rowena. Robert burned it in the middle of the floor. This was not an act of anger - but an act of charity."

speaker/spoken to

where?

when?

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

he was a hero.

quote (He) was a hero. He's already been to France – wounded and returned to Canada...He had also been a Varsity all-around athlete.

speaker/spoken to

where?

when?

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

the german lowered the binoculars.

quote "The German - who was lying down at the very edge of the crater - lowered the binoculars."

speaker/spoken to narrator/the reader

where? the crater that Robert and the other soldiers fall into

when? part 3, 1 p.m.

the german lowered the binoculars. (cont)

what is happening? after waking up in the crater, Robert spots a German soldier near the top. he orders his men to stay still and be cautious, but the German makes no move to harm anyone. Robert identifies the soldier to be around 18 years old. after slowly moving out of the crater with his men, the German has still made no hostile intentions towards them. Robert kills him.

impact on character/plot? Robert robs an 18 year old of his life. the note of the German's age is significant because it shows that the soldier was around Robert's age, creating a similarity between the two characters. though Robert kills the German with intentions of protecting his own men, he has still taken the life of someone who had no hostile intent towards him. this displays how Robert's innocence has disappeared.

importance? in addition to the importance of this scene on Robert's character, it also ties back into the symbolism of animals and the theme of nature in the novel. the German soldier chooses not to harm Robert and his men because there is a bird singing. that is, the German chooses the beauty of nature over taking someone else's life.

ross was no hitler

quote "Robert Ross was no Hitler. That was his problem."

speaker/spoken to mariam turner to the archivist

where?

when?

what is happening?

ross was no hitler (cont)

impact on character/plot?

importance?

he fired. a chair fell over in his mind.

quote "He fired. A chair fell over in his mind. He closed his eyes and opened them."

speaker/s-poken to narrator/the reader

where? s.s. massanabie

when? part one, chapter 27

what is happening? robert is in charge of killing a horse with a broken leg to put it out of its misery. however, the act of taking a living thing's life is terrifying to him (at this point in the novel) and he struggles to go through with it.

impact on character/plot? the killing of the horse reminds Robert of Rowena and her death. Rowena's death was accompanied by the killing of her rabbits, causing Robert to associate trauma related to Rowena to the death of animals, hence why being forced to kill a horse causes him to remember Rowena in the moment.

importance? this is the first time in the novel that Robert is forced to take a life. his staggering hesitation shows how unaccustomed Robert is to the workings of war and violence so far, but this is subject to change as the novel continues. slowly, Robert becomes more numb to taking lives, but this is not the case yet. the death of non-human animals in particular is impactful to Robert due to his association between animals and Rowena.

do you think we will ever be forgiven?

quote "Someone once said to Clive: do you think we will ever be forgiven for what we've done? They meant their generation and the war and what the war had done to civilization. Clive said something I've never forgotten. He said: I doubt we'll ever be forgiven. All I hope is - they'll remember we were human beings".

speaker/s-poken to juliet d'orsey/the archivist

where? interview takes place at d'orsey's apartment

when?

what is happening? this paragraph closes part four, which mainly consisted of Juliet's account of St. Aubyn's when she was 12.

impact on character/plot? Robert slowly loses his faith in humanity and the humanity in himself as the novel progresses. while Robert refused to take the life of even a small rabbit towards the beginning of the book, he later takes the lives of innocent soldiers later on. yet, Robert is still a very human character who is experiencing the heavy burden of war-inflicted trauma. the rest of the novel depicts how the trauma follows him and affects every aspect of his life such as his relationship to others.



do you think we will ever be forgiven? (cont)

import
ance? this quote is one of many that sums up the severity of ww1. while propaganda made war seem like an idealized opportunity for men to display their physical strength and heroism, this novel depicts the true horrors of war and its devastating effects on people. while the people who took lives could be considered to be cold blooded killers, Clive asks the future generations to remember that they were, too, people.

never that which is shall die.

quote "Never that which is shall die."

speaker/spoken to

where?

when?

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

1915. the year itself looks sepia

quote "1915. The year itself looks sepia and soiled-muddied like its pictures. In the snapshots everyone at first seems timid-lost-irresolute. Boys and men squinting at the camera."

speaker/spoken to

where?

when?

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

we would call it mad and shoot it

quote "If an animal had done this - we would call it mad and shoot it."

speaker/spoken to

where?

when?

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

not yet.

quote "Not yet."

speaker/spoken to robert ross/marian turner

where?

when?

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

in september,

quote "In September, he was tried in absentia and - since he could not be kept in prison - he was allowed to go to St. Aubyn's for convalescent treatment."

speaker/spoken to

where?

when?

what is happening?

impact on character/plot?

importance?

Rodwell

character rodwell is first encountered in the dugout
descri-
ption

keeps cages of injured animals beneath bed

especially cares for the toad, who rodwell refers to as a "he"

is an illustrator who believes the subject should be drawn as they are (as realistically as possible)

leaves a letter for robert adressed to his daughter

when transferred to another section of the army, rodwell commits suicide after being forced to witness the skinning of a cat by other soldiers (who are equally as mad)

quotes "I am alive in everything I touch. Touch these pages and you have me in your fingertips. We survive in one another. Everything lives forever. Believe it. Nothing ever dies. I am your father always."



Rodwell (cont)

rodwell's letter to his daughter that robert reads upon hearing about his suicide

lady juliet d'orsey

character description daughter of the marquis of st. aubyn's and lady emmeline

the archivist interviews juliet to gather first hand accounts of robert's life, which are only available through juliet and ms. turner

she provides descriptions of her life when she was 12 years old, the time that her house was converted into the st. aubyn's hospital

she is a curious child who takes no shame in eavesdropping in on conversations and pulling practical jokes on people

falls in love with robert and is jealous of her sister, who becomes romantically involved with him

walks in on taffler's attempt on suicide but feels guilty for intervening; considering the physical and mental pain taffler was in, he would have preferred death

walks in on barbara and robert having violent sex

robert leaves st. aubyn's but returns within a few months to recover from severe burns

juliet stays by robert's side for the five years of robert's stay until his passing

lady barbara d'orsey

character description daughter of the marquis of st. aubyn's and lady emmeline

initially encounters robert during his visits to harris, where she is supposedly dating taffler

lady barbara d'orsey (cont)

juliet describes her to be extremely possessive of the men she is attracted to, who are usually strong and handsome

prior to the war, barbara was jealous of clive and jamie due to their close relationship and lashed out by stealing clive away from other women

when jamie is hospitalized for severe burns, barbara puts up an apathetic front for him

in addition to taffler, barbara becomes involved with major terry and begins an affair with robert

similarly to jamie, barbara loses interest in robert after he is injured by fire

captain eugene taffler

character description first encountered by robert and clifford on the prairie

soldier with a reputation for his heroism and military achievements

at first, robert admires taffler for his confidence and heroism, seeing him as a role model to look up to during his time as a soldier

robert's ideation of taffler is destroyed during his visit to the brothel, where he sees taffler having sex with another man

taffler is present when during robert's visits to harris, as he is with barbara

he helps robert scatter harris' ashes after harris is accidentally cremated

taffler does not appear in the novel again until robert's visit to st. aubyn's, at which point he has lost both his arms in battle; robert is invited there under taffler's forged signature



captain eugene taffler (cont)

juliet walks in on taffler trying to commit suicide by taking off his bandages and rubbing his wounds against the wall

juliet calls for help against taffler's will and he survives the attempt

harris

character description

first meets robert on the s.s. massanabie

cares for the horses on the ship

a poetic character; talks about wanting to see a whale while on the ship

falls ill to pneumonia, robert takes over his job and injures himself

robert and harris form a close friendship during their stay in the infirmary

harris' illness worsens in london and robert takes care to visit him every day; robert feels a similar connection to harris as he did with his sister in that he wanted to be there next to him all the time

harris often rambled in his sick state, speaking often about his love for the ocean

juliet believes that robert was in love with harris

harris dies to his illness and is cremated accidentally

robert, taffler, and barbara scatter harris' ashes on the river; burial at "sea"

ms. ross

character description



By **tofu** (tofu425)
cheatography.com/tofu425/

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