

PART ONE

chapter	summary	literary devices & quotes & notes
prologue	robert is introduced	in media res (in the midst of)
	encounters a black horse and dog	-
chapter 1	narrator equips second person point of view	allusion - "We're told Euripides was killed by dogs - and this is all we know." -
	reader is introduced to be an archivist (someone who looks through historical documents to piece together a historical story)	-
	soldiers who knew robert ross appear to have some resentment towards him	-
	robert is said to have been "consumed by fire"	-
chapter 2	the archivist (the reader) finds a series of pictures and other documents from the time of the novel	-
	they are of: robert and rowena; rabbits and wheelchairs; children, dogs, and horses; barbara d'orsey; the s.s. massanabie; magdalene wood	-
	the time is described as "the war to end all wars"	-
chapter 3	the year is 1915	-
	describes the change in daily life as the war started	-
	april, ypres, 6000 dead & wounded	-

PART ONE (cont)

a photograph of robert on a black horse, riding in front of a trail of fire, is depicted	scene break - the description of the photograph does not directly relate to the rest of the chapter but its importance is established as the archivist appears to want to know its meaning
robert's family introduced: ms. and mr. ross, robert, peggy, stuart	the ross family is wealthy, privileged, and probably well-liked, but this starkly contrasts ross' reputation post-war, meaning something happened during that time that caused people to see him differently
rowena is robert's other sister, but excluded from the family pictures; is hydrocephalic and bound to a wheelchair	-
narrative switches to an interview with marian turner	-
turner was ross' nurse during the war; she describes him as a hero and hints at fire and "the story of the horses"	-
describes the simplicity of the passions involved in the war, comparing it to something as mundane as an argument between her and her sister	"robert ross was no hilter. that was his problem." - means to say that ordinary people and their collective actions lead to tragedies like war, and that no one is as different as they believe themselves to be



PART ONE (cont)

chapter 4 april 2, good friday "it snowed."

robert gets off a train in kingston, ontario

catches a girl staring at him but is distrustful of her because she is a woman

ross is shy of women because of an interaction with heather lawson, a girl he liked; she told him that she was in love with another boy, encouraging ross to start a fight with him; grew upset when ross refused

standing at the station, robert is unmoving

asked by the station master if he is there to join the field artillery

robert eventually starts walking as the snow turns to rain

the melting snow turned to mist, which robert envisions as his childhood memories

"the melting snow began to turn to mist and the mist was filled with rabbits and Rowena and his father and his mother and the whole of his past life—birth and death and childhood."

revealed at the end of the chapter that robert is immobilized by grief from the death of his sister, who had been buried the day before

PART ONE (cont)

chapter 5 rowena dies on a sunday while it was stuart's turn to be watching her

despite robert not being responsible for his sister's death, he blames himself for not being there when she fell because rowena was his responsibility

up until this point, robert's purpose in life was to care for rowena; rowena's death marks the beginning of a new chapter in robert's life

chapter 6 rowena, considering her condition, someone with rowena's condition was not expected to live as long as rowena did, but the family is still heavily burdened with grief

rowena had fallen while playing with her rabbits

rowena's rabbits are symbolic of her character, especially her innocence and gentleness - with rowena's death, those traits in robert being to die as well

chapter 7 ms. ross insists that the rabbits have to be killed, and that robert has to be the one to kill them

regardless of whether it would be practical to keep the rabbits or not, ms. ross insists that they must be killed as a way of coping through the anger she feels at her daughter's death

robert killing the rabbits is again symbolic of the death of innocence in robert



PART ONE (cont)

chapter 8 ms. ross retires to her room and presumably begins to drink

ms. ross equips unhealthy coping mechanisms to cope with the trauma of losing a child

chapter 9 rowena's funeral is held; peggy's boyfriend is present in his soldier's uniform

robert first gathers the idea of enlisting in the army when he sees peggy's boyfriend and thinks about how nice it must be to be able to escape afterwards

robert's hands feel empty and he keeps reaching out for rowena's wheelchair in his mind

with his duty as rowena's protector stripped away from him, robert seeks for something to replace that role in his life, which is perhaps what enlisting in the army meant to him

after the funeral and returning home, ms. ross continues to insist that it must be robert to kill rowena's rabbits "- because he loved her"; after arguing and being frustrated, she retires to her room and returns to alcohol

robert's father eventually hires someone else to come in and kill the rabbits, who robert attacks to stop him

robert fights the hired man as a final attempt to protect rowena even after her death; the killing of the rabbits symbolizes the death of robert's innocence

chapter 10 robert sits in a bathtub after his fight with the hired man; ms. ross walks in and begins reminiscing about robert as a childhood and his tendency to hurt himself skating

water is representative of change; robert is changing away from the child that ms. ross describes

PART ONE (cont)

ms. ross laughs at the memory of robert continuously falling while skating but still persevering until he even became captain of the hockey team

robert falling while playing hockey is somewhat parallel to the fall that killed rowena; ms. ross is bitter that her daughter could not survive a fall that most others would have been able to

suddenly, ms. ross turns bitter towards robert, accusing him of wanting to enlist in the army and telling him to go to hell

ms. ross goes on about how she is but a stranger who cannot maintain robert's life, nor is she responsible for it

"birth i can give you. life, i cannot. not anymore" - ms. ross blames herself for rowena's death but copes through it by taking her anger out on other's like robert

robert leaves the next morning before his mother awakens

chapter 11 robert enlists for the army and is assigned to train in alberta

the feeling of aiming a gun is foreign to robert, and robert wishes he had a mentor or a role model of sorts to follow

robert's want for a role model is a display of robert's glorification of war as a display of masculinity

robert remembers his time as a cadet where he was nicknamed "- blush" due to his tendency to get flushed easily

robert's timid nature shows a stark contrast between his innocence and the difficulties of being a soldier

THEMES

theme	description	part; chapter	quote/example
loss of innocence			from the beginning of the novel, it is heavily hinted at that robert undergoes drastic change throughout the story. robert before going off to war is depicted as someone who comes from a well-liked, privileged family. yet, those who knew robert during the war appear to harbour resentment towards him, indicating that something happened to robert that led peoples' images of him to change.

CHARACTERS

name	description
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SYMBOLS

symbol	description	part; chapter	quote/example
horses			

QUOTES

quote	chapter; page	analysis
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