Nicholas Sparks’ *A Walk to Remember: A Discussion Guide*

By David Bruce

SMASHWORDS EDITION

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Preface

The purpose of this book is educational. I enjoy reading Nicholas Sparks’ *A Walk to Remember*, and I believe that it is an excellent book for young adults (and for middle-aged adults such as myself) to read.

This book contains many questions about Nicholas Sparks’ *A Walk to Remember* and their answers. I hope that teachers of young adults will find it useful as a guide for discussions. It can also be used for short writing assignments. Students can answer selected questions from this little guide orally or in one or more paragraphs.

I hope to encourage teachers to teach Nicholas Sparks’ *A Walk to Remember*, and I hope to lessen the time needed for teachers to prepare to teach this book.

Nicholas Sparks has written many best-selling novels, and I say more power to him. Obviously, he has his finger on the pulse of much of the book-reading public, and this may mean that this book may be successfully used in a class filled with students who are normally non-readers.

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**Prologue**

**What do we learn about the narrator in the prologue?**

- The narrator’s name is Landon Carter.
- He is 57 years old at the time of telling this story.
- He is writing about a year that was important to him. The year began when he was 17 years old.
- He lives in North Carolina, which he calls “one of the most beautiful places in the world” (xii).
- The story he is telling has both joy and sadness.
- When he tells the story, it is the year before the millennium — 1999. Specifically, it is April 12, 1999 — it is spring and “the dogwoods and azaleas are blooming” (xii).
- North Carolina 40 years ago was somewhat different — it was more rural, with dirt roads, at least in the area where the narrator lived.
- Chances are, the narrator is a Baptist, since the young Landon stands outside a Baptist church.

**Chapter 1**

**What kind of a town was Beaufort, North Carolina, in 1958?**

- We have already learned that it is rural, with dirt roads.
- The 1950s is the time of Joe McCarthy and fear of Communists, something that is mentioned in this chapter, but which plays little role in this novel.
- The Civil Rights movement has not started. Black people play little or no role in this novel.
- Religion — especially the Baptist religion — plays a big role in the life of the town.
- There doesn’t seem to be much entertainment or much to do in the town. There is the annual Christmas play. The high school has a theatrical group — and no doubt sports. Boys and girls date (no birth control yet, but some boys do have cars). A baseball game is briefly mentioned. People can volunteer at the orphanage. People go fishing and crabbing. There are slumber parties, and kids go to Cecil’s Diner.
- The year is 1958. The town is Beaufort, North Carolina. We learn that Beaufort is located on
the coast. In the summer, it is really, really humid.

• Blackbeard the pirate lived there, and his pirate ship — Queen Anne’s Revenge — supposedly sank off the coast there.

What do we learn about Hegbert Sullivan in this chapter?

• Hegbert is a Southern Baptist preacher.

• Hegbert is deeply religious. He is against fornication.

• Hegbert has principles. He used to work for Landon’s unscrupulous grandfather, but he quit when he discovered how unscrupulous Landon’s grandfather was.

• Hegbert is very good at discovering where the little boys who mock him hide. When little Landon calls out, “Hegbert is a fornicator!” (4), Hegbert is able to find him with his eyes.

• Hegbert is a writer. He dislikes *A Christmas Carol*, so he rewrites the ending, which upsets some folks. He then writes his own Christmas play, which is about his family.

• Hegbert’s revised ending of *A Christmas Carol* has Scrooge becoming a preacher and going to Jerusalem.

• Hegbert wrote *A Christmas Angel*. It’s about a man who is religious but has a crisis of faith when his wife dies in childbirth. He has a daughter who wants a music box that has a picture of an angel on its top. On Christmas Eve, the man is looking through stores trying to find the music box, but he can’t find it. He meets a mysterious woman who says she will help him find the music box. First they help a homeless person, visit an orphanage and see some kids, then visit an old woman who wants company. Then the mysterious woman asks Hegbert what HE wants for Christmas. He answers that he wants his wife. The mysterious woman has him look into the city water fountain and tells him that he will find what he wants there. He sees his daughter. He starts crying, and the mysterious woman disappears. He goes home to see his daughter. On Christmas, the music box is under the Christmas tree and the angel drawn on top of the music box looks just like the mysterious woman.

• Hegbert dislikes ghosts — unless God sends them.

• Hegbert has translucent skin and white hair.

• Hegbert married late in life: He married at age 43. He had his daughter, Jamie, at 55. His wife, who was 20 years younger than he, died in childbirth.

What do we learn about Landon Carter’s father in this chapter?

• His father is a Congressman.

• His father searches for facts when rooting out Communists. That makes him a good man.

• His father is a politician and can get along with people and come up with a compliment when needed.

• His father lives in Washington, D.C., and is separated from his family for most of the year; because of his work, he is gone for nine months of the year.
• His father does not do with Landon what most boys’ fathers do with their sons. Landon says that his father wasn’t there for him when he was growing up.

• His father and Hegbert don’t get along — possibly because of Landon’s grandfather but also because the Congressman looks for facts in rooting out Communists.

**What was the Joe McCarthy witch-hunt of the 1950s?**

Joseph McCarthy was a Republican Senator from Wisconsin who became famous in February of 1950 when he claimed in a speech that he made in Wheeling, West Virginia, that Communists had infiltrated the State Department. This led to many, many people being falsely accused of being Communist or of having Communist sympathies, and it ruined many lives. Millard Tydings led a Senate investigating committee that investigated the State Department and found no evidence of Communist infiltration. In December of 1954, the Senate voted to censure (reprimand) Joseph McCarthy. His influence immediately diminished, and he died in 1957. Today, “McCarthyism” is a term that refers to sensationalistic attacks made without evidence.

**What do we learn about Landon Carter’s grandfather in this chapter?**

• Basically, we learn that Landon Carter’s grandfather is an SOB.

• He started out as a bootlegger during Prohibition, which shows that he started to make his fortune by breaking the law.

• Later, he opened the Carter Banking and Loan. Mysteriously, the competition burned down. No one ever voiced their suspicions because other buildings had mysteriously burned down, too.

• His bank charged high interest rates and acquired much, much property when borrowers defaulted on their loans. He hired these borrowers to take care of the land (as sharecroppers) and promised to sell it back to them, but he never did.

• He did die, but only after a long and apparently happy life. He outlived two wives and his only son (15-16) — so Landon would seem to be fatherless. Apparently, this is an error on Nicholas Sparks’ part since Landon’s father’s father is the unscrupulous grandfather and since Landon’s father is apparently alive in Chapter 2. He (Landon Carter’s grandfather) died on his yacht while he was vacationing off the Cayman Islands with his mistress.

• Landon believes that his grandfather’s life shows that life is not fair.

**What do we learn about Jamie Sullivan in this chapter?**

• Jamie is very religious. She reads the Bible during her lunch period.

• Jamie is a nonconformist. She doesn’t do the things that other kids do. She doesn’t care about being popular.

• Jamie wears the same brown cardigan sweater day after day. She also wears a plaid skirt and a white blouse.

• Jamie’s hair is in a tight bun, and she never wears makeup.

• Jamie is interested in performing in her father’s play. She will play the angel.

• Jamie is a senior in high school just like Landon.
• Jamie is developing into a young woman. She has a couple of bumps on her chest now that weren’t there previously, and Landon thinks that she is almost pretty.

• It’s a small town, so the children have pretty much grown up together. Landon and Jamie have known each other forever, but they have never been close.

• Jamie does good deeds. She volunteers at the orphanage, and she takes care of hurt animals. Often, she will appear at the local vet’s place of business with a hurt animal.

• Jamie believes that God has a plan for everything.

• Jamie is consistently happy — she is always cheerful.

• People like Jamie — at least older people like Jamie. She will be going down the street, and people will give her a glass of lemonade or a piece of pumpkin bread.

• Jamie is glad that Landon is in the drama class.

• Jamie is thin, and she has honey-blond hair and blue eyes.

What do we learn about Landon Carter (the narrator) in this chapter?
• Landon has a reputation as a rebel at this time, although he doesn’t do much other than soap a few windows or eat boiled peanuts in the graveyard.

• Landon is starting to notice Jamie.

• Landon is observant.

• Landon is much more of a typical teenager than Jamie is. He was also more of a typical kid, apparently, given that he thought it was funny to yell at Hegbert, “Hegbert is a fornicator!” (4).

• Landon decides to take the Drama class because the only alternative is Chemistry II. He is happy that mainly girls are in the class.

What do we learn about Miss Garber in this chapter?
• Miss Garber is the drama teacher.

• She is overweight (250 pounds) and enthusiastic. She is also tall (6 feet 2).

• Miss Garber has flaming red hair.

• She has freckles and is pale.

• She is very much into self-actualization, self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-fulfillment.

• Miss Garber claps for Jamie.

What do you think of the ending of chapter 1?
The chapter ends like this:

… well, almost pretty. Of course, I dismissed that thought right away, but as she looked around the room, she stopped and smiled right at me, obviously glad to see that I was in the class. It wasn’t until later that I would learn the reason why. (26)
This ending leaves us (the readers) with a question: Why is Jamie glad that Landon is in the drama class? It is not a cliffhanger, but it is a reason to keep on reading.

Chapter 2

Why does Landon run for class president?

• Basically, having class president on your college application looks good. Landon wants to go to college, but he can’t go to Yale or Harvard because his grades aren’t good enough.

• Apparently, Landon is one of the richest kids in school — his grandfather made the fortune and his father is a U.S. Congressman — but without the grades, he has to forget about Ivy League schools.

• Landon’s father is a bit pushy, and he wants Landon to go to college. Because of that, he wants Landon to become senior class president.

What do we learn about Landon’s father in this chapter?

• As stated above, Landon’s father is a bit pushy, and he wants Landon to go to college. Because of that, he wants Landon to become senior class president.

• Landon is afraid that his father is trying to make him into his own image. We already know that Landon resents his father because his father is away from home for nine months of the year on account of having to be in Washington, D.C. His father and mother want Landon to be raised the same way as his father was raised, so Landon and his mother stay in North Carolina all year.

What do we learn about Eric Hunter in this chapter?

• Landon may be the richest kid in the school, but he is not the most popular. Eric Hunter is the most popular. For one thing, Eric Hunter has a cool name and he is a jock. He is the star quarterback of a team that has won back-to-back state titles. This is a big deal.

• Eric is Landon’s best friend, but he doesn’t mind teasing Landon a little, such as asking if he has a date for the homecoming dance when he knows that Landon does not have a date.

• Eric gets Landon the jock vote, and so Landon is elected senior class president.

How does Landon win the senior class president election?

• Eric gets Landon the jock vote, and so Landon is elected senior class president. In addition, he gets Landon the vote of the jocks’ girlfriends.

• Of course, the election is a popularity contest. It’s not like the senior class president does anything important.

• The other contestants are poor candidates in a popularity contest. Maggie Brown is smart, a student politician (student council for three years and the junior class president); unfortunately, she is not pretty and she has gained 20 pounds over the summer, so guys are not going to vote for her. John Foreman is simply annoying — a know-it-all — and no one will vote for him.

What do we learn about Hegbert Sullivan in this chapter?

• He does set rules for his daughter. When Landon arrives to ask Jamie to go to the homecoming
dance, he finds out that Hegbert does not allow boys in the house when he is gone. Apparently, he is afraid of fornicators.

• Jamie does respect the rule. She and Landon sit out on the porch.

What do we learn about Jamie Sullivan in this chapter?

• She doesn’t seem overly concerned about dating. She had not made plans to go to the homecoming dance, apparently assuming that no one would ask her.
• She does agree to go to the dance with Landon, although she seems to be surprised that he asked her.
• We learn that she and her father had been to a doctor and so she had missed school that day. Landon asks if her father is OK. She smiles as she says that he is healthy.
• We learn that she tells Landon that he must not fall in love with her, although Landon assumes that she is joking. (She laughs when she tells him that.)

What do we learn about Landon Carter (the narrator) in this chapter?

• Landon is a typical teen in many ways. He worries about getting a date to the homecoming date, and he worries about being rejected — and about being rejected in public.
• Landon does have resentments — in some ways, he resents his father.
• Landon is aware that some kids are not popular in school.
• Landon is scared that he may have to go to the homecoming dance alone — or with his mother as his date.

Why does Landon ask Jamie for a date?

• Landon had a girlfriend who dumped him right before the homecoming dance; otherwise, he would have gone with her. Angela Clark dumps him for a mechanic who apparently imitates James Dean.
• All of the other girls are taken, although Landon tries, even asking a few girls who have graduated from high school. Basically, Jamie is the only somewhat pretty girl left for Landon to ask to the dance.
• It’s either ask Jamie or go to the dance with his mother. He may end up talking to an unpopular guy or passing out punch the whole time or cleaning up vomit if Jamie won’t go to the homecoming dance with him.

What do you think of the ending of chapter 2?

• It’s a good ending. Readers will keep reading. Jamie says that she would love to go to the dance with Landon, then makes him promise that he won’t fall in love with her:

  “I’d love to,” she finally said, “on one condition.”

  I steadied myself, hoping it wasn’t something too awful.

  “Yes?”
“You have to promise that you won’t fall in love with me.”

I knew she was kidding by the way she laughed, and I couldn’t help but breathe a sigh of relief. Sometimes, I had to admit, Jamie had a pretty good sense of humor.

I smiled and gave her my word. (44)

Chapter 3

What do we learn about Hegbert Sullivan in this chapter?

• Hegbert definitely loves his daughter.

• Hegbert questions Landon, apparently to make sure he won’t mess with his daughter, Jamie. Hegbert seems worried that Landon has planned a cruel joke of some kind, perhaps like the joke played on Carrie in Stephen King’s novel Carrie.

• We would expect a preacher to talk to a boy about to take his daughter out for the first time.

• Landon definitely thinks that Hegbert doesn’t like him.

• Hegbert thinks that Landon is irresponsible.

• Hegbert has a curfew for Jamie. She has to be home by 11 p.m. The dance ends at midnight.

Is Landon’s and Jamie’s date successful?

• It could have been worse. Jamie dressed nicely, but she was not dressed nearly as well as the other girls.

• Landon was afraid of being teased, but Jamie doesn’t have many friends, and his friends stayed away from them, so he and Jamie were alone for most of the evening.

• Jamie definitely had a good time. She thought everything was wonderful and complimented Landon on the decorations. (As senior class president, he had to help with the decorations.)

• Jamie is still Jamie. She talks about religion. She wants Landon to help with the decorations at a church function someday. (Landon is unenthusiastic.)

• As it turns out, Jamie can dance.

What happened when Angela and Landon first French-kissed?

• They knocked their teeth together so hard that Landon saw stars and had to take an aspirin when he returned home.

How does Jamie keep Landon from being beat up by Lew?

• Lew wants to pick a fight with Landon because he was looking at Angela. (Angela is Landon’s old girlfriend and Lew’s new girlfriend.)

• Jamie interferes by being cheerful and talking to Lew. As it happens, she was in his grandmother’s house. His grandmother needed help in bringing in the groceries. Jamie helped her, and she saw Lew’s photograph on the mantel.

• This confuses Lew. Should he pick a fight with the date of a girl who helped his grandmother
bring in her groceries?

• Lew ends up leaving Landon alone. Later, he ends up leaving Angela when she gets drunk and starts vomiting. Classy guy, that Lew.

• Lew, by the way, is the person who spiked the punch that got Angela drunk.

• Landon, by the way, is not a fighter. Usually, his best friend, Eric Hunter, is around, so everyone leaves Landon alone. In the third grade, Landon was supposed to be in a fight, but he started crying before the other guy hit him.

• Jamie invites Lew to sit down and talk. Lew is amazed and leaves.

What good deed do Jamie and Landon do for Landon’s old girlfriend?

• After Lew abandons Angela because she is so drunk, Jamie and Landon take care of her. Angela vomits in the girls’ restroom, and Jamie and Landon clean it up. This is ironic. Landon had asked Jamie to go to the homecoming dance so that he wouldn’t be cleaning up vomit, and here he and his date clean up the vomit.

• Angela is very good at vomiting. She even vomits on the ceiling. In fact, she vomits everywhere but into the toilet. Angela even vomits in Landon’s car. (The stink is so bad that Landon and Jamie roll the windows down.) Landon and Jamie take Angela home to her mother.

• Jamie and Landon help Angela in part because getting drunk is a big offence and Angela could get in big trouble. Of course, Jamie helps because she is a nice person.

• Jamie and Landon end up covered in vomit.

• Angela’s mother takes care of her daughter, but doesn’t thank Jamie and Angela — apparently, she is too busy and too embarrassed to do that.

How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance in this chapter?

• Basically, the date is at least a partial success. Jamie, at least, had a good time.

• They do not share a good-night kiss, but Jamie does thank Landon for a good time, even though she is covered in vomit.

What do you think of the ending of chapter 3?

• Nicholas Sparks knows how to end chapters. We read:

> Here she was, covered in puke, actually thanking me for the evening. Jamie Sullivan could really drive a guy crazy sometimes. (62)

• Speaking for myself, I want to know what happens next. Will there be a second date?

Chapter 4

Why does Landon hang out in the graveyard?

• Basically, it’s fun.

• Landon and his friends hang out, talk, and eat boiled peanuts.
• One of the things they do is to talk about the family whose tombstones they sit on — the tombstones are actually rather comfortable. The father, Henry Preston, was a one-armed lumberjack — as they find out from a visit to the library — and he was reputed to be able to chop down a tree as quickly as a lumberjack with two arms.

• Of course, the boys talk about girls. There’s a lot of teasing going on. On p. 112, we find out that some of the talk is racy.

• No doubt, it’s a mild form of teenage rebellion.

**What do we learn about Eric, Landon’s friend, in this chapter?**

• Eric outweighs Landon by 30 pounds.

• Eric bruises Landon occasionally — often with a slap on the back or a punch to the arm. This is not mean; Eric is simply a little rough in his male camaraderie.

**Landon is known as a bit of a juvenile delinquent. Is that reputation justified?**

• No, it is not.

• We can think of lots worse things than hanging out in a graveyard at night and eating boiled peanuts with a bunch of male friends. As teenage rebellion goes, this is very mild.

**Jamie is “not that kind of girl” (65). What kind of girl is she?**

• Eric teases Landon by asking if he kissed Jamie after they cleaned up the bathroom.

• Landon replies eventually that Jamie is “not that kind of girl” (65). Because this sounds like a defense of Jamie, Eric continues to tease Landon.

• We do see that Landon is quick witted in the scene with Eric. Eric teases him about liking Jamie, but Landon uses humor to deflect the teasing. He says that he was using Jamie to make Margaret jealous — and it worked because Margaret has been sending him lots of love notes. Margaret is a hot babe — but not a smart babe — and the image of Landon and Margaret together is funny to Eric. In the next chapter, we read that Margaret’s stupidity can make her as annoying as Jamie but that her legs tend to make up for her stupidity.

• Jamie is a good girl with strong Christian values. She respects her father, and she obeys his rules. For example, when her father is not at home, she and Landon sit on the porch. Jamie is not allowed to have boys inside the house when Hegbert (Jamie’s father) is not at home.

**Why does Landon agree to star in the play with Jamie?**

• Although Landon thinks that drama class is very boring, he does get to star in the Christmas play with Jamie, although he doesn’t want to.

• One reason is that the boy who was going to star in the play is unsuited for the role. Eddie Jones is skinny and pimply — he is hardly leading-man material. He also stutters — a major problem for a would-be actor.

• A second reason is that Eddie Jones is having second thoughts about starring in the play even though he volunteered for the role. He knows that other students will make fun of him — and of Jamie. In fact, Landon himself has been calling the two leading actors “the dynamic duo” (76).
• A third reason is that there is a shortage of other boys available to play the role. Hegbert has decreed that only seniors can play the leading roles. The number of seniors at the school is small. Half of the senior boys are on the football team, and another quarter of the boys are in band. Among the boys remaining are a few who could have played the leading male role but because of circumstances cannot. For example, Darren Woods broke his arm when he slipped on a boat and Jeff Bangert has to work in the family store because his father is ill.

• A fourth reason is that Jamie has asked him for a favor, and Jamie never asks anyone for a favor. It is important to Jamie that the play this year be a success because she is starring in the play and she wants it to be a success for her father.

• Landon agrees to star in the play because it seems that no one else who is suitable can do it.

**How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance in this chapter?**

• Jamie calls Landon to ask for a favor.

• Landon does Jamie a favor by agreeing to star in the play.

• Because the two are going to be starring in the play together, they will spend a lot of time during the next month together as they rehearse and act in the play.

• However, Landon is not in love with Jamie at this point. Following their date together, he has not spoken to her much and he has not felt like taking her to Cecil’s Diner for a basket of hush puppies and an RC Cola.

• Note that Nicholas Sparks, the author, is careful to keep the setting Southern. Hush puppies are gobs of fried corn meal. They are good, and they are a Southern treat (like grits). Boiled peanuts are another Southern treat.

**What do you think of the ending of chapter 4?**

• I think that the reader will keep reading to find out the answers to a few questions:
  
  • What will happen when Landon and Jamie spend a lot of time together?
  
  • Will the play be a success?

**Chapter 5**

**What do we learn about Toby Bush, the handyman?**

• Toby Bush made the props for the play. Unfortunately, he is a bad handyman, so after a while, the props started to fall apart. Hegbert has done his best to mend them, but he is not a good handyman, either, so the props have nails sticking out of them. The Playhouse stage is where the play will be performed, but management isn’t happy about the props being knocked over and the sticking-out nails making marks on the stage floor, so the play has been rehearsed elsewhere to work out the bugs so the cast and crew don’t knock over the props so often.

• Toby Bush is an alcoholic. He drinks beer all day, and he is “flying” (79) by 2 p.m.

• Toby Bush hits his fingers with his hammer when he gets drunk. At least once per working day, he hits his fingers. All of his knuckles are the size of walnuts from all the times that they have been hit throughout the years.
• In addition to being a drinker, Toby Bush is a swearer. Whenever he hits his fingers, he drops his hammer and swears. Of course, Hegbert doesn’t go in for either drinking or swearing, so Toby Bush is unhappy to be working for Hegbert.

• Toby Bush is a bad handyman — he can’t find a permanent job.

How do rehearsals for the play go?

• Eddie doesn’t mind giving up the lead role — in fact, he is relieved that he doesn’t have to play it. As a reward, Miss Garber allows him to play the mute role of a bum.

• Landon doesn’t put much effort into rehearsals. He isn’t trying to learn his lines, and he doesn’t look at the script when he isn’t at rehearsal.

• Jamie, of course, knows her lines perfectly — and everyone else’s lines, too.

• Landon at first felt “noble” (82) for agreeing to play the lead in the play, but that feeling wore off quickly.

• Landon occasionally cracks a joke during rehearsal, and everyone except Miss Garber and Jamie laughs.

How do Landon’s friends treat him when they learn that he is going to star in the play with Jamie?

• Landon’s friends engage in some major teasing.

• Sally talks of Landon and Jamie becoming engaged. Margaret hears about this, and like Sally she teases Landon about his “fiancée.”

• Landon doesn’t tell his friends that he volunteered to play the lead male role; instead, he says that Miss Garber forced him to play it.

What do we learn about Eric, Landon’s friend, in this chapter?

• Eric is a football star. We learn that Landon’s high school (Beaufort) has won its third state championship in a row.

• Eric takes lots of remedial classes.

• Eric is shrewd; he can tease Landon very well.

• When Jamie comes looking for Landon at 9 p.m. — which is late for her (and of course she is carrying a Bible) — Eric is able to persuade her that the orphans she cares about would love to see the play, so they ought to schedule a performance for the orphans as a kind of dress rehearsal before the real production.

• Jamie agrees happily to this idea, and Landon spends 14 hours the next day memorizing his lines (and cursing his friends). (Landon does not want to look bad in front of the orphans.)

• Because of Jamie’s conversation, Landon’s friends get some new ammunition to tease him with:

  • Landon volunteered for the role; he wasn’t forced into it by Miss Garber.
• Landon had sat with Jamie on her front porch once before, and Jamie has invited him to do so again (to help him learn his lines).

**How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance in this chapter?**

• The two keep meeting each other and spending time together.

• Now they will have to spend more time together because of the play performance before the orphans.

**What do you think of the ending of chapter 5?**

• I think that the reader will keep reading to find out the answers to a few questions:
  • What will happen when Landon and Jamie spend a lot of time together?
  • Will the play in front of the orphans be a success?

**Chapter 6**

**What is Miss Garber’s opinion of the idea of performing the play in front of the orphans?**

• She thinks that it is marvelous — that is her favorite word, by the way. She uses it a zillion times after finding out that Landon has suddenly learned his lines.

• A bug crawls up Eddie’s nose, he sneezes, and the bug lands near Norma Jean’s leg. She is grossed out, and there is pandemonium. Miss Garber takes the pandemonium as a positive reaction to performing the play in front of the orphans and says, “Marvelous” (92).

**Compare and contrast Landon’s home with Jamie’s home.**

• Jamie lives across town and across the railroad tracks (71).

• Landon’s father is a Washington, D.C., politician, and his home is fabulous.

• Landon’s home has a den and a library.

• Landon’s home has many paintings of ancestors.

• Landon’s home has 20-year-old furniture that looks almost new. The furniture is made from cherry and mahogany and was specially designed for each room.

• Jamie visits Landon’s house because Landon is going to the orphanage with her, and he wants to be well dressed when he meets the director of the orphanage.

• Jamie is very impressed; she has never seen a house that nice before.

• Landon lives in a very good part of town where there are many large and nice houses.

• Jamie’s house is poverty stricken in contrast. Of course, we know that it is clean and a good home.

**What is Landon’s mother like?**

• Landon’s mother is a nice lady.

• Like all other adults, Landon’s mother loves Jamie. It’s true that Hegbert’s sermons are often
directed at Landon’s family, but Landon’s mother doesn’t hold that against Jamie.

• Landon’s mother drinks mint juleps.

• Landon’s mother knows Landon well. She is amazed when Jamie tells her that it was Landon’s idea to perform the play in front of the orphans. (It was Eric’s idea, but Eric teased Landon by telling Jamie that it was Landon’s idea.) Landon’s mother knows that something lies behind this story (Landon would not be willing to volunteer such an idea), but she doesn’t know what.

**Does Landon know what he wants to do in the future?**

• Not really. When Jamie asks him, he says that he would like to be a one-armed lumberjack after he goes to college at UNC. Jamie doesn’t laugh.

• Jamie thinks that Landon would be a good minister because he is good with people and they would listen to him.

**What does Jamie want to do in the future?**

• Jamie wants a wedding with her father walking her down the aisle of a church filled to bursting.

• Landon says that she will get married; however, he doesn’t mention the part about the church being filled to bursting. He doesn’t think that Jamie and Hegbert are popular enough for that to happen.

**Why can’t Landon and Jamie perform the play for the orphans?**

• Mr. Jenkins, the head of the orphanage, doesn’t think that it is a good idea.

• The play is about a father learning to love and value his daughter, and Christmas is hard enough for the orphans without being reminded that they don’t have the love of a father or any other parent.

• Jamie immediately realizes that Mr. Jenkins is right — so does Landon.

**What is the orphanage like?**

• Depressing.

• The rec room is large and has few and very old toys.

• The rec room has a small TV and around 30 chairs in front of it. Pretty much the only children with a good view are the children in the front row.

• There is a Ping-Pong table, but it doesn’t have a net. The top is cracked. Styrofoam cups are on its dusty top. Landon realizes that no one has used the Ping-Pong table to play Ping-Pong for months or years.

• The orphans don’t have coloring books, so they color newspaper pages instead.

• The orphans do have stuffed animals that they are allowed to keep in their rooms.

• Jamie still wants to do something special for the orphans, but she doesn’t know what since the idea about the Christmas play didn’t work out.
• The orphans know Jamie; most are happy to see her.

• Jamie enjoys being with the orphans. She enjoys their smiles when she brings them books from the library or a new game to play.

**How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance in this chapter?**

• They are spending time together and learning about each other.

• Jamie learns how nice Landon’s home is.

• Landon learns how much Jamie cares about the orphans and what the orphanage is like.

**What do you think of the ending of chapter 6?**

• The reader will wonder this: What special thing will Jamie find to do for the orphans?

**Chapter 7**

**What kind of criminal activity exists in Beaufort?**

• Very, very little, although Miss Garber does ask Landon to walk Jamie home one evening early in December when rehearsal runs late and it is dark outside.

• By the way, we learn that Jamie’s home is on the way home from Landon’s house although previously we read that Jamie’s house was on the other side of town and across the railroad tracks (71).

• The biggest crime was a murder by stabbing committed outside Maurice’s Tavern six years ago. The murder occurred because someone welshed on a bet, and the murderer later walked into the police station and gave himself up, saying that a bar fight had gotten out of hand. The perpetrator spent six years in the penitentiary.

• According to Landon, the Beaufort police have the most boring jobs in the world because of a severe lack of crime. (What can you expect when the juvenile delinquents do nothing worse than hang out in graveyards and eat boiled peanuts?)

**How does Jamie spend her leisure time?**

• She helps wounded critters, works with the orphans, and reads the Bible.

• She studies for classes; her gpa is very high and she may even become valedictorian at her high school when she graduates.

• She plays gin rummy and spends time with her father.

• She says that her father has a good sense of humor — something that greatly surprised Landon.

• She doesn’t have many friends to hang out with.

• She says that she isn’t planning to go to college next year.

**Compare and contrast Landon’s father with Jamie’s father.**

* Landon’s father
Politician
Rich
Has a son
Not around much
Son sneaks out at night

*Jamie’s father*
Minister
Financially poor
Has a daughter
Around all the time
Strict with his daughter
Reads the Bible
Jamie says he has a good sense of humor

**How important is Jamie’s Bible to her? Why?**

- The Bible belonged to Jamie’s mother.
- The Bible is rather tattered.
- After Jamie’s mother died in the hospital giving birth to Jamie, Hegbert carried both the Bible and Jamie out of the hospital.
- Jamie’s mother read the Bible at night.
- The Bible was a wedding present, but Jamie’s mother claimed it before Hegbert did.

**What was Jamie’s mother like?**

- Jamie’s mother read the Bible a lot and especially during times of trouble — Landon remembers that Jamie’s mother suffered through miscarriages before having Jamie.
- Jamie missed her mother the way that Landon sometimes misses his father, who is not around much.

**What do we learn about Eric and Margaret in this chapter?**

- Apparently, Eric and Margaret are dating, since they are out riding in Eric’s car. Also, we find out that they are heading to Cecil’s Diner, which is a hot date spot in Beaufort.
- Eric crashes occasionally, but he can come up with a good explanation — even if it isn’t very plausible.
- For example, he once told his mother that he crashed because a cow came out of nowhere, darting quickly in front of him. This is a bad explanation because cows move slowly — they
don’t dart. The explanation would have been plausible if he had said that a deer — not a cow — had darted in front of him.

- Eric’s mother believed him. She used to be a head cheerleader, so I think that we are meant to believe that head cheerleaders are dumb. (Perhaps Margaret is a head cheerleader.)

- Landon knows that the kids will be gossiping about him and Jamie at Cecil’s Diner in a few moments and at school later, and he isn’t pleased about it.

**How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance (or not advance) in this chapter?**

- The day after Eric and Margaret see Landon and Jamie, they have a kind of argument. Actually, Jamie doesn’t argue, but Landon is in a bad mood because of the teasing of Eric and the other kids and because of getting his fingers banged while moving props with the clumsy Eddie.

- Because of all the teasing, Landon spends his lunch period in the library to get away from the teasing.

- Landon goes through the motions of reciting his lines without doing any acting. Miss Garber is not pleased.

- Jamie requests that Landon walk her home. Because the Playhouse is in the middle of town, this means that Landon will have to go far out of his way, so he tells no. However, Miss Garber overhears Jamie’s request, and she makes Landon walk her home. (Miss Garber is hoping that Jamie can get Landon’s acting back on track.)

- Landon is in a foul mood. (For one thing, because of all the work on the play, including moving props and rehearsing, he hasn’t eaten for a long time.)

- Landon walks in front of Jamie, his hands in his pockets, not looking to see if Jamie is following him.

- Landon raises his voice to Jamie for the first time, and he tells her that they are not friends, although she acts as if they are.

- Jamie is still Jamie. She thanks Landon for walking her home, making him hate himself because he knows that he is in the wrong.

**What do you think of the ending of chapter 7?**

- Once again, we wonder what will happen. Landon has said that they are not friends, and we wonder how their relationship will develop.

- In romantic comedy, this kind of thing happens as a matter of cliché. True love never did run smooth, and here we find a kind of disagreement between Landon and Jamie.

**Chapter 8**

**How does Landon apologize to Jamie?**

- Landon is a good kid. He knows that he was mean to Jamie the night before, so he wants to apologize to her now. He doesn’t have a chance to apologize to her at school, so he apologizes to her right before the play, asking to speak to her alone and taking her a little way away from Hegbert and Miss Garber.
When Jamie asks Landon if he meant what he had said to her the night before (that they weren’t friends), Landon doesn’t answer her question, saying instead that he was in a bad mood. He then promises, however, to make it up to her.

What does Eric think Landon is going to do in the play?

- Eric thinks that Landon will deliberately mess up the play, perhaps by knocking over the props or flubbing his lines.
- When Landon tells Eric that he is going to play his role straight and not mess up the play, Eric tells him that he is growing up. From Eric, that may not be a compliment, but Landon knows that he is right.
- By the way, Eric gives Eddie a wedgie at least once a week. Eric is a bully.

What does Landon learn about Jamie in this chapter?

- Mainly, Landon learns that Jamie is beautiful. Before dressing for her role as an angel, Jamie wore the same old sweater and had her hair up the same old way, but when Landon sees her on stage as the angel, he thinks that Jamie is beautiful.
- Jamie’s hair is down and is much longer than Landon had expected. She has glitter in her hair, and she is dressed in white. Landon thinks, “She looked exactly like an angel” (134).
- The first line that Landon speaks to Jamie in the play is, “You’re beautiful” (135). It sets the tone of the play. Landon has never nailed the line in rehearsal, mainly because he has never thought that Jamie was beautiful, but he nails the line now because he believes it.

How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance in this chapter?

It advances because Landon now realizes that Jamie is — or can be — beautiful.

No doubt, however, Jamie will go back to wearing her hair up and wearing the same old sweater.

What do you think of the ending of chapter 8?

Interesting. Now that Landon knows that Jamie can be beautiful, we wonder what will happen next.

Chapter 9

How successful is the play?

- Absolutely successful. It is a “smashing success” — and more (136).
- Even Eric congratulates Landon: “The two of you did good. […] I’m proud of you, buddy” (137).
- Miss Garber is saying, “Marvelous!” (137), and Hegbert has tears in his eyes.
- Jamie, of course, is happy. Landon realizes that her father will drive her home, and for once he realizes that he wishes he could walk her home.

Does the success of the play change Jamie?
Absolutely not. The next school day, she is the same old Jamie. Her hair is up in a bun, and she is wearing the same brown cardigan and plaid skirt she normally wears.

The kids treat her nicely, but Landon is afraid that it won’t last. She is a local celebrity for now, but not for much longer.

**Where does the extra money for the orphanage come from?**

- Jamie wants Landon to make up to her the mean things he said the last time he walked her home. (He agrees, although he thought that he had made it up to her with his performance in the school play.) She wants Landon to collect the cans for money for the orphanage Christmas party that she had on the counters of local businesses all year.

- Landon collects the cans, although it takes him longer than he thought it would. (Beaufort is a small town, so he has to talk to every proprietor.)

- Landon counts the money, and he is shocked by how little it is. (Perhaps he shouldn’t be shocked because he and his friends used to put slugs — pieces of metal — and paper clips in the cans.

- The money comes to $55.73. Since there are 30 orphans, this is not much money — even in 1958.

- However, he tells Jamie that since it is her project that he and she will count the money later. When they count the money — although Landon knows exactly how much it is — it comes to almost $247. (Of course, the extra money comes from Landon.) Jamie had wanted this Christmas to be special for the orphans, and that amount of money will make it special.

**How successful is the Christmas party for the orphans?**

- The Christmas party is successful and special indeed.

- Jamie knows the children, so she picked out the toys.

- Landon goes to the Christmas on Christmas Eve.

- Landon thinks, “It was even better than I’d imagined” (147).

- There is a very nicely decorated Christmas tree and presents and goodies.

- This time, Jamie wears a red V-neck sweater, so she has dressed up for the occasion. Also, her hair is down.

- The children seem to have gotten more than they expected, since they keep “thanking Jamie over and over” (150).

**What is your opinion of the Christmas presents that Landon and Jamie give each other?**

- Landon’s present is another sweater — it is brown like Jamie’s other sweater. This is a good Christmas present, but Jamie’s present to Landon is better.

- Jamie gives her mother’s Bible to Landon. This present seems to be excessive, in my opinion, but Jamie says that she wants Landon to have the Bible. This almost certainly shows that Jamie is in love with Landon.
How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance in this chapter?

• It advances very much in this chapter.

• Jamie gives Landon a present with loads of sentimental value, and Landon realizes that he has fallen in love with Jamie.

• Landon has also done a very impressive good deed in giving his own money to the orphans.

What do you think of the ending of chapter 9?

Landon realizes that he has fallen in love with Jamie:

[…] I smiled at her and all I could do was wonder how I’d ever fallen in love with a girl like Jamie Sullivan. (154)

Obviously, we want to know what will happen next.

Chapter 10

Does Jamie know what Landon did for the orphans?

• Yes, she does. She once told Landon that she wasn’t a dimwit, and she shows it by knowing that he donated his own money to the orphans.

• Landon worries that she may have figured out why he invited her to the Homecoming Dance — there was no one left to ask.

What happens during the ride back from the orphanage?

• The big important event is that Jamie lets Landon hold her hand.

In what ways is Hegbert acting oddly?

• His sermons are shorter.

• During sermons, he sometimes stops and he seems as though he is thinking of something else as he gets a strange look on his face.

• When Jamie exclaimed earlier about how much money had been collected for the orphans, Hegbert comes into the room and tells her that he is proud of her and that he loves her. He doesn’t even seem to know that Landon is present.

What is Landon’s opinion of God’s plan?

• Jamie is wondering, “Why do things have to turn out the way they do?” (158).

• Jamie has a secret, but Landon doesn’t find out what it is until later.

• Landon’s opinion about God’s plan is one that he considers to be good. He tells Jamie,

I don’t think that we’re meant to understand it all the time. I think that sometimes we just have to have faith. (158)

• Jamie agrees with Landon’s opinion.

What do we learn about Landon’s house and home?
• Landon invites Jamie over for Christmas dinner, which is the evening meal. (As is traditional in the South, Jamie asks what she can bring, but Landon tells her not to bring anything.) Hegbert allows Jamie to go, and Landon’s mother kisses Jamie before Landon has ever kissed her.

• We learn that Landon’s mother is a poor housekeeper. She can make sandwiches, but mustard stains on her fingernails can upset her for days.

• The house, of course, is fabulous. They have a maid and a cook because Landon’s mother is bad at doing both. Jamie, of course, is very impressed by the house.

• The house also has a garden.

• The house was owned by a signer of the Declaration of Independence: Richard Dodds.

• The house is listed in the National Historic Register.

What do Landon and Jamie talk about in the garden?

• Jamie asks about Landon’s grandfather — the SOB who made the family rich. Landon says that what Jamie had heard is true, and Jamie asks if he would give the money back. This is something that Landon has not thought of before, and he is unenthusiastic about the idea.

• Landon asks if Hegbert likes him. Jamie replies that Hegbert worries about her and about him — for the same reason that Jamie does. Once again, Jamie has a secret but we don’t know what it is. Jamie does say that Hegbert likes Landon.

What is your opinion of 1950s hanging out together?

• It’s quite a bit different from today, I think. The 1950s kids in the novel have Christmas dinner together, and they eat hush puppies and drink RC Colas at Cecil’s Diner. They do, however, have cars to drive around in.

How successful is Landon’s Christmas dinner with Jamie?

• Very successful. They have another chance to get to know each other, and Landon’s mother likes Jamie.

How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance in this chapter?

• It advances quite a bit. Landon has wanted to kiss Jamie, and it finally happens when the two are alone together on Hegbert’s porch. (Hegbert isn’t home, so of course Landon can’t go inside with Jamie.)

• Landon describes their kiss in this way:

    It wasn’t that long, and it certainly wasn’t the kind of kiss you see in movies these days, but it was wonderful in its own way, and all I can remember about the moment is that when our lips first touched, I knew the memory would last forever. (171)

What do you think of the ending of chapter 10?

• The relationship advances, and we want to know what will happen next.

Chapter 11
Has Landon been in love before?

- Landon tells Jamie that she is “a great kisser” (173).
- Jamie admits to Landon that he is the first boy he has ever kissed; Landon of course has kissed at least one other girl: his former girlfriend Angela.
- Landon says to Jamie that he has been in love before, but the true answer is probably no.
- Landon may have thought he was in love with Angela, but he realizes this:
  
  […] looking back, I’d realized that what I’d felt for Angela was totally different from what I was feeling now. (174)

What do we learn about Landon’s mother in this chapter?

- Being a woman, Landon’s mother knows something about girls.
- It is Landon’s mother’s idea for Landon to take Jamie out on a real date rather than simply to go over to her house and spend time with her every day.
- Landon, of course, is worried about money, but he admits that he had donated the money in his bank account to the orphans, and his mother says that the money for the real date shall be found.
- Landon’s mother calls the fancy restaurant after Landon is rejected when he asked for a reservation. Because of the Carter family reputation, a reservation is made right away. Either Landon’s father will be asked for a favor soon, or the restaurant owner is worried about Landon’s evil grandfather, who we are told is still alive (175) although earlier (15) we learned that he is dead.
- Landon’s mother thought that Landon should buy Jamie perfume, but Hegbert won’t allow her to wear makeup (except for the Christmas play) and so she is unlikely to be allowed to wear perfume.
- Jamie’s mother does make a few good comments about girls:
  
  “[…] young girls, even Jamie, like to be made to feel special.” (176)
  
  “Going to her house is a nice thing to do, but it’s not the most romantic thing there is. You should do something that will really let her know how you feel about her.” (176)

Does Landon go about asking for the date in the right way?

- I think that he does.
- Landon goes to the church to speak to Hegbert in his office about letting Jamie go on a date. Landon is dressed nicely in a jacket and tie.
- Landon calls Hegbert “sir” (179).
- When Landon says that his parents will not be along on the date (no chaperones), Hegbert says no, but he does thank Landon for asking for permission first.
- A few moments later Landon apologizes for the things he used to do to Hegbert when he (Landon) was a kid, and he tells Hegbert, “I love her” (180). Hegbert replies that he knows that
Landon loves Jamie, and he tells him to have Jamie home by 10 p.m.

- When Landon looks back, Hegbert’s face is in his hands and he looks as if he is crying. Jamie later explains it away by saying that Hegbert is realizing that his daughter is growing up.

**How successful is Landon and Jamie’s date?**

- The date is very successful.
- The restaurant is on the waterfront, and it is New Year’s Eve, so everyone is enjoying themselves.
- Jamie says about the restaurant, “It’s beautiful here” (182).
- They talk about the homecoming dance, and Landon admits why he asked her to the dance. Jamie laughs — she had already figured out why.
- They eat sea bass and salads, then dance.
- This is Jamie’s first real date.
- The other, older people watch them dance and remember when they were young.

**What is your opinion of 1950s hanging out together?**

- This real date is probably like many real dates today, and the hanging out together back then is somewhat like hanging out together today. However, today young people have more options, and often alcohol is involved today.
- Landon and Jamie go down to the river and throw stones in it.
- They kiss sometimes, and Landon doesn’t even think about second base — touching Jamie’s breasts.
- They hang out at Cecil’s Diner once. Landon wants other people to know that he and Jamie are together; unfortunately, no one else is at the diner.

**What do other people think of Jamie?**

- Landon doesn’t want to tell her, and he lies at first, but then he promises to tell the truth, and eventually he does.
- The truth is that other people think that Jamie is “strange” (187). Landon admits it, although it hurts him.
- Landon, of course, knows different:

  There was something nice when I kissed her, something gentle and right, and that was enough for me. The more I did it, the more I realized that Jamie had been misunderstood her entire life, not only by me, but by everyone.

  Jamie wasn’t simply the minister’s daughter, someone who read the Bible and did her best to help others. Jamie was also a seventeen-year-old girl with the same hopes and doubts that I had. At least, that’s what I assumed, until she finally told me. (184-185)
“You’re a wonderful person, Jamie. You’re beautiful, you’re kind, you’re gentle … you’re everything that I’d like to be. If people don’t like you, or they think you’re strange, then that’s their problem” (188).

**Why doesn’t Jamie want Landon to be in love with her?**

- Landon tells Jamie that he loves her, but it doesn’t have the effect he wanted.
- Landon says,
  
  “I love you, Jamie. […] You’re the best thing that’s ever happened to me.” (188)
- Jamie replies,
  
  “You can’t be in love with me, Landon,” she said through red and swollen eyes. “We can be friends, we can see each other … but you can’t love me.” (190)

- Landon then learns that Jamie is very ill, and she is dying.

**How does Landon and Jamie’s relationship advance in this chapter?**

- Landon tells Jamie he loves her.
- Landon learns that Jamie is dying.
- Certainly the two learn more about each other in this chapter.

**What do you think of the ending of chapter 11?**

- The reader will want to know the answer to these questions and will definitely keep reading this novel:
  
  - Why is Jamie dying?
  - What will Landon and Jamie do?

**Chapter 12**

**Why is Jamie dying? How long has she known that she is dying?**

- Jamie has leukemia.
- She has known since last summer.
- This means that during the entire time that Landon has really gotten to know and love her, she has been dying.
- Seven months ago, she was told that she had a year left to live, maybe less.

**What is foreshadowing, and what kinds of foreshadowing have we had in this novel?**

- Foreshadowing occurs when an author subtly suggests or hints at something that will occur later in the literary work.
- Of course, plays also contain foreshadowing. According to the playwright Anton Chekhov, “If there is a gun hanging on the wall in the first act, it must fire in the last.”
• We have had hints that Jamie has a secret, and of course we have wanted to know what that was. Now we know.

• Foreshadowing: Jamie wanted Landon to do the play — to make it special for her father.

• Foreshadowing: Hegbert called her his angel after the play.

• Foreshadowing: Hegbert looks tired all the time.

• Foreshadowing: Hegbert fretted when Landon came by the house so often.

• Foreshadowing: During sermons, Hegbert sometimes stops and he seems as though he is thinking of something else as he gets a strange look on his face.

• Foreshadowing: Hegbert sometimes seems to be crying.

• Foreshadowing: Jamie wanted Christmas for the orphans to be special.

• Foreshadowing: Jamie often gets tired.

• Foreshadowing: Jamie told Landon not to fall in love with her.

**How do people react to Jamie’s illness?**

• Landon hopes that some mistake has been made.

• Jamie and Landon and lots of other people cry, as when Hegbert learns that Landon knows and when Landon and Jamie tell Landon’s mother.

• Hegbert makes the announcement to his congregation the following Sunday, and everyone is shocked. A wailing begins.

• On Monday teachers tell all the students, most of whom already know. Girls cry, and people talk about Jamie as if she is already dead.

**Why doesn’t Jamie return to school?**

• Jamie wants to spend more time in the mornings with her father before he goes to work.

• In addition, she is growing weaker.

• In addition, she thinks students will regard and treat her oddly.

• Jamie will not receive a diploma; she has dropped out.

**Why does Landon start reading the Bible?**

• Landon is in a way hoping for a miracle. He thinks about faith healing, which he has seen work.

• Old man Sweeney was deaf in one ear, a result of the Great War, but a faith healer healed him.

• Miracles are in the Bible, so Landon reads the Bible.

• Landon does read a passage that he believes Jamie underlined just for him:

    I cry to you, my Lord, my rock! Do not be deaf to me, for if you are silent, I shall go
down to the pit like the rest. Hear my voice raised in petition as I cry to you for help, as I raise my hands, my Lord, toward your holy of holies. (202-203)

**How do Landon and Jamie interact together?**

- Fairly well. Both are scared, but Jamie does not act scared. Jamie knows that Landon is scared.
- Landon talks — once — as if Jamie will return to school soon.
- Jamie gets sicker and sicker.
- They read and talk about the Bible together.
- Once, Landon brings Jamie to his house for dinner.
- Landon tells Jamie that he loves her, and she says, “I love you, too” (209).

**What good deed does Eric do?**

- Eric and Margaret visit.
- Jamie has changed other people for the better.
- Eric has collected — on his own — over $400 for the orphans.
- Eric and Margaret both cry.

**How does Landon feel about Jamie? How does he tell Jamie how he feels about her?**

- Landon shows Jamie a sunset and a moonrise on the coast of eastern North Carolina. He then kisses her cheeks and her lips and says, “That […] is exactly how I feel about you” (217).

**When Jamie prayed for Landon, what was she praying for?**

- She was praying for Landon to become hers.

**What good deed do Landon’s parents do for Jamie?**

- Jamie’s pain increases, and the higher dosage of medication for pain makes her dizzy. Eventually, she has a choice to make: the pain or the dizziness. She chooses the dizziness.
- Jamie’s wish, expressed to her doctors, is “I want to die at home” (217).
- Eventually, it seems that Jamie will have to go to the hospital, but Landon’s father and mother make it possible for her to die at home. We read:

  All I know is that Jamie was soon surrounded by expensive equipment, was supplied with all the medicine she needed, and was watched by two full-time nurses while a doctor peeked in on her several times a day. (219-220)

- As a result, Landon cries on his father’s shoulder.

**Which possessions are close to Jamie’s heart?**

- These are the items:
  - Photographs of her as a young girl together with her father.
A collection of cards sent by children in the orphanage.

A newspaper clipping about the play that contained the only photograph of her and Landon.

**Is marriage a good idea in this case?**

- Landon thinks that it is. He thinks that God told him what to do.

- Possibly, it is not. Hegbert and Landon’s parents try to convince him not to marry Jamie (ch. 13).

- Landon and Jamie are only 17; they have not yet graduated from high school.

- They marry on March 12, 1959.

**What do you think of the ending of chapter 12?**

- Again, it is an interesting ending:

  “Will you marry me?” (232)

- The reader will want to know what happens next.

**Chapter 13**

**What do you think has happened to Landon in the years since 1959?**

- He married Jamie, and then possibly she died. Nicholas Sparks has written about the end of this novel:

  As to whether she *actually* lived or died, it’s ambiguous and purposely meant to be that way. If you wanted Jamie to live, she lived. If you knew that Jamie would die, she died.

  As for me, (and I’m not the final say — I wrote the characters, but readers know them just as well as I do), I thought there was a good chance that Jamie lived.

  At least, I hoped so.

  Source: http://www.nicholassparks.com/Novels/AWalkToRemember/FAQ.html

- Landon is apparently still in Beaufort.

- Apparently, he has never remarried. He still wears his wedding ring.

- Possibly, if Jamie died soon after the wedding, the wedding was never consummated.

**What is the “walk to remember”?**

- The walk to remember is Jamie’s walk down the wedding aisle. For Jamie, it is difficult, and she has to rest halfway, leaning on her father.

- Apparently, it is the wedding she has always wanted — over 200 guests are inside and more than that are outside.

- Jamie was using a wheelchair, but she walked up the aisle nevertheless.
What did Jamie teach Landon?
• Landon grows up a lot. He doesn’t mess up the play. He goes against the teasing of his friends to be with Jamie. He decides to marry her.
• Landon is reconciled with his father, who is proud of him.

Who is the greater nonconformist, or are Landon and Jamie both conformists?
• Probably Jamie is the greater nonconformist. She seems to go her own way, even if it means that she is unpopular.
• Landon seems to worry a lot about what his friends think of him, but he learns to go his own way, too.

What do you think of the ending of chapter 13?
• Landon says that he now believes that “miracles can happen” (240).
• This is basically a positive ending. The miracle may not be the recovery of Jamie’s health; perhaps it may be that Landon grows up.
• Nicholas Sparks has written this about the last sentence of the novel:
  Either the miracle was that Jamie lived (if that was the ending you imagined) or that Landon had experienced the miracle of first love and it had redeemed him (if you imagined that Jamie died).

  Source: http://www.nicholassparks.com/Novels/AWalkToRemember/FAQ.html

Is this novel good or bad? Does this novel suffer from sentimentality?
• The novel is good, but not great.
• An (at least seeming) error involves Landon’s grandfather, who is sometimes described as being still alive and sometimes described as being dead.
• At least once, Landon’s father is described as being dead (when Mr. Sparks writes that the evil grandfather outlived his only son).
• Something strange is the location of Jamie’s house. Sometimes Landon can walk Jamie home because it is on his way. Sometimes Jamie’s house is on the other side of town.
• The character of Jamie is very interesting. I like this novel because of the nonconformity of Jamie and because this novel has a religious viewpoint.
• A critic may argue that this novel is sentimental. However, readers can argue that some sentimentality is not a bad thing.
• Here is a rather negative definition of sentimentality:

  sentimentality
  “The effort to induce an emotional response disproportionate to the situation, and thus to substitute heightened and generally unthinking feeling for normal ethical and intellectual
judgment.”

Source: Harmon & Holman, 475.

Website: http://www.notesinthemargin.org/glossary.html#s Date Downloaded: 7 June 2004

• The American Heritage Dictionary (fourth edition, 2000) defines “sentimentality” in this way:

1a) Characterized or swayed by sentiment. b) Affectedly or extravagantly emotional. 2) Resulting from or colored by emotion rather than reason or realism. 3) Appealing to the sentiments, especially to romantic feelings: sentimental music.

Perhaps definition number 3 is most appropriate for this novel.

Appendix A: Bibliography and Paper Topics

Bibliography


Paper Topics

• Using the techniques found in this novel, including the use of description and dialogue, write an autobiographical essay. Do not feel that you have to be 100 percent truthful. If a little exaggeration will make a good story better, exaggerate. Also, no one expects you to remember exactly what you or anyone else said in real life, so feel free to create your own dialogue and make yourself wittier — or dumber — than you are in real life.

• Write an essay about the themes of religion and/or nonconformity in the novel.

• Watch the movie A Walk to Remember. In your opinion, is the novel or the movie better, and why? What advantages and disadvantages do novels have compared to movies? What advantages and disadvantages do movies have compared to novels?

• Write about the inconsistencies in A walk to Remember.

Inconsistencies in A Walk to Remember

• An (at least seeming) error involves Landon’s grandfather, who is sometimes described as being still alive and sometimes described as being dead.

Grandfather is Dead

He [evil grandfather] died at a ripe-old age while sleeping with his mistress on his yacht off the Cayman Islands. He’d outlived both his wives and his only son. (15-16)

Grandfather is Alive

There was a pianist and a singer, too, not every night or even every weekend, but on holidays when they thought the place would be full. I had to make reservations, and the first time I called they said they were filled, but I had my mom call them, and the next
thing you knew, something had opened up. I guess the owner needed a favor from my father or something, or maybe he just didn’t want to make him angry, knowing that my grandfather was still alive and all. (175)

- At least once, Landon’s father is described as being dead (when Mr. Sparks writes that the evil grandfather outlived his only son).

**Landon’s Father’s Father is Evil Grandfather**

Hegbert was about twenty years older than my father, and back before he was a minister, he used to work for my father’s father. My grandfather — even though her spent lots of time with my father — was a true bastard if there ever was one. He was the one, by the way, who made the family fortune […] (14)

**Father is Dead**

He died at a ripe-old age while sleeping with his mistress on his yacht off the Cayman Islands. He’d outlived both his wives and his only son. (15-16)

**Father is Alive**

So my father, Mr. Congressman, was a big-wig, and everyone but everyone knew it, including old man Hegbert. Now, the two of them didn’t get along, not at all, despite the fact that my father went to Hegbert’s church whenever he was in town, which to be frank wasn’t all that often. (10)

After high school I planned to go to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My father wanted me to go to Harvard or Princeton like some of the sons of other congressmen did, but with my grades it wasn’t possible. Not that I was a bad student. I just didn’t focus on my studies, and my grades weren’t exactly up to snuff for the Ivy Leagues. By my senior year it was pretty much touch and go whether I’d even get accepted at UNC, and this was my father’s alma mater, a place where he could pull some strings. During one of his few weekends home, my father came up with the plan to put me over the top. I’d just finished my first week of school. (27)

- Something strange is the location of Jamie’s house. Sometimes Landon can walk Jamie home because it is on his way. Sometimes Jamie’s house is on the other side of town.

**Jamie Lives on Other Side of Town**

We arranged to meet at five o’clock, and the rest of the afternoon ticked by slowly, like the drips from Chinese water torture. I left my house twenty minutes early, so I’d have plenty of time to get there. My house was located near the waterfront in the historic part of town, just a few doors down from where Blackbeard used to live, overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway. Jamie lived on the other side of town, across the railroad tracks, so it would take me about that long to get there. (71)

**Jamie’s House is in Between the Playhouse and Landon’s House**

Note: Rehearsals are apparently being held at the Playhouse in Ch. 7; earlier they were held at the school — see p. 79 and p. 81. But since the play will be performed soon — “that Saturday and Sunday”(109), the rehearsals must be held at the Playhouse.
But Jamie’s house was on the way to mine, and I couldn’t say no without hurting her feelings. It wasn’t that I liked her or anything, don’t get the wrong idea, but when you’ve had to spend a few hours a day with someone, and you’re going to continue doing that for at least another week, you don’t want to do anything that might make the next day miserable for either of you. (109)

**Jamie’s House is Not in Between the Playhouse and Landon’s House**

I ran through my lines without even thinking about them, and Miss Garber didn’t say the word *marvelous* all night long. She had this concerned look in her eyes afterward, but Jamie simply smiled and told her not to worry, that everything was going to be all right. I knew Jamie was just trying to make things better for me, but when she asked me to walk her home, I told her no. The Playhouse was in the middle of town, and to walk her home, I’d have to walk a good distance out of my way. Besides, I didn’t want to be seen again doing it. But Miss Garber had overheard Jamie’s request and she said, very firmly, that I’d be glad to do it. “You two can talk about the play,” she said. “Maybe you can work out the kinks.” By kinks, of course, she meant me specifically. (123)

**Appendix B: Short Reaction Memos**

The questions in this short guide to Nicholas Sparks’ *A Walk to Remember* can be used in discussions; however, they can also be used for short reaction memos. For example, I do this at Ohio University. See below for the assignment and sample short reaction memos.

*How Do I Complete the Reaction Memo Assignments?*

You will have to write a series of short memos in which you write about the readings you have been assigned.

Each memo should be at least 250 words, not counting long quotations from the work of literature. Include a word count for each memo, although that is not normally part of the memo format.

Following the memo heading (To, From, Re, Date, Words), write the question you are answering and the part of the book that the question applies to.

You may answer one question or more than one question. I will supply you with a list of questions that you may answer.

Note that a Works Cited list is needed if you use quotations.

For examples from my Great Books courses at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, see the following pages.

**To: David Bruce**

**From:** Jane Student

**Re:** Odyssey, Book 12 Reaction Memo

**Date:** Put Today’s Date Here

**Words:** 323
**Odyssey, Book 12: Is Odysseus a bad leader?**

This is an important question in the *Odyssey*. After all, Odysseus leads 12 ships and many men to Troy, but the ships are all destroyed and all of his men die and he returns home to Ithaca alone. Who is responsible for the deaths of Odysseus’ men? Is Odysseus responsible for their deaths, or do the men bear some responsibility for their own deaths? Many readers prefer Odysseus, the great individualist, to Aeneas, the man who founds the Roman people, but then they realize that all of Odysseus’ men died, while Aeneas succeeded in bringing many Trojans to Italy. When readers think of that, they begin to have a greater respect for Aeneas.

From the beginning of the *Odyssey*, this has been an issue. The bard says that the men perished because of the “recklessness of their own ways” (1.8). However, we notice that Odysseus is asleep at odd times. In Book 10, Aeolus gives Odysseus a bag in which the contrary winds have been tied up. This allows Odysseus to sail to Ithaca safely. However, they reach the island and see smoke rising from the fires, Odysseus goes to sleep and his men open the bag, letting the contrary winds escape, and the ship is blown back to King Aeolus’ island. Similarly, in Book 12, on the island of the Sun-god, Odysseus is asleep when his men sacrifice the Sun-god’s cattle.

It does seem that Odysseus does not bear the blame for his men’s death. In many cases, they do perish through their own stupidity. In other cases, of course, they die during war or during adventures, but in those times, Odysseus was with them, and he could have died, too.

One other thing to think about is that Odysseus is telling his own story. Could he be lying? After all, some of the adventures he relates are pretty incredible. (Probably not. The gods vouch for some of what he says.)

**Works Cited**


**To: David Bruce**

**From: Jane Student**

**Re: Inferno, Canto 1 Reaction Memo**

**Date: Put Today’s Date Here**

**Words: 263**

**Inferno, Canto 1**

• **What do you need to be a member of the Afterlife in Dante’s Inferno?**

To be a member of the afterlife in Hell, you must meet a number of criteria:

1) You must be dead.

2) You must be an unrepentant sinner.

3) You must be a dead, unrepentant sinner by 1300.

Of course, only dead people — with a few exceptions such as Dante the Pilgrim — can be found in the Inferno.
Only unrepentant sinners can be found in the Inferno. Everyone has sinned, but sinners who repented their sins are found in Purgatory or Paradise, not in the Inferno.

Dante set his *Divine Comedy* in 1300, so the characters who appear in it are dead in 1300.

**Inferno, Canto 1**

**What does it mean to repent?**

A sinner who repents regrets having committed the sin. The repentant sinner vows not to commit the sin again, and he or she does his or her best not to commit the sin again.

**Inferno, Canto 1**

**What is the geography of Hell? In *The Divine Comedy*, where is Hell located?**

Hell is located straight down. We will find out later that when Lucifer was thrown out of Paradise, he fell to the Earth, ending up at the center of the Earth. The center of the Earth is the lowest part of Hell. Lucifer created the Mountain of Purgatory when he hit the Earth.

**To: David Bruce**

**From: Jane Student**

**Re: *Candide*, Ch. 26-30**

**Date: Today’s Date**

**Words: 368**

**Ch. 30: Write a brief character analysis of the old man and his family.**

When Candide and his friends meet the old man, the old man is “sitting in front of his door beneath an arbor of orange trees, enjoying the fresh air” (119). The old man basically ignores politics that he cannot influence. Some people have recently been killed in Constantinople, and the old man does not even know their names. However, the old man does enjoy some material things, including good food, and he enjoys hospitality.

The old man invites Candide and his friends to enjoy some refreshments inside his house. They are served with “several kinds of fruit-favored drinks” and “boiled cream with pieces of candied citron in it, oranges, lemons, limes, pineapples, pistachio nuts, and mocha coffee” (119). The old man and his family have an abundance of food, but although Candide wonders if the old man has an enormous farm, the old man tells him, “I have only twenty acres of land, which my children and I cultivate. Our work keeps us free of three great evils: boredom, vice, and poverty” (119).

From this brief encounter, we learn several things:

• The old man and his family are content — even happy.

• The old man and his family ignore the wars and murders and crimes that happen elsewhere.

• The old man and his family have enough. They work hard on their little farm, and they have plenty of food and good things to eat.

• The old man and his family have only 20 acres, but 20 acres are enough.
Candide and his friends decide to emulate the old man and his family. Each of them begins to work hard on their little farm. Cunegonde learns to make pastry, Paquette begins to embroider, and the old woman does the laundry and repairs the linen. Brother Giroflée becomes a carpenter, and Candide and the others grow “abundant crops” (120). At the end of the short novel, the group of friends seem to have come the closest they can to happiness in a world filled with evil, but it does take an effort on their part. As Candide says in the short novel’s last words, “… we must cultivate our garden” (120).

Works Cited

To: David Bruce
From: Jane Student
Re: *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, Ch. 1-4 Reaction Memo
Date: Put Today’s Date Here
Words: 286

CH. 3: “KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND”

• What hints do we have of the relationship between Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot?

Some hanky-panky is going on between Sir Launcelot and King Arthur’s wife, Queen Guenever. Some six or eight prisoners address her, and they tell her that they have been captured by Sir Kay the Seneschal. Immediately, surprise and astonishment are felt by everybody present. The queen looks disappointed because she had hoped that the prisoners were captured by Sir Launcelot.

As it turns out, they were. Sir Launcelot first rescued Sir Kay from some attackers, then he took Sir Kay’s armor and horse and captured more knights. All of these prisoners were actually captured by Sir Launcelot, not by Sir Kay at all.

Two passages let us know that something is going on between Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenever:

1. The first is subtle; she looks disappointed when Sir Kay says that he captured the knights: “Surprise and astonishment flashed from face to face all over the house; the queen’s gratified smile faded out at the name of Sir Kay, and she looked disappointed …” (503).

2. The other is much more overt and occurs after Guenever learns that the knight who really captured the prisoners was Sir Launcelot: “Well, it was touching to see the queen blush and smile, and look embarrassed and happy, and fling furtive glances at Sir Launcelot that would have got him shot in Arkansas, to a dead certainty” (503).

Works Cited

**Appendix C: About the Author**

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954,
Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a master’s degree in English and a master’s degree in Philosophy. Currently, and for a long time to come, I publish a weekly humorous column titled “Wise Up!” for The Athens News and I am a retired English instructor at Ohio U.

If all goes well, I will publish one or two books a year for the rest of my life. (On the other hand, a good way to make God laugh is to tell Her your plans.)

Some Books by David Bruce

David Bruce’s Blog
http://davidbruceblog.wordpress.com/

David Bruce’s Smashwords Page
http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/bruceb

Discussion Guides
Dante’s Inferno: A Discussion Guide
Dante’s Paradise: A Discussion Guide
Dante’s Purgatory: A Discussion Guide
Forrest Carter’s The Education of Little Tree: A Discussion Guide
Homer’s Iliad: A Discussion Guide
Homer’s Odyssey: A Discussion Guide
Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice: A Discussion Guide
Jerry Spinelli’s Maniac Magee: A Discussion Guide
Jerry Spinelli’s Stargirl: A Discussion Guide
Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal”: A Discussion Guide
Lloyd Alexander’s The Black Cauldron: A Discussion Guide
Lloyd Alexander’s The Book of Three: A Discussion Guide
Lloyd Alexander’s The Castle of Llyr: A Discussion Guide
Mark Twain’s Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: A Discussion Guide
Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Tom Sawyer: A Discussion Guide
Mark Twain’s A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court: A Discussion Guide
Mark Twain’s The Prince and the Pauper: A Discussion Guide
Nancy Garden’s Annie on My Mind: A Discussion Guide
Nicholas Sparks’ A Walk to Remember: A Discussion Guide
Virgil’s Aeneid: A Discussion Guide
Virgil’s “The Fall of Troy”: A Discussion Guide
Voltaire’s Candide: A Discussion Guide
William Shakespeare’s 1 Henry IV: A Discussion Guide
William Shakespeare’s Macbeth: A Discussion Guide
William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream: A Discussion Guide
William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet: A Discussion Guide
William Sleator’s Oddballs: A Discussion Guide

(Oddballs is an excellent source for teaching how to write autobiographical essays/personal narratives.)

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*Homer’s Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*
*Homer’s Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose*
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The Funniest People in Families, Volume 6: 250 Anecdotes
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The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes
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These books are collections of autobiographical essays by my students at Ohio University.

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