

Jeanette Winterson *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*

Chapter 12 – Coda

Chapter 12: The Night Sea Voyage

- 1) How does Winterson suggest that her childhood has influenced her adult behaviour at the beginning of the chapter?
- 2) What does Winterson outline about her creative process on pages 156-157?
- 3) The inevitably sad process of emptying the parental home formulates a turning point for the author. What techniques does the author employ in the build-up to this key point? (pp 158-159)
- 4) Why does the author use the present tense when describing her reaction to these findings on the following page?
- 5) Trace Winterson's descent into mental instability following the demise of her relationship with Deborah and the techniques she employs to enable the reader to better engage with this traumatic process. (pp 161-168)
- 6) As Winterson returns to health, she states that 'creativity is on the side of health' (p 171). Why does Winterson turn to fairy tales and the writing of children's stories at this difficult time in her life?
- 7) What is the creature that Winterson refers to near the end of the chapter? (pp 174-177).
- 8) Structurally, this is one of the lengthiest chapters in the autobiography. Why do you think, and why has the author employed this title?

Chapter 13: This Appointment Takes Place In The Past

- 1) Why does the author employ intertextuality at the beginning of this chapter?
- 2) What is touching for the reader in Winterson's early relationship with Susie Orbach?

- 3) Winterson creates tension for the reader when describing her journey to London to try and locate her birth mother. What techniques does she employ? (pp 183-184)
- 4) From the mundane description of the 'functional office' to the italicised line at the bottom of page 186 Winterson employs a plethora of techniques in order to make this a powerful moment for the reader. Highlight five examples.
- 5) Why does Winterson use expletives at the top of page 189?
- 6) Pages 193-196 employs a mixture of humour and touching description to present the author's reaction to her father's death. Highlight sentences/anecdotes creating this juxtaposition of tone.
- 7) Winterson's difficult childhood reasserts itself on pages 200-202. In what ways?
- 8) What is the significance of the final words of the chapter?

Chapter 14: Strange Meeting

- 1) What is Winterson suggesting about Manchester, and how the city and her life have changed? (pp208-209)
- 2) What does Winterson mean by the metaphorical phrase 'forking paths' on page 209, do you think?
- 3) Winterson returns to an extended description of Manchester on page 212. What impression does this create for the reader?
- 4) Finally, Winterson gets to meet her birth mother, Ann. Highlight key quotations revealing the nature of the woman and the life her mother has had. (pp 213- 219)

Chapter 15: The Wound

- 1) At the opening of the chapter Winterson cites a whole range of literary, classical and Biblical references. How does this connect with the uncomfortable title of this chapter?

- 2) What does Winterson mean when she states, 'I will always be recognisable by my scar'? (page 223)
- 3) Consider the comparison of Winterson's two mothers, Mrs Winterson and Ann. How do the descriptions differ? (page 223)
- 4) At the end of the chapter Winterson returns to the opening of the autobiography and the phone box encounter with her mother. Why structurally might she do this?
- 5) What is significant about the final word of the chapter?

Coda:

- 1) Check the meaning of the title of this section of the autobiography. Why is it appropriate?
- 2) This final section suggests that Winterson's relationship with her birth mother is not without difficulty and she makes several references to Mrs Winterson, including, stating that, 'She was a monster but she was my monster'. (p229) What is meant by this?
- 3) Throughout this brief conclusion Winterson explores the difficulties of writing about one's own life and storytelling. Highlight these quotations.