

# Acdec literature 2015 pilgrim at tinker creek chapters



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Ch. 1 " Heaven and Earth in Jest" Book's intro; says that book's purpose is to be a meteorological journal of the mind; tomcat's bloody pawprints; waterbug sucks out frog; title refers to Quran; theodicy (how a good God could allow cruelty in the world); Pascal's deus absconditus and Einstein's feeling the hem; negative capability is the ability to hold mutually contradictory ideas in one's head without accepting or denying or choosing (Keats); steer across the stream (anthropogenic, " Swedish meatballs!")Ch. 2 " Seeing" Penny-hiding childhood memory (arrow points toward hidden treasure); equates seeing with seeking (and Annie tries to see animals in nature but needs the help of children); kayak sickness and walk/dream with mysterious " black body"; von Senden's Space and Sight describes the experiences of the newly-sighted (tree with the lights in it= nature's grace; some people's brains can't process sight= square as lemonade)Ch. 3 " Winter" Set in February; conscious human cruelty toward nature and nature's unconcern with said cruelty; starlings in Radford (introduced to US by Schieffelin); gory winter survival (Eskimo hunters and explorers; cutting off gulls frozen in ice and leaving their feet stuck there; long list of explorers); chases a coot and gets mad when she realizes the coot doesn't care; goldfish and only companion Ellery Channing named after Thoreau's walking partner William E. C. because Dillard loves ThoreauCh. 4 " The Fixed" unconscious human cruelty toward nature; learning to see mantis egg cases and, later, more in nature; Thoreau describes a battle of ants; mantises hatch in a Mason jar and eat each other; Polyphemus moth hatches in Mason jar and is crippled/mutilated for life; moth is imagined walking down a driveway but then it reaches a waterfall (grace); moth is a " he" (personalizes it);

caterpillars follow each other in line on the circular rim of a vase forever and <https://assignbuster.com/acdec-literature-2015-pilgrim-at-tinker-creek-chapters/>

eventually starve; mantis eats wasp eats bee eats honey; "the fixed" imprisons nature and humans; Mason jar symbolizes entrapment and wanton/meaningless destruction

Ch. 5 "Untying the Knot" Dillard tries to untie the knot in a snakeskin but it's not actually a knot and thus cannot be untied; symbol is Gordian knot which has no beginning or end (Alexander the Great cuts it with his sword); the seasons are compared to this knot; signals the arrival of spring; nature and people are sensitive to changing seasons; just like there is no knot in the snakeskin, there is no exact point when spring begins; this is the short chapter

Ch. 6 "The Present" "patting the puppy" at gas station in March is the key image; the puppy is unconsciously purely in the present; Dillard feels part of nature consciously until she realizes it (self-consciousness separates us from nature); innocence is living without self-consciousness, like kids; the present opens a door onto eternity; tree with the lights in it = grace; present is being emptied and hollow and catching grace like a cup under a waterfall; Xerxes sees sycamore and stops his army to look at it; Goethe's *augenblick* "present moment"; *Deus absconditus*; God is a hidden archer using invisibility as the all-time great cover

Ch. 7 "Spring" explores beauty and language; beauty is a kind of language that must be translated; birdsong is beautiful language but we don't know its purpose; Jean White's dead horse; young boy killing newts; it is important to explore the facts of creation even if they are not beautiful; Eskimo learns about God and asks preacher why he told him about God if he would have gone to heaven anyway without knowing

Ch. 8 "Intricacy" intricacy describes the endless details in nature; fringe on the hem of nature/God; chlorophyll (Mg) and hemoglobin (Fe) have similar structures; caterpillar muscles, leaf counts, and lots of insects are examples of nature's intricacy; "the creator loves

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pizzazz" means sheer variety in nature is evidence for the existence of God; like Romantics Dillard celebrates the individual irregularities around her; "Beauty itself is the fruit of the creator's exuberance"; newfound sight "scales are fallen from our eyes" is a reference to St. Paul; "Our life is a faint tracing on the surface of mystery"; confusion over whether nature "came off" or how intricacy and cruelty can coexist; first chapter to follow via negativa instead of via positiva; tone grows more negative/horrific from hereCh. 9 "Flood" chapter describes one complete coherent story for once; story is about Hurricane Agnes and the flood that ensued; Tinker Creek turns into a "violent dragon" and animals flee from it; cemetery in VA floods and bodies float down streets, which pilots compare to Vietnam; neighbors Bowerys with flooded house and Bings; Gov. Holton sees magical sight (one lightbulb remains lit despite the lack of all power); imagines a mushroom at the endCh. 10 "Fecundity" pairs with "Intricacy" but is more negative; extravagance is wasteful; life means inevitable death so spring's fertility means lots of death later; Dillard is horrified by just how many bugs and barnacles there are; plants are fundamentally different and "acres and acres of tulips" is fine but "acres and acres of rats" is horrible; nightmare about mating butterflies and a bed full of fish eggs; gooseneck barnacle is the ultimate example of survival in the face of so much death (Rachel Carson said that too); the problem is that humans care because nature sure doesn't; "We value the individual supremely; nature values him not a whit" Ch. 11 "Stalking" lighthearted; Dillard stalks "eye food" (just wants to see stuff, not eat it); fish, water striders, herons, and dragonflies, but mostly muskrats; muskrat is like an electron (Heisenberg's uncertainty principle) and cannot be perfectly stalked; to stalk muskrats, Dillard must let go of self-  
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consciousness; this reflects her change through the yearCh. 12 "

Nightwatch" visit to nearby Lucas property and 1-room cottage; focus on

landscape; simple cottage is an allusion to Thoreau's home; chapter

references mystic St. John of the Cross and his poem " Dark Night of the

Soul," which reformats spiritual crisis as spiritual awakening; silver eels

migrate to the Sargasso Sea sometimes overland; influenced by Rachel

Carson's Under the Sea Wing and Edwin Way Teale; lots of war words like

barrage and legions; title refers to a sentryCh. 13 " The Horns of the Altar"

key image is nibbling (everything in nature is nibbled, nothing is completely

whole); lots of parasites nibbling and chomping the world, including the tree

with the lights in it; title refers to Jewish sacrificial altar from Biblical times;

horns placed on corners for grasping or covering in sacrificed blood; heave

shoulder and wave breast; old and frayed world still has intricacy in the

fringes but September is starting to fadeCh. 14 " Northing" everything that

migrates is preparing to do so (caterpillars, caribou, birds) for winter; now it's

November; Monarch butterfly migration is key image and consumes 4

lifecycles; Dillard wants to go North, Nature wants to go South; Dillard wants

to recapture the austerity and simplicity of winter, which comes south to

meet her; recalls the Israelite wave breast which is a ram's breast waved

around before being sacrificed to God as thanksgivingCh. 15 " The Waters of

Separation" last chapter is paired with the first; begins with Quran quote to "

expend... the abundance" or simplify; Dillard walks around the creek one

more time and recalls the motifs, anecdotes, and images from the previous

chapters; these all come to a crescendo of questions: why are we here? Title

refers to another Jewish tradition: those who come into contact with a dead

body need to be purified; the book ends with an image of praise and silver

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trumpets even though the questions haven't really been answered ONACDEC  
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