

How is the story told
in chapter 12 of
enduring love essay
sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Ian McEwan uses various aspect of narrative in order to tell the story in Chapter 12. In this chapter McEwan uses a first person retrospective for Joe as he narrates the story and this leads to the reader questioning the reliability of his thoughts and actions, therefore giving the reader a limited view of the situations and the events that occur in the chapter.

This chapter differs from the previous chapters slightly as it is told by McEwan in normal chronological order, the author doesn't abruptly change the mood but follows a more conventional sequence by first telling the story of Joe's search through Clarissa's papers and the chapter ending with his decision to visit Mrs. Logan and arriving at her house. McEwan sets this chapter for the most part in Joe's house which is slowly becoming less of a retreat from Jed Parry's maddening presence.

The letter Joe receives from Parry is very much on his mind in this chapter and the author uses foreshadowing as it is described as ' his first letter' and judging by the perverse nature of the first letter it can only get worse. You can see the effect this is having on Joe as he says, ' these days I preferred to drive', so maybe he feels too scared to walk freely on the streets as this stalking has risen to a new level. The author gives us more insight into Joe's character and particularly his scientific nature as he reflects that he has read somewhere about a curtain used as a signal and this seems to have some relevance to Parry.

We can see that Joe is constantly looking for the source of the problem and for any rational reason why Parry would be pursuing him so because he cannot accept Parry's view that fate and, ultimately, God brought them

together as this just isn't how he thinks as he needs a firm scientific reason and proof for everything. McEwan focuses on the fine cracks starting to appear in Clarissa and Joe's relationship as Joe reflects on the fact he is having little luck with Clarissa in making her believe his story.

What is especially strange is how she takes a 'slow deep breath' when reading the whole section dealing with 'the whole matter of Clarissa' as she seems to be almost readying herself for what she is about to read. This paired with her statement 'his writing's rather like yours' makes us think that Clarissa has formed her own idea of what is happening and maybe she thinks that this letter is some long, convoluted way of Joe telling Clarissa that their relationship is over.

We know that Clarissa is taking the Jed Parry situation less seriously than Joe and this is her explanation for Joe's behaviour. The balloon accident has clearly changed the whole course of their relationship and Clarissa seems to be looking for a way out and accepts the fact that they aren't able to get on anymore quite easily. Here, McEwan is showing us the beginning of this relationship being tested during this threat from Parry and we can wonder how easily this 7 year relationship can be broken down if it isn't built upon a solid foundation of common interest and trust.

McEwan has presented two very different types of characters and they are both dealing with this situation in very different ways. Clarissa seems to be trying to get away from Joe and straight after reading the letter she gets up immediately and says 'I've got to get ready for work', changing the subject and being evasive so it's not a comfortable topic. We are further made to

think over Joe's assertion that Parry is ' the kind of phantom that only I could have called up'.

This would make the reader wonder about the mental state that Joe is in. It seems that Clarissa's thoughts are heading in this direction in the way her character behaves towards Joe treating him jovially over a seemingly serious matter and Jed Parry does seem to be the perfect antagonist for Joe as he is deeply religious and a believer in fate, whilst Joe seems to be a deep thinking scientific person.

It all seems too much like a drama and would seem that way for Clarissa (and the reader) who would therefore look for other causes and it seems plausible that Joe is mentally unstable and has made the whole thing up. McEwan shatters any image the reader had left of this thoughtful and trustworthy character when Joe goes into Clarissa's room and starts checking her correspondence for any sign of infidelity on her part. This is a clear betrayal of trust on Joe's part and again makes us question his reliability as a narrator and his character.

However, McEwan does make us feel a bit sorry as he seems quite sorry afterwards and it is difficult to dislike this man who doesn't have much confidence in his relationship and is quite self conscious of his behaviour when he feels ' so loathsome', this is surely not something he would normally do. But the reader would again be reminded of how Joe didn't tell Clarissa about the phone call from Parry straightway and this really is his fault in the first place.

Parry is never far from Joe's mind either as he realises that his 'intrusion was a landmark in our decline and in Parry's insidious success', so somehow Parry is to blame for his actions. Parry's letter is, for Joe, a sort of disease and Joe seems to be desperately keeping it under control, when he puts the letter away 'as though to contain the viral spores that were invading our home', but it might be too late for Joe and Clarissa's marriage. McEwan gives the reader a final insight into the way Joe's mind works as he drives up to Mrs. Logan's house in Oxford to tell her of her husband's courage.

This would seem a brave act but again the author shocks us with Joe realising as he sees the sad, little house that 'I had come to establish my guiltlessness, my innocence of death'. We realise that Joe is perhaps still guilty from his search of Clarissa's desk and reeling from the letter so he's trying to re-establish his virtuousness to someone or anyone. This chapter leaves off on a good cliff hanger with this revelation and Joe standing outside Mrs. Logan's house as McEwan makes the reader want to read on to see what is in store for the characters next in this psychological thriller.