

The big sleep: analytically breakdown

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The Big Sleep: Analytical breakdown The big sleep represents our class's first exploration into what is known as "Hardboiled" fiction. The advent of Hardboiled literature means an escape from classic detective novels where all we find are ingenious investigators and mind numbing puzzles designed to impress and surprise us. In such novels, the protagonist is often observed from a third person point of view; where insight into the (genius) mind of the protagonist isn't revealed till the end of the novel.

Instead, hardboiled literature takes us on a more realistic route; solving crimes in first person with brute force investigators, rather than "Sherlock Holmes" like characters. Detective Philip Marlowe of The Big Sleep is an example of such a character. Clever, but no Sherlock Holmes; Marlowe takes on cases with good old fashion leg work and tenacity. Such is the way things are done in the real world, where all Hardboiled novels take place. The Big Sleep is no exception. A common theme often portrayed in Hardboiled novels is that of corruption.

This corruption is often seen through the eyes of the protagonist, who is usually cynical and jaded because of which. The real world in The Big Sleep is a post WW1 Los Angeles, right around the time of the great depression. The effects of this time in history are clearly illustrated in many of characters represented in The Big Sleep. Here we have a world of moneyhungry people, who will do anything to escape such realities. This is how corruption starts. Everyone is dirty; politicians' takes bribes, police can be bought and newspapers lie.

People no longer have faith in promising futures, so they do what they have to do to survive. In this sort of world, characters like Philip Marlowe are rare. At <https://assignbuster.com/the-big-sleep-analytically-breakdown/>

25\$ a day, Marlowe works for cheap, proving that he is above the common desire of wealth. Marlowe is depicted as man full of integrity and honor, and works simply because he feels it's the right thing to do. However, such a job requires him to delve into the all too real world, and so corruption is no stranger to him. Because of this, Marlowe is often jaded towards those he meets, and tends to expect the worst of people.

However, this doesn't stop him from doing what he feels is right, even if he feels that those he helps don't deserve it. The plot of *The Big Sleep* revolves around a family that has become rich due an advantageous connection with oil. Marlowe is hired by General Sternwood, a bed ridden oil baron, who although is not free from corruption, has some honest qualities. The general tasks Marlowe with the task of discovering the whereabouts of Terrance Reagan, husband of the General's daughter, Vivian Reagan. Here is where we find another common theme in *Hardboiled* novels, that is, the depiction of the rich.

While most of America at the time is suffering due to the depression, some, such as the Sternwoods, are doing very well. However, we come to find that they too are suffering. Not physically, of course, but psychologically. It is not uncommon for *Hardboiled* novels to depict the rich as spoiled and often morally absent. Carmen Sternwood, for example, has grown up having everything she could possibly want, yet this leads her to becoming prone to drinking, drugs, and sexual behavior. Since their money was not earned, the General's Daughters do not have the same respect for money as their father who earned does.

Hence, they are prone to wasting their money on trivial pursuits and negative outlets. Instant gratification is their main concern. The juxtaposition of the rich is best displayed with the imagery of the old and dirty abandoned oil pumps that made the General rich in the first place. Although the exterior display of the rich is that of cleanliness (clean house, cars, clothes, etc...), their truer and deeper nature is closer to that of the oil fields, dirty and desolate. It is ironic that the General, owner of the money and the closest in the family to any form of morality, is bed ridden and unable to utilize his fortune.

Again, emphasizing the unworthiness of the rich. Despite the unworthiness of the rich, Detective Marlowe still agrees to help them. Although they may be unworthy of recusing, Marlowe still feels the need to rescue them, and in that way Marlowe is somewhat of a “ Shinning Knight” archetype. This is hinted towards the beginning of the novel when Marlowe stares in the stain glass window which shows a knight rescuing a lady. In a way, Marlowe is tasked with saving them from the external corruption (The blackmail of Eddie Mars) of the world and the internal corruption the daughters grew up with.

Marlowe maintains his knight hood by always taking the high road, and refusing to give into the seductive and nymphomaniac behavior of Carman, who is constantly throwing herself at him. Detective Marlowe is very successful because of his “ Knights Code”, and will even continue towards the truth even when he is not being paid. Marlowe’s tenacity for the truth takes him deeper and deeper into the dirty underworld of Los Angeles where he finds all different sorts of scum. Here we find two types of Criminal, the

petty and the big time. The petty criminal is Joe Brody. Joe represents a causality of society.

He isn't one to go around killing people, in fact if things were better in the world he might have made an honest man of himself. Brody is no crime lord; he can barely feed himself; as he puts it " I've been shaking two nickels together for a month, trying to get them to mate. " Eddie Mars, however, is a different man entirely. Eddie is at the top, the summation of corruption, and the direct opposite of everything that Marlow represents. As Marlowe puts it, " You think he's just a gambler. I think he's a pornographer, a blackmailer, a hot car broker, a killer by remote control, and a suborner of crooked cops.

He's whatever looks good to him...he never killed anybody, he just hires it done. " A character like Joe Brody represents what happens to good people under bad influences, whereas Eddie represents the bad influence itself. One way Hardboiled novels communicate to the reader is through use of the weather and setting. In movies, it is often the music that adds dramatic flair, but in books, authors must rely on visual imagery. In *The Big Sleep*, for example, thunder and rain is mentioned before many of the major plot happenings.

The darkness of rain clouds and cold of rain is symbolic of what Marlowe is going through as he treads through the underworld of LA, search for the truth. If you really pay attention, you might notice that pleasant weather is also used for the plot, a symbol that worst of things are over or at least getting better. Although the Major themes of this book are that of corruption and cynicism, there are also good vs. evil themes. A way of saying that no

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matter how bad things are there is always hope in the form of characters like Philip Marlowe.

There are people out there are willing to do what is right despite the consequences these action might inflict upon themselves. We call these types of people heroes, and I believe it is important for people like Raymond Chandler to write about characters like Detective Marlowe, especially considering the era that he wrote it in. When the world around you is dark, depressive, and inhospitable, it is important to have something or someone to idolize. Characters like Philip Marlowe help support the idea that you can still succeed with an honest heart.