

# East of eden summaries



Chapter 1 The narrator begins by describing his childhood in California's Salinas Valley, where he learned to tell east from west by looking at the mountains—the bright Gabilan Mountains to the east and the dark Santa Lucia Mountains to the west. The valley's weather comes in thirty-year cycles: five or six years of heavy rainfall, six or seven years of moderate rainfall, and then many years of dryness. The valley was settled by three peoples: first, the Indians, whom the narrator derides as lazy; next, the Spanish, whom the narrator calls greedy; and finally, the Americans, whom the narrator says are even greedier than the Spanish. Chapter 2 In 1870, Samuel and Liza Hamilton—the narrator's grandparents—arrive in the Salinas Valley from Ireland. The Hamiltons are forced to settle on the driest and most barren land in the valley, as all the better lots are already taken. To support his nine children, Samuel works as a blacksmith, a well-digger, and an unlicensed doctor. Chapter 3 Some time after Samuel Hamilton arrives, a man named Adam Trask settles a fertile corner of the Salinas Valley for himself and lives as a wealthy man. After introducing Adam, the narrator jumps back in time to tell the story of Adam's childhood.

Adam is the son of Cyrus Trask, a conniving Connecticut farmer who loses a leg in the Civil War and then passes on syphilis to his wife after contracting it from a black prostitute in the South. Cyrus's pious wife commits suicide shortly after discovering her illness. Cyrus needs help with the children, so he marries a young woman named Alice, who lives in fear of her husband and even hides her tuberculosis from him out of worry that he might impose a harsh medical treatment upon her. In his spare time, Cyrus studies military history and strategy so that he might create convincing lies about his time in

the Army. His lies about his alleged heroics in the Civil War gain him widespread respect and ultimately an appointment as Secretary of the Army.

As a boy, Adam Trask is kind and good-natured, but his half-brother, Charles, is boisterous and aggressive. One day, Charles beats Adam severely simply because Adam defeats him in a game. Adam loves his stepmother, Alice, and anonymously leaves her secret gifts in order to make her smile.

When Adam is a young man, Cyrus tries to convince him to go into the Army. When Adam asks his father why he does not want Charles to go into the army instead, Cyrus responds that the army would cultivate a part of Charles's nature that needs to be suppressed. In addition, Cyrus says that he loves Adam better.

Later, Charles asks Adam about his conversation with their father. Adam learns that Charles is resentful about Cyrus's recent birthday: Cyrus was completely indifferent to the expensive German knife Charles gave him as a gift, yet deeply appreciated the stray puppy Adam gave him. Suddenly, the jealous Charles beats Adam severely and leaves him in a ditch on the side of the road.

Adam limps home much later and weakly tells Cyrus that Charles thinks Cyrus does not love him. Cyrus leaves with a shotgun in search of Charles. Alice tends to Adam and tells him that Charles has a kind streak as well. It turns out that Alice mistakenly believes that Charles, not Adam, is the one who has been leaving her secret gifts for years.

Chapter 4 Charles wisely stays away from home for two weeks. When he returns, Cyrus is over his rage and puts him to work. Chapter 5 Samuel Hamilton educated himself in Ireland by borrowing books from a wealthy family. In America, his gentle good nature wins him the respect of everyone he meets. The Hamiltons never become rich but live comfortably nonetheless. They have four sons: George, who is bland and moral; Will, who is lucky and grows up to be wealthy; Tom, who is ardent and passionate; and Joe, who is lazy but likable and intelligent. Samuel and Liza also have five daughters: Lizzie, who does not associate with the family very much; Una, who is dark and brooding; Dessie, whose lovely personality makes her well-loved; Olive, the narrator's mother, who becomes a teacher; and Mollie, the baby and beauty of the family.

Liza Hamilton, like her husband, is highly respected in the Salinas valley. She strictly disapproves of alcoholic beverages until the age of seventy, when her doctor tells her to take port wine for medical reasons. From that day forward, the old woman drinks lustily.

Chapter 6 Young Adam Trask joins his Army regiment around the same time that Cyrus moves to Washington to become a Secretary of the Army. Charles takes over the job of running the Trask farm in Connecticut, living alone and visiting prostitutes twice a month. One day, Charles cuts his forehead badly while moving a large boulder from his yard. Ultimately, he develops an ugly, dark scar on his face. Ashamed of his disfigurement, Charles visits the town even less often and longs for Adam's return.

Adam is discharged from the Army in 1885 but soon realizes that he misses life in the Army and decides to enlist again. He is sent to Washington, where he encounters Cyrus, now dressed in fine clothing and fitted with a fancy prosthetic leg. Cyrus tells Adam that he could get Adam into the military academy at West Point, but Adam insists that he just wants to go back to his old regiment. Charles is crushed when Adam does not return to the farm. After a year and several letters, Adam succeeds in reestablishing contact with his brother. The two never have much in common, however, which makes their relationship difficult.

Chapter 7 After five years fighting in campaigns against Native Americans in the west, Adam again is discharged from the Army. As he slowly makes his way across the country back to the farm in Connecticut, he slips into a life as a drifter and is eventually arrested for vagrancy and placed on a chain gang. In February 1894, Cyrus dies and leaves a large fortune—more than \$100,000—to his sons, who are to split it evenly. Charles is shocked to learn that Cyrus had so much money and wonders how Cyrus could have made it honestly.

Some time later, Charles receives a telegram from Adam asking for \$100 to pay for his trip home to Connecticut. Charles sends the money via a telegraph officer, who asks Charles for a specific question he can ask Adam in order to verify Adam's identity. Charles tells the telegraph officer to ask Adam what present he gave his father before enlisting in the Army. If Adam answers "a puppy," then it is definitely Adam, and the money can be transferred.

When Adam arrives at home, he is somewhat surprised to find that he no longer feels intimidated by Charles. The brothers discuss their father and their inheritance. Charles informs Adam that he has figured out that all of Cyrus's war stories were lies, for Cyrus's Army papers were sent along with his will, and the dates on them clearly indicate that Cyrus could not have fought in the noteworthy battles in which he claimed to have fought. Furthermore, Charles suspects that Cyrus's fortune may have been stolen, but Adam denies it. Adam says that he and Charles should travel to California with the money, but only after building a memorial to their father.

Chapter 8“ I believe there are monsters born in the world to human parents. . . . The face and body may be perfect, but if a twisted gene or a malformed egg can produce physical monsters, may not the same process produce a malformed soul?”

Despite her innocent, childlike appearance, Cathy Ames is morally reprehensible from her earliest years. She is manipulative and selfish and learns to use her sexuality to hurt others. While still a schoolgirl, she sets up a group of local boys for punishment by luring them with her body; the boys receive a thrashing after Cathy's mother finds Cathy tied up in a barn with her skirt pulled up. Later, Cathy has a mysterious involvement with her Latin teacher that leads to his suicide.

Cathy hates her concerned parents and tries to run away to Boston. Her father catches her and beats her, which makes her more respectful and helpful around the house. One night, however, Cathy steals all the money from her father's safe, sets a fire in the house, pours chicken blood all over

the floor, and locks the house from the outside on her way out. The house burns down, killing her parents, who are trapped inside. When the townspeople find the chicken blood, they believe that Cathy has been murdered.

Chapter 9 Cathy, now using the pseudonym Catherine Amesbury, appears before Mr. Edwards, a man who runs a ring of prostitutes at inns throughout New England. The usually cold and cynical Mr. Edwards is surprised to feel a powerful sexual attraction to Cathy. Unbeknownst to his wife, he decides to keep Cathy for himself and puts her up in a small house. Cathy begins to steal from Mr. Edwards and manipulates him into fearing her.

After some time, the miserable Mr. Edwards learns something of Cathy's background. One night, he gets her drunk, and she becomes violent and threatens him with a broken wineglass. He forces her to come with him to a remote area and then beats her severely. Shocked at himself, Mr. Edwards returns home to his wife, leaving Cathy bloodied in a field that happens to be near the Trask farm in Connecticut. Cathy crawls away and eventually arrives on the Trasks' doorstep.

Chapter 10 In the time just before Cathy's sudden arrival, Charles and Adam struggle to get along on the farm. They bicker constantly, as Adam hates Charles's insistence on waking at 4:30 every morning to work the farm (even though the inheritance from Cyrus has made them very rich), while Charles cannot stand Adam's criticism and laziness. Adam tries to talk Charles into going to California, but Charles has no interest in leaving the farm. Adam begins to leave on trips for longer and longer periods of time,

traveling first to Boston and then to South America. When Adam returns from Buenos Aires, he sees that Charles has bought more land. He tells Charles the story of his months on the chain gang after the war. Chapter 11 Cathy crawls up to the Trasks' doorstep, covered in blood and dirt. Charles does not want to keep her in the house because he fears that it will ruin his reputation. Adam, however, says that Cathy is too weak to be sent away, so he cares for her tenderly. The sheriff questions Cathy about her beating, but she writes—she cannot speak because her jaw is broken—that she does not remember anything.

Cathy remains at the farm for some time, all the while against Charles's wishes. One day, Charles confronts her while Adam is away on an errand, telling her that he does not believe that she has really lost her memory. Charles convinces Cathy that she already told him about her past during a bout of delirium brought about by her injuries. Cathy falls for the trick, and Charles sneers at her gullibility.

Cathy believes Charles to be a great deal like her and fears him because of it. She is relieved to find that Adam, on the other hand, is easy to manipulate. When Adam suddenly asks Cathy to marry him, she considers the safe harbor that marriage would provide her and accepts his proposal, although she asks Adam not to tell Charles. Charles grows more suspicious of Cathy when a neighbor discovers a suitcase full of money and clothing near the site of her beating. But as soon as Charles leaves the house, Adam takes Cathy into town and marries her.



Charles becomes furious when he discovers that Adam and Cathy are married. Cathy is dismayed to learn that Adam intends to move her to California. That night, Cathy tells Adam that she is still too badly injured to sleep with him. She drugs Adam with a sleeping medication and then goes to Charles, who takes her into his bed.

Chapter 12 The narrator discusses his view of history. He believes that the human capacity for nostalgia causes most unpleasant events to be glossed over or forgotten. He chalks up the entire nineteenth century, including the Civil War, to a great upwelling of greed and brutality. As the twentieth century began, he says, people had to forget the previous century in order to move into the next. Chapter 13 "And this I believe: that the free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world. And this I would fight for: the freedom of the mind to take any direction it wishes, undirected."

The narrator writes that it is individuals, not groups, who accomplish great and inspired deeds. In light of this belief, he worries that the twentieth century's move toward automation and mass production will dampen the creative faculties of humankind.

Adam Trask moves Cathy, his newfound creative inspiration, to the Salinas Valley in California, despite her wishes to the contrary. The day Adam and Cathy leave, Charles drinks himself into a stupor, visits a prostitute, and weeps when he finds that the alcohol has made him impotent.

Adam meets many of the Salinas Valley locals, immediately fits in with them, and begins his search for a good plot of land to buy. Returning home one

day, he finds Cathy unconscious and nearly dead of blood loss in the bedroom. Adam fetches a doctor, who quickly realizes that Cathy is pregnant and that she has tried to abort her baby with a knitting needle. The furious doctor scolds Cathy for attempting to destroy life, but she placates him by lying that her family has a history of epilepsy and that she was afraid she would pass on her epilepsy on to her unborn child. The doctor believes Cathy and reassures her that epilepsy is not hereditary. He tells Adam that Cathy is pregnant.

Adam drives out to speak to Samuel Hamilton to get advice about a plot of land, as Adam has heard that Samuel is very knowledgeable about the valley. The two men discuss their plans for the future. The next day, Adam decides to buy an old ranch halfway between the towns of King City and San Lucas.

Chapter 14 Olive Hamilton, one of Samuel's daughters (and the mother of the novel's narrator), becomes a teacher in order to avoid life as a ranch wife. Determined to live in a town, she refuses to marry a farmer of any kind. Finally, she marries the owner of the King City flourmill and has four children. The narrator remembers his mother as a strict, loving woman who hammered a fear of debt into her children and who nursed her son through a severe case of pneumonia.

During World War I, Olive sold Liberty bonds to support the war effort, and she did so well that the government awarded her its grandest prize—a ride in an airplane. Terrified at the thought of flying, Olive went through with the flight only for the sake of her excited children. Once in the air, the pilot

misunderstood Olive's wishes and performed a number of aeronautic stunts. Dizzied and sickened after landing, Olive stayed in bed for two days.

Chapter 15 Adam becomes deeply happy in his life in California with Cathy. He hires a Chinese-American man named Lee as a cook and housekeeper. Lee makes Cathy nervous, but she enjoys the relatively luxury of her existence nonetheless. One day, while giving Samuel a ride to the Trasks, Lee confides in Samuel that he likes being a servant because it enables him to control his master. Lee says that, although he has lived in America all his life, he uses pidgin English—sentences such as “ Me talkee Chinese talk”—to play into Americans' stereotypes and expectations of him.

Adam asks Samuel to help him search for water on his land to determine if it will be good for farming. Adam tells Samuel about his past in Connecticut. Later, at dinner at the Trask house, Samuel finds himself virtually ignored by his hosts. Adam dotes on Cathy, while Cathy appears completely withdrawn into herself. After Samuel leaves, Cathy shocks Adam by telling him that she never wanted to come to California and that she plans to leave as soon as she is able. Adam tells her that things will change for her when her child is born.

Chapter 16 Samuel likes Adam but is chilled by the inhumanity he senses in Cathy. Samuel agrees to help Adam renovate the old, decrepit house on the ranch Adam has bought. Liza, however, disapproves, for she thinks that the Trasks' wealth and idleness are marks of immorality. Chapter 17 One day, while Samuel is working at the Trask house, Lee appears and reports that Cathy is in labor. Lee comments that there is something unpleasant about

Cathy, and Samuel agrees. Despite Cathy's overt hostility—she even bites Samuel on the hand as he attempts to help her deliver—Samuel helps her through labor, and she gives birth to twin boys. Cathy refuses to look at the infants, which prompts Samuel to tell her outright that he does not like her.

Liza goes to the Trasks' to help with the infants, and Lee also cares for the twins, despite his growing sense of foreboding about Cathy. After Cathy has rested for a week, Adam knocks on her door, and she appears at the door dressed for travel. She tells Adam that she is leaving and that she does not care what he does with the infants. Adam locks Cathy in her room. When he opens the door later, she has a gun pointed at him and shoots him in the shoulder. Adam falls to the floor and lies helplessly as the twins wail in the background.

Chapter 18 Adam tells Horace Quinn, the local deputy sheriff, that he got his gunshot wound by accidentally shooting himself while cleaning his gun. Quinn, however, sees through Adam's story immediately. Adam begins to weep when Quinn asks about Cathy. Quinn confers with the sheriff, who says that Faye, the proprietress of a local brothel, recently asked the sheriff about a runaway who closely matches Cathy's description. Quinn and the sheriff agree to keep the news from Adam so that the twins will not know that their mother is a prostitute.

In the meantime, Samuel counsels the miserable Adam that if he acts as though he is happy and alive, eventually he will feel that way. Samuel reminds Adam that his children need his strength.

Chapter 19 The narrator says that there are three houses of prostitution in the Salinas Valley, and that the valley residents accept these houses as an essential but undiscussed part of their society. Faye's brothel is the newest, and Cathy—now calling herself Kate—thrives there, having earned Faye's trust to quickly become an indispensable part of Faye's operation. When the sheriff finds Cathy, he tells her that as long as she agrees never to contact her sons, he will never make her background and her shooting of Adam a public matter. The sheriff also tells Cathy that he will never let his son come to Faye's, for he does not want his son ever to meet Cathy. Chapter 20 Faye is impressed by the fact that Cathy lectures the brothel's piano player, Cotton Eye, about his opium habit. Faye tells Cathy that Cathy has become like a daughter to her. She urges Cathy to give up prostitution, but Cathy says she needs the money.

Faye invites Cathy into her room for an elaborate ceremony in which she presents Cathy with her will. The will gives all of Faye's worldly possessions to Cathy upon Faye's death—an incredible sum, as the brothel does very well financially. Cathy is thrilled, but when she drinks a bit of Faye's celebratory champagne, she loses her inhibitions and begins to say cruel things to Faye. Cathy even confesses brazenly that she makes more money than Faye realizes, as she uses whips and razors and other sadomasochistic devices on her clients.

Faye screams in horror, and Cathy, panicking, gives her a drink to put her to sleep. Horrified by what she has revealed to Faye in her drunkenness, Cathy knocks Faye out with ammonia and pokes her with sharp instruments to make her believe that she is having a horrible nightmare. The other

prostitutes believe that Cathy is caring tenderly for Faye, and when Faye wakes, she believes the same thing. Faye believes that everything Cathy told her during the night was part of her nightmare, and she is grateful for Cathy's care and sweetness.

Chapter 21 Over time, Cathy begins to assume more and more control over Faye's house. She takes advantage of the local doctor's absentmindedness to begin slowly poisoning Faye with drugs. All the while, Cathy makes certain that the other girls believe her to be slavishly devoted to Faye. When Faye finally dies, Cathy pretends to be insensible with grief. Chapter 22 Adam's depression over Cathy's departure does not lift. Lee confides to Samuel that Adam still has not named his infant sons, even though they are more than a year old. Samuel finds this abominable and lectures Adam for his melancholy. The two men argue, and the typically nonviolent Samuel strikes Adam with his fist in an attempt to jolt him out of his stupor. The tactic appears to work, and Samuel tells Adam that they must sit down and name the two infant boys.

The men look over the baby boys and discuss possible names for them. Samuel brings up the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Then, looking in a Bible, he suggests Joshua and Caleb as names for the boys. One of the boys cries when he hears the word Caleb, which Adam takes as a sign. The first boy, therefore, is named Caleb. Adam dislikes the name Joshua because Joshua was a warrior, so he chooses the name Aaron for his second boy. This choice pleases Samuel, even though he knows that the biblical Aaron never made it to the Promised Land (Canaan, or modern Israel). The second child cries out

when he hears the name Aaron, which Adam takes as another sign, so the second boy is named Aaron.

Chapter 23 In 1911, Samuel is stricken with grief after his favorite daughter, Una, dies shortly after moving to a remote area of Oregon with her husband. When the Hamilton children visit Samuel and Liza for Thanksgiving, they notice that the previously youthful Samuel has suddenly aged significantly. The children devise a plan get their parents off the ranch by taking turns hosting them for long periods of time. Tom disapproves of the plan, saying it indicates to the aged Samuel that his life is essentially over. The other children, however, like the plan and present the idea to Samuel as though it were a vacation. Samuel accepts the plan but confides to Tom that he sees through it and realizes that his children are helping him transition into old age. Chapter 24 “[T]he Hebrew word, the word TIMSHEL—‘Thou mayest’—that gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world. That says the way is open”

Before he leaves his farm to stay with his children, Samuel goes to see Adam Trask. Samuel talks to the twins, now eleven years old, and reflects upon the fact that the easygoing Aron (he has dropped the first A in Aaron) reminds him of Abel and the closemouthed Caleb reminds him of Cain.

Samuel, Adam, and Lee discuss the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Lee says that he has been troubled by a discrepancy in the story that arises from two different translations of the Bible—according to one translation, God promises Cain that he will overcome sin; in another translation, God orders Cain to overcome sin. According to Lee, the Hebrew word in question is

timshel. After researching the matter for several years, Lee has determined that timshel means “thou mayest.” Lee considers this translation of timshel to be an extraordinary revelation, as it implies that God has given human beings the choice of whether or not to overcome sin—essentially giving humans the freedom to choose their course in life.

The men go for a walk, and Samuel asks Adam if he is happy. Adam does not answer. Samuel, hoping to force Adam to forget about Cathy, reveals to Adam that Cathy runs the most depraved whorehouse in the entire valley. Overcome with shock, Adam hurries away.

Chapter 25 Samuel Hamilton dies of old age. After the funeral, Adam goes to Cathy's brothel. As soon as he sees that Cathy is no longer beautiful and that she is actually a monster, Adam realizes that he finally can put her out of his mind. When he tells her as much, she responds that he is wrong to condemn her for her views, for there is nothing but depravity and evil in the world.

Cathy shows Adam photos of some of the most powerful and important men of the Salinas Valley performing sadomasochistic sex acts with her whores, and she brazenly admits to blackmailing the men with the pictures. As Adam rises to leave, Cathy suddenly panics, feeling him slip away—she even offers to sleep with him. When Adam shudders in disgust, Cathy cruelly claims that Charles is the twins' real father, for she slept with Charles on the night of her marriage to Adam. Adam says that he does not believe her and that it does not matter anyway, even if she is telling the truth.

Cathy screams, and the brothel's bouncer comes in and knocks Adam down. Even so, Adam leaves with a serene smile on his face, realizing that he is



finally free of the burden of Cathy that has been on his mind for so many years.

Chapter 26 Adam rides the train back from Salinas. Happy about his encounter with Cathy, he stops in at Will Hamilton's car dealership and tells Will he would like to buy a car. At home, Adam tells Lee that he now plans to make something of his land and to strengthen his relationship with his sons. Lee confesses that he hopes to leave the valley soon to start a bookstore in San Francisco but agrees to stay in Salinas to help Adam for the time being.

Chapter 27 Aron and Cal (the nickname he has taken for Caleb) play outside, hunting rabbits. The narrator discusses the differences between them: Aron is good-natured and handsome, while Cal is manipulative and vague. The boys discuss their mother. Cal says that he has heard rumors that their mother is in Salinas, not in heaven, as Adam has told them. Enraged, Aron attacks Cal, who realizes that he has found something that gives him power over Aron—Aron's feelings for their mother.

At home, the boys discover that they have visitors, the Bacons, who were passing by and have been caught in a sudden downpour. Mr. Bacon suggests to Adam that he rent out his farm and move to town if he does not intend to farm the land. Adam, lost in his own stream of thought, ponders taking the boys to visit his brother, Charles, whom they have never met.

Outside, the boys play with the Bacons' daughter, Abra, who is kind to Aron, much to Cal's annoyance. Cal offers to give Abra the rabbit he shot that day; Aron replies that it is his rabbit, but that Abra may take it home to bury it if she likes. Abra agrees. When Aron leaves, Cal makes up lies to upset Abra.

Cal says that Lee beats Aron and that Aron is going to put a snake in the box rather than the dead rabbit.

As the Bacons drive away, Abra throws the box out of their buggy, which hurts Aron's feelings—he has put a love note inside the box for her. Cal offers to give Aron his rifle if he wants to shoot Abra, but Aron points out that Cal does not have a rifle.

Chapter 28 That night at dinner, the normally distant Adam surprises the boys by suddenly asking them questions, showing interest in them, and treating them with kindness. Cal asks where their mother is buried, and Adam lies that she was sent back to her home in the east.

Later, Lee tells Adam not to lie to the boys, for they will discover the truth one day, and in lying, Adam risks injuring their trust. Lee then talks about his own childhood. His mother and father worked on the railroads, his pregnant mother having disguised herself as a man so she could join her husband on the voyage to the United States. After she gave birth to Lee, a mob of the other (all male) railroad workers, shocked that she was a woman, raped and killed her. But then, feeling instant remorse and revulsion at their deed, the railroad workers raised Lee as one of their own.

Adam writes a loving letter to Charles asking him to visit California. He worries about how Charles will interpret the letter and impatiently waits for a reply.

Chapter 29 Will Hamilton arrives at the Trask house with Adam's new car, but neither Will nor the mechanic who comes the next day seems to understand

how the car works. Chapter 30 Adam finally figures out the car and drives the boys into town in order to check his mail. In the mail is a letter from attorneys in Connecticut announcing that Charles has died and left a fortune of \$100, 000 to be split between Adam and Cathy.

Adam consults Lee about the inheritance, unable to understand why Charles would leave money to someone he despised. Cal eavesdrops on Adam and Lee's conversation. Lee observes that Cathy is not likely to claim the money, but he notes that his advice is probably irrelevant because he is sure that Adam will give Cathy the money anyway.

Lee announces that he is feeling old and that he wants to go to San Francisco to open a bookstore. The overheard conversation makes Cal sad, and he prays to God to become more like Aron. Trying to be kind, Cal tells Aron that Adam plans to send a wreath to their mother's grave. Cal gets into bed and continues to pray to God to make him better.

Chapter 31 Adam goes to see Cathy at the brothel to inform her about Charles's death and about her share of the fortune. Cathy is skeptical about Adam's motives for telling her about the money, for she knows full well that he could have kept it for himself and never told her. Adam confronts Cathy, telling her that she is only " part of a human" and that she simply is incapable of believing that there is any good in the world. This touches a nerve with Cathy, who shakes in rage as Adam leaves.

On an impulse, Adam then goes to visit Liza Hamilton, who is currently staying in Salinas with her daughter Olive, who is married to a man named

Ernest Steinbeck (the narrator's father). Adam tells Liza that he is thinking of moving the twins into town.

Chapter 32 After his father's death, Tom Hamilton lives in the old ranch house and secretly writes melancholy poetry. After a time, his sister Dessie decides to come live with him, and he happily tells her that they will rejuvenate the old house. Tom paints the house and cleans everything thoroughly, but Dessie begins to suffer from intense stomach pains, the severity of which she attempts to hide from Tom. Chapter 33 Tom and Dessie decide to raise money for a trip abroad, and Tom hits upon the idea of making money by raising young pigs. When he returns from a trip into town to see Will about borrowing money for the pig business, however, he finds Dessie doubled over with pain. Tom gives her salts to drink—a traditional remedy—and calls a doctor. The doctor curses Tom, telling him that giving her salts was a mistake that likely has made Dessie's ailment even worse. As the doctor steps out his door, he tells his wife to call Will Hamilton and inform him that he must drive the doctor to Tom's house, as his sister is dying.

Dessie dies. Tom, sick with grief and guilt that he may have inadvertently caused her death, deliriously tells his father's spirit that he wants to commit suicide. Tom writes a letter to his mother, telling her that he has decided to try to break in a wild new horse that he bought. He then writes a letter to Will instructing him to say, for their mother's sake, that Tom was killed by a fall from a horse. After posting the letters, Tom shoots himself with his revolver and dies.

Chapter 34“ I believe that there is one story in the world. . . . Humans are caught . . . in a net of good and evil. . . . There is no other story.”

The narrator discusses the struggle between good and evil, which he says is the one recurring narrative of human history. He says that people can be measured by the world’s reaction to their deaths. He remembers one man who made a fortune on the backs of others but then attempted to make it up later by becoming a philanthropist; people took that man’s death with quiet relief. He remembers a second man who had always been immoral, manipulating others under the pretense of virtue; people greeted his death with joy. Finally, the narrator remembers a third man who made many errors but who devoted his life to giving others strength in a time of great need; when he died, people burst into incredible grief.

Chapter 35The Trasks move to Salinas proper, buying the house in which Dessie Hamilton lived before she moved to the ranch with Tom. Lee leaves to open his bookstore in San Francisco. Aron and Cal discuss Lee’s departure, and Aron bets Cal ten cents that Lee will come back. Aron wins the bet, as Lee returns only six days later. Lee tells Adam that he was lonesome, that he realized he really did not want to run a bookstore, and that he is very glad to be home. Chapter 36Aron and Cal begin school in Salinas and are assigned to the seventh grade. They quickly prove themselves to be bright, popular students. Aron is well liked, whereas Cal bullies his way into respect on the playground.

After the first day of school, Aron follows Abra Bacon to her house and asks her to marry him someday. She takes him to a secret place—a canopy of

leaves beneath a willow tree—where she says they can practice being married. Abra asks Aron about his mother and pretends to be his mother herself by laying his head in her lap. He begins to cry. Abra tells Aron that she overheard her parents saying that Aron's mother is still alive. Aron does not believe her because it would mean that Adam and Lee have lied to him. Abra gives Aron a kiss before she leaves.

Chapter 37In 1915, Lee buys an icebox for the family, which starts Adam thinking about a possible way to make money: packing produce in ice and shipping it in refrigerated train cars to areas of the country that normally cannot get perishable produce during the winter. Will Hamilton tells Adam that his idea is foolish, but Adam tries it anyway. The scheme is a disaster, as the train is delayed at every turn, and the Salinas lettuce that Adam ships arrives rotten and late in the east, just as the skeptics predicted.

After the shipping boondoggle, Adam's once-sizable fortune is depleted to the point that he only has \$9, 000 to his name. Aron and Cal become the butt of jokes at school, and Adam is the laughing stock of the town. Only Abra stands by Aron, promising never to desert him. Cal, increasingly jealous of the time Abra and Aron spend together, becomes frustrated and restless. Because Adam is no longer universally respected in town, rumors begin to spread about Cathy and about Adam's past. Abra overhears one such rumor and advises Aron to ask his father about his mother, but Aron nervously declines.

Chapter 38Cal becomes increasingly restless and starts to wander outdoors at night. On one such excursion, a drunken farmer named Rabbit Holman

tells Cal about his mother's brothel and even takes Cal there. Appalled, Cal returns home and tells Lee what he has seen, and Lee tells Cal the full truth about Cathy. Lee says that Cal's mother is almost inhumanly evil. Cal worries that he has inherited this evil, but Lee urges Cal to remember that he has free will in all his behavior—that he, not his mother, will determine his path in life.

Cal tries to dedicate himself to a moral life, but temptation consistently causes him to stray. He does not tell Aron about their mother, as he fears that the news would destroy the good and trusting Aron. Aron, in the meantime, has discovered religion and says he has decided to become a minister. He even tells Abra that he wishes to remain celibate. Abra humors him, for she assumes that he will change his mind by the time she is ready to marry him.

Chapter 39A wave of moral reform sweeps Salinas—as the narrator notes, this occurs every few years—and organized gambling comes under fire within the town. Cal likes to watch the gambling during his nocturnal wanderings, and one night he is arrested during a police raid. When Adam retrieves Cal from the prison, the father and son have a long, heartfelt talk. Adam confesses that he thinks he is a bad father to the boys, and Cal confesses that he knows the truth about Cathy. Adam and Cal discuss Aron. Cal thinks that Aron's deep, innate goodness makes him fragile and that therefore he needs to be protected. Cal promises never to tell Aron about their mother.

Cal feels much closer to his father after their talk. He begins to spy on the brothel to learn about Cathy and gradually notices that she follows exactly the same schedule every Monday. Cal begins to follow Cathy around. She gives no sign that she notices him until she suddenly confronts him one Monday and asks why he has been following her. Cal tells Cathy that he is her son, and she takes him inside the brothel to talk.

In her room, Cathy keeps the light off, for she says that it hurts her eyes. She also wears bandages on her hands because of her severe arthritis. Cathy asks Cal about his brother and his father. Cal refuses to talk about Adam but says that Aron is doing well. Enraged to see how much Cal loves his brother and his father, Cathy brags to Cal about her ability to manipulate and control people. She insinuates that she and Cal are very much alike. Cal asks his mother whether, when she was a child, she ever felt that everyone else understood something that she did not. A strange look passes over Cathy's face, and Cal suddenly realizes that he does not have to be like his mother. He tells her that he knows the light does not hurt her eyes—rather, the light makes her afraid.

Chapter 40 One day, Cathy receives a visit from a woman named Ethel, who was a prostitute at the brothel when Faye was still in charge. Ethel implies that she found the discarded bottles of poison that Cathy used to kill Faye and tries to blackmail Cathy for \$100 a month to keep the secret. Cathy, however, uses her influence to have Ethel arrested and sent out of the county for theft. Nevertheless, Cathy begins to feel increasingly nervous that Ethel will turn her in. She also begins to sense the presence of Charles Trask around her. She feels increasingly paranoid and restless. Chapter 41 As it



appears that war may break out in Europe, Cal convinces Aron to finish high school and begin college early. Cal even promises to help Aron pay for college. When Lee finds out about Cal's plan, he offers to help with \$5,000 he has saved over the years. Then, Cal talks to Will Hamilton about making money. Will is impressed with Cal's openness and pragmatic business sense. Will takes Cal out to the Trask ranch and asks whether he wants a business partner. He tells Cal about a plan he has to make a great deal of money exporting beans in the wartime economy.

After the war breaks out, patriotic spirit explodes in Salinas. Cal and Will buy beans from local farmers for two-and-a-half cents a pound and sell them in England for twelve cents a pound. Cal plans to make enough money to restore the fortune Adam lost in his botched attempt at the refrigerated shipping business.

Chapter 42 The narrator briefly discusses the onset of World War I and how it affects Salinas. Telegrams begin to arrive informing families that their sons have been killed—a reality that gradually destroys the townspeople's myth that the war could never affect them directly. Chapter 43 Adam, proud of Aron's decision to finish high school early, tells Lee that he wishes Cal had the same ambition. Lee replies that Cal may surprise Adam. Aron, busy with his studies in school and at church, hears that a local madam has begun attending church services.

The war continues, and Liza Hamilton dies. Aron passes his graduation exams but does not tell his father; Aron tells Cal that he does not think his father would even care about the exams. Lee, however, tells Aron that his

father is immensely proud and that he was planning to give Aron a gold watch for graduation.

Chapter 44 Abra starts to spend time with Lee and Adam after Aron leaves for Stanford University. She confides in Lee and asks him if it is true that Aron's mother is a prostitute. Lee confesses that it is indeed true. He worries that Aron will find out and that he will never understand that Adam lied to him about it in order to protect him. Meanwhile, Cal tells Lee that he has made enough money to pay back his \$5, 000, along with an additional \$15, 000 on top of it. Cal plans to give the money to his father on Thanksgiving.

One day, Abra tells Cal that Aron said he does not want to marry her, for he wants to be in the clergy. Cal says that Aron might still change his mind. Abra asks Cal if he visits prostitutes, and Cal confesses that he does. Abra tells Cal that she is sinful too, but Cal is skeptical. He tells Abra that life with Aron will force her to be moral.

Chapter 45 The narrator introduces us to a man named Joe Valery, an ex-convict who escaped from San Quentin and who now works as a pimp and bouncer for Cathy. He has looked for weaknesses in her but can find none. As a result, Joe has developed an admiration for Cathy that stems from fear.

The arthritis pain in Cathy's hands has become so severe that she begins to rely heavily on Joe to run the brothel. Because she knows the secret about his convict past, she believes that she be able to control him. Nonetheless, he continues to constantly search for a way to manipulate and outwit her. Cathy sends Joe to find Ethel in the hopes that he will bring the prostitute back to Salinas and kill her before she can tell anyone about the bottles of

poison Cathy used to murder Faye. Joe asks around about Ethel in the surrounding towns and counties and discovers that she is dead already. He tells Cathy, however, that he heard a rumor that Ethel is returning to Salinas in secret. The news terrifies Cathy.

Chapter 46The people of Salinas are in a patriotic fever over the war. One day, a crowd, including the narrator and his sister, torments the local tailor because he has a German accent; they even set fire to the man's shop.

Chapter 47Adam is appointed to the local draft board, but he experiences intense guilt for sending young men away, possibly to their deaths. Lee reminds Adam of the concept of *timshel*: it is Adam's choice, Lee implies, whether or not to work for the draft board. Adam is excited for Aron to come home from Stanford for Thanksgiving; he has decided that Aron is smarter and better than Cal, unaware of the fact that Aron is miserable at Stanford.

Chapter 48Joe Valery continues to scheme to manipulate Cathy with the specter of Ethel and her blackmail. Cathy, meanwhile, schemes to uncover Joe's attempt to betray her. The pain in Cathy's hands has become so severe that she wears a vial of morphine capsules around her neck in case she ever wants to commit suicide. Chapter 49When Aron arrives in Salinas, he is depressed and unhappy about his father's dotting expectations for him. Cal, meanwhile, wraps up the \$15, 000 he plans to give to his father. He is nervous about Adam's response to the gift and wants desperately for his father to like it. When Adam opens the gift at Thanksgiving and sees the money, he is shocked and asks Cal how he earned it. When Adam learns about the bean-reselling operation, he becomes angry and tells Cal to return the money to the farmers he robbed in his war profiteering.

Cal turns away and runs to his room, full of anger and jealousy for Aron. Lee tells Cal to control his reaction, and Cal does finally recognize that it is within his power to control himself. He apologizes to his father and goes to see Aron, who is on his way back from Abra's house. Still roiling with jealousy, Cal tells Aron that he has something to show him. He takes Aron to see Cathy at her brothel. The next morning, Aron signs up for the army, too sickened by the truth to want to live.

Chapter 50The next day, Cathy is practically catatonic with the memory of Aron's visit and his horror upon learning the truth about her. She sends a note to the sheriff advising him to check Joe Valery's fingerprints and then writes a will in which she leaves all her worldly possessions to Aron. Cathy remembers her childhood, when she used to fantasize about forming a friendship with Alice of Alice in Wonderland. Cathy takes the morphine pill and imagines herself shrinking like Alice until she dies.

Joe Valery discovers Cathy's body the next morning and finds the will she has written. He takes the keys to Cathy's safe deposit box at the bank, as well as the photographs of the men she blackmails. However, just as Joe is about to leave the house, the sheriff's deputy arrives and says that he has to bring Joe in to see the sheriff about something—the sheriff has read Cathy's letter. Joe suddenly breaks away and tries to run, but the deputy guns him down as he flees.

Chapter 51Adam asked, " Do you know where your brother is?"

" No, I don't," said Cal. . . .

“ He hasn’t been home for two nights. Where is he?”

“ How do I know?” said Cal. “ Am I supposed to look after him?”

Horace Quinn, who has been promoted to sheriff, tells Adam about Cathy’s death. Adam weeps and wants to hide Cathy’s will from Aron. The sheriff convinces Adam to tell Aron, but no one seems to know where Aron is. When Adam asks Cal about Aron’s whereabouts, Cal snarls and asks, “ Am I supposed to look after him?” Adam is overcome with a numb shock.

Lee looks through a copy of Marcus Aurelius’s Meditations and remembers that long ago he stole the book from Samuel Hamilton, who likely knew Lee stole the book but said nothing. Lee goes to see Cal, who has been drinking heavily to cope with his guilt. Cal also has burned the \$15, 000 cash that his father rejected. Lee tells Cal that he needs to understand that he is simply a normal, flawed human being rather than an abstract and uncontrollable force of evil. This reminder soothes Cal’s spirit. On his way out, Lee finds Adam leaning against the wall as if in shock. In his hand is a postcard from Aron informing his father that he has joined the army.

Chapter 52As the war takes a hard turn for American troops in Europe, Adam’s health takes a similar turn for the worse. He begins to experience numbness and pain in his hand and obsessively wonders and worries about Aron.

Cal speaks with Abra, who tells him that she no longer loves Aron, as he seems to live in a fantasy world of extreme moral contrasts. Cal tells Abra that Aron now knows the truth about Cathy, and Abra confesses that she

learned about Cathy long ago. Abra tells Cal that she has fallen in love with him. Cal claims that he is not worthy of her, but Abra implies that she loves Cal precisely because of the moral struggles he undergoes.

At home, Abra's father has withdrawn into seclusion and refuses to return phone calls from a local judge. Abra knows that her father is not sick, as her mother claims, but she is not sure what is wrong with him. Abra gathers up Aron's love letters and burns them.

Chapter 53 One day, Adam tells Lee that he believes that the fortune his father, Cyrus, amassed was stolen from the Army. Lee contemplates the irony: the honest Adam Trask living his life on a stolen fortune, just as the good Aron Trask might live his life on a fortune made through prostitution.

Abra visits Lee, who is thrilled to see her and says that he wishes he were her father. Abra and Cal talk about the military and agree that Cal is not well suited to life as a soldier. Cal decides to take flowers to Cathy's grave.

Chapter 54 Adam slowly starts to regain his health. When spring comes, Cal and Abra have a picnic in an azalea grove, where Abra takes Cal's hand and tells him that he must never feel guilty about anything—not even about Aron. Lee looks through a seed catalogue and thinks of the garden he will plant in the spring.

A man comes to the door with a telegram announcing that Aron has been killed in the war. Lee, cursing Aron as a coward, enters Adam's room to tell him the news of his son's death.

Chapter 55 Adam has a stroke upon hearing the news and lies near death when Cal returns to the house. When Lee tells Cal what has happened, the boy is sick with grief and guilt. Cal goes to Abra, who does her best to comfort him. She takes him back to his house, where Lee tells Cal and Abra emphatically that they must always remember that they are in control of their lives and that they are not automatically doomed to repeat their parents' mistakes.

Lee takes Cal and Abra to see the dying Adam. Lee tells Adam that Cal, in informing Aron about his mother, committed a grave sin out of hurt he felt when he believed that Adam did not love him. Lee asks Adam to bless Cal before he dies. As Cal gazes down at him, Adam, with great effort, mouths the single word *timshel*, and then his eyes close in sleep.