America Is in the Heart

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CARLOS BULOSAN

Carlos Bulosan was born in a rural farming village in the Philippine province of Pangasinan. His parents were members of the Ilocano ethnolinguistic group. Following centuries of Spanish colonialism, the Bulosans struggled to survive, as large-scale plantations consolidated their hold over peasant lands. Their poverty notwithstanding, Bulosan's family emphasized the importance of education. Bulosan eventually saved enough money to secure steerage passage to America. He arrived in Seattle on July 22, 1930 at the age of 17. With only three years of formal schooling, Bulosan was broke and spoke no English, so he spent years working low-paying itinerant labor jobs in fields, orchards, hotels, restaurants, and factories. Like most Filipino people in America at the time, Bulosan experienced severe racial discrimination, but he found community with other Filipinos and joined the labor movement that fought to unionize ethnic workers on the Pacific Coast. He also taught himself English and pursued his lifelong passion for writing. In his short life, he wrote poems, short stories, journalistic pieces, and novels. His most famous work is the semi-autobiographical novel *America is in the Heart* (1946). Bulosan died from tuberculosis at the age of 42, and many of his other works were published posthumously. Today he celebrated as an early postcolonial chronicler of the Filipino experience in America.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Carlos Bulosan wrote during an era of complicated relations between America and the Philippines. Following the Spanish-American War (1898) and the Filipino-American War (1899-1902), the United States annexed the Philippines from Spain. As a result, large numbers of Filipinos migrated to the United States to fill agricultural jobs. Between 1906 and 1946, 150,000 Filipinos settled primarily in California and Hawaii. In California, an influx of Chinese and Japanese immigrants in the late-19th and early-20th centuries prompted white racial backlash. This backlash resulted in discriminatory laws such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited all immigration of Chinese laborers, and the 1913 Alien Land Law, which banned land ownership by Japanese citizens in California. Although the 1924 American Immigration Law categorized Filipinos as colonized "nationals" (but not U.S. citizens), white Americans often viewed Filipinos as yet another "savage" Asian group, and treated them accordingly. In *America is in the Heart*, Carlos Bulosan depicts the vitriolic racism and prejudice that Filipinos in America experienced on a daily basis. Filipinos were prohibited from entering "whites only" establishments, banned from marrying white people, given the worst jobs, and treated as derelicts by police. Like other non-white authors who chronicled their experiences as members of a racial minority in majority-white American society, Bulosan tells his own story as part of a marginalized group's difficult journey towards becoming "real" Americans.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Carlos Bulosan was among the first writers to chronicle the immigrant experience of Filipinos in America. His postcolonial writing, however, also overlaps with a broader body of migrant and ethnic/proletarian literature than blossomed in the United States during the Great Depression and the Second World War. Postcolonial literature is written by people from formerly colonized countries. It focuses on problems such as racism, economic exploitation, and cultural appropriation that colonized people experienced at the hands of their colonizers. Popular works of postcolonial literature include Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Bulosan, like most Filipino immigrants in America, led a working-class life. His writing, therefore, also fits into a contemporary tradition in which working-class writers tried to accurately depict the material and social conditions of working-class people, such as factory workers and farm laborers, as well as critique the existing capitalist power structure that controlled their lives. *America is in The Heart*'s depiction of the Asian experience in America shares similarities with Chinese American author Hsi Tseng Tsiang's *And China Has Hands* (1937), which follows the struggles of Chinese immigrants in New York City's Chinatown. Bulosan's work also fits in with works of ethnic and working-class literature such as Thomas Bell's *Out of This Furnace* (1941), the story of Slovak immigrants who face prejudice and economic exploitation in a Pennsylvania steel town, as well as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), a classic depiction of the harsh lives of migrant Dust-Bowl farmworkers.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** America is in the Heart: A Personal History
- **When Written:** 1930s and 1940s
- **Where Written:** West Coast United States
- **When Published:** 1946, reissued in 1973
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Semi-autobiographical novel
- **Setting:** The Philippines and the American Pacific Coast
- **Climax:** Carlos becomes a writer and publishes his work.

- **Antagonist:** White Americans, who hold a deep racial animosity towards Filipinos; capitalism, embodied by agricultural companies, business owners, and factory proprietors
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

Picture Perfect. In 1943, the *Saturday Evening Post* commissioned Carlos Bulosan to write an essay to accompany Norman Rockwell's Thanksgiving-themed painting, "Freedom from Want." Bulosan was one of four authors tapped to write in support of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms."

Red Scare. Bulosan's activism in the union and socialist movements earned him the ire of the rabidly anti-communist Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy, who blacklisted Bulosan in the 1950s.

PLOT SUMMARY

Carlos Bulosan is a young boy helping his father plow their small plot of land in a rural village outside of Binalonan, in the Philippine province of Pangasinan. Suddenly, he notices a man emerging through the tall grass and heading towards his father. It is Carlos's older brother, Leon, who has returned from fighting in a war in Europe. Carlos meets his older brother, who left when Carlos was a baby, for the first time. Leon returns during a tumultuous time for the Philippines, as the peasantry begins to revolt against the greed of the large plantation owners who have consolidated peasant lands. Carlos's family owns four hectares of land, which places them firmly in the peasant class who live in poverty. Shortly after his return from the army, Leon selects a peasant girl to marry, but the wedding party learns that the bride is not a virgin and beats her mercilessly as punishment.

Carlos has three other brothers. Luciano is completing his service in the Philippine Scouts (a native branch of the U.S. Army), Amado helps father with the farm work, and Macario is attending high school in Lingayen. The occupying American government has brought public education to the Philippines, but Carlos's family can only afford to send Macario to school in the city. Though they are illiterate peasants, Carlos's parents prioritize education as a pathway out of poverty. Carlos spends his days harvesting crops with father and Amado, but he is an innately curious child who is eager to learn how to read. Amado and Macario encourage his interest in **books** by recommending that he read as much as he can. In order to continue sending Macario to school, father sells his land to a moneylender, but is never able to purchase it back. The loss of the land turns father into a broken man. Carlos's mother spends her days peddling salted fish, rice, and beans in the local villages.

Macario eventually finishes high school and secures a job teaching in Binalonan, which provides the family with much-needed income. Carlos also tries to earn money through various odds jobs and helping mother with her trading business, a dangerous process that involves long treks and perilous river crossings. In some villages, Carlos witnesses Igorots who come down from the mountains to trade. For Carlos, daily life is a struggle. He manages, however, to find joy through bonding with his family, especially Luciano, who teaches Carlo about beauty by catching **birds** by the riverside. Carlos also plays with his young sisters Irene (who dies as a baby), Francisca, and Marcela. Meanwhile, peasants continue to revolt against large landholders throughout the Philippines, raising Carlos's awareness of how the rich are able to dominate over the poor.

When Carlos is 13 years old, he moves to the city of Bagio to look for work. Eventually, he meets an American named Mary Strandon, who gives him a job and teaches him about **America**, where Carlos hopes to go someday. Soon after, he decides it is time to join Amado and Macario in America to seek a better life. He bids farewell to his parents and sisters, and goes on to board a ship bound for the U.S. Carlos stays with the poorest passengers in the ship's hot, cramped steerage. He survives a meningitis epidemic and a verbal brush with racist white Hawaiians who call him a "monkey" before the ship finally docs in Seattle. With only 20 cents remaining, he winds up in a hotel with another Filipino named Marcelo, where he learns he will be sent to work in the Alaskan fish canneries to cover the cost of rent. Working in the canneries is a miserable, dangerous job, and he sees one worker lose an arm in the cutting machines. Carlos meets a university student named Conrado Torres who wants to unionize the cannery workers. When he returns to Seattle, he finds that the company has skimmed his pay. Most of the other Filipino workers blow their entire pay at the Chinese-owned gambling houses, bars, and brothels, but Carlos is not interested in these dens of vice.

Carlos meets a man who takes him to an orchard to pick apples in the Yakima Valley. He works under two shady characters named Corneilo Paez and Pinoy. He also meets a friendly older Filipino named Julio. One night, a racist mob attacks the orchard and the home of the owner, Mr. Malraux. Julio and Carlos flee for their lives and eventually part ways at a railyard, where Carlos boards a train to California. After making several stops, he learns that prejudice against Filipinos makes them targets for police, prohibits them from working many jobs, and bars them from acquiring decent lodging or marrying white people. In Los Angeles, Carlos finds that his brother, Amado is involved in bootlegging. His other brother, Macario, is living in a hotel with a group that includes brothers José and Nick, with whom Carlos becomes close.

Carlos briefly works with Macario in the home of wealthy movie director, but leaves in disgust after the man's white

dinner guests describe Filipino's as inferior and sex-crazed. He travels to the Imperial Valley with José, where he learns that local whites hunt Filipino farm workers with shotguns. Carlos and José hitch a ride with a truck driver named Frank. He takes them to the train yards, where detectives chase them. In the ensuing scuffle, José's feet to become severed under the train. He recovers in the hospital but wears a peg leg. Carlos continues to travel. He picks peas in Idaho and beets in Montana. Carlos worries that the relentless violence he continually witnesses will make him hard and cruel. He returns to Seattle but narrowly escapes being sexually assaulted in a men's shelter, prompting him to leave town. In Klamath Falls, two police officers beat and jail him, and he wonders how some Americans can be so sadistic.

After dabbling in crime himself and learning of his father's death in the Philippines, Carlos eventually joins the union movement alongside José, Nick, and Macario, and writes for a a socialist newspaper run by Pascual and his wife, Lucille. He is inspired by Macario's passionate belief that they must build a better America for themselves and future generations. He distributes pro-union pamphlets, helps to organize striking agricultural workers, and continues to write for socialist publications with José, Nick, and a Filipino radical named Felix Razon, whom he once met as a child. When an independent union known as the Filipino Workers' Association threatens to fold, Carlos and his associates work to save it by trying to unite Mexican and Filipino workers and supporting various labor strikes. As they are preparing pro-union leaflets in a restaurant, anti-union thugs kidnap Carlos, José, and a lawyer named Millar, drive them to the woods, and beat them savagely.

Carlos manages to escape his assailants, but he is severely injured. He makes his way to San Jose, where he stumbles into the home of a kind woman named Marian, who takes him in and nurses him back to health. They spend several weeks together until Marian dies of syphilis, devastating Carlos. Back in California, he learns of the new United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) union and meets with representatives from the Communist Party. Carlos helps recruit for the UCAPAWA, but his heart is still drawn to writing, especially poetry. He soon becomes seriously ill with tuberculosis. He enters the Los Angeles Hospital long-term, where and spends his time writing and reading great works of literature. Carlos is overjoyed when Harriet Monroe, a journal editor, publishes some of his poems. While in the hospital, Alice and Eileen Odell, two sisters who read his poetry, begin visiting him. They bring him books and food, and Eileen in particular becomes Carlos's close confidant, who he feels represents the best of America.

After undergoing a successful operation on his lungs, Carlos continues reading books and finds comfort in the hospital's outdoor porch near a beautiful tree. Eventually, Macario is able to get Carlos released after two years in the hospital. Carlos is frightened to go back to the outside world of violence and struggle. Already distraught over being thrust back into a world of crime and poverty, Carlos is further devastated when the doctor tells him he will probably only live for five more years. Determined to make the most of the time he has left, Carlos vows to write the story of his life and experiences in America.

Carlos seeks refuge in the Los Angeles Public Library, where he plans to read as many books as he can on every possible subject. He finds particular inspiration and personal relevance in the narratives of Asian immigrants who came to America. He also immerses himself in leftist literature, and meets with several local communist leaders. José suggest forming a separate Filipino unit of the Communist Party, and Carlos likes this idea. They distribute leaflets emphasizing 10 points of discrimination that Filipinos face and attract a fair amount of worker interest. The party leaders, however, reject the idea of a Filipino unit.

After falling out with the communists and being outed by a newspaper as an agitator, Carlos boards a bus and dreams of being back in the Philippines and bringing food and money to his parents. Back in Los Angeles, he helps organize a conference of Filipino labor leaders from across the state of California. The conference establishes the Committee for the Protection of Filipino Rights (CPFR) and takes up a campaign to demand American citizenship for Filipinos. Carlos becomes invested in the CPFR, but he also becomes disillusioned by the antics of members Roman Rios and Javier Lacson, who foolishly squander their goodwill with the movement over a woman, Lucia Simpson. Although communism for Filipinos seems attractive at first, its endless party divisions prevent any broad-based Filipino communist movement. Carlos does, however, see value in the ideals that communism imparts on Filipino workers.

Around this time, Carlos suffers a coughing fit and Nick takes him into his apartment and cares for him. When he recovers, Carlos goes to back to Los Angeles and finds José, Amado, and another friend, Ganzo, sleeping in Macario's place. In between jobs canning fish and picking peas, Carlos begins writing again, and focuses on his personal experiences in America. He is overjoyed when a small company publishes his first book of poems. After the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, Carlos's friends, including Amado and Macario, join the military, leaving Carlos alone. In Carlos's hotel room, Macario has left an envelope filled with money and a photograph of himself. Carlos deposits the money and gets on a bus bound for Portland. As the bus pulls away, he smiles and reminds himself that no none can ever destroy his faith in America.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan – Carlos Bulosan is the author and protagonist of *America is in the Heart*. He from the Pangasinan province in the Philippines. Carlos and his siblings the power education holds to lift up the downtrodden. Carlos has four brothers (Amado, Macario, Luciano, and Leon) and three sisters (Irene, Francisco, and Marcela). His mother and father are poor, illiterate peasant farmers, and struggle to support their eight children despite their strenuous work. Early on, they instill in The book begins with Carlos's impoverished childhood in the Philippines, where he establishes a love for **books**. As a teenager, he leaves his hometown of Binalonan to seek a new life on **America**'s West Coast. In the United States, Bulosan travels around the country working low-paying labor jobs and dabbling in crime to earn a living. He meets up with his brothers, Amado and Macario in America, and primarily lives with other immigrants like his friends José and Nick. Carlos's experiences as an itinerant worker eventually lead him to adopt leftist politics and become a labor organizer. He also pursues his passion for writing poems, short stories, and autobiographical pieces inspired by his experiences as a Filipino in an American society that is racist to non-white minorities. Although Carlos endures consistent struggles and hardships throughout his life, such as the prolonged bout of tuberculosis that nearly kills him, he is a naturally optimistic person who finds hope in opportunities to create a more just American society. Rather than wallowing in his misfortune, he uses his two-year hospital stay to educate himself by reading great works of literature (which his friends Alice and Eileen Odell provide for him). Throughout the book, Carlos is a compassionate and inquisitive individual who understands at an early age that powerful people use their wealth and influence to sow injustice and dominate the powerless. After recovering from his illness at the end of the book, he is released from the hospital, reconnects with the rebounding labor movement, and solidifies his commitment to the American ideals of equality and opportunity for all.

Amado – Amado is the youngest of Carlos's four brothers. Like Carlos, Amado spends his childhood in the Philippines helping his family perform the back-breaking farm labor that is necessary for their survival. Amado is a strong-willed and somewhat impulsive person who flees to Binalonan following a spat with his father over the treatment of a water buffalo during a rainstorm. Amado works for a time as a janitor in Binalonan's town hall, but he develops an appreciation for the value of education despite only attending school to the fifth grade. He provides Carlos with **books** and magazines, and proves to be a significant influence on his brother's lifelong commitment to reading and studying. After working a series of jobs in the Philippines, Amado moves to **America**, where his ostracized status as a Filipino sends him into the underworld of bootlegging, gambling, and theft with his partner, Alfredo. He spends time in jail but has stretches where he works within the law. He opens a successful restaurant and hotel, and works for a shady white lawyer. The latter job estranges him from Carlos for a long period. When Amado and Carlos reunite, Amado works to care for his other brother, Macario, but he cannot escape the influence of his underworld contacts, which strains the brothers' relationship. At the book's end, Amado joins the United States Navy, and his fate remains a mystery.

Macario – Macario is the third-oldest brother in Carlos's family. Macario attends the high school in Lingayen, making him the only member of the family to receive a formal education beyond grade school. Because the family can only afford to send one child to school full time, father and mother work hard to ensure that Macario has the money to finish school in the hopes that he can become a teacher and help provide for the family. Thus, early in the book, Macario (and the income he can potentially generate) serves as the family's most potent source of hope for a better life. Macario eventually finishes high school and becomes a teacher who provides the family with much-needed income, but he never earns enough money to buy back the family's four hectares of land from the moneylender. Like his other brother, Amado, Macario is an important influence on Carlos throughout his life. When Carlos is sick as a boy, Macario uses the novel *Robinson Crusoe* and the biblical story of Moses to teach him to develop his own intellectual capabilities in order to help him endure life's hardships. In **America**, Macario continues to influence Carlos's intellectual development as the two brothers steep themselves in the socialist tradition and work in the labor union movement. The most important lesson that Macario imparts to Carlos is that the American promise of equality for all is an unfinished, ongoing process, which Filipinos and other immigrants must work to fulfill.

Luciano – Luciano is the second-oldest brother in Carlos's family. At the beginning of the book, he is away completing a three-year service in the Philippine Scouts, a native detachment of the occupying United States Army. Luciano is honorably discharged from the service at age 20 but is diagnosed with tuberculosis. When Luciano returns home, he proves to be another formative influence on Carlos, who admires his brother's "wide experience" in the world. Luciano, for example, is the first member of the family to see automobiles and motorcycles when they arrive in Binalonan. In one of the book's most important passages, Luciano shows Carlos how to find beauty amidst suffering despair by teaching him how to snare different kinds of **birds** without harming them. Together, the brothers catch crying birds and vibrantly colored parrots, which they keep in the family home. Despite growing up in poverty and struggling daily to survive, Luciano teaches Carlos to appreciate the "esthetic pleasure" the birds provide through their very presence. Through Luciano's influence, Carlos learns that beauty is intrinsically valuable, and this knowledge allows him to appreciate beauty even during the most dire and depressing moments of his life. Luciano

eventually becomes mayor of Binalonan and tells Carlos he must always read "good books." He also teaches Carlos that the world has more to offer than his immediate surroundings. Luciano eventually dies of tuberculosis.

Leon – Leon is the oldest brother in Carlos's family. As the book begins, he has just returned from fighting in a European war. Due to their significant age difference, Carlos meets Leon for the first time when the former shows up in the family field where Carlos and father are plowing. Out of all of Carlos's brothers, Leon lives the most traditional peasant lifestyle. Upon returning to Binalonan from the war, Leon takes a peasant wife, and must endure a brutal old tradition in which the other villagers savagely beat his new bride when they learn she is not a virgin. Eventually, Leon moves with his wife to another part of the island of Luzon, where he raises several children. Like the other brothers, Leon is an important influence on Carlos. He teaches the latter to stand strong behind his convictions and teaches him to appreciate the Earth and all that it offers, a lesson Carlos carries with him in **America**. For Carlos, Leon also becomes a lifelong symbol of the bittersweet nature of homecoming, and he recalls his brother's return from the army several times while contemplating his own possible return to the Philippines from America.

Father – Father is a Filipino peasant farmer and the patriarch of Carlos's family. Throughout the book, Carlos never provides his father's actual name. Father first appears plowing his small plot of land with a very young Carlos. Father's relationship to the land is the defining element of his life as a peasant. He relies on the land to provide food and shelter for his family, but farming is backbreaking labor. Father is also illiterate, but despite his lack of education, he and Mother understand the important role education plays in achieving a better life, and he works hard to keep Macario in school. Ultimately, however, tragedy comes to define Father's life. The cost of Macario's high school education forces him to sell his land to the moneylender, and instead farm a small plot of land owned by a church. When the church sells the plot to a distant plantation owner, father tries in vain to purchase it back. The loss of his land turns Father into an idle alcoholic who eventually dies a destitute man. Carlos calls his father's death "the turning point" of his life, as it comes during a particularly dark period when Carlos doubts the promise of equality in **America**. This setback notwithstanding, much of Carlos's motivation to make something of himself in America stems from his desire to avoid becoming his father and perpetuating the cycle of poverty and ignorance into which he was born.

Mother – Mother is the matriarch of Carlos's family. Like Father, Carlos never reveals her actual name. Mother is illiterate, and while Father farms the land, she spends her time peddling salted fish and beans in the surrounding villages and raising eight children. Like Father, mother endures a harsh life defined by physical and psychological strain. Whereas Father's struggle to buy back his land shows Carlos the *private* shame of living in poverty, Mother's frequent public humiliations expose him to the *public* shame of a peasant's life. When a wealthy girl mocks mother's poor circumstances and causes her to spill her beans, mother makes no effort to protest and, instead, accepts her lowly status. Working with his mother peddling in the towns and villages brings Carlos in proximity to the wealthier classes of people who control the reins of power in the Philippines, and it alerts him the cold reality of class divisions that define society in both the Philippines and **America**. As Carlos grows older, he recognizes how his mother's sacrifices inspired his own desire to make the world a better place.

José – José is one of Carlos's closest friends in **America** and is an important partner in his work with the labor movement. José is also Nick's brother. Carlos first meets José at Macario's hotel in Los Angeles, where he is staying with Nick, Mariano, Victor, Manual, Luz, Gazamen, Leon, Alonzo, and Ben. José is a former college student who had to drop out of his classes due to the depression. Like the others in Carlos's group, José struggles to survive in a racist American society that offers few opportunities for Filipinos. He often travels by freight train with Carlos seeking work in the picking fields. In one particular incident, Carlos and José attempt to board a train after Frank drives them away from the Imperial Valley. Detectives spot Carlos and José trying to jump on the train and give chase. In the scuffle, José becomes stuck between the train wheels, and his feet are severed from his body. Frank and Carlos take him to a hospital, where he makes an impressive recovery and receives a wooden leg. Eventually, José and Carlos wind up in the home of Pascual and his wife. Carlos begins editorial work for their socialist newspaper, while José becomes an organizer with the new independent agricultural laborers' union in San Luis Obispo. He is later arrested for supporting striking workers, and when he is released, he tells Carlos about "the war between labor and capital" and tells him his life story. Throughout the book, José becomes involved with various aspects of the labor movement, including organizing and attending meetings, working on a socialist magazine with Felix Razon, and distributing pro-union literature throughout California and other West Coast states. José also becomes a key player in the founding of the Filipino Workers Association.

Nick – Nick is José's brother and a member of Carlos's group in **America** who works in the union movement. Carlos meets him in Macario's Los Angeles hotel, where he is staying with the other group members and is unemployed. Nick displays a cynical nature about life in American society. He is not above finding illegal ways to survive, as in one instance when he brazenly swipes a woman's purse after she drops it. He founds a short-live socialist literary magazine with Macario, José, and Felix, and becomes active in the union movement on the West Coast. Like the other members of Carlos's group, Nick also works a series of menial jobs, including one in a nightclub, and

he attempts to go to Spain to fight Franco's fascist forces only to have his Visa denied. Eventually, he becomes secretary-treasurer of the local UCAPAWA in Portland until reactionary elements oust him from the position, but he never stops trying to organize cannery workers.

Conrado Torres – Conrado is a journalism student at the university in Oregon who Carlos meets at the fish cannery in Alaska. Conrado moved to **America** from Binalonan at a young age, and he dreams of unionizing the exploited cannery workers. Carlos meets Conrado again in Seattle, where he fights the corrupt Japanese contractors who have hired goons to bust up the Seattle cannery workers' union. Conrado is fervently dedicated to the cause of organized labor, and he eventually forms a close bond with José and Nick and plays a key role in organizing the Committee for the Protection of Filipino Rights (CPFR).

Felix Razon – Felix is a young Filipino revolutionary whom Carlos first meets as a boy while harvesting in the rice fields. Felix appears with several members of the Colorum Party and urges the peasants to leave the rice fields and resist the plantation owners. Years later, Carlos again encounters Felix in **America**, where he forms a socialist literary magazine with José and Nick. Felix also becomes active in the union movement to organize Filipino workers is America, and he eventually travels to Spain to fight Franco's fascist army. Carlos never finds out what happens to Felix.

Alfredo – Alfredo is Amado's partner in crime. When Carlos encounters Amado in Los Angeles, he and Alfredo are working as bootleggers of illegal alcohol. Carlos first notices Alfredo and follows him into a café, where the two men nearly come to blows before Amado intervenes when he recognizes Carlos. Alfredo, like Amado, speaks perfect English, and he and Amado eventually give up bootlegging for the gambling rackets.

Mary Strandon – Mary is a white American woman from Iowa whom Carlos meets while fending for himself on the streets of Baguio. A library worker, Mary takes pity on Carlos and hires him to cook and clean for her. When Carlos expresses an interest in American history, Mary brings him **books** and arranges for him to help her work in the library. Mary is one of several American women throughout the book who care for Carlos and supply him with reading material.

English teacher – An English teacher in the Lingayen school that Carlos's cousin attends. He spent time in **America**, and he dresses and speaks in an American fashion. When Carlos starts joining his cousin in class, the English teacher takes a liking to him and gives him a credit card to give the impression that Carlos is a regular student in the school. The teacher comes from a peasant background, and he harbors a deep resentment towards the coddled children of Pangasinan's corrupt wealthy rulers. The English teacher is kind to Carlos, and he urges him to enroll in the school.

Francisca – Carlos's young sister who is born after Irene's death. Although they do not get to spend much time together, Carlos and Francisca play together in the family's home in the Philippines and develop a close relationship, despite their gulf in age. Before Carlos leaves for America, Francisca gives him her meager year's savings and tells him to go to school and someday return to Binalonan so he can teach her and Marcela to read.

Cousin – Carlos's unnamed cousin who attends high school in Vigan and takes Carlos dancing with some peasant girls in a village near Binalonan. When two of the girls follow them home and demand to marry Carlos and his cousin marry, the boys flee to Lingayen, where Carlos unofficially attends boarding school.

Julio – One of the apple pickers in Carlos's crew in the Yakima Valley. An old-timer who spent much time in the Chicago area, Julio is quick-tempered, as evidenced when he fights Pinoy over the missing wages. When a mob attacks the apple orchard, Julio flees the orchard with Carlos. They eventually cross a mountain reach the Yakima River. Julio advises Carlos to go to Los Angeles and take advantage of its Filipino community. Julio then returns Chicago. He is among Carlos's first true friends in America.

Claro – A man Carlos meets when he first arrives in Stockton, California. He speaks Carlos's dialect and takes him to a restaurant, where he prepares vegetable soup and chicken. Claro warns Carlos to stay away from the Chinese because they control all of Stockton's various houses of vice. Later in the book, Carlos encounters Claro leading a workers' strike and protesting against Japanese strikebreakers. He tells Carlos that the trade union movement in Manila is boycotting Japanese-made products.

Alonzo – One of Macario's hotel mates. He is a student who marries a divorced white woman who pays for him to attend college. One night, white detectives break into his home and beat him for marrying a white woman, and then they take him to jail. After he is released from jail he goes back to college and majors in languages and international law. He moves to the Philippines and participates in several anti-American campaigns.

Victor – One of Macario's hotel mates. He used to work at an apartment in Hollywood, and later gets a job working as an extra in a movie studio. He marries a white woman from Oklahoma with two children and works as an apartment house janitor. He eventually develops tuberculosis, and his wife gives birth to a baby girl.

Gazamen – One of Macario's hotel mates. He is a musician who endures fits of melancholy, but becomes one the most ardent supporters of the labor cause. He works as the business manager on the socialist newspaper with Pascual and his wife, and supports striking workers on the picket lines and through union committee work.

The Moneylender – A businessman who pays 200 pesos to Carlos's father for a hectare of his farmland. Father returns to the moneylender to pay for Macario's schooling, and the moneylender loans Father more money in exchange for the deed to another hectare of land. When Father cannot raise the money to repay him, the moneylender gains control over Father's land.

Dalmacio – The Igorot houseboy of an American teacher who lives by Mary Strandon. He starts teaching Carlos how to speak English and about Abraham Lincoln, the American from Illinois who rose from poor circumstances to become President of the United States. Dalmacio tells Carlos that he wants to go to **America**.

Veronica – Veronica is a girl who attends the school in Lingayen. She greatly dislikes Carlos. When Carlos finds a newborn baby in the grass by the school, he later discovers Veronica burning her bloody clothes in the boarding house stove, indicating that she is the mother of the baby. Veronica's hatred for Carlos forces him to drop out of the school and leave Lingayen.

Juan Cablaan – The wealthy son of a governor. Carlos meets Juan on a train headed for Manila, where they strike up a conversation. Juan gives Carlos advice about going to **America**, as well as a pair of shoes to wear so that others will not know that he is a peasant from the provinces. Juan's hobby is observing how the poor people live in Manila's slum district.

Mr. Malraux – The French-born owner of the Yakima Valley apple orchard where Carlos briefly works. He is married to an American woman and has three daughters. He is kind to his Filipino workers, and even hosts singing parties with them at his home. When the racist mob attacks his home, Malraux is presumably killed.

Frank – A Filipino man who owns a jalopy. He gives José and Carlos a ride from the Imperial Valley to Bakersfield to pick grapes. He then goes with them via train to Stockton and helps take José to the hospital when his feet are severed under the train track. After a few weeks picking peas with Carlos, Frank moves to Chicago.

Marian – A kind white woman who cares for Carlos after racist strike-breakers beat him brutally for his union organizing. Marian is from Oregon and has lived through much tragedy in her life. She gives Carlos money to go to college and becomes his friend and confidant until she dies of syphilis.

Alice Odell – A writer of proletarian short stories, Alice befriends Carlosand tells himof the difficult childhood she endured growing up poor in a small farming town with a gambling-addicted father. Eventually, she moved to Hollywood and had an affair with a wealthy man until he left her. Alice becomes Carlos's close friend and a kind of surrogate mother who brings him food and **books**. She ultimately moves to New York but continues to send Carlos books through the mail.

Eileen Odell – Alice's sister who visits and befriends Carlos after Alice moves to New York. Eileen is a teacher in Nebraska who moves to Hollywood to be with Alice. She visits Carlos weekly for three years. Like her sister, Eileen brings him **books** and food, and they have long discussions about politics and life in **America**. As he does with many women in the book, Carlos becomes infatuated with Eileen (though their relationship remains platonic), and he sees her as emblematic of America's inherent goodness.

John Custer – A fellow patient in Carlos's Los Angeles Hospital ward is being treated for tuberculosis. John is a poor boy from Arkansas who never learned how to write, but Carlos encourages him to rediscover **America** and seek an education. Years later, John learns to read and write, and sends Carlos a letter thanking him for the encouragement.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Luz – One of Macario's hotel mates. He used to work on a farm but moved to the city and is unemployed. In one instance at the hotel, he fights with José over a Mexican prostitute.

The rich girl – A wealthy young girl whom Carlos and Mother encounter while peddling beans in the Puzzorobio market. Two servants accompany the girl, and she is elegantly dressed. The girl calls Mother a "poor woman" and knocks over her basket of beans. Mother merely reacts by saying, "it is alright."

Marcela – Carlos's youngest sister who is still a baby when he leaves the Philippines for America.

Irene – Carlos's young sister. When Carlos is young, she dies a painful, unexplained death while still a baby.

Albolario – The chiropractor and witch doctor who helps Carlos heal his broken bones after he falls out of a coconut tree as a child.

Marcelo – A boy on the ship bound for **America** who gives Carlos water. He is from San Manuel, Pangasinan, where Carlos once worked harvesting mongo fruit.

Elias – Marcelo's cousin in Seattle who briefly meets with Carlos and Marcello before disappearing from their lives.

Paulo Lorca – A graduate of a Los Angeles law school who Carlos meets at the Alaskan fish cannery.

La Belle – Paulo's Indian girlfriend who becomes pregnant with Conrado's baby. When he learns that conceding he is the baby's father will keep Conrado in Alaska for seven years, Paulo intercedes by claiming he is the baby's father.

Max Fuega – The corrupt contractor at the Alaskan fish-canning company who deducts non-existent "expenses" from the paychecks of Carlos and the other cannery workers.

Corneilo Paez – The shady leader of the apple picking crew Carlos works with in the Yakima Valley. When payday arrives, Paez vanishes with the money, a stunt he has evidently pulled

on numerous occasions.

Pinoy – Paez's bookkeeper with doubtful credentials. Pinoy has an antagonistic relationship with Paez, and he gets into a brutal fight with Julio over apple pickers' missing wages.

Doro – A man Carlos meets in a whorehouse in San Luis Obispo. He speaks Carlos's dialect.

Mariano – A former clothing company agent with a pencil moustache whom Carlos meets in Macario's Los Angeles hotel.

Leon – One of Macario's hotel mates. He works selling tickets in a dance hall, but one night he goes on a whiskey binge and dies in his sleep.

Ben – One of Macario's hotel mates. He does housework in Beverly Hills.

Rolla – Nick's girlfriend. She is a college graduate and a teacher.

Estevan – A starving, sickly Filipino whom Macario brings to the hotel. He wants to be a writer, but he commits suicide by jumping from his apartment window. His passion for writing inspires Carlos.

Pete – The leader of the crew of Filipino beat-pickers in Billings, Montana, where Carlos travels seeking work. He nearly beats his wife, Myra, to death when she has an affair with Poco.

Myra – Pete's wife who has an affair with Poco. After Pete nearly kills her, they reconcile much to Carlos's astonishment.

Poco – A Filipino with tuberculosis who has an affair with Myra. In a fit of rage, he shoots both Pete and Myra.

Alfred – Pete's cousin who beats him after he savagely attacks Myra. When Poco attempts to kill Pete and Myra, Alfred and Carlos escape from the scene in Alfred's truck.

Cortez – A Filipino who claims to be from Binalonan and leads a gang of farm workers in Guadalupe, California. Carlos joins them to pick cauliflower.

Benigno – A husky farm worker with a voice ruined by a sinus infection. He entices Carlos to go to a bunkhouse, where Carlos discovers that the other cauliflower pickers are having an orgy with a prostitute.

Panfilo – Carlos cousin in the Philippines who informs Carlos of his father's death in a rice field.

Judith – A young girl who works in a grocery store in Buelton. She shows Carlos an impressive wall of **books**, and Carlos is entranced by her beautiful looks.

Pascual – A socialist who lives with his wife, Lucille, in Max's former house in San Luis Obispo. They are socialist newspaper editors who hire Carlos, Gazamen, and José to work on and promote the newspaper.

Lucille – Pascual's wife. After he dies, she moves to San Francisco and starts a new newspaper.

Chiye –A Japanese waitress with money and a car who joins up with Carlos and José for a night of fishing before revealing that she is married.

Helen – A white woman who leads the striking lettuce pickers in Lompoc into a police trap. She is a professional strike-breaker who briefly marries José and holds racist feelings towards Filipino laborers.

Mr. Magna – A labor activist who lives in San Francisco and is mutual friends with José and Helen.

Ganzo – A Filipino who works on Pascual and Lucille's socialist labor magazine. When Pascual dies, he goes to San Francisco to work with Lucille on a new newspaper. In one instance, strike-breakers beat him severely.

Millar – A San Francisco newspaper reporter who works with a Filipino communist to organize workers in Sacramento.

Mauro Perez – A Filipino who consolidates labor organizing in Seattle after Conrado Torres goes to the Yakima Valley.

Florencio Garcia – A Filipino kitchen helper whom Carlos meets at a hotel in Santa Barbara. He is a passionate writer, but he is unable to sell his stories.

Rosaline and Lily – Two young girls who marry sailors in San Diego. Carlos meets them on a bus bound for Medford, Oregon, where goes night swimming with them in a lake.

Dagohoy – A Filipino who starts the union in the Seattle fish canneries. Japanese contractors hire men to assassinate him in a restaurant.

Dora Travers – A woman Carlos meets in Los Angeles. She is a member of the Young Communist League. She urges Carlos to write poems and believes he can become a great American poet.

Harriet Monroe – The editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. She publishes some of Carlos's poems and plans to meet him before she dies tragically in South America.

Jean Doyle – A contributor to *Poetry* who once fed Carlos when he was a migrant worker. She visits Carlos in the hospital and brings him food.

Laura Clarendorn – Eileen's friend who writes a proletarian novel about the Northwest that features a Filipino protagonist. She visits Carlos and he is excited over her writing.

Panagos – A Greek patient in the Los Angeles Hospital ward who likes to sweep floors.

Sobel – A Polish/Jewish patient in the Los Angeles Hospital ward who helps carry trays of food to patients too weak to walk.

Teresa – José's sister-in-law. Carlos is attracted to her, but she rejects his advances.

Ronald Patterson – An American poet whom Carlos meets in the Los Angeles Public Library.

Anna Dozier – A woman Carlos meets at a meeting of leftists in

Los Angeles. She introduces him to a man who fancies himself the first Filipino communist in LA.

Head of the Lemon Camp – The leader of Filipino workers at the lemon camp with whom Carlos has a long discussion about attachment to the land.

Cabao – A wealthy Filipino contractor in Bakersfield who controls over 800 Filipino workers. Carlos sees him an example of a member of an oppressed group mimicking the behavior of his oppressors.

Percy Toribio – The secretary-treasurer of the striking asparagus workers union.

Steve Laso – A foreman for one of the big farmers in Stockton.

Roman Rios and Javier Lacson – Parvenus who control the Los Angeles delegation at the CPFR conference.

Joe Lozano and Marc Dorian – Labor delegates from Seattle.

Vito Marcantonio – An Italian-American congressional representative from California who introduces a bill in congress proposing Filipino Citizenship.

Lucia Simpson – An attractive, middle-aged American woman who begins appearing at the labor meetings with Lacson.

Jean Lawson – A woman from San Diego who spends long hours talking about big ideas with Carlos.

Francisco Franco – The fascist military general and politician who ruled over Spain as Head of State and dictator (*caudillo*) from 1939 until his death in 1975. During the Spanish Civil War, Franco led the Nationalist faction against the Republican loyalists to the Second Spanish Republic.

Mary – A girl from Pennsylvania whom Carlos meets on a bus going to Los Angeles.

Rommy – Julio's partner in realm of Filipino crime.

José Rizal – A Filipino hero—and famous author of many books, including *Noli Me Tangere*—who died resisting Spanish colonial rule. Macario compares Rizal to Moses, the biblical Jewish leader who led his people out from the under the oppressive rule of the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Manuel One of Macario's roommates, who ends up marrying a white woman.

Leon's wife The woman who Leon marries in the Philippines. When on the wedding night it seems that she is not a virgin, the wedding guests turn into a mob and beat her. Leon soon moves away to another town with his wife.

Joe Tauro A friend of Macario and Carlos's who listens on the radio with the two brothers as they hear about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. All three men worry about what will happen to the Philippines.

Max Smith After Carlos's father dies, Carlos starts hanging out with a Filipino criminal named Max Smith. Carlos joins Max in committing robberies, but is shocked back to his senses after Max shoots and kills a white man with whom his wife is having an affair.

TERMS

Igorot – The name Igorot, meaning "mountaineer," is the collective term for several Austronesian ethnic groups of people who inhabit the northern mountains of Luzon, the largest and most populace island in the Philippines. While trading at San Manual's public market in the novel, **Carlos** witnesses groups of Igorot people who came down from the mountains to the lowland villages to trade their products. He notes that they walked "in their G-strings with their poisoned arrows." This is a reference to the fact that in the early 20th century, the Igorot peoples adhered to their traditional cultural dress and way of life. Even in the 21st century, many Igorot groups still observe their traditional tribal customs.

Boggoong – A traditional Philippine peasant dish of salted fish. **Carlos**'s **mother** often peddles it in the village markets.

Pinoy – An informal term that refers to Filipino people in the Philippines, as well as members of the Filipino diaspora. The term's etymology comes from the last four letters of the word *Filipino* with the addition of the suffix "y" in the Tagalog language, the first language of the Philippines. **Carlos** observes at one point in the novel that "Pinoy" is a common label for all Filipino immigrant workers in America.

Colorum Party – This Colorum Party refers to a variety of sects that fell under a broader resistance movement among the Filipino peasantry and the urban proletariat in the early 20th century. These sects incorporated both Messianic and revolutionary ideals to resist the growing consolidated power of the large plantation owners and the Catholic Church. The origins of the Colorums date back to Spanish rule. In 1843, a man named Apolinario de la Cruz sought to join the Dominican friars, but the Spanish Dominicans rejected him because he was Filipino. Outraged, de la Cruz formed his own religious order that attracted other Filipinos disenchanted with Spanish religious and political rule. The movement soon spread and splintered, but collectively became known as *colorum* after the groups' mispronunciation of the Latin prayer *saecula saeculorom*. When **Carlos** encounters the Colorum, he disparages them as "a fanatical organization of dispossessed peasants that terrorized Luzon."

UCAPAWA – An acronym for the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America. The UCAPAWA was formed in 1937 as part of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Conceived as an independent, decentralized national union to address the concerns of agricultural workers during the Great Depression, it incorporated Mexican, black, Asian, and Anglo food processing workers under its large banner. The UCAPAWA espoused a

commitment to trade union democracy and was one of the first unions that allowed women to hold high-level offices. In the novel, **Carlos** is initially enthusiastic about the UCAPAWA's potential, but becomes disillusioned with the rigidity of its communist members.

CIO – An acronym for the Congress of Industrial Organizations, originally formed in 1935 as the Committee for Industrial Organization by labor leader John L. Lewis. Like the AFL, the CIO was formed as an umbrella organization for other unions. The CIO found immediate success quickly after its formation by organizing workers in the rubber, steel, coal, and automobile industries, among others. In contrast to previous labor organizations such as the AFL, the CIO worked to organize unskilled laborers in large industrial companies. In **Bulosan**'s novel, several local branches of the UCAPAWA are affiliated with the CIO.

AFL – The acronym for the American Federation of Labor, a national federation of labor unions established in 1886 as an umbrella organization for multiple unions. The origins of the AFL go back to the famed labor leader Samuel Gompers, who in 1881 established the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States of America and Canada, a precursor to the AFL. Gompers served as the AFL's first president and held that post (with the exception of a single year) until 1924. Until the 1930s, the AFL only represented skilled workers. In 1935, AFL member and noted labor leader John L. Lewis formed the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which existed alongside the AFL until the two organizations merged as the AFL-CIO in 1955. In **Bulosan**'s novel, branches of the UCAPAWA attempt to join the AFL, often as an alternative to the CIO.

CPFR – An acronym for the Committee for Protection of Filipino Rights. In the novel, the CPFR is formed as "a working committee from which we could form the nucleus of a broad organization for Filipinos on the Pacific coast." The CPFR lobbies for the right of Filipinos to become American citizens. **Carlos** writes articles and news items for CPFR publications.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

BEAUTY IN DESPAIR

America is in the Heart is a semi-autobiographical novel by Filipino-American novelist Carlos Bulosan. It tells the story of his early life in the Philippines and his immigration to **America**, where he becomes a writer after a lifetime of struggle. During Carlos's life, he endures constant despair, but he is able to overcome this despair by appreciating the beauty in the world. Born into the peasantry in a small Filipino village, Carlos immigrates to America to pursue a better life. The racism, violence, and discrimination he endures at the hands of white Americans, however, causes Carlos to succumb to a violent life of crime, vice, and anger. Nonetheless, finding beauty amidst despair eventually inspires Carlos to move past this violence and instead pursue the positive goal of being a writer and thus contributing to the betterment of humanity.

In the novel's first part, Bulosan details his early life as a Filipino peasant. For Carlos's family, poverty produces starvation, beggary, and humiliation that leads to much despair. The marriage of Carlos's brother, Leon, for example, goes from joyous to despairing when the wedding party savagely beats Leon's bride after learning that she is not a virgin. This "cruel custom" turns a celebration of love into a cause for suffering. Carlos's mother also endures the suffering and humiliation of the peasant life. She travels by foot to sell food, which ravages her body and forces her to cross dangerous rivers. At one village, a rich girl calls his mother a "poor woman" and spills her jar of beans. This constant pain and abuse shows just how physically and emotionally difficult Carlos's and his family's lives are in the Philippines. Additionally, when Carlos's father loses his farmland to the moneylender, Carlos writes that this "family tragedy…marked the beginning of my conscious life." Tragedy, then, is not merely a feature of Carlos's life—it entirely defines his existence. For Carlos and his family, poverty casts a cloud of despair that makes day-to-day life very difficult to endure.

Despite such despair, however, Carlos's family is able to survive by embracing the beauty of their family bonds. "If there was one redeeming quality in our poverty," he writes, "it was this boundless affinity for each other, this humanity that grew in each of us." Carlos emphasizes how family ties are a source of beauty in a poverty-ridden lifestyle where despair is a constant threat. The close relationship between Carlos and his brother, Luciano, embodies how family ties provide a sense of beauty amidst an arduous existence. Luciano teaches Carlos to catch **birds** and appreciate them "for the esthetic pleasure we found in observing them." Carlos calls this time with Luciano "the most pleasant period of my life" that "finally led me to an appreciation of beauty—that drove me with a burning desire to find beauty and goodness in the world." Appreciating beauty allows Carlos to recognize the value of happiness, even amidst extreme material deprivation.

Carlos and his family seek a better life in America, but there he endures racial discrimination and economic exploitation, which strains his former ability to see the beauty in life. Carlos experiences how white Americans' racism forces Filipinos into the worst jobs and neighborhoods (he calls one such

neighborhood an "island of despair"). Racism also subjects the family to violent harassment and denies them citizenship. Systematic discrimination fosters despair in many Filipinos, who embrace their lot as a despised caste and waste their lives in gambling joints, whorehouses, and bars. Others, like Carlos's brother, Amado, turn to crime. Prejudice drives Filipinos to "hating everyone and despising all positive urgencies toward freedom." Carlos believes it is unnatural "to run from goodness and beauty." However, it is hard to find beauty in a society rife with violence and exploitation. Carlos struggles to avoid the fate of many Filipinos who surrender to despair and therefore endure lives of crime, vice, misery, and anger because they believe life in America offers few positive alternatives.

Despite enduring discrimination as a Filipino in America, Carlos manages to find beauty in his experiences. This beauty sustains him and helps him realize his dream of becoming a writer. Faced with so much suffering and despair, he longs for "a life of goodness and beauty," so he focuses on the positive opportunities America offers. Literacy is a source of beauty, and reading and writing provide Carlos with a positive outlet because it offers him a path out of the pain that other people's ignorance causes. He is "seized with happiness" when he learns to write in English, and vows to tell his story as a Filipino immigrant. Moreover, writing leads him to the positive ideals of progressive journalism and labor organizing, both of which he believes will improve the lives of Filipinos in American society. Additionally, the union movement introduces Carlos to the people who become like a surrogate family to him and serve as an extension of the family bonds he cherished in the Philippines. Carlos also views women as a source of beauty in his life, both for their physical appearances and because they nurture him and provide him opportunities to fulfill his dreams. He meets a variety of kind-hearted women throughout his life, including As a child, Carlos meets Mary Strandon, a librarian who introduces him to literature, and Alice and Eileen Odell, who care for Carlos as he recovers in the hospital from tuberculosis, share **books** with him, and become his close confidants. Writing, discovering a community of like-minded people, and developing relationships with women who care about him are all factors that allow Carlos to reconnect to the inherent beauty and goodness in life, effectively lifting him out of his despair as an oppressed immigrant and allowing him to pursue a positive path as a writer.

Throughout *America is in the Heart*, Carlos is able to find the beauty amidst even the most harrowing despair. The poverty of Carlos's peasant origins, as well as in the rampant exploitation and oppression that he experiences in America are constant sources of despair in his life. By finding beauty in relationships, nature, education, and higher ideals, Bulosan avoids the life of crime and vice to which so many other Filipinos succumb. Focusing on the beauty in the world fuels his desire to become a writer who makes a positive contribution to the world.

RACE AND AMERICAN IDENTITY

In *America is in the Heart*, Carlos Bulosan struggles to reconcile **America**'s supposed commitment to liberty and equality with the harsh reality of a racist society that is prejudiced against Filipinos. In Bolosan's book, American identity is inextricably connected with race, and the country's majority-white population dehumanizes Filipinos as racial "others." This allows white people in power to assault Filipinos and deny them basic legal rights, all while still upholding the façade of equality. Initially, Carlos cannot make sense of why some Americans are obsessed with race while others are not. However, his later work as a labor organizer reveals that racism serves both social and economic functions: by dehumanizing Filipinos, white people attempt to reduce them to beasts of burden, whom they force to work in the fields and factories. Bulosan sees American identity as a social hierarchy in which white people dominate over subordinate minority groups—a hierarchy that lets America welcome Filipino immigrants not for their humanity, but for the cheap labor they provide.

Racism upholds American identity as exclusively "white" in numerous ways, including through the legal system. Carlos discusses the case of Roldan v. Los Angeles County, in which California courts determined that a Filipino man could marry a white girl since the state classified Filipinos as "Mongolians" and thus exempted them from anti-miscegenation laws. As Carlos notes, however, white people brought the case to court in order to "degrade the lineage and character of the Filipino people," and the law was soon amended to outlaw white/Filipino marriages. Carlos and other Filipinos also experience racist discrimination in their everyday lives that prevents them from living as full American citizens. They are forbidden from eating in white restaurants and staying in white hotels. Moreover, most white people will not rent rooms or apartments to Carlos and his friends. "We don't take Filipinos!" one white woman exclaims. Because their race precludes them from assuming American identity, Filipinos exist as pariahs on the margins of society.

The connection between race and American identity also forces Filipinos to work the worst, lowest-paying jobs. Like other non-white immigrants groups who came to the American west coast, Filipinos must toil in the fields, slaughterhouses, and fruit orchards for poverty-level wages because they have little access to better jobs. White people resist Filipino efforts to better their situations. Filipinos cannot join labor unions alongside white people, and must instead form independent unions. Carlos recognizes how the "Big Farmers" sow dissent among different ethnic groups to prevent them from recognizing their common struggle against the companies that exploit them all equally. Through his experiences, Bulosan shows that minorities, and particularly immigrants, are often valued not for their inherent worth as human beings, but

merely for the cheap labor they can provide.

White society further upholds the racialized conception of American identity by using dehumanizing language that equates Filipinos to animals. When Carlos's boat docks in Hawaii, a white woman calls him and the other Filipinos "half-naked savages from the Philippines," and demands that they "ship those monkeys back to where they came from." Associating Filipinos with animal savagery allows white people to deny them their basic humanity. Throughout the book, many people refer to Carlos as a "brown monkey." While monkeys and humans are both primates, the latter view the former as nothing more than animals. Thus, identifying Filipinos with simian characteristics allows white people to view them as only vaguely human. They are suitable for American labor, yet not worthy of the American identity. White Americans in the book also believe that Filipinos possess an insatiable, animal-like sexuality that precludes their assimilation into American society. While working in a wealthy white home with Macario, Carlos listens as the white guests insist that Filipino men are "sex-crazy" and "sex-starved," and therefore a danger to white women. In another instance, a white restaurateur beats a Filipino man for having a child with a white woman. That white people equate Filipino/white relationships with bestiality demonstrates how far they will go to dehumanize Filipinos and deny their rights as Americans.

The most visceral and extreme way that white people maintain the racial barriers of American identity is through violence. Brutal violence is a common occurrence in Bulosan's novel, as white people rely upon it to dehumanize Filipinos and other minorities. "I was beaten upon several occasions by restaurant and hotel proprietors," Carlos writes of his time in San Diego. During Carlos's earliest years in America, he witnesses white mobs attack Filipino orchard workers, and watches helplessly as police officers enter a gambling hall and shoot a Filipino to death. Violence always lies just beneath the surface of Filipino life in America. Indeed, any time a Filipino character dares to defy white racism by sitting in a restaurant, dating a white person, or simply applying for a better job, white people use violence to force him or her back into a subordinate position.

Carlos is the victim of violence on multiple occasions, most significantly when two racist police officers savagely beat him in a jail cell. The book suggests that America's reliance on state-sanctioned racialized violence demonstrates its extreme commitment to equating American identity with white identity. Bulosan recognizes how white people's pervasive use of violence to maintain their racial dominance makes a mockery of the supposed American commitment to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." "Everywhere I went I saw white men attacking Filipinos," he writes, "it was only when I had become immune to violence [...] that I was able to project myself out of it." So pervasive is violence to the Filipino experience that Carlos must accept violence as "normal" in order to face living with it.

The connection between race and American identity lies at the heart of Bulosan's experience as a Filipino immigrant. White society uses both legal and violent means to maintain its racial dominance over Filipinos and other minority groups while also exploiting them for the labor they provide to American agriculture and industry. As a result, Filipinos like Carlos exist within American society, but are not part of that society. Amidst this prejudice, Bulosan vows to help reconcile American ideals with the reality of American life.

EDUCATION VS. IGNORANCE

Carlos Bulosan's book is about pursuing a better life, first in the Philippines and then in **America**. He finds that education is the key to escaping the deprivations of want and ignorance. Education promises a reprieve from manual labor via less physically demanding jobs, but it also allows Carlos to develop an awareness of how systematic injustice relies on ignorance to keep Filipinos and other minorities in a state of perpetual servitude. Carlos is born into the peasantry, an existence defined by a lack of education. He witnesses his illiterate parents struggle to obtain the basic necessities of life, and he sees the sacrifices they make so that his brother, Macario, can get an education and obtain a better job to support the family. Carlos's early experience as a peasant teaches him that educated people have the opportunity to break free from the clutches of want and ignorance, and that poverty and enforced ignorance often go hand-in-hand.

Bulosan wastes no time emphasizing the importance of education for those who want to escape a life of poverty, especially following the U.S. occupation of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War. U.S. rule brings public education to a former Spanish colony where education "belonged exclusively to the rulers" and the peasants "were denied even the most elementary schooling." Carlos understands how education bestows power on those fortunate enough to have it, while those without education live in poverty and ignorance. Most Filipinos so appreciate "free education"—and the attendant opportunities it provides—that "every family who had a son pooled its resources and sent him to school." Carlos's family is no exception. "It was for Macario that we were all working so hard," he writes. They want Macario to get a job and "help us support our large family." Carlos and his illiterate parents are well aware that the path out of poverty lies through school. Macario's pursuance of this path inspires Carlos. "He who had so little education knew how necessary it was to go into the world with a good education," Bulosan writes. His family struggles, but Macario gets a high-paying teaching job, a clear demonstration of how schooling can improve the peasantry's material conditions.

Despite his hope to go to school, structural barriers—namely racism and the poverty from which he tried to escape in the

Philippines—impede Carlos's ability to get an education in America. When he arrives in Seattle, racial discrimination and poverty combine to thrust Carlos into a migrant laborer's existence. He shuffles from state to state, working in canneries, fruit orchards, vegetable fields, and gambling halls. He has neither the time nor the money for schooling. Hard labor for little pay overtakes Carlos's life. "It was a planless life, hopeless, and without direction. I was merely living from day to day," he writes. This life makes him unable to plan for a future with schooling. *America is in the Heart* is about hope for a future defined not by poverty and ignorance, but by studying and advancement. This is the darkest part of the story because that future appears utterly unobtainable. Nonetheless, Carlos embodies the American archetype of the "self-made man" through his own journey of self-education. He realizes his potential through his "revelation" that he is able to understand English, which inspires him to pursue writing as a means of self-empowerment. Carlos dreams of becoming a writer in order to make life better for himself and for other people. He learns about inspirational writers and vows to "educate myself to be like them!" Carlos realizes that if a peasant from the Philippines can become a writer without formal schooling, he can also do more to help others born into similar positions.

The book's final two sections involve Carlos's pursuit of self-education in two ways: by reading as much literature as he can and by working in the labor movement. These twin pursuits eventually help him fulfill his dream of becoming a writer. When he spends two years in the hospital recovering from tuberculosis, Carlos reads voraciously. Alice and Eileen Odell, Carlos's close friends, provide him with **books**, and they study as if Carlos were in a formal school. "I wanted to educate myself as fast as possible," Carlos writes. He likens the potential release from ignorance as the ultimate human freedom: education is a life-saving process, the difference between a life of suffering and a life of flourishing. Inspired by the "democratic writers and poets" who brought about action to address political and economic injustice, Carlos discovers that literacy literally offers him the chance to make the world a better place. However, he worries that his education will inspire more wrath from ignorant people. "I acquired a mask of pretense […] at ignorance and illiteracy," he writes, "I felt that if they knew that I had intellectual depth they would reject my presence." Bulosan reiterates a point that threads throughout the book: America is a land of opportunity and danger, the latter often being a result of the former.

Carlos therefore decides to take his talents to the Filipino working classes via the labor movement. The movement's goal of "the unification of the minorities" to create a "national program of peace and democracy" inspires Carlos. He uses his education to write for labor publications and to teach less-educated Filipinos about the power that unions hold to better their lives. Carlos's self-education frees him from a peasant's life, and allows him to find a place in the labor movement. There, he learns how to turn big ideas into practical solutions to help others escape from want and ignorance. Bulosan's journey to escape the mental and material deprivations of a peasant's life therefore underscores the central role that education plays in eradicating poverty and eroding the conditions that actually create it. Not only does education offer the potential to secure better-paying jobs, it also shows minority groups how powerful people use education to rule over and perpetuate the ignorance of less-powerful minorities.

POVERTY

America is in the Heart contains many antagonists, particularly the numerous white people who cheat and abuse Carlos throughout his life in **America**. However, poverty—the state of being too poor to afford the necessities to live a thriving life—is the greatest overall antagonist in Bulosan's story. From the time he is born, poverty defines Carlos's life, and he is never able to completely escape poverty's psychological influence. Poverty is the book's ultimate antagonist because it is the single biggest obstacle to human flourishing in both the Philippines and in the U.S. Those who cannot afford food, water, shelter, medicine, and education not only struggle to survive daily, they also have few options to improve their lives in the future. Poverty, therefore, is not just a state but also a cycle. Carlos and his family's ongoing struggle not only as poor peasants in the Philippines, but as American immigrants, demonstrates that the cycle of poverty reproduces itself through generations and fuels the numerous injustices that Carlos and other poor people experience.

Carlos realizes very early in his life that poverty is a curse into which he is born, and that he and others like him will spend much of their lives struggling to break free from this curse. The Bulosan family's poverty results in father losing his land to a distant plantation owner. The futile struggle to reclaim the land leaves him "fighting to the end and dying on it like a peasant." Carlos becomes "sensitive in the presence of poverty and degradation," and notes that his experience with poverty "tempered my psychological relation to the world." Because he is born into poverty, poverty will always shape how he sees the world around him.

Not only is poverty a fact of Carlos's life, he sees it getting worse with the growing power of plantations, banks, and the church. "As bloodily as this wealth concentrated into the hands of the new companies," he writes, "as swiftly did the peasants and workers become poorer." The growing industrial economy shows Carlos that poverty results from an imbalance of wealth between a small group of ruling elites and the vast majority of people whom the elites keep in poverty. After witnessing a failed peasant revolt, Carlos vows to escape the "circumscribed" peasant life with its "crushing forces." He also wishes, however, "to understand what it meant to be born of

the peasantry." Realizing that poverty is a part of his identity, "no matter where I went or what became of me," Carlos is determined to learn what causes poverty and how people can overcome it.

The transition from the Philippines to America removes Carlos from the poverty of the rural peasantry but thrusts him into the poverty of an itinerant wage laborer, and he witnesses other minorities living a degraded life in the so-called "land of opportunity." Forced into menial jobs that leave him scraping by in a constant state of hunger and fear, he moves from place to place, losing friends along the way. "Some survived death but could not survive life," he writes, "could I forget all the horror and pain? Could I survive life?" This sentiment, that life is something to "survive" rather than "live," attests to the firm hold that poverty has on his existence. Carlos is not alone in his experience with American poverty. In one instance, he sees a starving Mexican child become addicted to wine, which "gave him release, and soothed his hunger." Carlos sees himself in the child: "I knew that he would grow up to destroy this planless life around him, or it would destroy him," he writes. People cannot choose poverty; rather, poverty chooses them. Nor does poverty simply go away on its own when poor people immigrate to a new country—rather, it is a cycle that follows people wherever they go, and they must work tirelessly to overcome its effects.

Even more degrading than the living conditions of Carlos and other poor immigrants is the fact that the wealthy wield poverty as a weapon to control others. The bosses who pay farm workers slave wages, the police who criminalize being Filipino, and the gamblers and pimps who prey on the despair of the poor all rely on poverty as the source of their power. The socioeconomic power of white America "worked as one group to deprive Filipinos of the right to live as free men in a country founded upon this very principle." This realization, that to challenge poverty one must challenge those in power, leads Carlos into the labor and socialist movements. The organized labor movement provides Carlos with an ideological framework for understanding and resisting poverty in the lives of Filipinos and other minority groups in America. The harsh racism he experiences in America initially drives Carlos into a tribal relationship with other Filipinos that "hated the broad white universe." Socialism, however, offers him a different way of looking at the world. "Socialism was destroying my chauvinism," he writes, as it opens his mind to the possibility of unity for the betterment of all. In the union movement, Carlos discovers that a shared interest in resisting the powerful forces that keep minority groups in poverty is "the one and only common thread that bound us together, white and black and brown, in America." Bulosan finds agency in understanding that poverty is not something that just happens, but is instead the result of human behavior, and he can therefore fight this behavior. The Filipino Worker's Association (FWA) and the Committee for Protection of Filipino Rights (CPFR) become vehicles for Filipinos to voice their grievances against employers and the state (poor wages, terrible conditions, discrimination in housing, etc.). While both organizations struggle to survive, they do provide a template not only for overcoming poverty, but also for attacking its source.

Poverty is the central antagonist of *America is in the Heart* because it defines Carlos Bulosan's life from birth. His struggle to overcome the psychological effects of poverty leads him to better understand how society is organized around him, and it offers him an avenue for challenging the systems of injustice that prevent America from achieving its stated goal of equality and opportunity for all people.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

AMERICA

In *America is in the Heart*, America symbolizes hope and the promise of advancement out of the dire circumstance into which Carlos Bulosan, the author and protagonist, is born. Coming to America allows Carlos to gradually transform from an illiterate peasant to a published writer. At a young age, Bulosan recognizes that being a Filipino peasant entails a cycle of poverty and ignorance. He understands that his poor, illiterate parents cannot improve their situation, and wants to avoid their fate. Early in the novel, Carlos observes how America inspires the peasantry to revolt against the landed elites following the close of the Spanish-American War. America also brings public education to the Philippines, and Carlos's parents and brothers tell him that education is a necessary tool for advancing out of poverty. Among the most crucial moments in book occurs when Dalmacio teaches Carlos about Abraham Lincoln, a poor boy who became President of the United States. For Carlos, Lincoln's extraordinary story is emblematic of the kind of social advancement that America offers, but which is impossible to achieve in the Philippines. Even when Carlos immigrates to America and experiences brutal racism and economic exploitation, he does not lose hope in American ideals. Despite having no formal education, America introduces him to new people and new ideas that enrich his life. Americans like Alice and Eileen Odell provide him with **books** to learn from, while his circle of friends and associates in the labor movement help him understand how to put the American ideal of equality into practice. By the end of the novel, Carlos takes to heart Macario's lesson that America is an "unfinished dream" fueled by the "hopes and aspirations" of immigrants like himself who must work daily to finish that dream.

BOOKS

Books play a major role in Carlos Bulosan's life. Throughout the novel, books symbolize education and the hopeful path out of ignorance that it provides. Carlos recognizes the vast gulf in status between those who are literate and educated and those who are not. "In Spanish times education was something that belonged exclusively to the rulers," he writes, "but the poor people [...] were denied even the most elementary schooling." Carlos's parents are illiterate, but they sacrifice to send his brother Macario to school. The premium that Carlos's parents and brothers place on education instills in him a lifelong "passion for books." "You must never stop reading good books," his other brother Luciano tells him, "reading is food for the mind." Throughout *America is in the Heart*, a number of people, such as Amado, Macario, Luciano, Mary Strandon, and Alice and Eileen Odell give Carlos books, for which he is eternally grateful. During Carlos's two-year stay in the Los Angeles hospital, books help him maintain the hope that he can become an educated member of society despite all of the hardships he has experienced. "Who were the men that contributed something positive to society? Show me the books about them! I would read them all! I would educate myself to be like them!" Carlos proclaims. Books give him the opportunity to learn about American history, to access the ideas of the world's greatest thinkers, and to develop his own way to contribute to society's betterment. As Macario states, "America is the illiterate immigrant who is ashamed that the world of books and intellectual opportunities is closed to him." Books are central to Carlos's very identity as an immigrant in America, and they foster the intellectual development that gives his life meaning, paves his path out of poverty, and facilitates his eventual career as a writer.

BIRDS

Throughout the novel, birds are a represent the underlying beauty and inherent goodness of life that prevail even in the midst of suffering. Carlos Bulosan's life story is one of resilience in the face of much despair. In one of the novel's key passages, Carlos's brother, Luciano, uses birds to teach Carlos that beauty is not only aesthetically important, it is also an important buffer against that despair. By building horsehair snares, Luciano and Carlos are able to trap birds by the river without harming them. "Luciano did not have to go away to show me the beauty of the world," Carlos writes, "we did not catch them for their usefulness, but for the esthetic pleasure we found in observing them." In one instance, the brothers catch a crying bird, which Carlos keeps in the house. When the crying bird refuses to eat, Luciano tells him that the bird "has lost something precious," and that Carlos "must try to make it live." Carlos does all he can for the crying bird, but it soon dies. By caring for the crying bird, however, Carlos learns to appreciate the beauty that comes from love, and compassion helps him deal with the despair brought on by the bird's death. These lessons build up his overall resilience and optimism, qualities that allow him to survive even during incredibly difficult circumstances growing up impoverished. In another instance, the brothers catch a beautiful parrot that Luciano believes is in love with a quail. "When you are in love you are brave," he tells Carlos, "you are not afraid of death." Carlos remembers Luciano's lesson later in life, when he proclaims that, "my fear of death made me love life dearly." Through catching birds, Luciano teaches Carlos that the beauty of love instills the courage to face death and despair. Carlos's experience with birds inspires in him a "burning desire to find beauty and goodness in the world," and this desire enables him to overcome the despair that so often defines his life.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the University of Washington Press edition of *America is in the Heart* published in 2014.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ I knew that if there was one redeeming quality in our poverty, it was this boundless affinity for each other, this humanity that grew in each of us, as boundless as this green earth.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Mother, Father, Leon , Amado

Related Themes:

Page Number: 10

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Carlos discusses how his brother Leon moves away from the village following the tragic beating of his new bride by the wedding guests. He then uses his brothers' different experiences after leaving their home village to introduce two of the novel's central themes: poverty and the role that beauty plays in dispelling the despair that poverty breeds.

Carlos and his family are rural peasants for whom poverty and deprivation are realities of everyday life. The family's poor circumstances force Carlos's older brothers to leave their rural village in search of economic and cultural activities beyond the confines of their upbringing. However, while poverty forces his brothers to leave the family, it also brings them back to share new experiences and knowledge with the family. Carlos finds it inspiring to listen to his

brothers' stories about "other times and lands," and he emphasizes that were it not for their state of poverty, the family might not be bound together as closely as they are. Here, Carlos exhibits a strategy for finding beauty—in this case, the beauty of family love—amidst otherwise desperate circumstances. In other words, poverty entails relentless material want and psychological strain, but it also encourages family bonding as a means of coping with these difficult circumstances.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ As bloodily as this wealth concentrated into the hands of the new companies, as swiftly did the peasants and workers become poorer.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 24

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Carlos, however explains his belief that peasants are poor exactly because more powerful people have created the conditions that keep peasants in a state of poverty. Throughout the novel, Bulosan ruminates on the lopsided relationship between the rich and the poor, between the powerful and the powerless.

He first witnesses this imbalance of socioeconomic power in the Philippines. Where Spanish colonizers once wielded absolute power over the peasantry, the combined power of the large landowners, the church, multinational corporations, and banks now oppress the peasants. In return, the peasants stage violent revolts that those in power mercilessly suppress. Carlos understands that while the peasants will no longer tolerate their exploitation, they also lack the education necessary to properly identify their oppressors and develop a plan to ameliorate their conditions. When Carlos moves to America, he again sees a similar pattern of exploitation, in which large agricultural corporations and the white political power structure combine to oppress ethnic migrant workers. Among the core themes at the center of Bulosan's coming-of-age novel is his growing political awareness that injustice can only be addressed by altering existing structures of power, and this passage shows the beginning of that awareness.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ I became sensitive in the presence of poverty and degradation, so sensitive that my unexpressed feelings tempered my psychological relation to the world.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Father

Related Themes:

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after Father learns that he will never earn enough money to pay back the moneylender and reclaim his family land. Carlos describes the loss, and Father's resulting depression, as a tragedy that influenced his entire life. So pervasive is the poverty into which he was born that it cannot help but shape how he interprets the events he experiences. For Carlos, the curse of being born into poverty manifests in his constant inclination towards accepting, and even embracing, a reality in which misery and suffering define his life experiences, as well as the experiences of so many others.

Because Carlos has known only poverty from a young age, he becomes "sensitive" to its effects and finds it difficult to embrace the idea that suffering and despair do not compose the natural state of humanity. His experiences in America, defined as they are by racism, prejudice, violence, crime, and pain, only fuel this inherent predilection towards the idea that life entails constant suffering. Not until later in the novel, when he discovers his own "redeeming qualities" (especially his ability to read and write), is Carlos able to fully articulate that poverty and degradation are not a "natural" state for human beings, and that people have the power within themselves to overcome such dismal circumstances.

Chapter 7 Quotes

❝ My education with Luciano was very useful to me when I was thrown into the world of men, when all that I held beautiful was to be touched with ugliness.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Luciano

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 53

Explanation and Analysis

Carlos reflects on the time he spent catching beautiful birds with his brother, Macario. This passage represents Bulosan's most direct examination of the novel's theme that great beauty exists even amidst great despair, provided people know how to recognize and appreciate said beauty. Carlos and Macario marvel together at the beauty of birds such as parrots. Carlos specifically notes that while other peasants ate birds (understandably so, since many peasants were starving), Macario emphasizes that birds can be appreciated for "the esthetic pleasure" people gain from observing them. This passage follows several others in which Carlos discusses the poverty of his circumstances and the hard work and suffering his family endures because of that poverty. In these circumstances, beauty is seemingly in short supply. Yet, despite the family's peasant status, Macario uses birds to teach Carlos that people can find beauty anywhere, even amidst great despair. This is a crucial lesson that Carlos carries with him throughout his life. Finding beauty in the ugly and unpleasant "world of men" allows Carlos to endure a lifetime of suffering and eventually overcome his struggles to realize his dream of becoming an educated writer.

Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ Why don't they ship those monkeys back where they came from?

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

After the ship he is taking to mainland America briefly docks in Hawaii, Carlos hears these words from a racist white woman who observes him and other Filipino passengers sunning themselves. This quote highlights one of the novel's most significant themes, which is that race is inextricably bound up with American identity. The woman who identifies Filipinos as "monkeys" is hardly alone in Bulosan's novel, as he repeatedly encounters white Americans who refer to him and other Filipinos in similarly dehumanizing terms. For Carlos, the fact that white Americans view American identity specifically as "white identity" represents the cruel paradox at the heart of American society: it is a society founded on the notion of the equality, but in practice, life in America is deeply divided along racial lines. Over the course of the novel, this paradox threatens to turn Carlos from an idealistic believer in the goodness of America into a cold, aggrieved, and violent individual who is forced to lash out against the prejudice he encounters. This quote represents the first time in the novel where Carlos personally witnesses dehumanizing racism. By characterizing Carlos and the other Filipinos as monkeys, the female speaker explicitly rejects their humanity. This dehumanizing process allows her to dismiss any empathy she might feel for them, and Carlos endures this process of dehumanization repeatedly during his time in America.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ And perhaps it was this narrowing of our life into an island, into a filthy segment of American society, that had driven Filipinos like Doro inward, hating everyone and despising all positive urgencies toward freedom.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Doro

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Carlos is riding in a car en route to Lompoc with a Filipino named Doro. When highway patrolmen stop the duo, Doro becomes immediately enraged, and tells Carlos that the police want to check the car for white women because they believe all Filipinos to be "pimps." This quote represents Carlos's realization that merely being Filipino constitutes a crime in California. The equation of American identity with white identity manifests in the form of systematic legal discrimination against non-white people, which here allows the police to interfere in the personal lives of Filipino men. Doro is so angry over the discrimination that he vows to kill a white man someday.

Through this quote, Carlos directly identifies white American prejudice towards Filipinos as the cause of so many Filipinos' internalized self-hatred. Through the passage of racist laws and by upholding rampant cultural prejudice, white Americans have narrowed "onto an island"

the opportunities for Filipinos to fulfill their dreams and aspirations. This oppression has created a vicious cycle in which many Filipinos see no choice but to resign themselves to being "a filthy segment of American society." They therefore act accordingly and become like Doro: angry, violent, prone to partaking in vices like prostitution, and primed to commit murder. The great struggle of Carlos's life is to resist identifying as part of a "filthy segment," and to instead embrace "positive urgencies toward freedom" that will lead him to a life of happiness, rather than a life of misery.

Chapter 19 Quotes

Why was America so kind and yet so cruel? Was there no way to simplifying things in this continent so that suffering would be minimized?

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), José , Frank

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

Carlos, Frank, and José attempt to jump a train headed for Fresno, but detectives try to prevent them from boarding. In the ensuing chase and scuffle, José has one foot severed off and another left hanging by a tendon. After trying to flag down several motorists who literally spit at them, Frank and Carlos finally get a ride and take José to the hospital. While walking through the hospital halls, Carlos notices the contrast between the nurturing care José is now receiving and the discrimination they just faced at the hands of the railroad detectives and from passing motorists who refused them a lift. For Bulosan, these two contrasting moments embody the simultaneous cruelty and kindness that characterize America in his experience. He spends much of the novel trying to understand this paradox, and he gears his self-education towards learning to reconcile America's ideals with the practices of its citizens who flout those stated ideals. Carlos has several moments like this one in which he struggles to make sense of the American paradox, and these moments help set up a revelation he has later in the novel thanks to a long discussion with his brother, Macario.

Chapter 24 Quotes

I knew, even then, that it was not natural for a man to hate himself, or to be afraid of himself. It was not natural, indeed, to run from goodness and beauty, which I had done so many times.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), José , Gazamen , Pascual , Lucille

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 184

Explanation and Analysis

Carlos makes this statement shortly after he takes a job as an editorial writer for Pascual and Lucille's socialist newspaper. Though the job pays him virtually nothing, it represents Carlos's arrival at a crossroads in his life. Having dealt with racism, violence, and prejudice at the hands of white Americans, he previously wrestled with the urge to respond to this treatment by becoming a negative person consumed by hate and rage. However, his newfound ability to read and write in English gives him access to ideas such as socialism that promote a more just world and denounce racism and inequality. Gaining exposure to positive ideas in turn convinces Carlos that the self-hatred with which he had previously dabbled was not natural. Indeed, he learns that those who flee from "goodness and beauty" do so because they feel they have no options for positive self-affirmation. This realization is a revelatory moment in Carlos's life. It points him in the direction of confronting prejudice, rather than running from it, and it fuels his belief that beauty is worth fighting for because it is a natural antidote to despair.

Chapter 25 Quotes

America is not merely a land or an institution. America is in the hearts of men that died for freedom; it is also in the eyes of men that are building a new world.

Related Characters: Macario (speaker), Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 189

Explanation and Analysis

Carlos's brother Macario makes this statement as part of a broader lecture he gives Carlos about the nature of American society and the role that immigrants like them must play in order to make American ideals into concrete reality. Macario's extended lecture effectively caps off the novel's first half, during which Carlos grows up as a peasant in the Philippines before moving to America to seek a better life. In America, Carlos finds more hardship and experiences vile prejudice, causing him to become embittered and to entertain the idea of abandoning his faith in America. Macario's discussion with Carlos is a turning point because it sets up the novel's third and fourth sections, when Carlos shifts his priorities from running away from prejudice to educating himself, so that he can inspire other Americans to overcome their prejudice. Through this quote, Macario helps explain why America can be both welcoming and rejecting, why it is both kind and cruel in equal measure. American ideals of justice and equality, Marcario claims, are just that: ideals. These ideals rest within the hearts of the people who fight for them, and this fight is ongoing. Carlos learns from Macario that he and other immigrants must contribute to the realization of American ideals through labor organizing, writing, and other forms of activism. In so doing, they will help build "a new world" that will overcome racism and truly make America a land that welcomes all people.

Chapter 27 Quotes

I could not believe it: the gods of yesterday were falling to pieces. They were made of clay. I had to make my own gods, create my own symbols, and worship in my own fashion.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Helen , Amado, Macario

Related Themes:

Page Number: 202

Explanation and Analysis

This quote marks a moment of despair for Carlos, when he learns that his brothers Macario and Amado are not idols, but are, in fact, flawed human beings like everyone else. Macario, who had long championed education, is losing interest in attending college. He also becomes close to the strikebreaker, Helen, despite Carlos's warnings about her. Meanwhile, Amado, who inspired Carlos to pursue education and self-betterment, begins working for a shady lawyer and refuses to help Macario pay for college. So important have Macario and Amado been to shaping Carlos's thoughts that he likens them to "gods of yesterday" who, much to his shock, are "falling to pieces" in front of him.

Because Bulosan's novel is a story of coming of age, Carlos's realization that his brothers are merely human represents an important development in his intellectual and moral growth as an individual. His brothers' fall from grace forces Carlos to begin charting his own path and creating his own "gods" and "symbols," which he must "worship" on his own terms. Although Carlos does not cease soliciting his brothers' advice, he no longer relies on them to make the right decisions when it comes to moral and intellectual matters. This passage, therefore, marks a crucial moment in the further development of Carlos's self-awareness and sense of agency.

Chapter 30 Quotes

I *knew* now. This violence had a broad social meaning; the one I had known earlier was a blind rebellion. It was perpetuated by men who had no place in the scheme of life.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Dagohoy , Conrado Torres

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 222

Explanation and Analysis

Violence looms constantly over Bulosan's novel, and many of the book's turning points revolve around how Carlos responds to violence. Carlos makes this remark in Seattle after he witnesses thugs assassinate Dagohoy, who was a friend of Conrado Torres and the leader of the cannery union. In the wake of Dagohoy's death, Carlos compares the violence perpetrated by Dagohoy's assassins with much of the racial violence he has personally experienced up to this point in the novel. The white men who beat and murder Filipinos are participating in a "blind rebellion," in which violence serves merely as an extension of their racism. Carlos realizes here that this racial violence serves no other purpose than to give a shallow sense of meaning to men who otherwise have "no place in the scheme of life." These men lack a place in "the scheme of life" because they expend so much effort to tear others down, rather than to lift themselves up.

But here, Carlos notes that the violence of Dagohoy's assassination is not a simple extension of racism. It's more

than that, and more purposeful: the men who assassinate Dagohoy use violence as a means of social control. Japanese contractors hire the assassins to get rid of the union leaders like Dagohoy, because the unions threaten to disrupt the flow of profits that the contractors and canning companies earn by exploiting the labor of their workers. Here, Carlos understands that violence can be mindless or purposeful, depending on the goals of those who perpetuate violence.

Chapter 33 Quotes

I wanted to educate myself as fast as possible, and the fury of my desire was so tumultuous, I could not rest.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Eileen Odell , Macario

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 242

Explanation and Analysis

Carlos is now confined to the Los Angeles Hospital, where he is recovering from tuberculosis and his friend Eileen often brings him books to read. Macario pays him a visit, and he tells Carlos that he wants to go to Spain to fight the Fascist forces of Francisco Franco because doing so will place him in the broader worldwide struggle for democracy. Macario's visit, however, causes Carlos to have flashbacks of his mother and father back in the Philippines. The sight of Macario's rough, calloused hands, which Carlos describes as "ugly and twisted," reminds him of the hard life his parents endured as peasants who were forced to work the land merely to survive. Macario's hands symbolize the life that Carlos fled, and he remembers how his parents promoted education as the only means to escape a life of toil and hardship. Although Carlos has already worked at educating himself, Macario's visit provides a jolt of inspiration. With little else to do while recuperating in the hospital, Carlos decides to make the best of his situation by reading relentlessly during his ample spare time. This passage is a key moment in the novel, when the life-or-death struggle between education and ignorance inspires Carlos to use to the former to fight the latter.

Chapter 36 Quotes

I was enchanted by this dream, and the hospital, dismal as it was, became a world of hope. I discovered the other democratic writers and poets, who in their diverse ways contributed toward the enlargement of the American dream.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 251-252

Explanation and Analysis

This passage incorporates three of the novel's themes by demonstrating how Carlos finds beauty in a dismal situation, how he embraces education as a tool for dispelling ignorance, and how dispelling ignorance can, in turn, help realize the American ideal of equality for all people. In the heat of August, Carlos is still in the Los Angeles Hospital, a generally miserable place characterized by the relentless presence of sickness and death. Carlos, however, is able to make this otherwise despairing environment into a hopeful one by using it as his own personal school. He reads books by American authors such as Walt Whitman, who emphasizes the dream of America as a place where all races can coexist as equals. Whitman makes Carlos believe that he too can experience the American Dream, and that by further educating himself, he can inspire others to do the same by teaching them that racism is born out of fear and ignorance. Carlos is so inspired by his personal growth in the hospital that soon after this passage, he requests a discharge so he can rejoin the fight in the outside world.

I acquired a mask of pretense that became a weapon I was to take out with me into the violent world again, a mask of pretense at ignorance and illiteracy, because I felt that if they knew that I had intellectual depth they would reject my presence.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 252

Explanation and Analysis

This passage emphasizes the looming fear that haunts Carlos during his hospital stay. Although he finds hope in the opportunity to spend his days reading and educating himself, Carlos recognizes that his growing intellectualism isolates him from his fellow hospital patients, and that it will likely isolate him further when he returns to the outside world. The other patients' limited interest in his intellectual pursuits in turn limits the amount of rapport Carlos can generate with them, and he becomes quite lonely. He compares himself to the title character in the novel *Robinson Crusoe*, who is left isolated on an island and must rely on his own wits to survive. Carlos recognizes that when he finally does return to the work of union organizing, he will be an intellectual among a group of largely working-class people with limited education, and he fears they will reject him. In order to survive in the hospital and prepare for his release, Carlos adopts the "a mask of pretense" described here by feigning ignorance and illiteracy merely to fit in with those around him. This decision, however, puts Carlos in the difficult position of denying his true self in order to appease others.

Chapter 37 Quotes

❝ Maybe I succeeded in erasing the sores, but the scars remained to remind me, in moments of spiritual vicissitudes, of the tragic days of those years.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Victor , Macario

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 256

Explanation and Analysis

Following his two-year stay in the hospital, Carlos finally secures a release with Macario's help, and he moves into Macario's hotel room. Afterwards, Carlos, Macario, and Victor attempt to secure an apartment, but racist building owners deny them the opportunity to rent. Yet another experience with prejudice enrages Carlos, who marvels at Macario's ability to react so calmly in the face of such blatant hatred. At this point in the novel, Carlos has worked hard to overcome the natural tendency to lash out violently in the face of racial prejudice, but he still finds himself wanting to respond to prejudice with more prejudice in return. He likens this urge to scars that remain long after the sores caused by prejudice have healed. For Bulosan, these scars represent the cruel legacy that racism leaves on those who experience it, and they are why his struggle to keep his worst memories at bay fails in "moments of spiritual vicissitudes," when bad experiences inevitably evoke negative emotions.

Chapter 39 Quotes

❝ But now this desire to possess, after long years of flight and disease and want, had become an encompassing desire to belong to the land—perhaps to the whole world.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Father

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 273

Explanation and Analysis

In the San Fernando Valley, Carlos visits a Filipino laborers' camp in a large lemon farm. He eventually has a long discussion with the head of the laborers. The man is a U.S. military veteran whose years spent on the lemon farm imparted in him a deep longing to be close to the land. The man reminds Carlos of his father, and he reflects on how his own view of the land has changed during his years spent in America. Where he once viewed the land as merely a source of sustenance, Carlos now sees the land as a symbol of his desire to put down roots in the country where he came to seek a better life.

In this passage, the emphasis on the land, where the lemon trees have firm roots and grow for generations, contrasts with the rootless life Carlos has led as an itinerant laborer in America. In this respect, America has become both a blessing and a curse for Carlos: the land provides him with (albeit meager) employment, but, in a cruel twist, Carlos is forced to pick the land's abundant crops, a process that constantly reminds him of his own lack of roots in America. At this point in the novel, Carlos views the land not as something to work, but to "posses," and he imagines that this possession will, in turn, make him a part of America and, therefore, a part something greater than himself.

Chapter 41 Quotes

❝ They worked as one group to deprive Filipinos of the right to live as free men in a country founded upon this very principle.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Vito Marcantonio

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 287

Explanation and Analysis

This quote represents Bulosan's most strident critique of white Americans' racialized conception of American identity. Working on behalf of the Committee for the Protection of Filipino Rights, Carlos campaigns vigorously for the Marcantonio bill that will give American citizenship to Filipinos. He meets equally vigorous resistance from racist groups and organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Liberty League of California, who succeed in defeating the bill. For Carlos, the most damning thing about these groups is the hypocritical way they invoke "American" ideals in service of their racism. He notes that in a country founded on the principle that "all men are created equal," many white Americans blatantly limit equality to whites alone. The hypocrisy at the center of white American racism is a theme that Bulosan examines and condemns in equal measure throughout the book. Deliberate racism, rather than a simple lack of education, underpins this hypocrisy. By knowingly denying Filipinos equal rights merely because they are not white, white Americans are disrespecting the stated ideals of the very country they claim to love.

Chapter 46 Quotes

❝ Then it came to me how absolutely *necessary* it was to acquaint the Filipinos with the state of the nation.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Macario

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 311

Explanation and Analysis

After attending several meetings of Filipino, Japanese, Mexican, and white American cannery workers, Carlos becomes invigorated by the displays of cross-racial solidary. He experiences the same invigorating feeling when he visits Macario in Los Angeles and meets several ordinary workers who come from different backgrounds. None of the men, he notes, is especially aware of the kinds of work the others do, yet they seem united by a common understanding of solidarity.

Moments like this in the novel highlight the importance Bulosan places on uniting workers behind a common goal as a means of overcoming the ethnic differences that so often divide them, and which employers exploit to discourage union activity. Under these circumstances, Carlos views education, of both formal and informal varieties, as the best means for showing workers their shared interests. When he later attends a meeting for Filipino cannery workers in San Pedro, Carlos is impressed at the overall political awareness of men who can only barely speak English. Their commitment to the labor cause shows Carlos that these men must be taught the "state of the nation" because, as union members, they are participating in that nation's development. This experience inspires Carlos to begin teaching workers about the history of the labor movement.

❝ We are Americans all who have toiled for this land, who have made it rich and free. But we must not demand from America, because she is still our unfinished dream.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker), Macario

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 312

Explanation and Analysis

After becoming inspired by the Filipino cannery workers' interest in learning about the cause of organized labor, Carlos opens up a small workers' school and begins teaching pea-pickers about unions. Although the workers are not formally educated men, they immediately understand Carlos's teaching that the advance of democracy goes hand in hand with workers' struggle for better wages and working conditions. He later teaches Mexican and Filipino beet-pickers these same lessons, and he is equally inspired by their demands to hear the labor struggle in a biblical context.

Here, Carlos explains his new understanding of why the struggles of biblical figures such as Moses and Job continue

to inspire. Persecution has existed as long as there have been persecutors, and the persecutors have always claimed righteousness by denying the basic human rights of the persecuted. Carlos reasons that despite white Americans' insistence that non-white immigrants are not "real" Americans and therefore deserve to be persecuted, immigrants are, in fact, "Americans too." Immigrants are all Americans "who have toiled for this land," and part of this toil is the right to continue struggling to make America a better place for all people. Thus, echoing Macario's teachings, Carlos ultimately concludes that rather than "demand from America," immigrants must work *on behalf* of America, because only in dedicating themselves to America can they hope to realize the benefits of being American.

Chapter 49 Quotes

❝ It came to me that no man—no one at all—could destroy my faith in America again.

Related Characters: Carlos / Allos / Carl Bulosan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 326

Explanation and Analysis

Much of Bulosan's novel is a story of struggle and hardship, but it ends on a decidedly hopeful note. Having bid farewell to his brothers and friends who have gone off to join America's fight against Japan following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Carlos boards a bus bound for Portland. During the ride, he reflects on his time in America up to that point. He assesses all of the hardships he has experienced at the hands of people whose goal was to convince him that America was not a place where he is welcome. Ultimately, however, Carlos's spirit is not broken. His insistence that "no one at all" can "destroy [his] faith in America" bookends the novel's core message that America resides not in the hearts of those who betray its ideals, but in the hearts of those who work to *fulfill* those ideals. In this respect, America welcomes everyone. After many trying years during which he is repeatedly tempted to lash out in reaction to America's false promises, Bulosan ultimately chooses to emphasize that America's promises are neither inherently false nor inherently true, but are instead defined by those who dedicate themselves to shaping the country.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

A young Filipino boy, Carlos Bulosan, is watching a man emerge from the tall grass that surrounds his family's rural plot of land in the farming town of Binalonan, in the Philippine province of Pangasinan. The man carries a bundle and appears anxious as he sits down and looks towards Carlos's small family home. The man seems familiar with the *barrio*, or village, and an excited Carlos runs across the animal pasture to "the rich piece of land" where his father is using a *carrabao*, or water buffalo, to plow the field. Carlos's father asks him why he has been running, and Carlos responds that his brother, Leon, is the man who arrived carrying a bundle. Father insists that Leon is either still off fighting in Europe or perhaps even dead.

The novel opens by introducing the close family bonds that connect Carlos with his father and brother, Leon. From the start, Bulosan introduces the importance of family and the land as two elements that will shape the story going forward. Especially during the book's first part, Carlos and his family's intimate connection to their land specifically, and to nature more broadly, will influence the way Carlos comes to view his place in the world.

Carlos, however, tells his father to look at the stranger when he emerges in the field. Father realizes that the stranger is indeed Leon, and he introduces Carlos to his brother. Leon left to fight in Europe when Carlos was very young, so the two brothers have not formally met until this day. "Welcome home, soldier," Carlos says to Leon. Leon soon imparts an "affectionate glance" at the water buffalo, takes the rope that tethers the animal from his father, and starts "plowing the common earth that had fed [Carlos's] family for generations." Although he has just met Leon, Carlos writes that his brother's time spent in a distant land will inspire Carlos later in life by providing an "assurance of righteous anger" in the face of the "crushing terror that filled [Carlos's] life in a land far away."

Leon takes over the plowing from Father in a demonstration of the mutual respect the sons in the family have for the patriarch. Meanwhile, Carlos emphasizes how Leon's time in the army will help Carlos cope with troubled times later in his life. Although Carlos has just met Leon, he foreshadows the significant role Leon will play in shaping Carlos's intellectual and emotional development over the course of the novel. Both of these points reinforce the key role that family plays throughout the story.

It is springtime on the Philippine island of Luzon when Leon returns home to the village. Immediately upon arrival he discards his khaki army uniform, dresses in his old clothes, and joins his family in working the land in hopes of harvesting a "good crop." During this time, "radical social change" is sweeping across the Philippines. Following years of agitation for independence from Spanish colonial rule, powerful native leaders have gained control of the government and used their advantages in education and wealth to plunge the nation into "economic catastrophe" and stifle the movement for national unity.

Here, Bulosan once again emphasizes the intimate connection the peasantry has to the land: Leon immediately transitions from soldier to farmer upon his return home. Control of the land is also at the center of the sweeping social changes in the Philippines that threaten the autonomy of the peasantry.

The culmination of the Spanish-American War has turned the Philippines into an American colony. The influence of **American** ideals such as "equality" inspires young people in the peasant provinces to rebel against the *hacienderos*, or landlords, who control vast plantations where the peasants toil in poverty and abject slavery.

The influx of American ideals like "equality" into Philippine society comes, somewhat ironically, alongside the growing power of the large landholders, who usurp more and more of the peasants' lands. Bulosan discusses this struggle in order to introduce an important point that carries throughout the novel: poverty in not a "natural state." Rather, poverty exists because the rich and powerful use their wealth and power to dominate the less powerful and keep them in a state of economic oppression.

Carlos's family controls a small, but productive, four hectares of land, on which they raise corn, rice, beans, and animals to ward off starvation. Shortly after his return home, Leon decides to marry a peasant girl from the province of Ilocos Sur. Father is overjoyed at Leon's decision to get married, and the wedding is multi-day affair full of music, dancing, and lots of food and drink.

The land is so important to peasants like Carlos and his family in part because they risk starvation without it. This interdependence between the people and the land helps further explain why peasants across the Philippines stage seemingly futile revolts against the large landholders: the land is the core of the peasants' survival.

Towards the end of the festivities, Leon takes part in a tradition wherein he carries his new bride into their house to find out if she is a virgin. In this "primitive custom" that has "come down to the peasants in the valleys from the hill people," Leon must release black smoke from the chimney to publicly confirm his bride's virginity. According to this "cruel custom," brides who are not virgins must be released back to their villages and are forbidden from marrying again.

Much of Bulosan's novel deals with the process of change, especially change that seeks to address injustice. By charactetizing the wedding custom as "primitive" and "cruel," the author suggests that upholding tradition for tradition's sake cannot justify the pain certain traditions cause.

When Leon and the wedding party learn that the new bride is not, in fact, a virgin, the party turns into a mob. The mob ties the girl to a guava tree, where the women spit on her and strip her of her clothes. The men then beat her with horsewhips while women and children fling sticks and rocks. An outraged Leon intervenes by "covering her bleeding body with his," while Father throws himself on them both, pleading with the crowd to stop their assault on the "good, industrious woman." Eventually, the crowd grows weary and dissipates. Carlos cuts the girl's ties, and the crying, bleeding girl embraces Leon. Overwhelmed by the scene, Father searches for "an answer in the earth to the unanswerable question in [Leon's] eyes."

Although one of the novel's major themes is finding beauty amidst despair, Leon's wedding is an example of the opposite occurring. The wedding party's savage attack on the bride turns what should be a beautiful occasion into a moment of tragic despair for Carlos's family. That Father struggles to find a reasoning behind the madness he has just witnessed indicates that sometimes, tragedies defy easy explanations.

Soon after the wedding, Leon sells his share of the family property and moves with his bride away from his village. Later, on his way to **America**, Carlos passes through Leon's new town and waves to his brother and his wife and children. "It was good-bye to my brother Leon and to the war that he had fought in a strange land," Carlos writes, as well as a "good-bye to his silent wife and all that was magnificent in her." Carlos is never able to recall how many children Leon had at his side.

The relationship between Carlos and Leon symbolizes transition. Bulosan first introduces Leon as returning from the broader world and Carlos as the laboring peasant farmer. Eventually, however, the reverse occurs: Leon settles down to a traditional Filipino peasant's lifestyle, while Carlos leaves for America.

CHAPTER 2

After the tragedy of Leon's wedding, Father brings Carlos's other brother, Amado, back from the nearby town. The youngest of Carlos's four brothers, Amado is attending grade school and living with his mother and baby sister. Carlos's other brothers have already ventured off to other towns, but when they return, they share their experiences with the family. "This boundless affinity for each other, this humanity that grew in each of us," Carlos explains, was "the one redeeming quality in our poverty." Carlos's other brother, Luciano, is at military camp completing a three-year service in the Philippine Scouts, a native branch of the United States army. Most importantly, Carlos's brother Macario is attending high school in Lingayen, Pangasinan's capital.

The close relationship between the members of Carlos's family highlights the novel's key theme of finding beauty in despair. Despite living in poverty and enduring the constant despair of material deprivation, this deprivation inspires the family to become closer to one another. They develop an interdependence that carries them through hard times, and Carlos recognizes the inherent beauty of this love that binds his family together, even though it is born from hardship.

Carlos's family has sacrificed much to put Macario through school so that he can become a teacher in Binalonan and help support that family. Meanwhile, Amado helps Father with the farm work. Father tells Carlos and Amado to bring the animals to the corral, and after doing so, Carlos hitches a bamboo sled to a goat and carries three empty petroleum cans to the village. There, he fills the cans with water and brings them back to the corral, where he fills the animals' water troughs. That night, Carlos helps prepare the family a dinner of string beans, small beef slices, rice, and salted fish. After dinner, the family washes the coconut-shell dishes. Father then discusses Macario, "our pride and the star of all our hope," with Carlos and Amado. The family goes to bed at midnight.

Among the most important themes in Bulosan's story is the power education holds to triumph over ignorance. Even illiterate peasants like Carlos's parents understand that education is the key to overcoming poverty, so they sacrifice a lot to put Macario through high school. To emphasize why Macario's future income is so important to the family, Bulosan details the meager peasant's dinner that Carlos helps prepare.

Spring gives way to the summer rainy season, and after he drives the animals to pasture, Carlos brings a bamboo tube full of drinking water and goes to join Father and Amado in the corn field. They hope to harvest the corn before the heavy rains come. As Carlos makes his way to the corn, Father calls for Carlos in a voice that rolls through the valley "like the trees that whispered as I ran eagerly toward them." When Carlos arrives at the field, the men work furiously to harvest the corn, as they know the rains will come within a few hours. As they work on the last row of the three hectares of corn, the sky opens. The rains break loose an irrigation ditch, and the men watch helplessly as the water "thunder[s] towards the cornlands" and swallows up the green stalks of corn.

Although the land provides the food necessary for the peasantry's survival, this scene shows that nature can be cruel as well as kind. The urgency with which Carlos, Father, and Amado work to harvest corn before the rains come only makes the rains' eventual damage that much more devastating. As the resulting flood swallows up the family's precious corn, they can only watch helplessly as nature takes away the same resource it gives.

Father warns that the rains will flood Binalonan and destroy the rice crops. Father proves prescient, as the next morning brings news that all of Binalonan's rice fields are under water. The rains do not stop until September, when the sun reemerges. September also marks the start of another school year for Macario.

The change of seasons here signals a symbolic transition from a period of despair to one of hope. The rainy season destroys the family's precious crops, but then the rains give way to Macario's new school year, a lone symbol of hope to improve the fortunes of Carlos's family.

Although the **American** government brought free, "popular education" to the Philippines, schools are centered in far-off towns, and living in those towns requires money for room and board, money that Carlos's family does not have. Carlos's illiterate parents are "willing to sacrifice anything and everything to put [...] Macario through high school," so Father sells a hectare of land and gives the money to Macario for school. The family also plants extra beans and Mother trades salted fish in the villages in exchange for chickens, eggs, and beans that she then sells at market.

Carlos's parents put so much faith in the power of education to alleviate their suffering that they are even willing to sacrifice their land so that Macario can continue his schooling. This move is a sign of the changing times. From the arrival of American rule, to the land's gradually declining importance in the Bulosan family's lives, new developments are shaking up centuries of tradition for the Filipino peasantry.

Carlos's family deprive themselves "of any form of leisure" to put Macario through high school. The thought that he would not finish school terrifies them. Father borrows money from a moneylender in exchange for deeds to acres of the family land. Father knows full well that failure to repay the loan will automatically give the moneylender ownership of the family land. The family hopes that Macario's eventual wages from teaching high school will be enough to repay the moneylender. The arrangement leaves the family with only one hectare of land, which is not enough to sustain them.

Poverty brings despair in many forms. Not only does it force Carlos's family to work constantly to survive, it also makes them depend on a moneylender instead of depending on the land as they've always done before. . This transition is especially troubling because where the land at least provided food for the family, the moneylender provides only stress and suffering.

Although Carlos's brothers would like to attend high school, the family can only afford schooling for one child. A local church allows Father to clear five hectares of its land, which gives Father new hope. The family burns the brush off the land, but must wait until the rains pass to uproot the heavy tree roots that remain in the ground. One night, while working under a heavy rain, Amado's water buffalo stops working. An enraged Amado starts hitting the animal with a stick. This enrages Father, who stops Amado from hitting the animal. Overcome with anger, Amado drops the stick and bids goodbye to "Allos" (the name Carlos often goes by among family) and runs off towards Binalonan.

Amado's angry breakdown in the field foreshadows the darkness that will later engulf him in America, where he turns to a life of crime. Here, Father chastises Amado for flouting tradition after Amado disrespects the water buffalo. This echoes several moments later in the novel when Carlos will likewise chastise Amado for abandoning his traditional identity as a Filipino in favor of the vices America has to offer.

Later, Carlos sees Amado again when he moves to Binalonan to live with Mother. Amado is working as a janitor at the town hall, and Carlos climbs coconut trees to collect the fruits and sell them in market. One rainy day, however, he falls from a coconut tree and breaks several bones. As he lies healing at Mother's house and watches his baby sister, Irene, Amado comes over and gives him magazines and a large **book**, which Carlos vows to learn how to read. Though he no longer attends school, Amado has "a passionate desire for education," and this passion inspires Carlos throughout his life.

Carlos's own passion for education comes from both Amado's love for books and from the dangerous work that Carlos must endure just to make a living. Throughout the novel, Bulosan contrasts the hard manual labor that working-class people perform with the less taxing mental labor performed by educated writers. The promise of a less physically taxing lifestyle is just one of education's many benefits, as hinted at here by the fact that getting hurt actually makes Amado's life easier.

CHAPTER 3

The end of Macario's school year approaches, and Carlos's family hopes he can help buy back their land from the moneylender. To celebrate a national election, Father tells Carlos to bring a white goat from the pasture to slaughter. Carlos and Father also fill a sack with tomatoes and eggplants and gather snails from a pond. Carlos hopes that Macario "will bring some **books** with him" upon his return home.

Once again, Bulosan contrasts older peasant traditions with new developments in Filipino society. Here, Carlos's family follows up voting in an American-style modern election with a traditional slaughter of a goat, showing how new and old can blend in societies like this one.

Binalonan's streets are filled with peasants casting their ballots, and Mother is selling salted fish and vegetables in the public market. As Father and Carlos wait in the plaza, they see Macario arrive from a bus. He is dressed in a new white cotton suit but still resembles his father. Macario embraces Carlos and Father and tells Carlos that he must cut his long hair so as to look like a "gentleman."

Macario's arrival home following his graduation from high school highlights the way Bulosan contrasts the new with old. Not only does the younger Macario contrast with his older father, but also his modern clothing symbolizes the new world he now inhabits. Macario's middle-class existence is a stark contrast to the peasant existence of his birth.

Carlos walks silently through the plaza between Macario and Father, and the latter two act as "strong walls" who guide Carlos "into the future that [is] waiting with all its ferocity." When they arrive at the family house, Father slaughters the goat and Carlos lays down a bowl to collect the blood. After a dinner of the goat and some vegetables, the family discusses Macario's schooling. He tells them that in three months he will be finished, but he needs 200 pesos to finish his last course.

The symbolism of Carlos walking between Macario and Father is striking. It suggests how Carlos is now caught between Macario's modern world, with its promises of education and escape from poverty, and the traditional peasant lifestyle represented by Father, whom Carlos deeply loves. Together, the "strong walls" of Macario and Father support Carlos in different ways over the course of his life, even though they also represent the conflicting worlds he inhabits.

Mother tells Macario that the family has no money left. Father says he will sell the remaining land, and the prospect terrifies Mother. The family now has only the church's land to raise crops, a third of which must go to the church. Carlos explains that the combination of absentee landlords, large corporations, and a corrupt church have been detrimental to the Philippine peasantry.

Vast social changes are upending the lives of Filipino peasants, and these changes will soon force Bulosan's close-knit family to separate, despite their deep love for each other. Throughout the novel, Carlos must deal with larger forces that are beyond his immediate control, and coping with such developments contributes to his intellectual development over time.

Despite his dire economic circumstances, Father maintains hope, a basic faith in humanity, and an "instinct for the truth." Carlos says that the latter is an "inborn quality" that is "common among peasants." That summer, peasants in a southern province revolt against the exploitative absentee landlords who keep the peasantry in a state of poverty. Although the authorities violently suppress the revolt, such "sporadic revolts and uprisings" expose the "malignant cancer that [is] eating away the nation's future security." Carlos notes that this negative force is turning the Philippines into a "gigantic agricultural country" where corporations, banks, the church, and a native professional class of lawyers exploit the majority rural peasantry. Carlos explains that these intolerable conditions could not last forever, especially when peasant sons went to school and learned about justice and social equality.

Despite the vastly different paths the two men take in life, Father's faith in the inherent goodness of humanity provides Carlos with an intellectual template that he uses to endure the struggles that come to define his life. When the racism and violence Carlos experiences in America later threaten to erode his optimistic view of the world, his ability to see the goodness in people connects him directly to Father's hopeful lineage. Bulosan mentions the hope embodied by his father alongside rising peasant revolts to foreshadow how hope will serve as a constant buffer for Carlos during trying times.

Amidst these conditions, Macario graduates from high school and begins teaching in Binalonan, where he earns a salary of fifty pesos a month. The extra money eases Father's worries, and he takes Carlos on a hunting trip. They gather shrimp from a pool, place them inside bamboo shoots, and cook them in banana leaves over a fire. The shrimp proves far tastier than the wild boar they kill on the hunt. Carlos also catches a little deer and brings it home with him, but it turns out to be difficult to domesticate.

This section contrasts with Bulosan's earlier mention of how poverty has sapped any leisure time from his family's life. Aided by the cushion of Macario's new wage, Carlos and Father are able to enjoy a day hunting together. Alleviating poverty, this episde shows, makes life more enjoyable.

A few weeks after the hunting trip, a man presents Father with a letter purported to be from the church. Unable to read the letter, Father brings it to town for Macario to read. The next morning, Carlos and Father take a pre-dawn walk, during which Father reveals that the church land now belongs to "a rich man in Manila."

The fact that a wealthy landowner in far-off Manila can have such control over Carlos's family is emblematic of the reach and influence that the powerful have in the lives of the powerless.

Father's loss of the church land to an absentee landlord in Manila marks the beginning of his futile struggle to hold onto his land. In a further desperate attempt, Father walks to Lingayen to fight for control of the land. He walks back on bloodied feet, a "defeated man."

Father's descent into despair suggests that hope alone is not enough to fight injustice in the world. Carlos learns here that unless hope is paired with action, it cannot address the despair that dominates so many people's lives.

CHAPTER 4

Carlos states that his father's loss of the church land marks the beginning of his own "conscious life," the moment when he "[becomes] sensitive in the presence of poverty and degradation." This change later inspires Carlos to find strength in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The loss of the land reduces Father to the humiliating status of a hired laborer. When Carlos's maternal grandmother dies, she leaves a small piece of land, but the soil is too poor and rocky to cultivate, despite Father's and Carlos's best efforts. This point marks the end of Carlos's childhood, and Father urges him to move to town with Mother and attend school. Father stays behind, determined to try and farm alone.

Poverty and the despair that it breeds colors every aspect of Carlos's young life in the Philippines. Here, Bulosan articulates why poverty is so sinister: it is not just an economic state; it is also a psychological condition, and those afflicted by this condition can never truly escape its influence. As poverty breaks up his family and threatens his own future, Carlos recognizes that poverty will always color the lens through which he views the world.

When Carlos arrives in Binalonan, he gets a job on the construction crew building the new overland highway. He works mostly nights until one night the nearby river sweeps him up. Three of his fellow workers rescue him, and afterwards he collects his salary and gives it to the moneylender. It is the first payment on the family land. Later, Macario brings Carlos a copy of *Robinson Crusoe*. Carlos enjoys the **book** and Macario tells him to take inspiration from Crusoe's struggles. "Someday you may be left alone somewhere in the world and you will have to depend on your own ingenuity," Macario states. Carlos says this moment marks "the beginning of [his] intellectual life with Macario."

Carlos's job in Binalonan foreshadows his later struggles as an itinerant laborer in America. Working on the highway is dangerous and the pay is low, conditions that will also define his work in the United States. Bulosan provides additional foreshowing by mentioning Robinson Crusoe, a character who, like Carlos, must rely on his own efforts and ingenuity to survive alone in a strange land.

After recovering from his injuries building the highway, Carlos begins helping Mother with her trading business. Each morning, they wake up and fill an earthen jar with boggoong, or salted fish. They then peddle the fish to peasants in the villages in exchange for rice and beans. Mother often gives fish to peasants who have nothing to trade, and this alerts Carlos to her generous nature. The walk between villages is dangerous.

Just as Carlos learns faith in humanity from his father, his mother teaches him the value of compassion by giving generously to the other peasants, even though she desperately needs money herself.

One day, while crossing a river, Mother slips and drops a decorative drinking jar she acquired at market. Later, in another village, a peasant woman has nothing to barter for salted fish, so Mother allows her to dip her hands into the fish. The woman then washes her hands in a bowl of water and drinks the water. Carlos finds the scene humorous, but Mother tells him that he will someday understand what such poverty does to people.

This moment highlights the extreme lengths that poor people will go to ameliorate their condition. Carlos finds humor in the peasant woman's sad attempt to draw nutrients from salted water, not realizing how desperate she must be to do such a thing. He will later witness similar desperation from a poor Mexican child, and at that later time he will react not by laughing, but by crying.

CHAPTER 5

Working with Mother helps Carlos understand the obsession with food that drives the peasants' lives, an obsession he will relate to throughout his life. "Many of the peasants were starving, but like my family they were full of pride," he states. He and Mother begin selling beans in the town of Puzzorobio, which means crossing more dangerous rivers. In Puzzorobio, many rich people frequent the market, and Mother admires the rich women's "delicately embroidered dresses" and "silk handkerchiefs."

The constant lack of food brings a debilitating hunger that plagues Carlos throughout his life. Here, he witnesses the hunger of the peasantry, which Bulosan contrasts with the fineries that the wealthy market visitors display. The fact that great wealth and great poverty often exist literally side by side is a thread that runs throughout Bulosan's novel.

One day, a rich young girl comes to the market with her two servants. The traders of rice and beans tremble with "envy and admiration" for her. When the rich girl sees Mother selling beans, she mocks her as a "poor woman" and knocks over her basket of beans. In response, Mother merely insists that "it is all right." Carlos is disgusted by the middle class's "contempt for the peasantry."

Not only does poverty bring constant humiliation, it also it leaves the poor unable to protest their unfair treatment. Mother endures the rich girl's insults because she has no other choice, and her helplessness in the face of such degradation contributes to Carlos's lifelong contempt for the ruling classes.

Mother and Carlos's trips to Puzzorobio are largely successful until one day while crossing the river, Mother slips and loses a basket of beans in the water. The accident ends their trips to Puzzorobio. Meanwhile, Father takes back the farm but must still make payments. Mother and Carlos start harvesting *mongoes*, or yellow beans, in San Manuel to sell in the town's public market. There, they encounter many Igorots who come from the mountains to trade with the lowlanders. Mother buys a small piece of cotton cloth for Irene and they return to Binalonan. She also tells Carlos that he can now attend school. The thought of school enchants Carlos with dreams of becoming a doctor. At home, Irene is sick and begins screaming and bleeding from the nose.

Hope often exists alongside tragedy in Carlos's young life. Just as he and Mother experience success trading in the villages, the dangers of river crossing force them stop trading. Similarly, Father briefly regains a measure of control over the farm, but he must still find money to pay the moneylender. Moreover, when Mother purchases a pretty cloth for Irene, the latter becomes gravely ill. For Carlos, his excitement over starting school immediately precedes a series of impending family tragedies, again showing how hope and desolation often exist side by side.

CHAPTER 6

Carlos's sister Irene dies, setting off a series of tragedies for the family. One day during lunch, a young girl from Macario's school comes to the house and waits for Macario to come back. Macario tells her to leave but she vows to stay at the house. Macario and the girl argue further and Macario threatens to throw her out, but she goes to the school principal, who tells Macario to marry the girl or else lose his job. Macario knows that marriage means he must cease making payments on the family land, so he instead tries, but fails, to get a civil service job. Meanwhile, Mother becomes pregnant again while Father grows more desperate and neglects his farming. Amado gets a job collecting traders' tickets in the public market, and a *copra* (dried coconut kernel) company hires Carlos to climb coconut trees to cut nuts for other people.

Irene's premature death kicks off a series of tragedies that threatens the family's income and Carlos's chance to go to school. This establishes a trend that carries throughout the remainder of Bulosan's story: hope and tragedy go hand in hand, and every potential advancement comes with setbacks. Many of Carlos's internal struggles from this point on involve him wrestling with the dualistic nature of existence, as he confronts the balances between hope and tragedy, beauty and despair, and kindness and cruelty.

Mother gives birth to another girl, Francisca, and on the day before the next land payment is due, Carlos falls from a coconut tree and breaks his leg and arm. Father takes Carlos to a witch doctor for treatment. The treatment helps Carlos and steadily his bones knit. While Carlos is healing, Macario reads him the story of Moses from the Old Testament, and likens him to José Rizal, the Filipino hero who resisted Spanish rule. "It filled me with wonder as he explained the significance of the great men who had died for their persecuted peoples centuries ago," Carlos states. Macario then bids Carlos farewell and moves south to Mindanao, a Philippine island inhabited by Muslim descendants of conquering Moors.

This marks another moment in the novel when a significant book makes a lasting impression on Carlos's life. Whereas Robinson Crusoe taught him the value of self-sufficiency, the biblical story of Exodus teaches him the importance of living for a higher ideal that can improve the lives of other people. The tale of Moses teaches Carlos about the important role leadership plays in bringing justice to oppressed groups of people.

That year, the new mayor of Binalonan fires all public employees, including Amado. The loss of work sends Amado to **America**, and Macario, who moves to Manila to escape the girl from school, also contemplates fleeing to the United States. Father understands that the family is unraveling, and there is no money left to make the land payments. Meanwhile, Carlos limps to school on his healing leg. The other students taunt him for his peasant origins, but he is too absorbed in **books** to care. He works hard in school, despite knowing that he will soon have to quit classes to go back to work for the family.

Books are one of the novel's most potent symbols. While they have already played an important role in Carlos's life, here Bulosan highlights that books also offer Carlos a genuine escape from suffering and poverty. Even as he recovers from a broken leg and endures the taunts of fellow students, Carlos knows that he must cherish his time in school and relish every chance he gets to read a book. The connection between books and recovery from injury is one Bulosan will revisit later in the story.

CHAPTER 7

The rainy season arrives and Carlos's legs swell up, preventing him from going to school. He spends time with Francisca, and sometimes a boy from school reads to him from outside the window. Other times a girl comes to his house to teach him to sing. Missing school saddens Carlos. As the next land payment looms, Father hires himself out to some village farmers and Luciano, having completed his three-year service in the Philippine Scouts, returns home. He has contracted tuberculosis in the army. Although he is only 22 years old, he appears tired. Carlos calls Luciano "a man of wide experience," as he can use a typewriter and is familiar with machines such as cars and motorcycles.

Here, Bulosan details the unique methods Carlos employs to continue his education when he is unable to attend school. Although he is missing time in the formal classroom, Bulosan continues the thread of hope coexisting with tragedy by introducing Carlos's brother Luciano, who will teach Carlos important lessons that will serve him through the remainder of his life.

Luciano teaches Carlos to snare colorful **birds** by the grassy river without hurting them. Luciano catches Carlos a singing bird and Carlos keeps it at home. But the bird soon becomes ill and refuses to eat. Luciano tells Carlos that the bird "has lost something precious," and urges Carlos to keep it alive. When the bird finally dies, Carlos is inconsolable. Luciano carries Carlos to the river to watch him set up snares to catch more birds. Although peasants often eat birds, Luciano forbids the family from eating the ones that he and Carlos catch. The birds eventually become tame and roam around the family's house.

Birds are an important symbol of beauty in the novel. In keeping with Bulosan's juxtaposition of beauty with despair, Carlos experiences both love and sadness by keeping the singing bird that Luciano catches. Carlos's love for the bird makes its death even more heartbreaking, but the experience teaches Carlos that the experience of love is something worth pursuing, even if it entails great loss along the way.

Carlos describes his time catching **birds** with Luciano as "the most pleasant period of [his] life." He recounts the things his father and brothers have taught him. Father taught him to be kind to animals because of their usefulness on the farm. Leon taught Carlos "to be few of words and to stick to [his] convictions," as well as to love the earth. Amado taught Carlos the importance of studying, while Macario taught him about people in faraway lands. Luciano taught Carlos about "the beauty of the world" through the birds the brothers caught together. This education from Luciano proves useful to Carlos in later life, when he is "thrown into the world of men" where everything beautiful becomes "touched with ugliness."

This section exemplifies the way Bulosan finds and cultivates beauty as a means of dispelling despair in the novel. All of Carlos's brothers teach him important lessons, but particularly important here is the way that Luciano uses birds to teach Carlos about the life-saving value of finding beauty even amidst the despair and turmoil of a peasant's life. He teaches Carlos that while life is hard and often ugly, the world is full of beauty, and appreciating this beauty is a way to cope with the despair that so often consumes daily life.

Among the most beautiful **birds** Luciano and Carlos catch is a parrot. Luciano builds it a cage, and the brothers use it as a decoy to catch other parrots, which they then sell. The money they make allows them to open a small store in Binalonan, from which they help tourists repair automobiles. Luciano, however, begins worrying about his pension from the United States government. He grows sicker but decides to enter politics. Meanwhile, the moneylender takes the last of Father's land. When Luciano informs Father that he cannot get the land back, Father falls into despair. Luciano is also getting sicker with tuberculosis, and the money he makes repairing cars is not enough to pay back the moneylender.

Once again, despair and suffering follows moments of joy and hope. Even as Luciano and Carlos open a successful automotive repair store, Luciano grows sicker with tuberculosis and his government pension dries up. Father also learns that he can never regain his land. It is yet another familiar cycle of joy and tragedy in Carlos's young life.

Luciano is eventually elected mayor of Binalonan. He continues to discuss life and politics with Carlos, advising him that reading and learning healthy ideas are both "food for the mind." Luciano suggests to Carlos that he become a journalist. Years later, Carlos remembers the sacrifices his brothers made. "I will be a writer and make all of you live again in my words," he vows.

This is another moment of foreshadowing, since Luciano's suggestion that Carlos become a journalist comes to realization later in the story. Carlos's brothers ultimately shape the course of his life, and mostly for the better.

CHAPTER 8

Rumors swirl throughout Luzon regarding the "land question," and amidst whispers of peasant uprisings against the absentee landlords, Father finally loses his land for good. Like his peasant ancestors, Father believes that "life should be rooted in the soil." He goes to Lingayen to fight for his farm in the court, but a "poor and ignorant peasant" like him stands little chance against the educated people on the courts. He fails to get his land back and returns home a broken man who resorts to drunkenness. Mother goes to Binalonan and returns with Carlos's sisters, Francisca and Marcela. It is the middle of the season and "strange men" are showing up in the rice fields. One of them is Felix Razon, a peasant boy who urges revolution among the farmers and tells them to abandon the rice fields. Meanwhile, Carlos works at harvesting rice with Mother, which he enjoys.

In keeping with the novel's coming-of-age structure, Carlos is able to recognize seismic social changes, but he does not yet know how to deal with them. The brief introduction of Felix Razon, and Carlos's subsequent confusion over Razon's urging the peasants to abandon the rice fields anticipates the novel's later sections. When Razon appears later in the story, he and Carlos become allies united in a common cause to resist the powerful. But Carlos must learn about this cause before he can participate in it, and as a child in the rice fields, he cannot quite recognize this call toward a larger purpose.

Felix again returns to the rice field and urges the peasants to sell their shares of rice. In response, Mother and Carlos tie their shares of the rice in bundles to their bodies and carry them to the plaza in Tayug. At the plaza, they find that an army of the black-clad, anarchist Colorum Party of peasants has begun laying siege to the city. The rebels overtake the town hall, and Mother, Carlos, and his sisters flee into the bushes. They are unsure of why the rebels are fighting. Eventually, the local constabulary troops defeat the Colorum. The revolt nonetheless has a profound effect on Carlos, who becomes determined to "leave that environment and all its crushing forces" and return later "to understand what it meant to be born of the peasantry."

Carlos's first personal experience with the peasant rebellions in the Philippines highlights his limited understanding of the conflict. He knows that the black-clad Colorum Party is revolting, but he does not understand why, and he is puzzled over their ultimate goal. What Carlos does recognize, however, is that in order to understand the chaos that comes with being born a peasant, he must first get away from his peasant surroundings. This realization foreshadows how Carlos's most important moments of intellectual development will later involve separating himself from the immediate chaos of his surroundings.

CHAPTER 9

Carlos's father is now a landless farmer who has become "a pathetic figure in the house." Meanwhile, Luciano dives deeper into local politics as his lungs get weaker. The fear and uncertainty that have taken over his family make 13-year-old Carlos want to run away. He finally decides to tell his parents that he is leaving. While they are heartbroken over his decision, they also understand it. He settles on going to Baguio but hopes to someday get to **America**. "It was good-bye to Binalonan and my childhood," Carlos states. He takes a bus to Baguio, where the roads are smooth and modern and the houses and theaters are built in the Western tradition. Unable to find work in the stores, Carlos falls asleep between two rice sacks.

Father's loss of the land and Luciano's declining health spur the first great move of Carlos's life. Although he is not yet moving to America, he recognizes that he is nonetheless separating permanently from the life he once knew. The city of Baguio represents a sort of gateway to America for Carlos. Its buildings are built in a Western style and the city has an overall modern feel that contrasts with the old and rural Philippine countryside. In Baguio, Carlos also begins working the kind of itinerant jobs that will define his life in America.

In the morning, Carlos wanders between the vegetable stalls picking up bits of food. When an American tourist pays him to undress for a picture, he makes himself "conspicuously ugly" to attract the attention of any other tourists with cameras. The tourists, however, are more interested in photographing the near-naked Igorot people in the city. Eventually, a ricer trader hires Carlos to transport rice from wheel barrows to his booth. While working that job, he meets an American woman, Mary Strandon, who works in the library. She hires him to cook and clean her apartment. Next-door to Mary lives another American woman who has an Igorot houseboy named Dalmacio. He and Carlos become friends.

Carlos's introduction to Mary Strandon marks the first of a series of platonic relationships Carlos will have with American women over the course of his life. For Carlos, these women are symbols of beauty and nurturing who arrive in his moments of greatest vulnerability to help nurse him back to health. Mary begins this trend when she rescues Carlos from the streets, gives him a job, and provides him with the opportunity to expand his love for books.

Dalmacio tells Carlos that English is better than money for those who want to go to **America**. He begins teaching Carlos to speak English after Carlos agrees to do some work for him. Carlos is thrilled to learn about Abraham Lincoln, a "poor boy who became president of the United States." Miss Strandon also supplies Carlos with **books** from the library and soon lets him work with her there. He becomes even more passionate about learning. "Names of authors flashed in my mind and reverberated in a strange song in my consciousness," Carlos states, adding that "a whole new world was opened to [him]." When Carlos returns to his family back home during New Year's celebrations, Luciano finds him and reveals that Father has sold their house and bought a small plot of land in Mangusmana. Due to Father's ill health, Mother is doing most of the farm work.

America is a constant symbol of hope and advancement throughout Bulosan's book. In Baguio, Carlos learns about Abraham Lincoln, who embodies the kind of rags-to-riches opportunity that America claims to provide. Lincoln's life story fuels Carlos's quest to educate himself through the local library's collection of books. But the hope that America represents contrasts starkly with the fortunes of Carlos's family, who continue to struggle in the wake of Father's loss of the land.

Carlos soon finds Mother, "a little peasant woman who carried the world on her shoulders," plowing the new land and offers to finish the job for her. In the house, Father lies shivering and coughing. Carlos meets up with his cousin, who takes him dancing in a nearby village. They dance with several "shy peasant girls" and Carlos finds release in the activity. "When you dance for the first time, the world is like a cradle upon the biggest ocean in the universe," he notes, but when the song is over, "You are pushed back to reality, to the world of puny men and women who are circumscribed by fear." The next morning, Carlos and his cousin flee the peasant girls who now want to marry them, and they eventually go to Lingayen.

Carlos's experiences with Filipino women are quite different from his experiences with American women. Here and several other times throughout, Filipino women in Bulosan's novel threaten to trap Carlos into a traditional Filipino peasant's life, from which he yearns to escape. By contrast, American women support Carlos by nurturing both his body and his mind, thereby allowing him to fulfill his dreams of literary success in America.

CHAPTER 11

During the second week of June, all of the students return to Lingayen, some by oxcart and others on foot. They settle in the small houses along the shores of Lingayen Gulf, where fishermen dock their boats. Carlos stays in the boarding house where his cousin lives, and he gets a job working for the fisherman who owns the house. Fourteen boys live in the boarding house, and next door 15 girls live in a separate house. All are the children of peasant families from nearby towns. A town ordinance forbids people of the opposite sex from living together.

Carlos's time in Lingayen highlights how difficult it is for him to escape his peasant upbringing while remaining in the Philippines. Although he finds work in the fishing boats and even gets an opportunity to go back to school later, students from peasant families much like his own surround him. Their presence, specifically the presence of girls, eventually forces him to leave Lingayen to seek progress elsewhere..

Carlos wakes at dawn to board the boat and fish all day. He enjoys working among the rugged fishermen. When the boat returns to shore, the fish buyers are waiting to buy the catch. On his way back to the boarding house from work, Carlos stops to watch the students play at school.

This scene is emblematic of trends that persist throughout much of Carlos's life. Despite his desire for a formal education, it often remains just out of reach, as he is forced to perform manual labor to survive.

Carlos's cousin invites Carlos to go to school with him, and Carlos eagerly accepts. While attending classes, he befriends his cousin's English teacher, who invites Carlos to his house and gives him a card to give the appearance that Carlos has been attending school for two years. The teacher resents the wealthy Philippine middle class, having spent time in **America** as a boy only to return to the Philippines to find that his peasant parents had died. Carlos pities the teacher. "Instead of using his experience as an inspiring example to other peasant children," Carlos observes, "he had turned inward and used it as a weapon of revenge." Nevertheless, the teacher is kind to Carlos and gives him a copy of the General Intelligence test score sheet to study. Carlos takes the test for fun and gets the highest score in all of Pangasinan.

The English teacher both inspires Carlos and earns Carlos's pity. Having witnessed American society and value of equality first-hand, the teacher becomes resentful of the social stratification that defines Filipino society. Like many of the Filipinos Carlos will meet in America, the English teacher has turned his bitterness inward, and Carlos finds this trait unfortunately common in Filipinos who believe they cannot contribute to the world in a positive way.

Word of Carlos's score reaches the girls in the school and he becomes famous in the town. The teacher laughs about the test but urges Carlos to study seriously. The girls, hoping that Carlos will tutor them, start showering him with gifts of handkerchiefs and washing dishes and clothes in his boarding house. Soon, however, a girl named Veronica demonstrates a hatred of Carlos after he finds a baby abandoned in the schoolyard. When he later finds Veronica burning some of her bloody clothes in the stove, it becomes clear that she gave birth to the baby. The landlady urges Carlos to move away, lest Veronica wrongfully identify him as the baby's father. He boards the first bus back to Binalonan.

Other than his mother, whose hard work and dedication inspire Carlos from a young age, Bulosan depicts his experience with Filipino women in the novel as often joyous but also constricting. Like his dance with the peasant girls, which goes from joyful to threatening when one girl insists that he marry her, the showering of love he gets from the girls at the school is soon tempered by Veronica's animosity towards him. Her resentment forces him to leave Lingayen instead of staying in school, and this dynamic exemplifies the way that Bulosan often portrays Carlos's relationships with Filipino women.

CHAPTER 12

When Carlos gets back to Binalonan, he looks for Luciano at the town hall but learns that his brother has been absent for a while. He finds Luciano at his home and learns that their parents are harvesting *mongo* in San Manuel. He also learns that a gambler has purchased the family's old home. Carlos vows to return and purchase the house again, but Luciano tells him: "If I were you I would never stop moving until I came back with money." Before he departs for Manila to go to **America** the next morning, Francisca gives Carlos five pesos to go to school. Carlos shares a tearful goodbye with his family, and Luciano begs him not to return to Binalonan. "Don't come back as I have done. See what happened to me?" he yells.

Here, Bulosan highlights the beauty Carlos has found within his poor family, but he also emphasizes that the same poverty that brought them together is also forcing them apart. Carlos's vow to buy back the family home and Francisca's gift of money to Carlos embody the warmth of the family's love, but Luciano's reminder that money, not love, will help the family most is a trenchant reminder that poverty is still a force that fuels despair.

On the train to Manila, Carlos notices a university student named Juan Cablaan, whose father is the governor of Pangasinan. He tells Carlos to watch out for cheating drivers and gives him new shoes to wear so he can hide his provincial origins on his way to **America**. Carlos arrives in Tondo, Manila's slum district. It is rife with cockfighting, gambling, crime, and prostitution. Cablaan tells Carlos he often comes to Tondo "to see how the slum people live." He asks Carlos if he would like to "try" a prostitute before leaving for America, but Carlos furiously runs off to his boarding house.

Although Carlos comes from a poor rural village, Bulosan's depiction of urban poverty in the novel is quite different from the rural poverty of his birth. Whereas near-starvation and backbreaking labor are the hallmarks of a rural peasant's existence, vice and crime are the defining elements of poverty in cities. The apparent thrill Cablaan gets from watching people in the slums adds a level of surreal exoticism to Bulosan's depiction of urban poverty.

In the morning, Carlos travels by truck to the government detention center, where a doctor examines him before he boards the boat bound for **America**. The boat moves slowly from the harbor under a shower of confetti from onlookers. "I knew that I was going away from everything I had loved and known," he write. After the boat departs, he goes down to the filthy steerage hold below.

Carlos's move to America represents both an opportunity and a tragedy. He loves his family dearly, but knows that if he is ever to help them, as well as himself, he must leave them, with the knowledge that he may never get the chance to see them again.

CHAPTER 13

As Carlos lies in the dark ship steerage, he wonders why he left home and what will become of him in **America**. He sneaks out of steerage with other passengers to sun himself, but the first-class passengers complain and force the Filipinos back into steerage. Soon, a meningitis outbreak hits the people in steerage. The waiters refuse to bring the steerage passengers food, and the environment is unbearably hot. Carlos befriends another young man from Pangasinan named Marcelo, and when the ship docks in Honolulu, the epidemic is checked and they are allowed to leave steerage. A young American girl sees the Filipinos lying in the sun and calls them "half-naked savages." She demands that those "monkeys" be shipped back where they came from.

Carlos's poverty follows him even after he departs the Philippines by forcing him into the filthy and hot steerage compartment. His experience with the racist American woman in Hawaii also foreshadows what will be the defining dynamic of his relationships with white Americans: that of racial resentment. The woman dismisses the Filipinos' humanity by calling them "monkeys." Carlos will hear this term frequently in America, and his first taste of American racism comes before he even reaches the American mainland.

In June, Carlos arrives in Seattle with only 20 cents and finds a hotel in the Filipino district on King Street. Marcelo receives a telegram informing him that his brother has died in California. The hotel proprietor tells the Filipinos that because they have no money, they will be sold for $5 each to work in the Alaskan fish canneries. At the cannery, the drunken contactor threatens the workers' lives if they fail to obey his orders. There, Carlos befriends Conrado Torres, a journalism student at the University of Oregon, and Paulo Lorca, a law school graduate from Los Angeles. Both men want to unionize the cannery workers, who endure filthy bunkhouses, dangerous working conditions, and company henchmen who violently suppress union activity. The company also skims Filipino workers' wages.

Having arrived in Seattle penniless, Carlos learns firsthand that work in America can be just as brutal and exploitive as work in the Philippines. Carlos's job in the fish cannery is a form of indentured servitude, but it also represents his introduction to the idea of organized labor and the struggle to unionize Filipino workers in America. His time at the cannery is a kind of baptism by fire that helps chart the course he will eventually take as a Filipino laborer in American society.

One day, a woman named La Belle who often associates with Conrado and Paulo accuses Conrado of being the father of her new baby. A local official tells Conrado he must marry La Belle and stay on the island for seven years, as required by law. Paulo then claims, falsely, that the baby is his and agrees to stay on the island himself. It is the last time Carlos sees Paulo.

This incident demonstrates that people are capable of great acts of loyalty and kindness even in the most harrowing of circumstances, as Paulo sacrifices his own freedom to help Conrado. It also represents a turning point in the plot. After he is released from the cannery, Conrado will play an important role in the union movement later in the novel.

CHAPTER 14

Carlos returns to Seattle, where Max Fuega, the company contractor, hands out pay envelopes full of skimmed payments. Carlos is left with only $13. Upon receiving their pay, the rest of the Filipino workers spend it all in the Chinese-owned houses of gambling and prostitution. Carlos tries to avoid these dens of vice and discovers a Filipino dance hall. He dances with a girl who cheats him by making him buy more tickets to keep dancing with her. Suddenly, a man strikes Carlos in the head with a pipe. Several other attendees draw guns and start firing. The lights go out and Carlos flees into a small church. Outside the church, a truck driver hires Carlos to pick fruit in the Yakima Valley.

America proves to be a deeply unfair place for Filipinos for a number of reasons. The racial and economic discrimination they experience forces them into situations where they are tempted by numerous vices. This also marks yet another point in the novel where a Filipino woman reacts negatively to Carlos by cheating him. Like Veronica in Lingayen, the girl in the dancehall forces Carlos to flee his immediate surroundings.

In the Yakima Valley, Carlos works with a crew under Corneilo Paez and his "shifty" bookkeeper, Pinoy. White people in the valley resent the Filipino workers and have attacked them on multiple occasions. Carlos becomes acquainted with an old-timer named Julio who has a lot of experience in **America**. The employer who hires the Filipinos is a kind Frenchman named Mr. Malraux, who lives with his daughters Estelle, Martha, and Diane.

Carlos's first job following his work at the fish cannery sets a trend in which he stumbles into less than ideal employment. Yet even as he often has to work with devious individuals like Pinoy , Carlos's various jobs also introduce him to people like Julio, who become lifelong friends. This marks another example of how Carlos is able to find positive aspects of desperate situations.

One day, Pinoy fails to return with the workers' paychecks, and a furious Julio punches the bookkeeper and throws him out of the house. "I had not seen this sort of brutality in the Philippines," Carlos notes, "but my first contact with it in America made me brave." He recognizes how being surrounded by daily cruelty makes Filipinos in America become cruel in turn, and this realiation hampers his own ability to trust people.

Cruelty born out of poverty and despair is, in many ways, the defining characteristic of American society for Carlos. He notes how he had not previously witnessed such naked brutality in the Philippines despite the fact that his home country was actually experiencing countless violent peasant revolts. This disconnect sheds some light on the way that Carlos may not be a wholly objective judge of the world around him.

Carlos's worries prove justified when a mob of white people armed with guns attacks the fruit pickers and the Malrauxs. Carlos and Julio flee the farm and travel on foot through the trees and by morning, they are walking through a desert landscape. In the town of Zillah, some children stone the two men. They arrive at the Yakima River, where they bath and wash their clothes. Julio tells Carlos, "this is the beginning of your life in **America**." They decide to hop a freight train for California, and Carlos and Julio become separated when they take different trains. Carlos is sad to lose his friend and hopes to see again someday.

Although this is not Carlos's first experience with violence in the novel, it marks his first experience with the kind of explicitly racialized violence that becomes common for him in America. Julio's statement that such violence marks the "beginning" of Carlos's life in America darkly foreshadows the way racial violence will quickly come to define his daily life.

CHAPTER 15

As the train rumbles towards California, Carlos watches groups of hobos board it at different stops. One night the sound of a girl crying wakes him up, and to his horror, he realizes that she is being raped in the dark. Carlos tries to stop her assailant, but is knocked unconscious by an unseen attacker. The train stops at Hood, Washington, and Carlos strikes up a conversation with the girl, but she eventually leaves the train.

Violence towards women is one of the darkest side effects of the despair and poverty that plagues Filipino life in America. The violent rape of a girl in the train car marks the first of many such incidents of sexualized violence that so often characterize male-female relationships in Bulosan's novel.

In Reno, Nevada, Carlos boards a different train. He decides to go to Stockton, California after he learns that it is home to a large Filipino population. In Stockton's Chinatown, he witnesses a Chinese man shoot and kill a Filipino. After fleeing, Carlos meets a man named Claro, who offers him food and shelter and tells him to stay away from Chinese-dominated Stockton "until [he] are ready to fight for [Filipino] people."

This is the first of several murders of Filipino men that Carlos will witness. These incidents demonstrate the cruel extent to which American society goes to devalue Filipino life. Thus, when Claro entreats Carlos to fight for his people, he means that the fight in question is a literal life and death struggle.

CHAPTER 16

Carlos is alone on another freight train and travels south until he reaches San Luis Obispo. There, he gets a ride from a fellow Filipino named Doro, who drives him to another town. Doro explains how white people view all Filipinos as pimps and criminals. This is the first moment when Carlos begins to truly understand that it is "a crime to be a Filipino in California." By criminalizing an entire group of people, American society has driven Filipinos like Doro inward, making them "[hate] everyone and [despise] all positive urgencies towards freedom."

This is a key moment in Carlos's intellectual development, as he sees how racism becomes a corrosive element in Filipino people that causes them to nurture a destructive self-hatred. American racism is tragic for a number of reasons, but in large part because it makes an entire group of human beings into criminals merely for existing in a place where the majority white population does not want them to exist. In turn, Bulosan notes, many Filipinos internalize this hatred with destructive results.

They arrive at the town of Lompoc, where Carlos goes into a Mexican café and meets a cigar-smoking Filipino who is sitting alone in a corner. The man leads Carlos to another café, where he is ambushed by a knife-wielding assailant who turns out to be Carlos's brother, Amado.

Carlos's violent first meeting with Amado foreshadows the tumultuous relationship the brothers will have from this point on. As this encounter immediately makes clear, America has changed Amado for the worse.

At first, Amado does not recognize Carlos. But the brothers soon reconnect, and Carlos learns that the name of the man he followed is Alfredo. Carlos tells Amado about his experiences in **America** thus far, and Carlos is shocked to learn that while Amado is articulate and speaks perfect English, he has become a bootlegger of alcohol in order to weather the Great Depression. Amado takes Carlos on a run to pick up illegal alcohol, and Amado's careless lust for money disappoints Carlos. As Amado bids him farewell, Carlos hopes that America will not change him the way it did his brother.

Carlos views Amado's transition into a criminal as a tragic development. Nonetheless, the trials of living as a Filipino in America have helped Amado to become an articulate English speaker, much to Carlos's surprise. Amado's fall from grace in Carlos's eyes comes, somewhat paradoxically, at the same moment that Carlos sees how Amado has been able to further his own education. As before, happy outcomes coexist with unhappy ones.

CHAPTER 17

After leaving Amado, Carlos makes his way to Los Angeles to find his brother Macario. In the city's Mexican district, he is at first unable to find anyone he knows, so he finds a quiet church in which to sleep. The next day he searches for Macario in the Filipino district. In a pool hall, two police officers enter and shoot a young Filipino man in cold blood. The officers seem unaffected by the murder, and a bystander tells Carlos that "they often shoot Pinoys like that." Disturbed by the murder, Carlos nonetheless becomes excited when Macario enters the room. Macario is surprised to see Carlos in **America**, and, like Amado, Macario calls him Carlos, rather his family nickname, "Allos."

The banality of yet another senseless murder of a Filipino man demonstrates how violence is a central component of the Filipino experience in America. That two police detectives commit the murder only further emphasizes how racism is thoroughly baked into the American system of justice. Once again, however, Carlos finds relief from such turmoil in the form of family when he meets Macario.

The brothers make their way to the hotel where Macario is staying. In the hotel room people are throwing a wedding party. Carlos counts "three American girls" and "ten Filipinos." Macario introduces Carlos to his friends. At bedtime, Carlos is embarrassed when an orgy begins, so he and Macario head outside for a long walk. They try to talk, but the years and their different paths have caused them to grow apart. Carlos worries that the brutality he is witnessing in **America** is hindering his ability to express feelings of love and affection. That morning, they return to the hotel room, where Carlos meets Macario's roommates.

Carlos's night in Macario's hotel room forces him to witness an orgy among the various members of the wedding party. This is the first, but not the last, act of public sexual activity that Carlos encounters, and he consistently reacts with disgust. Bulosan frequently depicts promiscuous sexual activity as a symptom of the poverty and racism that Filipino people experience in America. The tragedy of discrimination, according to Bulosan, is that it takes something beautiful, like sexual relations between two people, and utterly degrades it into a cheap and sometimes violent act.

Among Macario's many roommates are a pair of brothers, Nick and curly-haired José, who had to drop out of college when the Depression hit. Mariano, another roommate, was an agent for a now-failed clothing company. Victor and Manuel are both former apartment house workers. Luz is a recent transplant from the countryside, while the jovial Gazamen likes to play music on his phonograph. Leon sells tickets in a dance hall, and he is the only hotel resident with a job. He dies in the middle of the next night. Alonzo is a college student, and Ben is a house worker in Beverly Hills who spends his money as quickly as he makes it. Carlos thinks that Macario lives "in a strange world" characterized by a "desperate cynicism." He wonders if there is hope for these Filipinos, who are "revolting against American society in this debased form."

Macario's roommates come from various backgrounds, but they are united by their status as lost souls who struggle on the margins of American society. The "strange world" that Carlos sees Macario living in is, in fact, a world in which an entire population of people is forced by social restrictions to abide by different rules that do not apply to white Americans. Though Carlos describes Macario's roommates as revolting against American society in a "debased" way, they are understandably trying to find any solace and survival they can in a society that despises them.

CHAPTER 18

Following Leon's death, Nick, Nick's girlfriend Rolla, Macario, and Carlos move to a new apartment on the ironically named Hope Street, in Los Angeles's red light district. There, "pimps and prostitutes were as numerous as the stars in the sky," and suicides and murders are "a daily occurrence." However, it is the only district where the Filipinos can find a room to rent. Carlos wonders if this "narrow island of despair" will "shadow" his "whole life."

The fact that "Hope Street" is a place defined by crime, despair, and death symbolizes the deeply unfair circumstances in which Filipinos are forced to build their lives in America. The utter hopelessness of "Hope Street" is the only place where they can rent a room. As Carlos observes, Hope Street represents both the physical and social "narrowing" of the Filipino experience in America.

Meanwhile, Manuel marries a white woman with two children, while Luz and José fight over a Mexican street prostitute one night, and the ugly scene sickens Carlos. Luz eventually dies in a gambling house. Alonzo meets a white divorcee who pays for him to attend college, but police arrest him over the relationship and call him a "brown monkey." Furious, Alonzo returns to the Philippines and wages an anti-**American** campaign in the press.

Among the most forceful ways in which white American men enforce racial dominance over Filipinos is trying to control the sexual lives of white women. By forbidding white women from associating with Filipino men, white American society often forces Filipino men into the arms of prostitutes, thereby severing the act of sex from the emotion of love and keeping Filipinos further isolated.

Carlos's lease on the hotel room is expiring and he continues to struggle to find work, ushering in "days of hunger and loneliness." He and Macario move into a small room with Gazamen in the Mexican district. One night, Macario brings in a sickly, starving Filipino named Estevan. He is a writer who has written many stories and essays but has failed to get any of them published. Estevan is the first writer Carlos meets, but the young writer soon commits suicide by jumping out of his window. Carlos takes one of his stories and keeps it with him for inspiration.

Although his appearance in the novel is brief, Estevan serves as a symbol of the two potential futures Carlos might have. Like Estevan, Carlos is passionate about writing and knowledge, but Estevan is unable to use the beauty of his passion to overcome the despair of his poverty. Like Estevan, Carlos will one day have a choice between pursuing his dream to its fulfillment, or succumbing to the degradation that white American society is bent on forcing upon him.

Macario gets a job cooking and cleaning for a movie director. Carlos joins him one day during a dinner hosted by the director. The rich white people at the dinner disparage Filipinos with racial remarks, calling them "sex-starved," and dismiss them as uppity for wanting to be educated. One morning, Carlos carries a breakfast tray upstairs and witnesses the lady of the house standing nude. He stares in "ecstasy" at the "onionlike whiteness of a white woman's body" before turning away. Carlos decides to stop working with Macario at the director's house, angered at Macario's "subservience" to people "less human and decent than he."

Racist white Americans repeatedly characterize racial minorities as sex-crazed and therefore untrustworthy around white women. Although this is a vile caricature, the fact that white women are barred from associating with Filipino men does enhance their allure. Carlos, for example, is entranced when he sees a white woman's naked body for the first time, as it represents all that is forbidden to him in American society.

CHAPTER 19

Carlos describes the discrimination Filipinos experience during the "year of the great hatred." When a Filipino in Pasadena marries a white girl, they are brought to court in the case of *Roldan v. The United States*. The case challenges the law that Filipinos are not "Mongolians" and are therefore exempt from laws forbidding marriages between whites and Mongolians. Amidst such racial fervor, José and Carlos arrive in San Diego, where the latter is beaten several times by hotel and restaurant owners. He and José take a train south to the town of Holtville, where they learn that a Filipino labor organizer "had been found dead in a ditch." In another instance, a restaurant owner and several other white men nearly beat a Filipino man to death for bringing his wife (who is white) and their mixed-race child into the restaurant.

White racism towards Filipinos is shown here to be institutional, as well as explicitly violent. Violence serves as a method for enforcing the laws (such as the miscegenation law to which Bulosan refers) that codify and restrict the freedoms of Filipinos. Because the law itself upholds the perverse "justice" of racism towards Filipinos, white men have free rein to physically attack Filipino men with absolute impunity.

While sneaking through a pea field, Carlos and José come across a jalopy driven by a man named Frank, who gives them a ride to Bakersfield. They find work on a large farm, but soon a Filipino labor camp at a neighboring farm goes up in flames. "I understood it to be a racial issue," Carlos notes, "because everywhere I went I saw white men attacking Filipinos." The men flee to the freight yards, but the boxcars are all loaded. Detectives arrive to prevent the Filipinos from riding the train. José attempts to avoid the detectives but gets caught under the train, and both of his feet are severed from his body.

Here, Carlos recognizes that violence is as prevalent American society as it is anywhere else. In a key moment of his informal education, he understands that violence stems directly from the racism that is everywhere in American culture. Violence and racism are intimately connected, with each one fueling the other. Because racism tells white people that Filipinos are inferior and unwelcome, it justifies the violence against Filipinos that is intended to ultimately make them leave America.

Carlos and Frank rescue José and try to hail a car, but the motorists spurn their cries for help. Eventually, an old man drives them to the hospital, where José receives care. Carlos marvels at this paradox in American culture: drivers on the highway spit at the Filipinos, yet white people in the hospital give them loving care. "Why was **America** so kind and yet so cruel?" Carlos wonders. While José stays in the hospital, Frank and Carlos take a train east to Idaho, where they work several weeks picking peas. Frank soon tires of pea-picking and takes a bus to Chicago, and Carlos travels to Montana. There, he works in a Filipino labor camp lead by a man named Pete.

For Bulosan, America is a paradox because it displays great kindness alongside horrible cruelty. Throughout the novel, Carlos struggles to make sense of this paradox by attempting to discern whether the "real" America is naturally kind or naturally cruel. This paradox is yet another reflection of the book's theme of beauty in despair. As is the case after the incident with the railroad detectives, Carlos often witnesses beauty (via the kindness of the hospital workers, in this case) after moments of seemingly relentless despair.


Pete's wife, Myra, is having an affair with another worker, Poco. One night, Pete beats Myra over the affair and attempts to kill her with a knife. Carlos intervenes, but he is knocked out by Poco's cousin, Alfred. When the violence subsides, Pete and Myra reconcile, but when Poco arrives and vows to kill Pete, Alfred and Carlos ride away in a truck. They are heading back west, "back to the beginning of [Carlos's] life in **America**," where Carlos is "going back to start all over again."

Carlos attempts to escape the violence and hardship he has experienced on the west coast by traveling to work in Montana. He quickly discovers, however, that the cruelty and violence that so often characterizes Filipino life in America is hardly limited to California.


CHAPTER 20

Having witnessed so many "heart-breaking tragedies" in **America**, Carlos feels he is unable "to interpret them objectively." He worries that he is being swept up into a world of violence and pain because he is a part of that world. He likens this violence and cruelty to a "slow decay" that is devouring him "like cancer." Seeking new work, he again finds himself in Seattle.

Carlos's greatest challenge in the novel is finding a way to appreciate and cultivate beauty in the midst of societies that cause him endless despair. He does not want to respond to the violence and cruelty around him by becoming violent and cruel himself. Yet the prevalence of such despair in his everyday life makes not succumbing to the despair a monumental challenge.

Carlos stays in a hotel, steals the sheets, and sells them the next day. It is his first dishonest act in **America**, but he does not feel guilty. He works as a sign-carrier and a dishwasher in both Washington and Oregon. At a bus station where he is working, another Filipino gives him a ticket for a soup kitchen near Portland's Chinatown, where he also finds a shelter to sleep in.

The stress of being surrounded by cruelty finally forces Carlos to commit a crime, which he once disparaged Amado for doing. Unlike Amado, however, Carlos never relies on crime as a primary source of income.

In the shelter, Carlos is surrounded by "lost men," who terrify him. One night, he narrowly avoids being raped, which causes him to run off to the freight yards. On the ride to Eugene, he is inspired by the beauty of the night sky and the fragrant smell of the lush surroundings. "I knew that heaven could not be far from the earth," he reasons.

Once again, Bulosan follows a moment of horrendous despair with a moment of quiet beauty. After witnessing several incidents of sexual assault against others, Carlos is nearly assaulted himself. Yet, in a testament to Carlos's firm desire to still appreciate the positive sides of things, he manages to bask in the beauty of the sky and countryside.

In Klamath Falls, Washington, Carlos stops to eat at a restaurant, where two policemen confront him and demand to know if he is Filipino. Soon, the policemen assault Carlos and beat him unconscious. He wakes up later to find himself sore and bleeding in a jail cell. The two drunk policemen drag him from the cell and dump him at the California border, where they beat him further. Carlos puzzles over the "sadistic" joy the police take in brutalizing him.

As representatives of American justice, police officers like the ones in this scene serve as broader symbols of how structural racism targets Filipinos in American society. Not only can Carlos not go to the police to protest the injustice he experiences, but the police themselves also visit this injustice on Carlos.

Carlos takes a freight train to San Francisco, where he hangs around the gambling houses begging for money. He meets a Filipino named Cortez and eventually joins his work crew picking cauliflower. In the work crew's bunkhouse, Carlos is horrified when the other workers force him to engage in sex with a Mexican prostitute. Carlos escapes the camp in shame.

Carlos's experience with the prostitute and the cauliflower pickers again demonstrates how racism and social disenfranchisement encourage vice and degrade the act of sex among oppressed populations like the Filipinos described here.

CHAPTER 21

Carlos works the cauliflower fields until the end of the picking season. Then he goes to Lompoc, where he finds his brother Amado and Alfredo have given up bootlegging in favor of a gambling partnership through which they cheat Filipino farmworkers. Carlos joins a crew of lettuce pickers and Amado borrows money from him to open a restaurant, but then Amado spends it on a dice game instead.

Amado's involvement in crime already disturbed Carlos, but the fact that Amado is now cheating Filipino farmworkers embodies the way American society can turn members of oppressed groups against one another out of desperation. In addition, Carlos takes Amado's gambling partnership as a personal slight. Because he is a farmworker himself, Carlos believes that his own brother is cheating him.

Carlos then begins washing dishes in a Filipino restaurant called the Opal Cafe, where he is shocked by the sexually indecent behavior of the schoolchildren who dine there. He also works in the café's bakery department, where he witnesses many backroom transactions between corrupt men. When a drunken white businessman taunts Filipinos for their alleged criminality, Carlos angrily points out that white men control the various illegal rackets in town. This enrages the businessman, who attacks Carlos. When Carlos fights back, his boss fires him.

In Bulosan's novel, children are not spared from the kinds of vices that plague Filipino adults. Already disgusted by public displays of promiscuous sex by adults, Carlos is horrified to see such behavior among schoolchildren. Witnessing such ugliness makes Carlos especially agitated and prone to the violent reaction that causes him to confront his racist boss and lose his job.

Losing yet another job in an unjust manner further angers Carlos. "You are fired! How many times did I hear these words [...] across oceans and continents?" he fumes. Unable to control his emotions, he screams that he will "kill you, you white men!" He eventually flees into the alley. Shortly after he is fired from the café, Carlos receives a letter from his cousin, Panfilo, informing him that his father has died. The loss sends Carlos into a deep despair, and he refers to it as "the turning point of my life in **America**." He nurtures his growing hatred for white people. Yet the hate isolates him from others, and he wonders if he will again feel the love "that could resuscitate beauty and goodness."

News of his father's death , though tragic, gives Carlos a chance to examine his own rage towards white men and come to terms with his newfound callousness towards death. Though he just recently threatened to commit murder himself, his father's death brings the emotional reality of death back to the front of his mind. Because he loved his father, he wonders how he can nurture such hatred while still holding onto the love that the memory of his father brings.

Carlos soon meets another Filipino who calls himself Max Smith. Max entices Carlos to join him in a series of armed robberies. They discuss robbing a bank, but then one night Max takes Carlos to the home of his wife. He runs into the home and shoots his wife's white lover, and then he gives Carlos some money and urges him to run. Carlos boards a train for New Mexico.

Following his father's death, a devastated Carlos lets his worst instincts overtake him by agreeing to work with Max. When Max murders his wife's lover, however, the act shocks Carlos back to his senses, and he abandons his short-lived life of crime. The love of his family still guides Carlos, even during one of the darkest times of his life.

CHAPTER 22

The beauty of Santa Fe, New Mexico, entrances Carlos, but he feels lonely there. He soon receives a letter from Amado, who is in jail for robbery in Santa Barbara. Hoping to aid his brother, Carlos goes back to California. He hires a lawyer to take Amado's case, but the lawyer fails to get Amado released. When Amado is finally released, he takes a job as a cook while Carlos works for a milk company.

Carlos becomes hopeful after Amado attempts to transition away from crime and back into a legitimate occupation. The connection between the brothers here shows again how invaluable family can be, especially in desperate circumstances.

The work for the milk company, however, is unfulfilling, and Carlos laments: "I was merely living from day to day: yesterday seemed long ago and tomorrow was too far away." Meanwhile, Amado buys a restaurant and leases the upper floor as a hotel. The business initially prospers, but it soon attracts Amado's old friends, who take up all the space and eventually force Amado to close the establishment. The milk company also fires Carlos around this time.

A sense of rootlessness and a lack of security characterize Carlos's time in America. The life of an itinerant laborer involves merely surviving from day to day and makes planning for the future virtually impossible. Even though both brothers try to earn money through legitimate avenues, their efforts are thwarted yet again, showing just how tempting it might be to rely on crime as Amado as done in the past.

An unemployed Carlos retreats to the gambling houses, where he runs into Alfredo, who shows off a large wad of money and tells Carlos that **America** is about "survival of the fittest." Alfredo disappears not long after. Carlos then works a series of jobs picking flowers and washing dishes. One day he visits a grocery store and chats with a clerk named Judith. Her beauty draws Carlos in, and she reads him a story from a **book**. Later, when the restaurant where Carlos works refuses to serve a Filipino man and a white woman, he attacks the headwaiter and is summarily fired. He says goodbye to Judith and once again searches for work.

Carlos's time spent with Judith marks the first time he interacts significantly with an American woman since his work with Mary Strandon in the Philippines. Like Mary, Judith represents (however briefly) a nurturing, motherly figure who introduces Carlos to more books and helps rekindle his passion for learning. Judith's nurturing love contrasts strikingly with Alfredo and his embrace of a decidedly harsh "survival of the fittest" approach to life.

CHAPTER 23

In Pismo Beach, Carlos finds Mariano and two other companions living in a cabin. He lives with them and they spend their nights in the gambling houses. Seeing that Carlos is hungry, a Korean woman takes pity on him and lets him eat in her restaurant. After one of Mariano's companions dies, he burns down the cabin, leaving Carlos homeless again.

The Korean woman's empathy for Carlos continues a new trend in which women (with a few exceptions) become primarily nurturing figures in Carlos's life.

Carlos goes to Seattle, where he again meets up with Julio in a Japanese gambling house. Julio teaches Carlos "the art of gambling" and shows off his spoils from pickpocketing, which he calls "works of art." Julio encourages Carlos to work the gambling houses, and soon Carlos becomes adept at earning money through gambling, particularly at the game of Pi-Q. He works the gambling houses in Portland and San Bernardino and earns $500. "This is the life for me in **America**," he says.

The reappearance of Julio reunites Carlos with the close friend who saved his life back at the apple orchard. In contrast to Amado, whose attraction to crime disgusts Carlos, Julio appeals to Carlos's creative inclinations by framing crime as an artistic endeavor. This development shows both how insatiable Carlos's creative urges are and how starved he is for opportunities to exercise them.

Carlos goes to the small island of Coronado, where he meets up again with Frank in a Filipino clubhouse. At the clubhouse, Carlos plays more Pi-Q, and he successfully cheats several Filipino laborers out of their wages. When Carlos learns that one of the men has a hospitalized wife, however, he buys the men groceries. He briefly considers an affair with Frank's Mexican girlfriend, but reconsiders and then leaves for Stockton. He plays in the Japanese gambling houses, but becomes dispirited and finds a hotel room in San Luis Obispo. There, Carlos begins writing a letter to Macario and is thrilled that he can now write understandable English. He vows to tell the world about his story of struggle.

Carlos spends time working the gambling houses along the west coast, and the amount of money he makes temporarily blinds him to the reality of what he has become. Where he once lamented over Amado's descent into a life of crime, the same lust for money and success that tempted Amado has now caused Carlos to become like his brother. Not until he is shaken by the reality of cheating fellow Filipino workers does Carlos reexamine this decision. Moreover, his discovery that he is now proficient in English offers him a positive goal to strive towards. This revelation marks a turning point where Carlos once again begins to see beauty in the world.

CHAPTER 24

Overjoyed by his newfound writing ability, Carlos wants to read as many **books** as he can by "the men that contributed something positive to society" so that he can emulate them. He locates the home of Max's wife and knocks on the door. A white woman answers, lets him in, and offers him port wine. She gives Carlos the nickname "Carl" and introduces him to her sickly Filipino husband, Pascual. Carlos learns that the couple edits a small socialist newspaper.

In Bulosan's novel, books are an important symbol of overcoming ignorance. Here, however, books also become a key source of beauty in Carlos's life, as they illuminate his path towards intellectual maturity. The new opportunity to write for Pascual's newspaper also represents the first time in his life where Carlos is able to work doing something he loves to do, namely, to write.

At the home, Carlos also reunites with Gazamen and José, and the latter has started an independent union for Filipino agricultural workers. Carlos begins working as an editor for Pascual's newspaper, and though the paper makes barely any money, the work inspires in Carlos a "passion for abstract, universal ideas."

Learning to read and write English begins an entirely new chapter in Carlos's life. Whereas he previously worked merely to survive, he now begins working in the service of bigger ideas that he believes can help him make a positive contribution to the world.

As Carlos and José solicit advertisements for the newspaper, José introduces Carlos to a Japanese girl named Chiye. They get drunk and go fishing with her, then they rent a cabin for the night. When Chiye reveals that she is married, however, the three part ways and Carlos and José return to Pascual's house. The pea pickers in Prismo Beach are on strike, so Carlos and Lucille, another of the newspaper's employees, print out pro-strike leaflets for distribution to local businesses. José is arrested but released from jail soon after. He tells Carlos that "this is a war between labor and capital," but for Filipinos, it is also an "assertion of our right to be human beings again." José then tells Carlos his life story, to which Carlos can relate.

Carlos's time working for Pascual and Lucille introduces him to the organized labor movement and all of the potential and pitfalls that it brings. In addition, joining the union movement forges stronger bonds between Carlos and José, as José teaches Carlos about the conflict between labor and capital. Though the connection isn't yet clear to him at this point, Carlos eventually comes to recognize this conflict as the same one that pits peasants against plantation owners in the Philippines.

CHAPTER 25

Pascual's condition worsens; he is now paralyzed from the waist down and he is close to death. Before he dies, however, Pascual tells Carlos: "It is for the workers that we must write [...] There is no otherway to combat any attempts to suppress individual liberty." After Pascual dies, Lucille starts a new newspaper in San Francisco while Carlos goes to Los Angeles. There, he finds that his brother Macario and José's brother Nick have started a literary magazine with Felix Razon, the former Filipino peasant boy whom Carlos met in the rice fields years ago.

Joining Macario and Nick in Los Angeles brings Carlos full circle by connecting his struggles in the Philippines to his struggles in America. At the center of this connection is Felix, who Carlos first met as a bewildered boy in the rice fields. Like Carlos, Felix brought his struggle for social justice to America, and here that struggle brings the two men together in a common cause.

The men spend much time discussing how to spread progressive ideas throughout California, and Macario impresses Carlos with his newfound dedication to universal equality. Macario explains that the American ideal is yet unfinished, and new immigrants like Filipinos are charged with fulfilling American ideals for themselves and for future generations. "All of us, from the first Adams to the last Filipino, native born or alien, educated or illiterate—*We are* **America**!" he explains, and declares that "America is a prophecy of a new society of men."

Macario's multi-page philosophical lecture closes out the first half of Bulosan's book, and it provides the thematic link that connects the first two parts to the remaining two parts of the novel. In the first two sections, Carlos struggles internally to reconcile the American paradox. In the next two sections, Carlos joins a more active fight to resolve this paradox, guided by Macario's point that America is an unfinished ideal that immigrants must help make into a reality.

CHAPTER 26

Carlos makes Macario's dictum that "the old world will die" his new guiding thought. He points out José's imprisonment, Pascual's death, and Macario's new dedication to **America** as markers of his "intellectual awakening." He helps distribute copies of the inaugural issue of *The New Tide* magazine, but the magazine soon folds despite a valiant effort from Nick and Felix to save it.

After years of struggling to find his place in the American social landscape, Carlos now dedicates himself to the goal of building a better, more just America for himself and other non-white immigrants. Again, Carlos has found a surprising form of hope that rises out of a desperate situation.

Although the magazine does not succeed, the dedication its founders displayed for their higher ideals inspires Carlos "toward an intellectual clarification and a positive social attitude." Moreover, working on the magazine draws Carlos deeper into the labor movement, and when he learns of the independent Filipino Workers' Association union, he decides to form a new branch of the union with José and Gazamen in Lompoc.

From this moment onwards, the union movement becomes not just an activity for Carlos, but also an intellectual calling. The drive to organize workers relies on a foundation of justice, opportunity, and equality for all people regardless of their race. These higher ideals inspire Carlos like nothing he has previously experienced in his life.

Soon thereafter, there is a scramble for power among the Association's national officers. Many Filipino workers have embraced the trade union movement because "low wages and other labor discriminations" are "the direct causes that [instigate] the persecutions against them." Lettuce workers in Salinas successfully strike for better wages, but arsonists destroy their general headquarters.

Despite its tumultuous existence, the Filipino Workers' Association gives a much-needed avenue through which Filipinos can voice their collective grievances. By connecting their precarious labor conditions to the broader social racism they experience, the workers successfully identify the systematic injustices they must fight.

José and Carlos make the Association's new, temporary general headquarters in Lompoc and begin a new membership campaign. Carlos recognizes how vegetable companies split up Mexican and Filipino sugar beet pickers in an effort to dissuade unionization and keep the two groups antagonistic towards each other. This type of "fascism," he notes, impedes the labor movement everywhere.

Carlos understands that by dividing employees along racial lines, employers can also stifle any cross-racial union alliances. Thus, showing different ethnic workers that they share a common antagonist becomes a key element in Carlos's union campaigning.

José and Carlos organize a meeting between representatives from the Mexican and Filipino workers, but union-busters arrive and break up the meeting. Carlos and José flee and hide out in a manure barn. When the coast is clear, they flee the barn and walk five miles south to the town of Camarillo. Carlos admires the mountains nearby because they remind him of his home village in the Philippines, and he describes the natural surroundings to José.

Bulosan continues his theme of contrasting great despair with great beauty. After fleeing from violent union busters and literally hiding in waste, Carlos is nonetheless still able to appreciate the beauty of the nearby mountain ranges.

On their way to Ventura, police arrest José and Carlos, and they spend three days in jail before returning to Lompoc. They learn that a white woman named Helen has been agitating with striking Filipino workers there. She is secretly a professional strike-breaker, but despite Carlos's suspicions about her, she convinces José to let her join their labor activities.

The character of Helen is a rarity in Bulosan's story: she is an American woman who does not nurture Carlos, but instead sows chaos and hatred in his life. Perhaps because American women have been so supportive of him before this point, Carlos ends up working with her even though he senses that she's not trustworthy.

CHAPTER 27

Helen urges the workers to continue their strike, which soon spreads beyond Lompoc. At Helen's behest, striking workers continue to guard the highways and other exits from the valleys to prevent trucks from bringing produce from the fields. Highway patrol officers, however, guard the trucks, and when the trucks encounter the striking workers, the patrol officers beat the strikers with clubs. When resistance proves futile, the police arrest the strikers and throw them in jail.

Helen exploits the workers' wish to find allies in the white majority population and abuses the workers' trust by leading them into a trap. Here, Bulosan makes an explicit connection between the struggle for racial justice and the struggle for economic justice. The American justice system, symbolized by the patrol officers, views Filipinos and organized workers as threats; though one group is a racial group and the other is an economic group, they face linked forms of oppression.

Carlos travels to Los Angeles, where he meets up with Macario and learns that Amado is in San Francisco working for a white "racketeer lawyer." Carlos is displeased to learn that Amado and the lawyer have become close, to the point where they "sleep with the same woman." Amado tells Carlos that he is "going into a new world," and Carlos believes that Amado has deserted his Filipino roots for good.

This moment represents yet another fall from grace for Amado. After a moment of legitimate enterprise in the form of his restaurant, Amado finds a way to hide his criminal intentions behind the mask of legitimacy by collaborating with a lawyer, who ostensibly represents the justice system. The corrupt lawyer is another example of how symbols of justice in the United States are often deeply unjust themselves.

Carlos moves in with Macario and Helen returns, planning to make Macario her next victim since she believes him to be a "professional agitator." Carlos knows that she works for agricultural companies and for so-called "patriotic organizations that considered it their duty to terrify the lives of minorities in the state."

Here, Bulosan mocks the hypocrisy of so-called "patriotic" organizations that in reality work to constrict the freedoms of non-white residents of America. In so doing, these organizations betray America's core values of liberty and equality while claiming to honor the nation.

When José returns and calls out Helen for her treachery, she responds: "I hate the Filipinos as deeply as I hate unions! You are all savages and you have no right to stay in this country!" Carlos angrily strikes her in the mouth before José restrains him. She flees down the nearby ally, and Carlos and José never hear from her again.

Helen's betrayal of the union workers marks the beginning of a dark period in the second half of Bulosan's novel. While Carlos is prone to seeing women as symbols of beauty, Helen's treachery unleashes much despair that once again forces Carlos to reexamine his commitment to finding beauty in the world.

CHAPTER 28

Helen's disappearance marks the end of the Filipino Workers' Association and ushers in a dark period, as white people conduct organized terrorist campaigns against Filipino workers and lobbying groups call upon the state legislature to curtail organization by both agricultural and urban laborers. Carlos, José, and another newspaper editor, Ganzo, want to help unite the city and agricultural workers in their common struggle against their employers.

In the face of a concerted and violent pushback against union activity, Carlos and his companions attempt to fight back with their own organized campaigns for workers' rights. Here, Carlos's commitment to improving America holds strong through unprecedented challenges.

The organizers meet in the home of a San Francisco reporter, Millar, to map out a plan. Felix goes to the Imperial Valley to promote the labor cause, while Nick and Macario work with urban workers in Los Angeles. Conrado Torres, Carlos's former cannery worker friend, heads to the Yakima Valley, while Mauro Perez remains in Seattle. Carlos is one of the only men in the group without college educations, but they are all nonetheless determined to create a "better **America**."

Among the most significant points in Bulosan's novel is that workers from different industries and backgrounds all have a stake in uniting against their abusive employers. Carlos's belief in the power of unity over division keeps him dedicated to the labor movement, and the novel suggests that such unity is necessary to keep organizers invested in their fights.

Carlos is so invested in progressive causes that he begins to neglect his own health. He is still new to the concept of unionism and is just beginning to learn that Filipino and other minority workers need a broader political program to achieve their goals. Lettuce workers strike in San Jose, but the company imports Mexican workers to replace them. José and Carlos attempt to meet with the Mexicans to convince them to join the strike, but five white men ambush the meeting and kidnap José, Millar, and Carlos. The white men drive them to a secluded wooded area, where they call them "monkeys" and beat them savagely. They knock Millar down and beat him, and then they tar and feather José and tie Carlos to a tree and repeatedly punch his body.

The importance of unionizing workers from different backgrounds under a far-reaching political movement is underscored by the severity the pushback from anti-union forces. In one of the novel's most harrowing moments, Carlos is nearly lynched by racist white men who explicitly fear the threat posed by unionized workers who are also *racial minorities. This scene demonstrates that economically empowered Filipinos are a direct threat to white social dominance, and the white men's use of the dehumanizing epithet "monkeys" is an attempt to repress this threat.*

While the attackers pause to drink whiskey, Millar quietly tells Carlos about a knife in his shoe. Carlos grabs the knife and cuts the ropes binding him. Once free, he crawls into the woods. Though he is barely able to use his shattered leg, he limps towards San Jose. There, he enters a small house, where a white woman named Marian greets him. Carlos tells her that thugs attacked him for his union activities, and the sympathetic woman begins nursing him back to health. He marvels at the contrast between the kind white woman and the savage white men who nearly killed him. Together, Marian and Carlos then move to Los Angeles.

Carlos's arrival at Marian's house continues Bulosan's pattern of following up great despair with great happiness, and vice versa. Like the women who have preceded her in Carlos's life, Marian becomes a nurturing mother figure to Carlos, and the immediate contrast of the kind Marian with the abusive white men who attacked Carlos again emphasizes the paradoxical nature of American society.

CHAPTER 29

Marian reveals that she is from Oregon and briefly attended college and picked hops before fleeing an affair with a man who turned out to be married. The death of another partner in a car accident left her distraught and directionless. Carlos tells her about his own struggles, and the two become close. Marian tells Carlos that she "wants someone to care for" and that "[he is] the one." Carlos becomes increasingly infatuated with Marian, and she reminds him of the girl he once met on the freight train. In San Luis Obispo, Carlos learns from Ganzo that their labor work in the city is on the verge of failure and that enemies have captured Gazamen.

Like all of his relationships with women in the novel, Carlo's relationship with Marian is platonic and maternal rather than sexual or romantic. Although Carlos sometimes mentions the physical beauty of the women in his life, he only occasionally expresses an explicit urge for sexual relationships with them. Because sex in Bulosan's novel is usually characterized by deviance and criminality, Bulosan's decision to depict Carlos's relationships as platonic prevents the beauty of those relationships from becoming tainted by the deviance of sex as Carlos has experienced it in America.

Carlos and Marian eventually go to Santa Barbara, where Carlos meets a kitchen helper and aspiring writer named Florencio Garcia, who shows off his manuscripts. Soon, Marian gives Carlos money so that he can attend school. "I was with a white woman who completely surrendered herself to me," he notes. He becomes further entranced by her beauty, and is shocked when they are able to eat in a fancy restaurant without getting harassed. After dinner, Marian faints crossing the street, and she stays overnight at a doctor's office. When Carlos visits her the next day, she reveals that she is dying, and makes Carlos promise "not to hate" and instead to "love everything good and clean." Within a few days, Marian dies due to complications from syphilis.

In contrast to Estevan, the suicidal writer whom Carlos met earlier in the novel, the writer Florencio does not meet a tragic end. This development mirrors Carlos's own path as he continues to pursue his creative ambitions despite having endured much tragedy. However, a period of beauty again becomes one of despair when Marian dies shortly after meeting Carlos. Her dying words highlight again how important it will be for Carlos to continue focusing on the positive aspects of life, even when he's tempted to feel hatred instead.

CHAPTER 30

Carlos describes Marian's death as "one of the darkest periods of [his] life." He turns to drinking to numb the pain of the loss before he finally boards a bus. On the bus, he meets two girls named Rosaline and Lily, and together they sing popular songs. The girls invite him to stay with them at their home in Medford, in the forested part of Oregon. Carlos decides to stay at a hotel there instead. He has dinner at the girls' home and swims with them in a lake that reminds him of the clear pool where he and his father once swam years ago. The next morning, he bids farewell to Lily and Rosaline, and heads to Seattle.

Marian's tragic death sends Carlos into a spiral of alcoholism before he again meets women who recuse him from despair. His brief time with Rosaline and Lily serves as a healing period in which he's able to begin fulfilling Marian's dying request. Following his time with the girls, he once again seeks out the other source of potential beauty in his life: the labor movement back in Seattle.

In Seattle, Carlos meets Conrado Torres in a restaurant. Conrado tells him that Japanese contractors have been union-busting the local Filipino cannery workers. Soon, Dagohoy, who started the cannery union, enters the restaurant with two other union officers. While in the restaurant, assailants shoot and kill Dagohoy and his friends. Carlos feels somehow responsible for the deaths, and laments that "this violence had a broad social meaning [...] it was perpetrated by men who had no place in the scheme of life." Carlos then goes to San Francisco and meets Mariano in Salinas, where he learns that workers have formed the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of **America** (UCAPAWA). The new union gives him hope.

The death of Dagohoy and the others at the hands of hired assassins represents a watershed moment in Bulosan's novel. Up to this point, the meaning of the violence that has plagued his life has puzzled Carlos. Although he understood that this violence stemmed from racism, the roots of racism itself remained a mystery, Dagohoy's death, however, makes Carlos realize that those who commit racial violence do so as a means to assuage their own inadequacies, and to shift the blame for those inadequacies onto to others.

In Los Angeles, Carlos again finds Macario, who is staying with Victor. He also meets a woman named Dora Travers, who tells him about the Young Communist League and urges him to join. Carlos is apprehensive about joining but appreciates Dora's company. That night he writes a poem about Dora after watching her sleep, and she encourages him to write more poetry. Inspired, Carlos realizes he can "fight the world now with [his] mind, not merely with [his] hands." His health, however, begins to decline, and a doctor informs him that he has tuberculosis. Carlos now fears he will experience a slow death like his brother Luciano did.

Carlos is rather uninspired by the Communist Party, but Dora is yet another woman who gives him true inspiration and will to continue pursuing his dream. His newfound dedication to the beauty of poetry stems from the beauty he observes in Dora, suggesting that any kind of beauty can have profound positive consequences. This begins a new period of intellectual growth for Carlos, as he commits himself to continuing to write even in the face of a life-threatening diagnosis.

CHAPTER 31

Faced with the reality of his disease, Carlos wants nothing more than "to get well as soon as possible and go back to the labor movement," as he finds it "exhilarating" to belong to "something vitally alive in **America**." Macario takes a job in a restaurant to earn money and care for Carlos, who resents being too sick to fend for himself. Dora comes often to read poems to Carlos, and she eventually reveals that she is pregnant with Nick's child and is going back to the Soviet Union, where she was born. She soon disappears from Carlos's life.

Carlos settles down to begin a long period of recovery from tuberculosis. Meanwhile, Dora's repeated visits begin a trend of female nurturement that will define his time recovering. During this period, Carlos's connection to women becomes vital to his intellectual development, again showing how interpersonal connections can be a vital source of inspiring beauty.

After Dora's departure, Carlos publishes several of his poems in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. The magazine's editor, Harriet Monroe, offers him a scholarship and promises to visit him in Los Angeles. He reads the work of other poets and dreams of someday becoming learned enough to "go back to the Philippines with a torch of enlightenment" and "help liberate the peasantry from ignorance and poverty." Tragically, however, Harriet dies in South America before Carlos can meet her. Nonetheless, one of Harriet's journal contributors, Jean Doyle, visits Carlos and gives him food. Around this same time, a Hollywood writer named Alice Odell sees Carlos's poems and writes him to arrange a meeting.

After Dora's departure, poetry becomes a gateway for Carlos to connect with several other women who provide a sense of beauty and inspiration in his life. Inspired by Dora's initial urging, Carlos reads the work of more poets, and their work inspires him to bring the beauty of education to the despairing Filipino peasantry. As he reads more and more, women like Alice and Jean become surrogate mothers and teachers who feed and nurture both his body and his mind.

When Alice and Carlos meet at the public library, they find they have much in common. She comes from a poor farming town in Iowa and, at a young age, watched her father descend into the despair of a gambling addiction. She eventually found herself in Hollywood, where she had an affair with a wealthy man who ultimately left her. Alice has a sister, Eileen Odell, a teacher who followed her to Hollywood. Alice visits Carlos frequently and brings him **books** and food. Soon, he is transferred to the Los Angeles County hospital, and Alice tells him she is moving to New York. She continues to send him books after she leaves. "She was directing my education," Carlos writes. While preparing for his first surgery, Carlos writes poems and sends them to Alice.

Carlos finds kinship with Alice Odell, and the a pair share a relationship that resembles one between a student and a teacher, as well as between a mother and a son. As a teacher, Alice brings Carlos books, and as a mother, she brings him food. This connection between physical nutrition and intellectual nutrition highlights the idea that feeding the life of the mind is as crucial to survival as feeding the body. What's more, Alice's role in both forms of nutrition suggests that close interpersonal connections are crucial to survival as well.

CHAPTER 32

Shortly after Alice moves to New York, her sister, Eileen, begins visiting Carlos nearly every day for three years. Like her sister, Eileen brings Carlos **books** and various kinds of food. Carlos writes that he "yearned for her and the world she represented." He writes poems about her and vows to "get well" for her. They also exchange letters when apart, and Carlos uses the process of letter writing as his own personal "course in English." Eileen gives him several books about politics, history, and society, and he is overjoyed at the opportunity to learn "the great discoveries in the life of man."

To Carlos, Eileen represents a world characterized by beauty, safety, wealth, love, and education. This world is a stark contrast to the world of despair, poverty, ignorance, and violence that he has known for the majority of his life. The phase that Carlos spends in the Los Angeles Hospital learning about the broader context of his world effectively represents the final phase of his intellectual and moral development.

Carlos and Eileen grow closer, learning about their mutual hardships, and she "[weeps] silently when [he] suffer[s] pain and loneliness." For Carlos, Eileen represents the **America** that is "human, good, and real" because she fulfills his "insatiable hunger for knowledge and human affection."

In a very crucial way, Eileen comes to embody the vision of America about which Macario lectured at the close of the novel's first half. She symbolizes the welcoming promise of the American Dream even more so than America itself does.

As Carlos lies in the hospital, the knee injury he sustained from the anti-union attackers causes him searing pain, and he finds it hard to eat. He observes his suffering roommates as they die painful deaths, and he thinks about how hard it is to die. He undergoes a knee operation, and afterwards, Eileen brings him more **books** by great authors such as Franz Kafka and Federico Garcia Lorca. The suffering these authors endured further inspires him to overcome his own suffering and become a writer.

Growth and happiness define much of Carlos's time in the hospital. Even, when he suffers pain, he turns to the suffering of the great authors he admires as a means of keeping the faith that he will one day join them. The hope of expressing his suffering and growth in writing continues to provide Carlos with very real strength, showing the practical power that books and education can have in individuals' lives.

One of Eileen's friends, Laura Clarendon, is writing a proletarian novel with a Filipino protagonist, and Carlos gives her advice on the character. Soon, Felix visits to tell Carlos he is going to Spain to fight the fascist regime of Francisco Franco, and that Macario and Nick are going with him.

After achieving limited success fighting in the American labor movement, Carlos's friends decide to take their fight against injustice to Spain. Like Carlos himself, his friends crave the opportunity to stand behind an ideal higher than themselves. However, the fact that they have to leave America to have any hope of doing so shows just how deep American racism and oppression run.

CHAPTER 33

Macario tells Carlos that fighting with the Spanish loyalists "means that there are men of good will all over the world, in every race, in all classes," and that "the forces of democracy are found in all times." Carlos cannot help but admire his brother's lofty ambitions. "It's much easier for us who have no roots to integrate ourselves in a universal ideal," Carlos explains. Meanwhile, Carlos works to educate himself further with help from Eileen. He tells her an amusing story about a prisoner in Binalonan who convinces the police to let him attend a cockfight and have a siesta. Recalling past memories gives him the idea to write a book about characters from his hometown.

Though Carlos admires Macario's dedication to his ideals, he does not share his desire to go to Spain. Carlos understands that a desire to work toward ideas can be particularly strong among people who are not tied to any specific place, and who therefore are eager to fight injustice anywhere. In this respect, Macario's rootlessness actually fuels his ideals, and his example shows how hard it can be to combine individual stability with a larger fight against oppression.

CHAPTER 34

Carlos undergoes more operations to stop the spread of tuberculosis into his lungs. He loses all of the ribs on his left side, but the doctor tells him he will live longer than initially thought. The nurses transfer him into a smaller ward with a Mexican man who dies the morning after a sexual encounter with his visiting wife. Carlos then goes back to the larger ward and watches WPA workers dig holes in the lawn to keep busy.

Even amid visits with friends and long periods spent immersed in books, Carlos cannot escape the reality that his disease will kill him sooner or later. The daily sight of suffering and death among the other hospital patients compounds his anxiety about his own mortality.

Carlos passes his days in the hospital watching visiting musicians and singers, reading **books**, and writing poetry. Revolutionary Russian writers such as Alexander Pushkin and Leo Tolstoy particularly inspire him about the power of human potential. He also discovers American writers such as Mark Twain. By reading great authors' books, Carlos creates "a spiritual kinship with other men who had pondered over the miseries of their countries."

In order to fulfill a lifelong desire to become an educated person, Carlos turns his hospital into a school. He acts as both student and teacher, and recreates the camaraderie of schoolmates by imagining the great authors he reads as his intellectual peers. Carlos's determination to learn as much as he can in the time he has left shows how education can always be an inspiring force, no matter how dark the circumstances.

CHAPTER 35

After months in the hospital ward, Carlos befriends another patient named John Custer, a poor, illiterate boy from Arkansas who is also suffering from tuberculosis. At John's request, Carlos writes a letter to John's mother, and in telling of John's sorrows, he also tells of his own struggles and sorrows. When John leaves the hospital, Carlos urges him to "rediscover **America**," and reminds him that he is still young and full of potential. Years later, Carlos tells of how he received a letter from a now-educated John, thanking Carlos for his comfort and advice.

Although Carlos spends much of his time in the hospital as a "student" of sorts, meeting John gives him the opportunity to play the role of teacher. By urging John to make the best of his life in America, Carlos imparts advice that his own brothers gave to him years before and demonstrates again how emotional connections with others can be a valuable kind of education.

When summer rolls around, Macario returns and tells Carlos that he and Nick could not get visas to go to Spain, but Felix did get there and is fighting valiantly. Carlos also learns that Nick and José have gained leadership roles in the Portland UCAPAWA chapter. Carlos yearns to rejoin the trade union movement.

News of his friends from the outside world makes Carlos yearn for the union movement that previously gave so much meaning to his life. This development shows that as valuable as education can be, it's not truly fulfilling until one has the chance to apply its ideals in practice, as Carlos wishes he could do with the union movement.

CHAPTER 36

The summer heat spurs more deaths in Carlos's hospital ward, but he spends his time on the outdoor porch near the only tree near the building. "The tree began to indicate recovery and survival for me," he writes. Other patients share this superstition about the tree, and patients who spend time on the porch appear to make swifter recoveries than those who languish inside the hospital. Though Carlos is sad to be confined by illness, he nonetheless has food, **books**, friends, a porch, and Eileen, whereas outside he had only violence and despair. He continues to read and write poetry and wonders if an immigrant like himself can actually achieve the "**American** dream." For Carlos, the dismal hospital has actually become "a world of hope."

Throughout the novel, nature frequently offers Carlos a hopeful respite from the struggles he endures in the human world. Here, the lone tree near the hospital bed comes to symbolize the beauty of the natural world from which Carlos drew much inspiration before his illness. In addition, the positive impact the tree seems to have on the other patients helps Carlos further appreciate the fact that joy and hope can come from unusual sources.

Carlos's growing intellectualism isolates him from most of the other patients in the hospital. "I acquired a mask of pretense that became a weapon I was to take out with me into the violent world again," he writes, "a mask of pretense at ignorance and illiteracy" to stave off rejection from others who might reject him for his intellectual abilities. He becomes increasingly lonely and attempts to get out of the hospital by inquiring into a dismissal from the Social Service Department. But they reject his request for transfer to a sanitarium on the grounds that he was a minor when he arrived in **America** and, therefore, has no guardian to sign the release papers.

Education is tremendously important to the arc of Carlos's life. It is his means of becoming a more fulfilled human being, as well as a tool he embraces in order to free himself from the clutches of poverty. However, even education has a downside, as his intellectual development threatens here to invoke the jealously of those who have not had the privilege of an education. Carlos has worked hard to become the educated person he is, but now he sees that even an excellent education can be isolating when not everyone shares that advantage. Again, Carlos runs up against the realities of inequality in American life.

Even Carlos's doctor supports his release, and is angry that he must remain at the hospital over a mere technicality. He resubmits his case to the Social Service Department, but a racist woman in the department tells him that Filipinos "ought to be shipped back to [their] jungle homes!" He confides his rage at the incident to Macario, who finally successfully secures Carlos's release from the hospital after two years.

Even in the generally nurturing environment of the hospital, Carlos encounters the kind of ugly racism that he knows awaits him when he returns to the outside world. Discrimination, this sequence of event reminds Carlos, is present even in otherwise positive environments.

CHAPTER 37

Although he is glad to be out of the hospital, Carlos is fearful of going back to the perilous, violent life he left behind before he got sick. "I had never known peace, except in the hospital," he observes. When he arrives at his hotel, Victor and Macario try to make him feel at home. Victor and Carlos try to find their own place, but racist white proprietors refuse to rent to them. Macario's restraint in the face of such prejudice impresses Carlos.

It's somewhat ironic that Carlos is happiest in the hospital, a place that by definition houses suffering and grief.. His release from the hospital is yet another beginning for him, but the hope of this fresh start is once again tempered by coming face-to-face with entrenched racism.

Unable to find a place to live, Carlos seeks out José, who is now married with a child whom he named after Carlos. When José suggests that Carlos pick out one of his sisters-in-law for himself, Carlos obliges, only to be rejected by the woman he chooses. The rejection depresses Carlos, who laments: "I was to run from crying women, because I was afraid they would evoke emotion in me."

This represent one of the few moments in the novel where Carlos expresses an explicit desire for sex. ,Because Bulosan frequently associates sex with depravity throughout the novel, the lust Carlos shows for José's sister-in-law frames his return to the outside world as a loss of the purity (and nurturing relationships with women) that he enjoyed in the hospital. .

Carlos eventually finds an apartment on Los Angeles's crime-ridden Temple Street. Police raid the building on several occasions to arrest prostitutes, and one night Carlos witnesses an attempted murder following a domestic argument. In the face of such despair, Carlos turns to **books** of fairytales, which spark an interest in Filipino folklore. He recalls his doctor's warning that his poor living conditions combined with the effects of tuberculosis mean he has maybe five years left to live. He vows to spend the remainder of his life writing "about our anguish and our hopes for a better **America**," with the goal of making a positive impact on the world.

As with Carlos's previous residence on the ironically named Hope Street, here he is forced into yet another crime-ridden slum. Temple Street is an equally ironic name for a place that's full of desperation and misery, as opposed to the pristine glory of a majestic and holy temple. Yet even in the face of this setback and the real knowledge of his impending death, Carlos vows to devote the remainder of his life to fostering beauty in the world. Again, Carlos's story demonstrates that it's always possible to cling to beauty, even in desolate settings.

CHAPTER 38

Faced with his mortality, Carlos retreats to the Los Angeles Public Library, where he plans "to read ten thousand **books** on all subjects." He finds solace in immigrant autobiographies that remind him of his own experience as an immigrant to **America**. One day, a poet named Ronald Patterson meets Carlos in the library and gives him stacks of leftist magazines and publications. The magazines give Carlos "a new pattern of ideas."

Books continue to inspire Carlos and fuel his desire to put his education to good use. His dedication to reading socialist publications also links his time in the hospital as a self-taught student to his time on the street as a union organizer, emphasizing the crucial interconnection of learning and action.

Ronald then takes Carlos to a meeting of socialists, who inspire Carlos with their goal of "the unification of minorities." Hoping to rally Filipinos to this cause, Carlos meets a communist party member who claims to be the only Filipino communist in the city, but his rigid devotion to the party deters Carlos. After a discussion with José, Carlos suggests forming a separate, Filipino socialist party branch. They distribute leaflets and hold a meeting that attracts a crowd of Filipinos.

The communist party member's rigid adherence to party rules contrasts with Carlos's desire for a welcoming labor movement that embraces all kinds of people. This desire to unify disparate groups of people becomes the backbone of Carlos's union work through the remainder of his life.

As the crowd gathers, José and Carlos address the numerous inequalities that Filipinos in American society face. When the Filipino communist and his associate, a woman named Anna Dozier, learn about the meeting, they tell Carlos that he cannot establish a Filipino branch of the Communist Party. Confused, Carlos takes a bus north, and finds solace in the green natural surroundings.

Here, nature again provides an invigorating respite for Carlos when he tires of the ugliness and bickering that so often characterize the human experience.

CHAPTER 39

On his trip northward, Carlos stops in the San Fernando Valley, where he finds an agricultural camp of Filipino lemon pickers. He searches for the leader of the group and meets the leader's wife, an educated woman who has read Carlos's poetry. When the woman's husband arrives, he tells Carlos about his time in the Navy and his long history as a farmer. The man's attachment to the land reminds Carlos of his peasant father.

Carlos's time sent with the leader of the lemon camp imparts a desire to finally place roots in America. Ever since his arrival in Seattle, Carlos has led an itinerant, rootless existence, but now Carlos realizes that he still feels connected to the values that his own father passed on to him long before.

After a long chat, Carlos leaves the lemon camp for Bakersfield. There, he goes to the large home of a Filipino farm contractor named Cabao, who is wealthy, educated, and married to a beautiful wife who is cheating on him. The two men talk, and Carlos learns that despite his wealth and power, Cabao is unhappy with his life. After leaving Cabao's house, Carlos goes to Stockton, where Filipino asparagus workers are striking.

Cabao represents the complete opposite of Carlos: he is a wealthy Filipino who has reached the pinnacle of the American Dream. Yet Cabao's unhappiness only validates Carlos's belief that life should be spent in pursuit of ideas intellectual growth, not wealth.

Among the strikers, Carlos spots Claro carrying anti-Japanese placards. Claro explains that a Japanese woman has been strikebreaking in the area by supplying laborers to replace the strikers. Claro also notes that the Chinese gambling lords are cooperating with the strikers by closing their dens of vice, thereby ensuring that Filipinos will not lose their money in those places. Carlos wonders if there is a way to make peace with the Japanese community *and* the Chinese community.

Claro has shown kindness to Carlos in the past. Hisdivisive style of labor agitation, however, does not sit well with Carlos's commitment to unifying different groups of people behind a common cause. This incident shows how difficult it can be to foster unity, even when one is working with someone as kind as Claro.

CHAPTER 40

Carlos meets with Percy Toribio, who is the head of the asparagus workers union and a college graduate who enjoys writing. Carlos asks Percy if his union has attempted to affiliate with the CIO or the AFL, but Percy is afraid of appearing too "radical" for the farmers. Carlos accuses Percy of prioritizing protecting his own job, which ends their conversation and confirms Carlos's belief that college-educated labor leaders are ill equipped for the job. Later, Claro points to a newspaper headline that warns of a "Filipino Communist" strike leader. Though it does not mention Carlos's name, a local foreman, Steve Laso, suggests that Carlos should nonetheless leave town. Laso soon drives Carlos to Stockton.

Despite the importance he places on education, Carlos's experience with Percy shows him that education has its limits when trying to enact real-world change. Percy's college education has not taught him the courage needed to run a union, again showing how academic learning and real-world experience need to go hand-in-hand when it comes to effecting change.

In Stockton, Carlos sleeps on a bus and dreams of his family eating dinner. His mother refuses to eat even though she is clearly hungry. Soon, he finds out that his mother will not eat because there is not enough food in the house, and that "she [is] starving herself so that her children would have something to eat." In the dream, Carlos pretends he is no longer hungry and leaves the house so his mother can eat, and from outside he watches his family laugh and enjoy their dinner.

This dream outlines the most important lesson that Mother taught Carlos before he moved to America: he must put the interests of his community above his own individual interests. The self-sacrifice she demonstrates in the dream is eventually rewarded, and Carlos carries this lesson throughout his life.

Carlos awakens briefly before he falls asleep again and has another dream. In the second dream, he is sitting in an acai tree watching his mother cook corn with a concerned look on her face. He slides down the tree and starts running. "I wanted to run away from all that poverty," he writes, but he hates the idea of leaving "the affection in our family." He runs far away until a police officer finds him and offers him bananas. In the yard of the *presidencia*, the chief of police shows Carlos a fragrant banana tree and then drives Carlos back to his home, telling him about **America** on the way.

This dream highlights Carlos's unresolved feelings about his peasant upbringing. Despite the poverty of such an upbringing, he also remembers the way it bonded him to his loving family. He still feels a lot of guilt about running away from this poverty and leaving his parents and sisters behind, Even in the dream, the temptation of America still linger, showing how powerful the country's allure remains for those seeking better fortunes.

The dream continues as the police chief drives Carlos home. When they arrive, Carlos's father carries him into the house. Inside, his mother assures him: "We have *enough* food now, son." Carlos sits down to eat but then runs to thank the man who drove him home, but the man is gone. When Carlos awakens, he realizes that this was not a dream, but the memory of something that actually happened to him as a boy. Carlos describe the incident as "one of the most significant events in [his] childhood."

The dream ends by helping Carlos reconcile his guilt about going to America with the reason he did so in the first place. The fact that the dream actually happened reveals the roots of Carlos's fixation on America, since he associated the idea of it with having enough food and escaping poverty more generally. That he has this dream now also suggests that maybe someone does *have enough food because of Carlos's efforts; maybe all his striving for a better world has somehow paid off.*

CHAPTER 41

When Carlos returns to Los Angeles, he and José organize a conference among Filipino labor delegates, many of whom are members of his old group of friends and associates. Their goal is "to create a working committee from which [they] could form the nucleus of a broad organization for Filipinos on the Pacific coast." The conference quickly creates the Committee for the Protection of Filipino Rights (CPFR) and discusses ways to earn Filipinos American citizenship.

The emergence of the CPFR is the realization of Carlos's dream to unite Filipinos in America under a common banner. Through the proposal for American citizenship, the CPFR also provides a potential solution to the problem of Filipino rootlessness that keeps them on the margins of American society.

Carlos writes for CPFR as well as for a labor paper spearheaded by Ganzo, and he speaks before American audiences throughout California. After he speaks before the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, a rich white woman invites him to her home and offers to throw a party for the CPFR, but she makes him hide when a visitor arrives. He is embarrassed but finds a strange comfort in her luxurious white rug and fancy house.

Like the socialist newspaper on which he previously worked, the CPFR publications allow Carlos to combine his love and talent for writing with his desire to serve a cause that will better the lives of other people. The work even brings him into the private halls of power: the homes of wealthy white people. However, the fact that the wealthy woman makes Carlos hide shows that even powerful people who are sympathetic to his cause may still be deeply racist.

Among Carlos's most important tasks with the CPFR is campaigning for Representative Vito Marcantonio's bill proposing Filipino citizenship, but the bill goes down in defeat. This breaks Macario's spirit, as he invested his savings in campaigning for the bill. When Macario becomes ill, a man from Macario's workplace visits Carlos and threatens to fire Macario unless he returns to work. Carlos attempts to assault the man with a knife, but Macario stops Carlos and tells him to leave. Carlos wants to support his sick brother, but is too weak to perform much manual labor. He sneaks into a white woman's home, steals her diamond ring, and sells it to a gambler. Macario grows sicker and Carlos resumes writing.

The failure of the Marcantonio bill is a huge blow to Carlos and his compatriots, as its failure suggests that their own labors have been fruitless. In addition, Macario's debilitating illness enrages Carlos further, and he strikes at white society by swiping a white woman's ring. A petty act, it nonetheless symbolizes Carlos's new despair, since Carlos has previously been so opposed to criminal activity. Even in the face of this despair, however, Carlos never stops writing.

CHAPTER 42

Following the defeat of Marcantonio bill, Roman Rios and Javier Lacson, who are both Los Angeles CPFR delegates, try to convert the CPFR into a unit of the Communist Party. Lacson starts bringing a middle-aged American woman named Lucia Simpson to organizational meetings, and another woman, Jean Lawson, begins visiting Carlos. A former teacher at the University of Manila, Jean attempts to revive the dying CPFR, but she gets into a love triangle with Lacson and Rios that compromises her usefulness to the group.

Here, as elsewhere in the novel, Bulosan characterizes communism as a frustrating and inadequte solution to Filipino workers' problems. Specifically, the selfishness and narrowmindedness of Lacson, Simpson, and Lawson symbolize the wasted potential the communist party embodies.

Meanwhile, Carlos continues to retreat to his **books**, and Macario encourages him, saying that a lack of formal education should not deter him from becoming a writer. Macario's health is worsening, and Carlos tries to find Amado by seeking out contacts in the Filipino crime underworld. While Carlos looks for Amado, Jean gains control of the CPFR, but then she flees to Hawaii with Lacson. Lacson eventually returns, embittered by the Communist Party.

Even after all this time, Macario still serves as Carlos's most important source of inspiration and encouragement by reminding him that there are many paths to education, not all of which involve school.

Carlos grows further apart from Lacson, Rios, and other members of the CPFR who deem him too intellectual. While the Communist Party proves disappointing, Carlos nonetheless sees hope for Filipinos through the broader ideals of socialism. He bids goodbye to Macario and heads for Bakersfield on a boxcar.

Here, socialism mirrors the promise of America more broadly: it is a grand ideal that, despite all its potential, has yet to be fully realized in practice.

CHAPTER 43

In Bakersfield, Carlos falls asleep in a Mexican bar and awakens to find Amado staring at him. Amado tells Carlos that he secretly visited him in the hospital and gave him blood. The brothers dine at a chop suey house and, later that evening, Carlos tells Amado about Macario's poor health. Amado offers to move to Los Angeles and get a job there to care for Macario, and Carlos is overjoyed at his brother's kindness. "Now I knew that in a strange way we were together again," he writes. Carlos then goes to Portland and contacts Nick at the local UCAPAWA office. Nick tells him the union is dead. Soon thereafter, Carlos becomes ill and fears he is going to die.

Carlos's reunion with Amado after a long period of estrangement once again underscores the depth of the family bonds that he and Carlos forged while still in the Philippines. Moreover, Amado's status as both a loving and supportive sibling and an alienated criminal mirrors America's status as a place of both kindness and cruelty. This is a fitting parallel, since America made Amado into the man he has become.

CHAPTER 44

Nick attempts to help Carlos bear the "black frustration" that defines his life by sharing a large bottle of wine. Fearing he will soon confront death, Carlos decides to "squeeze every minute to the last drop of activity." After a month, Carlos recovers from his illness. He boards a bus for California and meets a teenage girl named Mary who is headed for Los Angeles. She follows Carlos to his apartment, where Ganzo, Victor, and Amado are sleeping on the floor.

Carlos's reinvigorated to desire to make the absolute most of the time he has left brings him back to the circle of friends and associates who first gave his life meaning through the labor movement. He even meets another American woman, Mary, who becomes another in the long line of kind female characters who nurture Carlos through hard times.

Nick's enemies in the union fire him from his role as secretary-treasurer. He goes to Alaska, but the union there is also weak. During this period, reactionaries gain control of the CPFR and the UCAPAWA locals. Carlos confides his sorrows to Mary, and she becomes "a symbol of goodness" in Carlos's world. Conrado Torres also moves into the apartment, where he spends his days drinking with José.

The reactionaries' claiming of the local unions demonstrates the precariousness of the unions' very existence. But even as Carlos worries that his life's work will once again fall to pieces, he finds solace in the beauty that Mary represents.

Several poor Mexican children live in Carlos's neighborhood, and one small boy sneaks into Carlos's kitchen and gets drunk on wine. José continues to give the boy wine every day, and the boy becomes a drunk. Carlos pities the child, but he recognizes that the boy is starving, and that "the wine gave him release, and soothed his hunger." Carlos wonders what will become of the boy, and whether he will revolt against his circumstances or succumb to them.

Much like the schoolchildren Carlos previously encountered having promiscuous sex in the restaurant, the starving Mexican child demonstrates how the ravages of poverty introduce adult vices into children's lives. Carlos cannot help but recognize himself in the boy.

During these "dark days," Amado associates with shady characters, while Mary spends more time away from the apartment and eventually disappears. Macario finds a job, but continues to grow sicker. One night. Carlos breaks up a fight between Amado and Macario over Amado's shady contacts. He strikes Amado with a pan, and shortly after the fight, Amado leaves. Carlos laments that he has "struck down one of the gods of [his] childhood."

Here is yet another demonstration of the complicated relationship Carlos has with Amado. Placed in the impossible situation of taking sides between his brothers, Carlos makes the choice that prevents physical harm but nonetheless leaves psychological wounds. Like so many other aspects of Carlos's life, the brothers' family bonds are sources of both strength and heartache.

CHAPTER 45

Afraid that the violence of Temple Street will consume him, Carlos again retreats into **books**, this time by writers of historical American fiction. The books stimulate his mind, but he feels he has no outlet for his intellectual passion. He begins writing drafts of his life story in **America**, which some Manila-based magazines publish. When a new landlord buys the apartment, Carlos and his friends move into a hotel. Carlos attends a party for a prominent Filipino educator studying the American educational system. Two police detectives arrive to harass the Filipinos, much to the educator's shock. Carlos goes back to the hotel to get a gun, but Macario stops him from going back to the party.

In one of the novel's most powerful sequences, Carlos feels triumphant after getting some of his writing published. Yet this triumph is tempered by an instance of racist violence that awakens his long-controlled rage towards white America. After Carlos cares for Macario through a long illness, Macario returns the favor by saving Carlos from making the horrible mistake of murder. If Carlos had returned to the party with a gun, he might have endangered all that he has worked so hard to achieve.

The incident at the party causes Carlos to demand violent action, so he contacts Julio in the Filipino underworld. Along with his partner Rommy, Julio has been stealing Social Security checks, then cashing them at racetracks and gambling houses. Unwilling to fully enter a life of crime, Carlos gets drunk, and Ganzo later finds him wandering in San Francisco. Ganzo encourages Carlos to give up drinking and start writing again.

Although Macario prevents Carlos from committing murder, Carlos nonetheless tries to channel his rage into crimes and drunkenness. For a moment, it appears Carlos may finally succumb to the despair brought on by the racism of American society, but again, it's the idea of writing and using his education well that pulls him back from the brink.

CHAPTER 46

Carlos finds work in the Los Angeles fish canneries and writes in his spare time and for Ganzo's newspaper. Later, while attending a meeting of cannery workers from different backgrounds at Nick's house, Carlos once again gets inspired by a "common faith in the working man." While visiting Macario, Carlos realizes that this new group of cannery workers has the potential to revive the union movement.

Following Ganzo's intervention, Carlos again finds inspiration in the potential for cross-racial unity in the labor movement. This marks Carlos's final transition from a student of America to a teacher of America.

Carlos moves to the town of Nipomo to pick peas, where starts a school for the other pea-pickers. He teaches the workers about American history, democracy, and the bible. He then carries his lessons to other workers in other small towns. Carlos finds strength through teaching. "This was what I had been looking for in **America**!" he writes, "to make my own kind understand this vast land from our own experiences."

Carlos's dedication to teaching other minority workers about the history of the labor movement is the logical fulfillment of his years spent educating himself. Whereas organizing for the union movement gave him the chance to introduce others to the potential of unions, teaching gives him the opportunity to improve other peoples' lives directly by helping them find their own places in American society.

Following the end of his travels as a teacher, Carlos learns that José is teaching about unions in Monterey and goes to visit him. Suddenly, people begin to enter José's house, including Filipinos, Mexicans, and Chinese people. Carlos recalls Macario's words that **America** was "in the hearts of men."

The assortment of different workers whom Carlos encounters at José's house symbolizes the potential fulfilment of the America ideal of equality for all people.

CHAPTER 47

A radio announcer reports the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan. Carlos runs to Macario's hotel, where Macario and another man named Joe Tauro are listening to the radio. They worry about the impact war will have on the Philippines. The prospect of war brings José to tears. Joe tearfully gets a bottle of bourbon and the men share a drink. Carlos reminisces about his childhood and wonders about his family, and soon the men take a drunken stroll outside.

The possibility that Japanese forces might invade the Philippines places his homeland back into the forefront of Carlos's mind. This shocking new development makes it clear that for all Carlos and the others do to try and improve their world, they are still at the mercy of enormous forces beyond their control.

Carlos and the other men go into a strip club and witness a fight that draws the police. They flee the strip club and go to a restaurant where Conrado Torres is sitting. José reminds Carlos about an upcoming conference of labor and social leaders. Suddenly, Conrado and Amado begin fighting until two girls distract them. Carlos is disgusted by his friends' and brothers' behavior, and he wonders if the war is already breaking them.

The prospect of war comes as a shock to Carlos's friends and brothers, and their somewhat destructive response to the news is symptomatic of their precarious place within American society. Neither citizens nor strangers, they remain on the margins of America even in a time of impending chaos, and this hybrid status makes the war even more stressful for them.

A few days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Carlos and his friends go to enlist in the military, but they are refused on grounds that they are aliens, not citizens. As Japanese forces overrun Binalonan, Carlos and other Filipino delegates petition Washington to permit Filipino enlistment, and President Franklin Roosevelt signs a proclamation allowing the formation of Filipino regiments.

The onset of America's war with Japan brings war to the Philippines as well. The outbreak of war inspires Carlos and his friends to fight for American freedom and to protect their homeland from Japanese forces, and this moment represents a symbolic merging of Carlos's investment in both his original homeland and his adopted home.

CHAPTER 48

Shortly after the fall of Battan, a small publisher contacts Carlos and wants to publish an edition of his poetry. The resulting book, *Letters from* **America**, is a testament to Carlos's "hopes, desires, [and] aspirations." He then searches for Amado to show him the book and finds him drinking beer with two girls, who are unimpressed by Carlos's poetry. One girl tears pages from the book, and Amado punches her. A few days later, Amado announces that he is joining the Navy. He and Carlos share a difficult goodbye, then Amado gives Carlos a letter in which he declares: "My lostness in America will give you a reason to work harder for your ideals."

The arrival of his first published book gives Carlos something to hold onto even amid the uncertainty of war. This moment represents Carlos's final contact with Amado in the novel. Well aware that he will never fully redeem himself in America, Amado urges Carlos to achieve the life that Amado himself could never have, again highlighting how the brothers' fortunes are intertwined.

Carlos's other friends and even Macario join the armed forces, and they share a series of goodbyes. "I knew it was the end of our lives in America," Carlos writes. He walks towards his hotel, and in his room Macario has left an envelope with $200, a Social Security card, and a photograph of himself. Carlos takes ten cents and uses it to repay a shoe shiner who once loaned Macario money. Carlos has a beer with the shoe shiner, who also plans to join the Navy. "I know I'll meet your brother again somewhere, because I got my dime without asking him," the shoe shiner states. Carlos then goes back to his hotel.

Macario's parting gift to his brother symbolizes the generosity with which he has treated Carlos throughout his life. The presence of the Social Security card also links Carlos to his future in America, and the money allows him to make a new start as a writer in the land that gave him the opportunity to educate himself. The shoe shiner's recognition of Macario's kindness also hints that Macario and Carlos may yet meet gain in the future.

CHAPTER 49

The next morning, Carlos deposits Macario's money in the bank and gets on a bus bound for Portland. He watches the pea-pickers in the fields and hears church bells ring in the distance. As the bus rolls on, Carlos looks out of the window and realizes: "No man—no one at all could destroy my faith in **America** again. It was something that had grown out of my defeats and successes, something shaped by my struggles for a place in this vast land."

The final scene in Bulosan's novel includes several symbols of America itself: the workers in the fields, the beautiful scenery, and the bus that takes Carlos into the next stage of his life. Carlos's parting lesson reinforces the idea that at its best, America is both a place and a state of being. What a person chooses to make of America is what America means to that person, and Carlos concludes his story by claiming the American dream for himself at last.


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