

Breakfast at Tiffany's



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF TRUMAN CAPOTE

Truman Capote's life was one of dizzying highs and devastating lows. Born in New Orleans to a teenage mother, Capote was sent at a very young age to live with his aunts and cousins in Monroeville, Alabama. There, he was a lonely child who took solace in reading and writing. He became friends with his neighbor Harper Lee (author of [To Kill a Mockingbird](#)), and their friendship lasted for the remainder of Capote's life. As a teenager, Capote moved back to New York City to live with his mother and her second husband, José García Capote. After José was imprisoned for embezzlement, however, Capote and his mother bounced around the New York City area and lived in Connecticut for a time. Here, Capote wrote for Greenwich High School's newspaper and literary journal. After returning to New York, Capote attended the Franklin School while working as a copyboy for *The New Yorker*, before quitting and moving to Alabama to live with relatives. Back in the South, he began working on his first novel, *Summer Crossing*, which went unpublished until 2006. Openly homosexual at a time when few other writers were, and a theatrical person to boot, Capote cut quite a figure with the publication of his first book, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948). 1966's [In Cold Blood](#) is considered by many to be his crowning achievement. After the towering success of [In Cold Blood](#), Truman spent the rest of his life working on an autobiographical "tell-all" book called *Answered Prayers*, which was never completed. He also wrote short stories and Hollywood screenplays, and was a correspondent for magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *Esquire*. In his later years, Capote struggled with mental health issues and drug and alcohol addiction. He died of liver cancer (a complication of alcoholism) in 1984.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although the novella isn't about military service or international conflict, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* takes place during World War II, which subtly creeps into the narrative. Indeed, the war is constantly in the background of the book, as the characters make fleeting references to it. For instance, Holly frequently talks about what she's going to do after the war ends, making plans to reunite with her brother, Fred, who is serving in the army. Unfortunately, though, these plans never come to fruition because Fred is killed in action, devastating Holly. And though the war doesn't necessarily factor into the plot in any other significant ways, readers sense that it's always hovering in the characters' minds, casting a pall on their everyday lives.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Although *Breakfast at Tiffany's* doesn't deal explicitly with themes of homosexuality, many readers draw an association between the unnamed narrator and Capote himself, concluding that the narrator is indeed a gay man. For this reason, it's worth considering the novella alongside other books about gay men in the 1940s, including Gore Vidal's novel *The City and the Pillar*, which is a coming-of-age story about a young gay man living in the United States during World War II. Similarly, James Baldwin's second novel, [Giovanni's Room](#), explores male sexuality and what it means to be a closeted gay man in the mid-20th century. On another note, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* follows in the tradition of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel [The Beautiful and Damned](#), since it builds upon Fitzgerald's early depiction of New York City's "café society" of socialites. Unlike the female characters in Fitzgerald's novel, though, Holly Golightly has a significant amount of personal agency and cultural capital, having learned how to use her social charms to subvert an otherwise oppressively patriarchal community of wealthy elitists. In the same way, Fitzgerald's [The Great Gatsby](#) also serves as a precursor to *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, since it establishes an image of the kind of rich Americans whom Holly uses her beauty and charisma to win over.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Breakfast at Tiffany's
- **When Published:** First appeared in *Esquire* in November of 1958, and was published in book form several months thereafter.
- **Literary Period:** Realism, Modernism
- **Genre:** Novella
- **Setting:** The Upper East Side of New York City during World War II
- **Climax:** While tending to the narrator's wounds after a rough day of horseback riding, Holly is arrested in her own apartment building and taken to jail for helping a mobster run a drug ring from inside prison.
- **Antagonist:** The patriarchal society in which Holly exists, which threatens to curtail her freedom and independence.

EXTRA CREDIT

Risky Business. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* was originally going to be published in *Harper's Bazaar*, but the magazine's parent company, the Hearst Corporation, felt uncomfortable printing some elements of the novella. Frustrated, Capote agreed to edit certain parts of the story, but Hearst ultimately decided not to run the piece, worrying that Tiffany & Co. would

withdraw advertising support.

Guess Who. Readers have long tried to discern whom Capote based Holly Golightly on, drawing comparisons between her and famous women like Oona O'Neill, Gloria Vanderbilt, Suzy Parker, and Marilyn Monroe. Capote called this guessing game the "Holly Golightly Sweepstakes."



PLOT SUMMARY

The unnamed narrator receives a call from a bartender named Joe Bell, who used to serve the narrator and his friend Holly Golightly when they lived in a brownstone on the Upper East Side. It has been a long time since the narrator has seen Joe—almost as long as it has been since he last saw Holly Golightly. When the narrator arrives, Joe makes him a drink and shows him a picture taken by I. Y. Yuniوشي, a photographer who used to live in the same brownstone as the narrator and Holly. The picture is of a man in Africa holding a wooden sculpture of a woman's face. Right away, the narrator recognizes it as Holly's face, and Joe Bell tells him that Yuniوشي was traveling in Africa when he saw this piece of art. Apparently, Holly had emerged on horseback with two exhausted men and asked for shelter in the sculptor's village. While the two men rested for several weeks, Holly became romantic with the woodcarver, who made the sculpture of her. The narrator wonders aloud whether or not the story is true. Joe Bell, for his part, admits that he looks for Holly wherever he goes, revealing that he always loved her. Thinking about this, the narrator leaves, wondering where Holly is now.

The narrator thinks about his first impressions of Holly. It's the early 1940s when he moves into the brownstone on the Upper East Side and sees Holly's name on one of the mailboxes. Holly's mailbox indicates that she's traveling, but the narrator knows this isn't true because Holly often comes home very late and buzzes neighbors to let her in because she lost her key. She soon starts doing this to the narrator, getting him up at all hours. Over the next few weeks, the narrator keeps tabs on Holly, letting her in each night but never interacting with her. Finally, though, the narrator formally meets Holly one night: she appears at his window while he's lying in bed. The narrator spills his whiskey but quickly calms himself enough to let Holly in, and she tells him she's trying to avoid a drunk man she brought home. She's hoping to avoid the man until he falls asleep, so she walks around the narrator's room and speaks rapidly, saying that the narrator looks like her brother Fred, and therefore deciding to call him by this name.

Holly and the narrator have a drink, and the narrator tells her that he's a writer. Holly says she'll help him become well-known and asks him to read a story aloud. When he does, she critiques it. This deeply hurts the narrator, but he still finds Holly appealing and she endears herself to him once more. As

someone used to sharing personal information, Holly tells the narrator that she visits a mobster named Sally Tomato in prison every Thursday, explaining that Sally's lawyer approached her and asked if she would keep Sally company. Holly agreed, she tells the narrator, so she goes to see Sally each week, delivering coded messages, though she mainly enjoys the man's company and doesn't think too much about whatever information she's communicating.

The sun comes up and Sally crawls into the narrator's bed and sleeps next to him. As she snoozes, she calls out, "Where are you, Fred?" Upon waking, Holly is crying. She evades the narrator's questions and climbs back out the window. Over the next few days, the narrator thinks constantly about Holly and is quite pleased when she invites him over for drinks one evening. When he arrives, a man named O.J. Berman lets him in. Holly is in the shower, and O.J. suspiciously asks why the narrator has come, adding that Holly often has men barging into her apartment. Soon enough, O.J. relaxes and starts rambling about how crazy Holly is, saying she's a "phony" and explaining that he met her in California and helped her get rid of her strange accent. He still doesn't know where Holly is from, and suspects he'll never find out. Nevertheless, O.J. continues, he focused on helping Holly become an actress, since he's an agent. When he finally got her an audition to be in a big movie, though, Holly suddenly gave up acting and moved to New York City. Since then, she's been spending time with rich people like Rusty Trawler, whom she might marry. The narrator notes that he has never heard of Rusty, which causes O.J. to speculate that the narrator must not know Holly very well.

Finally, Holly emerges and tells O.J. that the narrator is a writer, though O.J. is uninterested. Gradually, the living room fills with men who all seem surprised by the crowd, each one having thought Holly invited him exclusively. The narrator identifies the most boisterous and confident person in the room as Rusty Trawler, who gregariously makes martinis while the narrator stands by the wall and pretends to read the books on Holly's shelves. As he does so, he finds a newspaper clipping about Rusty, which explains that his parents died when he was a boy, turning Rusty into a highly-publicized millionaire orphan. Ever since then, Rusty has gotten a scandalous divorce and gone through legal battles that have appeared in the tabloids. He is also a widely-suspected Nazi-sympathizer. As the narrator reads these things, Holly approaches, deflecting the narrator when he asks about her visit to Sally Tomato that week.

Holly talks to the narrator about why she left O.J. behind in California, saying she doesn't feel guilty even though she knows she should. Still, she says that she was only thinking of becoming an actress because she didn't know what else to do. She then tells the narrator that fame would be too much for her at the moment—after all, she's not yet attached to her own life. That's why her apartment is so sparsely furnished and why her **cat** doesn't have a name. Going on, Holly says she sometimes

gets “the mean reds,” which is different than having the blues. The mean reds, she says, is a kind of “angst,” and the only way she knows how to deal with it is by taking a cab to **Tiffany’s** jewelry store and gazing at its beauty. This makes her feel calm, she says, because it feels like nothing bad could ever happen at Tiffany’s. Holly claims that if she could find a place in real life that made her feel like this, she would settle down immediately.

Interrupting, Rusty approaches and says he’s hungry, complaining that Holly doesn’t love him enough to feed him. They argue for a moment, but it’s clear that Rusty enjoys the attention. When Rusty turns away, Holly heavily insinuates that Rusty is gay and that she would only marry him for his money. Around this time, a tall woman named Mag Wildwood enters and takes command of the party, though Holly spreads a rumor that Mag has a venereal disease when the woman is in the bathroom. When Mag returns, none of the men want to talk to her anymore, so she gets extremely drunk. The narrator is then left to care for her when Holly, Rusty, and everyone else decide to leave—though he simply lets Mag fall asleep on the floor before going back to his own apartment.

The narrator becomes increasingly interested in what happens in Holly’s apartment. Mag moves in, and she intends to marry a Brazilian politician named José starts coming to see her. Mag intends to marry him. At one point, the narrator learns that a small literary magazine has accepted one of his stories, and he rushes to show the letter to Holly, who insists that they go to lunch to celebrate. They spend the afternoon walking around together. The narrator shows Holly a large birdcage in a shop window that he has been admiring for quite some time. She admits it’s beautiful, but hates the idea of restricting a bird’s freedom. That Christmas, Holly gives the narrator the birdcage.

One day, Holly tells the narrator that she gave his story to O.J., who liked it but thinks he’s wasting his time writing about things nobody cares about. Holly says she agrees, which creates a nasty falling out between her and the narrator. Over the next few days, the narrator keeps his distance, but he soon notices a strange man lingering outside Holly’s apartment. One day, the man follows him to a café, and when the narrator finally confronts him, he learns that the suspicious man is Doc Golightly—Holly’s much older husband. Sitting at a diner counter, Doc Golightly explains that Holly—whose real name is Lulamae—wandered onto his property in Texas when she was still a girl, having run away from nasty foster parents with her brother Fred. Doc caught both Holly and Fred stealing from his farm, so he took them in. When Holly turned 14, he married her, and she eventually ran away despite seeming happy.

Doc Golightly convinces the narrator to warn Holly that he’s downstairs. The narrator doesn’t manage to specify who’s there to see her, so Holly bounds downstairs thinking it’s Fred. She pauses when she sees Doc but then fondly embraces him. The next morning, Holly and the narrator go to Joe Bell’s and drink martinis while Holly explains that she spent the night with Doc,

even accompanying him to the train station but refusing to go back with him. Several days later, the narrator is on the train when he notices a newspaper article indicating that Rusty Trawler has gotten married. He feels jealous, suddenly realizing that he loves Holly. But he loves her, he notes, in the same way that he loved his mother’s cook or his childhood mailman. Rushing home, he finds José in Holly’s apartment and learns that Rusty married Mag Wildwood, not Holly.

Holly, for her part, has trashed her apartment and is in a frenzy, which a doctor quells by administering a sedative. As Holly sleeps, José tells the narrator that Holly isn’t upset about Rusty, but because she received a telegram from Doc saying that Fred was killed in the war. After this point, Holly avoids talking about Fred and instead talks to the narrator about how happy she is with José and about how she’s going to marry him and move to Brazil. She also says she’s pregnant. These comments throw the narrator into a funk. Then, on the narrator’s birthday, Holly takes him horseback riding in Central Park and tells him she’s moving in a week. This upsets the narrator, but Holly hardly notices. As they ride their horses, a group of teenagers jump out and one of them injures the narrator’s horse, sending it careening away at top speed while he holds on for his life. Blocks away, Holly finally catches up to him and gets his horse to slow down.

That evening, Holly is arrested because of her associations with Sally Tomato, who used her to run a drug ring from inside prison. O.J. who posts her bail. When the narrator goes to get Holly some clothes, he finds a man in Holly’s apartment. The man gives the narrator a letter from José, in which he explains that he can’t be with Holly because it would ruin his political career. The narrator delivers this letter to Holly, and she tells him she lost her baby while riding after him that day in the park. She then says she plans to go to Brazil when they let her out; not to chase José, but to avoid a prison sentence. The narrator hates this idea, but he brings her suitcase and cat to Joe Bell’s bar as instructed. There, Joe calls a limo to take Holly to the airport. On the way, Holly tells the driver to stop in Harlem, where she lets out the cat. After doing this, though, she screams at the driver to stop and frantically tries in vain to find the cat. The narrator promises to keep looking for the cat after she’s gone, so Holly leaves.

The narrator receives only one telegram from Holly saying that she’s living in Buenos Aires and will send him a permanent address when she has one, though she never does. This disappoints the narrator because he wants to tell her that he found her cat. He now hopes that Holly, like the cat, has found somewhere she belongs.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Narrator – The unnamed narrator is a passive, reserved man who lives in New York City. He develops a close relationship with his neighbor, Holly Golightly, a woman he takes an interest in because she leads a lavish, unconventional life as part of New York’s “café society” of socialites. When the narrator moves into Holly’s building, Holly starts ringing his bell late at night because she lost her key. This piques the narrator’s interest, so he starts keeping tabs on Holly, even reading her mail when he finds it outside her door. Soon enough, the narrator and Holly become friends after she climbs through his window one night to avoid a drunk man in her apartment. For the rest of the night, they have long conversations, and Holly decides to call the narrator “Fred” because he looks like her brother. She also promises to help him with his writing, though she hurts his feelings by critiquing a story he reads aloud. Nonetheless, the two grow close, and though the narrator’s interest in Holly might seem romantic, their relationship lacks sexual attraction. Shortly after they have a falling out because Holly once again insults his writing, the narrator discovers that Holly has been hiding her past. He knows this because a man named Doc Golightly tells him that Holly’s real name is Lulamae and that he—Doc—married her when she was 14. Holly ran away from Doc, and now he’s come to win her back, though his plan fails when Holly convinces him to return to Texas without her. Still, this episode causes Holly and the narrator to forget their animosity, and the narrator once again gravitates toward her, eventually helping her secure bail money when she’s arrested for associating with Sally Tomato, a mobster. Though sad to see Holly go, the narrator helps her flee the country to avoid a prison sentence, promising to search for her **cat**—which Holly regrettably set free—after she’s gone. The narrator later finds the cat living with another family, but he’s unable to tell Holly this because he doesn’t know where to reach her.

Holly Golightly (Lulamae) – Holly Golightly is a beautiful 19-year-old who lives in the same building as the narrator. A striking and self-sufficient young woman, Holly sustains herself by dating rich men, though the particulars of this arrangement (that is, what she does to elicit money from them) remain unspecified. One night, she climbs up the fire escape and through the narrator’s window because she’s brought home a drunk man whom she wants to avoid. For the rest of the night, Holly talks to the narrator, insisting that she can help him with his writing career. Holly leads an untethered life and associates with all kinds of people, including a mobster named Sally Tomato, whom she visits in prison once a week. She receives coded messages from Sally, which she relays to his supposed lawyer, Mr. O’Shaughnessy, in exchange for money. Later, the narrator learns that a Texan man named Doc Golightly took Holly and her brother, Fred, in years ago after catching them stealing. They had just run away from cruel foster parents, so Doc gave them a home and then married Holly when she was 14, though she ran away several years later and changed her name (which used to be Lulamae). The only thing Holly regrets

about this is that she had to leave behind Fred, the person she cares about the most. Accordingly, she’s distraught when she learns that Fred has died in World War II, and even José—Holly’s lover—can’t calm her down. In the weeks after receiving this news, she focuses on the fact that she’s going to marry José and move with him to Brazil, and she also learns that she’s pregnant. However, she’s suddenly arrested for helping Sally Tomato run a drug ring, and she discovers in jail that she has lost the baby. The narrator also informs her that José has left Holly because he fears associating with her will hurt his political career. Thankfully, O.J. Berman posts Holly’s bail, so she decides to leave the U.S., knowing she’ll never be able to come back. With this in mind, Holly continues her restless life of wandering, constantly searching for happiness and freedom.

Joe Bell – Joe Bell is a bartender who falls in love with Holly Golightly. An irritable man with a sour stomach, he serves the narrator and Holly whenever they come into his bar. Years after Holly flees the U.S. to avoid a prison sentence, Joe contacts the narrator and tells him to come to the bar. When he arrives, Joe shows him a picture taken by I. Y. Yunioshi, one of the other tenants in Holly’s building. The photo is of a woodcarving that looks exactly like Holly, and Joe relates the story of the picture to the narrator, saying that Yunioshi was traveling in Africa when he saw this carving and asked the sculptor about it. The sculptor told him that a woman came to the village with two fevered men and asked to stay there until the men recovered. For several weeks, then, the woman stayed with the sculptor, developing a romantic relationship with him, which is why he made the carving of her. Joe Bell, for his part, is hesitant to believe that Holly would actually sleep with the sculptor, though both he and the narrator agree that the story could be true. Joe then reveals that he’s in love with Holly and is always looking for her in the streets, hopeful that she’ll return. He misses her dearly, though he helped her flee the country by calling a limo to the airport when she left—something he didn’t want to do, though he couldn’t resist helping her.

Mag Wildwood – Mag Wildwood is a tall, striking woman who works as a model. After attending one of Holly’s parties (at which Holly tells all the men that Mag has a venereal disease, so they stop flirting with her), Mag gets outrageously drunk and never goes home. In fact, she starts living with Holly, and the narrator eavesdrops on them as they speak to one another on the fire escape, listening as Mag speaks with a stutter about her Brazilian boyfriend, José, a Brazilian politician whom she plans to marry. However, this never happens, perhaps because Mag suspects that Holly and José are in love after they all go on a vacation with Rusty Trawler. On this vacation, Holly and José spend quite a bit of time together. This is possibly why Mag later marries Rusty, and though Holly insisted there was nothing going on between her and José, she immediately falls into a relationship with him. When the narrator ends up calling

everyone Holly knows to ask them to bail her out in the aftermath of her arrest, Mag tells him that she and Rusty never want to hear about Holly again.

Rusty Trawler – Rusty Trawler is an outgoing man whose flushed demeanor makes him seem like a child with a grown man's body. Rusty's wealthy parents died when he was very young, making news because his father was killed by an anarchist (his mother died shortly thereafter of shock). Public attention centered on Rusty again when he later accused his godfather of "sodomy" (it's unclear if this means his godfather had sexual relations with *him* or with someone else), and then he made news once again when he went through the first of his three divorces. When the narrator meets him, Rusty is a Nazi-sympathizer who has been seeing Holly, and everyone thinks they'll most likely get married. Holly, for her part, admits that she would only do so because Rusty is rich, especially because the marriage wouldn't be real, anyway, since Rusty is gay. Despite what everyone thinks, though, Rusty ends up marrying Mag Wildwood. This leaves Holly free to marry José, though this never happens, either.

José Ybarra-Jaegar – José is a Brazilian politician who originally shows up at Holly's apartment because he's dating Mag Wildwood. A man dedicated to his profession, José frequently travels in and out of New York City, often returning to Brazil or making trips to Washington, D.C. When the narrator learns that Rusty Trawler is about to get married to yet another woman, he rushes over to Holly's apartment, assuming that she's Rusty's bride-to-be. However, José greets him when he arrives and explains that Rusty is marrying Mag Wildwood, not Holly. Apparently, Holly and José are happy about this, since it leaves them free to continue their relationship, which was previously unfolding in secret. In the ensuing weeks, José and Holly make plans to get married and move to Brazil. Holly also becomes pregnant, though she loses the baby after a rough day of riding horses in the park with the narrator. Worse, José abandons Holly after she's arrested, writing a letter explaining that he can't jeopardize his political career by continuing their relationship.

Doc Golightly – Doc Golightly is a veterinarian from Texas. He is also Holly's husband, though nobody knows about this except for the narrator, since Doc Golightly tells him what happened when he comes to New York after finally learning where Holly has been living. Sitting at a nearby diner, Doc tells the narrator that Holly's real name is Lulamae and that he first met Holly when he caught her and her brother, Fred, stealing from his farm because they'd run away from their cruel foster parents. Pitying them, Doc took them in and cared for them, letting them live with him and his own children. A widower, Doc married Holly when she turned 14. Though he admits that most people don't know what they want at that age, he insists that Holly—or Lulamae, to him—was already a sophisticated young woman. Doc explains that Holly lived a good life as his wife,

never having to do anything but relax because Doc cared for her so well. Nevertheless, she ran away once she got a bit older, leaving behind Doc, his children, and even Fred. After telling the narrator this story, Doc implores him to let Holly know that he's come to see her, not wanting to scare her off. When the narrator tries to do this, though, Holly bounds downstairs before waiting to hear who's there, and she's shocked to see Doc, though she quickly recovers and embraces him with genuine warmth. They then spend the rest of the evening and night together, and though Holly appreciates Doc, she convinces him that she can't possibly go back to Texas with him. Later, Doc is the one to send Holly the telegram informing her that Fred died in World War II.

O.J. Berman – O.J. Berman is a talent agent who meets Holly when she's living in Los Angeles. Right away, he tries to help her become a movie star, teaching her how to drop her accent, though he doesn't even know what the accent actually is or, for that matter, where Holly used to live. In fact, O.J. tells the narrator at a party that he'll probably *never* know where Holly's from, since she's such a "phony." He feels this way about Holly because she moved to New York without telling him, even though he had just gotten her an audition to be in a major movie. A man always looking for new ways to make money, O.J. is mildly interested in the narrator's writing when Holly shows it to him, though he thinks the narrator should write about less trivial matters—an opinion that Holly shares and that, incidentally, creates a temporary rift between her and the narrator. And though O.J. thinks Holly is something of a fraud, he doesn't hesitate to post her bail when she's arrested, insisting that he doesn't owe her anything, though he notes that he wants to help her.

I. Y. Yunioshi – I. Y. Yunioshi is a photographer who lives in the narrator and Holly's building. Mr. Yunioshi gets quite upset when Holly (who lost her key) buzzes his apartment late at night and asks to be let in, so she starts doing this to the narrator instead. Years later, Yunioshi is traveling in Africa when he sees a wooden sculpture that looks exactly like Holly. He then learns from the woodcarver that a woman and two sick men appeared in town and that the woman struck up a romantic relationship with the carver while the men recovered. During this time, the artist made the carving of her. Yunioshi takes a picture of the sculpture and shows it to Joe Bell, who agrees that it must be of Holly. Joe Bell then tells this whole story to the narrator, who also thinks the carving looks like Holly. This, in turn, suggests that Holly has made her way to Africa after fleeing the United States.

Fred – Fred, who never actually appears in the novel, is Holly Golightly's brother. By leaving Doc Golightly's house to live her own life, Holly was forced to leave Fred behind—something that caused her great pain, since she cared for him so much. When Holly first meets the narrator, she says that he looks somewhat like her brother, so she decides to call him Fred.

Later, Holly receives a telegram from Doc telling her that Fred died in World War II, and this news devastates her.

Sally Tomato – Sally Tomato is a mob boss serving time in Sing Sing prison. When the narrator first meets Holly, she tells him that she visits Sally every Thursday. When the narrator asks why, Holly explains that Sally’s “lawyer,” Mr. O’Shaughnessy, asked her to do this for money, saying that Sally saw her once and would love it if she visited him to keep him company while he serves time. Holly agrees to do this, understanding how terrible it would be to be locked away. She also agrees to pass coded messages back and forth between Sally and O’Shaughnessy, never inquiring what, exactly, they mean. Doing this ultimately implicates her in the drug ring that Sally has been running from prison, which is why she eventually gets arrested along with O’Shaughnessy, who isn’t really a lawyer.

Oliver O’Shaughnessy – Mr. O’Shaughnessy is a defrocked priest who has a long criminal history and who helps the mobster Sally Tomato run a drug ring from prison. He does this by posing as Sally’s lawyer and convincing Holly to visit the old mobster once a week. Paying her to do this, he has Holly convey coded messages to and from Sally—an act that implicates her in the crime and leads to her eventual arrest.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Madame Sapphia Spanella – Madame Sapphia Spanella is an old woman who lives in the narrator and Holly’s building. Incensed that Holly comes and goes at all hours of the night and entertains so many men, Madame Spanella frequently threatens to call the police and often accuses Holly of being a “whore.”



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.



FEMALE INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM

A novella about a young woman fending for herself in New York City in the 1940s, Truman Capote’s *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* spotlights a certain kind of female independence that was rather uncommon in the mid-20th century. In particular, 20-year-old Holly Golightly emanates a sense of untethered freedom that not many women enjoyed at the time, allowing herself to move through the world on her own terms despite the many people trying to encroach upon her autonomy. For that matter, almost every character in the novella tries in some way to curtail Holly’s freedom. For

instance, Holly’s neighbor Madame Sapphia Spanella frequently threatens to call the police because she’s uncomfortable with the bohemian, modern lifestyle that Holly has introduced to the building. Furthermore, the men who go out with Holly and pay her to accompany them in public try to force themselves into her life by accompanying her home and attempting to weasel their way into her apartment. However, Holly is quite adept at sidestepping any effort to inhibit her autonomy. In turn, Capote popularizes the archetype of the liberated woman in modern American literature. *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* illustrates what it might look like for a woman to live on her own terms instead of acquiescing to the gender dynamics of the 20th century, which generally promoted female passivity and conformity to patriarchal expectations.

Holly lives her life according to what she wants, paying little attention to what other people expect of her. This is especially evident in the way she ignores Madame Sapphia Spanella’s repeated complaints about her late-night parties and unconventional hours. In fact, Madame Spanella is a perfect embodiment of society’s intolerance of young women who don’t adhere to rigid conceptions of decency. At one point, for instance, Madame Spanella asks the other tenants in the building to sign a petition to evict Holly on the grounds that the young woman is “morally objectionable.” Of course, Holly has merely hosted parties and invited men into her apartment, but Madame Spanella sees this behavior as repugnant and reprehensible, as if young women are only allowed to socialize in certain ways and in certain contexts. Even within the confines of her own home, then, Holly faces criticism and disapproval about the way she lives—an indication of just how pervasive such ideals were and how difficult it was for an independent young woman living in the 1940s to avoid them.

Unfortunately for Holly, even the people she socializes with sometimes subject her to expectations that ultimately encroach upon her independence. As a young woman who financially sustains herself by spending time with wealthy men who are primarily interested in her looks, Holly frequently finds herself having to deflect their heavy-handed advances. For example, men sometimes walk her home and then try to get into her apartment, thinking she’ll have sex with them just because they took her to dinner. This is an assumption based on the patriarchal and overbearing belief that men are entitled to enter a woman’s private life—an indication that the society in which Holly exists expects young women like her to defer to men’s wishes. Because of this, it’s quite admirable when Holly turns away her lustful suitors, successfully benefitting from her relationships with them without ever sacrificing her independence.

Holly is unapologetically her own person, and this is perhaps why she develops such a close friendship with the unnamed narrator, who is quite passive and whom she calls Fred, after her own brother. Even this small detail says something about

their relationship: Holly has so much control over their connection that she chooses what to call her new friend, effectively confirming that she's free to do whatever she wants. Unfortunately, though, she doesn't have this level of control over other areas of her life—something that becomes evident when she's eventually arrested as a result of her involvement with a mobster named Sally Tomato. Throughout the novella, Holly visits Sally in prison, passing along coded messages between him and a man on the outside named Oliver O'Shaughnessy. She does this because O'Shaughnessy approached her and claimed that Sally once saw her and took a liking to her. Now, O'Shaughnessy tells her, Sally wants company while he serves time in prison, and though Holly senses that the mobster has an ulterior motive, she decides to go along with the plan simply because she likes visiting Sally. This willingness to break the law aligns with Holly's overall lack of interest in anything that might curtail her ability to choose what she does with her life. In the end, she gets arrested and then flees to Brazil, demonstrating that she'll do anything to protect her autonomy.

At the same time, though, running from the law considerably narrows the scope of Holly's freedom, forcing her to live in hiding for the rest of her life. This, in turn, represents the ways in which society ostracizes people who reject conformity. A woman who has only ever wanted to live according to her own wishes, Holly now finds herself unable to embrace the kind of freedom she's always sought. And though it's true that she broke the law and presumably deserves to face the consequences, Capote uses her exile to represent the unfortunate fact that the world is unwilling to grant her the kind of freedom she has chased for her entire life. After all, Holly must become an outlaw and fugitive in order to continue her life as an independent, untethered woman. And she will, it seems, search for this freedom for the rest of her days.



WEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND BELONGING

Because *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is about a young woman who sustains herself by consorting with New York City's wealthy elite, Capote scrutinizes

the relationship between wealth, social status, and overall happiness. More specifically, it becomes clear that Holly worships the idea of wealth and prestige, as evidenced by the fact that she goes to **Tiffany's**—a jewelry store famous for its diamonds—when she's feeling down, finding that the store gives her a sense of tranquility. What's more, Holly claims that looking inside Tiffany's makes her feel as if nothing bad will happen, a sentiment that underscores the transformative effect that the mere *idea* of wealth has on her entire disposition. This makes sense, considering that she originally came to New York after experiencing genuine poverty. What's more, Holly ran away from Doc Golightly, who took her in when she was orphaned and then married her when she was only 14.

Given her personal history, then, it's easy to see that a lack of wealth has put her in precarious situations that have undoubtedly limited her ability to establish a happy life. In this way, Capote suggests that Holly's preoccupation with wealth is tied to her desire to belong to something, and invites readers to empathize with those who value money and material possessions rather than to judge them for having what might otherwise seem like superficial values.

It's evident that Holly wants to be revered by New York City's elite, given that she frequently entertains rich men, commits herself wholeheartedly to perfecting her mannerisms, and cultivates an aloof persona that draws people to her. However, neither Holly's popularity nor her status as a "girl-about-New York"—as a newspaper article refers to her at one point—appear to have any lasting influence on whether or not she's happy. This becomes evident when Holly tells the narrator that very few things in her life help her banish what she calls "the mean reds," a term she uses to talk about a restless feeling of discontent and "angst." She tells the narrator that alcohol doesn't make her feel better, nor does marijuana or, for that matter, aspirin. The only thing that *does* help, she says, is going to Tiffany's. "It calms me down right away," she says, "the quietness and the proud look of it." It's worth noting that Holly takes comfort in the "proud look" of the expensive jewelry store, as if the elevated sense of status has an inherently soothing quality to it. For Holly, wealth and opulence represent the contentment and comfortability that her life still lacks.

What's most tragic about Holly's preoccupation with Tiffany's is that she feels as if her actual life is out of touch with what the store represents. To that end, she tells the narrator that the reason she hasn't bothered to properly furnish her apartment is because she doesn't feel as if her current life contains the happiness she's looking for, so she doesn't want to settle down. She says she would finally do this if she could find "a real-life place" that made her feel like she feels when she's at Tiffany's. This suggests that Holly's attraction to Tiffany's is directly linked to her unhappiness, though she never quite admits that she's dissatisfied with her life. All the same, it's obvious that her trips to Tiffany's are attempts to feel something that she thinks is sorely missing from her actual existence. Interestingly enough, though, the wealth and opulence that Tiffany's symbolizes actually *are* in sync with the life Holly already leads, since she has successfully become a popular and respected "girl-about-New York" who is an integral part of the city's high society. Accordingly, readers begin to sense that Holly yearns for something deeper than the supposed happiness that comes along with material wealth.

Indeed, what Tiffany's represents to Holly isn't just status and wealth, but a sense of belonging. Although she socializes with the city's elite, she herself doesn't come from a wealthy background. If Holly could be a customer at Tiffany's in her own right, it seems, she might feel like she actually belongs in her

life. Instead, she works as something of an unofficial prostitute, going out with wealthy men and sometimes engaging sexually with them in exchange for their financial support. This is the only way that Holly has managed to work her way into this echelon of society—a fact that makes her feel as if she doesn't belong amongst even her closest acquaintances. Holly even admits at one point that she doesn't have any true friends, a sign that her status and popularity do little to make her feel at home in her new context. This feeling of estrangement from her current circumstances is why she covets wealth, seeing it as a way to move on from her embattled past and finally settle into a life that otherwise feels inauthentic and foreign. By spotlighting these emotional dynamics, then, Capote suggests that Holly's attraction to affluence and prestige has more to do with her search for happiness and belonging than with a sense of shallow materialism or vanity.



COMPANIONSHIP, LOVE, AND SEXUALITY

In many ways, Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is a story about the human desire for companionship and love. Although Holly Golightly is an independent young woman who makes her own way in the world and refuses to let others interfere with her individuality, she also appreciates the value of human connection. This is made obvious by the fact that she actively seeks out the unnamed narrator, endearing herself to him and establishing a kinship with him—a kinship so strong that she calls him by her beloved brother's name, Fred. What's most interesting about their relationship is that it is completely platonic while also bearing certain romantic qualities, though most readers interpret the narrator as a stand-in for Capote himself, implying that he's gay, since Capote was gay himself. In keeping with this, the narrator never makes any sexual advances or tries to turn his and Holly's bond into a romantic one, though he *does* invest himself in her life in a similar way that a lover might. Holly, for her part, seems to delight in the fact that she has found a companion willing to care for her without any ulterior motives, and she devotes herself to the narrator by insisting upon helping him grow as a writer. What emerges, then, is a relational bond predicated on the simple desire to be cared for and supported by another person. By putting this dynamic on display, Capote shows readers that platonic love can be just as deep and emotionally resonant as romantic love.

At first, it is somewhat difficult to gauge the nature of Holly and the narrator's relationship. This is largely because, despite the fact that he's the one telling the story, readers know very little about the narrator. Instead of focusing on himself, he spends his time thinking about Holly, making it clear that he's quite drawn to her. Of course, this might lead readers to think that the narrator is in love with Holly, and though this is undoubtedly the case in a certain sense, it comes to seem increasingly

unlikely that his feelings for her are romantic. After all, the relationship they develop is one of companionship, ease, and emotional support, not one of romantic attraction. Several times throughout the novella, the narrator sees Holly in various states of undress, and neither of them make a big deal out of these moments—most likely because they're both aware that the narrator isn't sexually attracted to women. If he were, it's probable that he would want to turn his and Holly's relationship into a romantic affair. Instead of doing this, though, he takes pleasure in simply passing the time with her, ultimately indicating that what he wants more than anything is to enjoy her company.

Even if Holly and the narrator aren't in a romantic relationship, though, their connection is emotionally rich. This is especially apparent when the narrator momentarily thinks Holly has finally gotten engaged to Rusty Trawler, a rich gay man with whom she spends quite a bit of time. While riding the subway one day, the narrator sees a newspaper article announcing that Rusty is now engaged, but he can't see the rest of the sentence. He therefore assumes that Holly is the woman Rusty is about to marry, and he suddenly feels an overwhelming sense of jealousy—a feeling that confounds him. Reflecting upon his intense reaction, he wonders if his "outrage" has to do with the fact that he's in love with Holly. "For I was in love with her," he admits. However, he goes on to say that this brand of love is the same affection he used to feel for his mother's cook and the mailman who used to let him follow him around as a child. When he makes this clarification, readers see that not all kinds of love are strictly romantic. Rather, the narrator has a strong affinity for Holly, and this affinity—this kind of love—is just as capable of inciting jealousy as true romantic feelings.

In a certain sense, Holly and the narrator's close platonic relationship provides Holly with a refuge from a life that is otherwise overrun by male lust. Because she sustains herself by dating wealthy men, there are many hopeful suitors who are eager to become romantic with her, but she has no interest in this. Unfortunately for her, though, when she finally does fall in love with a Brazilian politician named José, she's eventually forced to face the painful fact that he's unwilling to stand by her when she runs into trouble with the law. In other words, José doesn't care enough about Holly to help her out of trouble. The narrator, on the other hand, helps Holly flee the United States even though seeing her leave is the last thing he wants. This illustrates how strong their connection is, since the narrator not only acts against his own wishes in order to help her, but also puts himself in danger by supporting a fugitive. In doing so, he shows Holly that his love for her is unequivocal and uncompromising, regardless of whether or not it is of a romantic nature. Consequently, Capote highlights the beauty of platonic love, suggesting that nonromantic relationships built upon mutual support and devotion are often even more enduring, meaningful, and dependable than romantic

connections.



PRIVACY AND OBSESSION

In *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Truman Capote explores the boundaries between public and private life. As a fashionable and popular young woman who attracts both positive and negative attention in New York City's "café society," Holly Golightly has a hard time maintaining any sense of privacy. This is mostly because the people who are drawn to her—and, indeed, there are many—tend to become rather obsessed with her. In fact, even the unnamed narrator becomes fixated on Holly, secretly keeping track of her everyday life before they become friends. Once they grow close, he maintains this close level of attention, constantly hoping to learn more about her life. It is perhaps because Holly is so used to this kind of nosy fascination that she both flaunts and hides details about her life. On the one hand, she freely volunteers information about herself on a regular basis. On the other hand, though, she only does this when it suits her, and is actually quite secretive about other aspects of her life. In this way, Holly pretends that her life is an open book so she can maintain a shred of privacy, throwing people off by making them think she's told them everything there is to know about herself. By scrutinizing this tactic, then, Capote suggests that even people who are seemingly quite forthcoming are actually capable of leading very private, guarded lives.

The narrator's interest in Holly's life comes to the forefront of the novella early on, when he acknowledges his fascination in her daily patterns. He notes that Holly is on the whole unaware of him as a person, but this doesn't stop him from becoming an "authority" on her life by keeping tabs on her comings and goings. To do this, the narrator reads portions of Holly's letters, which she rips up and leaves in the hall. He also listens to her when she sits on her fire escape and plays the guitar, and he notes when she comes home late or has loud parties downstairs. Even after they become friends, the narrator's desire to know more about Holly continues. This is made evident by the fact that the narrator identifies a tick she has of rubbing her nose when she's been asked a question she doesn't want to answer. That the narrator is capable of recognizing this is proof in and of itself that he makes a point of trying time and again to gain a certain amount of access into Holly's life that she's unwilling to grant him. After hearing Holly crying in her sleep and talking about her brother, Fred, for example, the narrator asks her what was wrong. "Oh, for God's sake," Holly says, "I *hate* snoops." By saying this, she characterizes herself as a fairly private person, showing the narrator—and, in turn, readers—that she wants to keep certain things to herself.

However, Holly also volunteers quite a bit of information about herself. For instance, when she first introduces herself to the narrator by climbing through his window one night, she goes on at length about her love life, her incriminating association with

an imprisoned mobster, and her brother Fred's personality. As she allows the narrator these insights into her life, he recognizes that these dizzying details help her keep people from asking about things she doesn't want to tell them. "Like many people with a bold fondness for volunteering intimate information," he notes, "anything that suggested a direct question, a pinning-down, put her on guard." This is a perfect encapsulation of the tension between Holly's forthcoming nature and her private, secretive side. Her openness is actually a defense mechanism, a bait-and-switch tactic that she uses to keep people from learning too much about her personal life and, more specifically, her past.

Holly has good reason to keep people from learning too much about her. For one thing, she exists in a social world in which a person's reputation is extremely important. After all, her public image is what determines if she'll be able to financially support herself, since her income is based solely on whether or not wealthy men want to pay her to go out with them. In this sense, Holly benefits from the fact that the people in her social circles are obsessed with her, since this ensures that she'll remain coveted and highly sought-after. But her secrecy isn't simply an attempt to make herself look mysterious. Rather, she tries to maintain her privacy because she doesn't want people to know that she ran away from Doc Golightly, who married her when she was only 14. Of course, it's not that she's ashamed of this fact, but that people might judge her for living the life of a single woman when she's technically married (though this would be highly unfair, considering that Doc Golightly obviously transgressed by marrying her when she was so young). Regardless, though, Holly knows that her ability to lead the life she wants rests upon whether or not people know about her past. Accordingly, she keeps such details hidden by making up for her secrecy with lesser confessions, posing as an exceedingly public person when, in reality, she is quite private. She is, therefore, an example of somebody who embraces public life in order to preserve her own privacy, manipulating other people's obsession with her so that she doesn't have to divulge information she'd rather keep secret. And in doing so, Holly demonstrates that even the most ostensibly extroverted people are actually capable of great interiority and guardedness.



SYMBOLS

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



TIFFANY'S

Holly Golightly's obsession with Tiffany's jewelry store is a manifestation of her desire to secure a sense of belonging and happiness in her life. Whenever she's

particularly down, she tells the narrator, she goes to Tiffany's. She does this because simply being in the store soothes her. The beauty of the jewelry, the smell of the shop, the attitude of the employees—everything about it makes Holly feel as if nothing bad is going to happen to her. If she could find a way to feel like this in “real life,” she says, she would finally settle down and invest herself in her current circumstances. For this reason, Tiffany's becomes a representation of everything in life that Holly wants, ultimately signifying the vast difference between her actual reality and the kind of existence she wishes she could have.



THE BIRDCAGE

The birdcage that Holly gives the narrator is an embodiment of the kind of existence Holly fears most—namely, one in which she can't exercise her personal freedom. When she gives the cage to him for Christmas, she makes him promise never to put a living thing inside of it, clearly feeling that the cage represents confinement and restriction. Interestingly enough, the narrator doesn't see the cage in these terms, instead thinking of it as a beautiful object. It is, after all, a very large and ornamented birdcage. In this way, the birdcage stands for one of the fundamental differences between Holly and the narrator, which is that Holly's fear of losing her freedom renders her unable to see—like the narrator can—that some kinds of stasis and domesticity can actually be quite beautiful. In this sense, the birdcage signifies the fraught relationship Holly has with her own idea of autonomy and freedom.



THE CAT

Because Holly refuses to admit that she's emotionally connected to it, the nameless cat that she finds and takes into her home epitomizes her unwillingness to attach herself to her current life. Throughout the novella, Holly emphasizes that neither she nor the cat “belong” to each other, wanting everyone to know that she and the animal are both fiercely independent. In keeping with this mindset, she forces the cat to run away on the streets of Spanish Harlem just before she flees the country, ultimately trying to prove to herself that it will be easy to part with the most important aspects of her life in the United States. However, Holly immediately regrets this decision, realizing after driving several blocks that she and the cat truly *did* have a meaningful connection and that just because she never named the animal doesn't mean she wasn't emotionally attached to it. In turn, the cat represents the fact that people inevitably become connected to elements of their lives without even realizing it, since it's nearly impossible not to form emotional relationships while going through everyday life—no matter what kind of existence a person leads.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* published in 1993.

Breakfast at Tiffany's Quotes

☝ “And I swear, it never crossed my mind about Holly. You can love somebody without it being like that. You keep them a stranger, a stranger who's a friend.”



Two men came into the bar, and it seemed the moment to leave. Joe Bell followed me to the door. He caught my wrist again. “Do you believe it?”

“That you didn't want to touch her?”

“I mean about Africa.”

At that moment I couldn't seem to remember the story, only the image of her riding away on a horse. “Anyway, she's gone.”

Related Characters: The Narrator, Joe Bell (speaker), Holly Golightly (Lulamae)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

This interaction takes place between Joe Bell and the narrator at the beginning of the novella, when Joe Bell tells the narrator that Holly was spotted in a small African village. As Joe Bell talks about this, he reveals just how invested he is in discerning Holly's whereabouts, eventually saying that he looks for her everywhere he goes. This gives the narrator pause, and he says that he wasn't previously aware that Joe Bell was in love with Holly. Joe doesn't deny that he loves Holly, but he claims that it's a special kind of love, not necessarily one motivated by sexual attraction. According to him, a person can love someone else “without it being like that.” And though it seems somewhat unlikely that he doesn't love Holly in a romantic way (as evidenced by the narrator's skepticism that Joe Bell never wanted to “touch” Holly), this sentiment is important because it foreshadows the platonic but emotionally intense dynamic that readers will later encounter between Holly and the narrator himself.

●● But if Miss Golightly remained unconscious of my existence, except as a doorbell convenience, I became, through the summer, rather an authority on hers. I discovered, from observing the trash-basket outside her door, that her regular reading consisted of tabloids and travel folders and astrological charts; that she smoked an esoteric cigarette called Picayunes; survived on cottage cheese and melba toast; that her varicolored hair was somewhat self-induced.

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae), The Narrator

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 13



Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after the narrator moves into his new brownstone apartment, Holly (who lives in the same building) starts buzzing his apartment late at night because she lost her own key. This is the only interaction that she and narrator have at first, but it looms large in the narrator's mind because he's so intrigued by her. In fact, he even becomes something of an "authority" on Holly's life, despite the fact that he has never formally met her and doesn't actually know what she's like. Nonetheless, he sifts through her trash and keeps tabs on Holly from afar, apparently unable—or unwilling—to keep himself from invading her privacy. This emphasizes the extent to which the narrator is fixated on knowing about Holly's life, as evidenced by his intrusive surveillance and the close attention he pays to small details, like that she reads astrological charts and smokes a certain brand of cigarettes. Holly, on the other hand, is hardly aware that the narrator even exists. And though this imbalance eventually recedes when they become close friends, the narrator's rather obsessive interest in Holly never goes away, even after she flees the country and he stops hearing from her.

●● But there were moments when she played songs that made you wonder where she learned them, where indeed she came from. Harsh-tender wandering tunes with words that smacked of piney woods or prairie. One went: *Don't wanna sleep, Don't wanna die, Just wanna go a-travelin' through the pastures of the sky*; and this one seemed to gratify her the most, for often she continued it long after her hair had dried, after the sun had gone and there were lighted windows in the dusk.

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae), The

Narrator

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator recalls listening to Holly play guitar on the fire escape beneath his apartment's window. They have yet to officially meet, but the narrator has been tracking her from afar, endlessly curious about what kind of person she is. To that end, he becomes especially curious about Holly when he hears her playing a folk song that doesn't quite align with the otherwise metropolitan persona she has cultivated in New York City's "café society." What's more, the folk song she sings not only invites the narrator (and, in turn, the readers) to wonder about Holly's background and where, exactly, she's from, but also calls attention to Holly's restless spirit. When she sings, "*Just wanna go a-travelin' through the pastures of the sky*," readers sense that she covets her own autonomy and freedom, her ability to go wherever she wants (with its attention to the wide-open, unconfined nature of the sky, this line also foreshadows Holly's later suggestion that living like a liberated bird can actually be quite lonely). In this sense, then, the song places Holly's mysterious past alongside her desire for complete freedom.

●● "Oh, you get used to anything," I said, annoyed with myself, for actually I was proud of the place.

"I don't. I'll never get used to anything. Anybody that does, they might as well be dead." Her dispraising eyes surveyed the room again.

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae), The Narrator (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 16


Explanation and Analysis

This conversation takes place between Holly and the narrator shortly after Holly climbs through the narrator's window in the middle of the night. Although it's the first time they've spoken to each other, Holly doesn't make any pretense of being polite, quickly asking how the narrator could possibly live in his apartment. The narrator, for his part, has come to like his living space because it's his first

apartment in New York, but he senses that Holly thinks it's a dismal, sad place, so he suggests that people can always "get used to" things. However, Holly states that this isn't the case for her—in fact, she actively hopes she'll *never* get used to her circumstances, since she believes that people who habituate themselves to their surroundings "might as well be dead." This is a rather absurd statement, since getting "used to" one's own life is a huge part of what it means to find contentment, as long as one doesn't simply acquiesce to an unsatisfying life. And this, it seems, is exactly what Holly has in mind when she says that she'll "never get used to anything." Indeed, she will never get used to anything because nothing will ever seem quite good enough to her. She will, in other words, always be searching for a certain kind of (elusive) contentment. Therefore, she embraces the prospect of change instead of lamenting her inability to attain happiness.

☝ I [...] asked her how and why she'd left home so young. She looked at me blankly, and rubbed her nose, as though it tickled: a gesture, seeing often repeated, I came to recognize as a signal that one was trespassing. Like many people with a bold fondness for volunteering intimate information, anything that suggested a direct question, a pinning-down, put her on guard. She took a bite of apple, and said: "Tell me some thing you've written. The story part."

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae) (speaker), The Narrator

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 17



Explanation and Analysis


During Holly and the narrator's first conversation, it emerges that Holly left home at a very young age. Curious about this (and curious about Holly in general), the narrator asks why she ventured out on her own, but Holly clearly doesn't want to answer. This is rather ironic, considering that she has just barged into the narrator's bedroom, asked for food (an apple), and started to talk to him even though he was in the middle of enjoying a quiet night to himself. Furthermore, the narrator identifies Holly as someone "with a bold fondness for volunteering intimate information" about herself, though he notes that this is actually in keeping with her unwillingness to speak frankly about certain parts of her life. According to this logic, Holly presents herself as quite open and forthcoming so that

people won't ask her "direct question[s]," which she might be uncomfortable answering. Simply put, her openness is little more than a style of misdirection, and when it fails, she simply changes the subject, which is what she does in this moment by asking the narrator to talk about his writing.

☝ "If I do feel guilty, I guess it's because I let him go on dreaming when I wasn't dreaming a bit. I was just vamping for time to make a few self-improvements: I knew damn well I'd never be a movie star. It's too hard; and if you're intelligent, it's too embarrassing. My complexes aren't inferior enough: being a movie star and having a big fat ego are supposed to go hand-in-hand; actually, it's essential not to have any ego at all. I don't mean I'd mind being rich and famous. That's very much on my schedule, and someday I'll try to get around to it; but if it happens, I'd like to have my ego tagging along. I want to still be me when I wake up one fine morning and have breakfast at Tiffany's."

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae) (speaker), O.J. Berman, The Narrator

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 31


Explanation and Analysis



Holly says this to the narrator after the narrator speaks to O.J. Berman and learns that Holly abandoned O.J. after he tried to help her become a movie star. When Holly gives the narrator her side of the story, she admits that she feels guilty about leading O.J. to believe that she actually wanted to be a famous actress—which, apparently, she doesn't. To explain what she means, she says that she would like to be "rich and famous" someday, but she thinks that becoming a movie star would interfere with her ability to truly become herself. This, at least, it seems like Holly means when she says that she'd like to still be herself when she "wake[s] up one fine morning and ha[s] breakfast at Tiffany's." The actual meaning of this sentiment isn't entirely clear by this point in the novella, since Holly hasn't yet mentioned Tiffany's, which she later explains is somewhere that makes her feel content in a way that nothing else does. What she's saying, then, is that she thinks becoming a famous actress at this point in her life would fundamentally change her ability to enjoy the one thing that brings her happiness, since it would alter who she is. When she finally *does* become the

kind of person who can afford to go to Tiffany's (perhaps casually eating a breakfast pastry as she strolls amongst the jewelry), she wants to know that she is still completely herself. This, in turn, illustrates Holly's hope that contentment will naturally come into her life without her having to do anything to make that happen—a rather unrealistic (but understandable and very human) expectation.

“Rusty thinks I should smoke marijuana, and I did for a while, but it only makes me giggle. What I've found does the most good is just to get into a taxi and go to Tiffany's. It calms me down right away, the quietness and the proud look of it; nothing very bad could happen to you there, not with those kind men in their nice suits, and that lovely smell of silver and alligator wallets. If I could find a real-life place that made me feel like Tiffany's, then I'd buy some furniture and give the cat a name.”

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae) (speaker), The Narrator, Rusty Trawler

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

Holly says this to the narrator while talking to him at her impromptu party, which takes place in her sparsely furnished apartment. At this point, Holly has just told the narrator that she sometimes experiences something she calls “the mean reds,” which is her term for when she feels depressed, anxious, and unsettled. Nothing, she tells him, helps her when she feels this way—nothing, that is, except for visiting Tiffany's jewelry store, where she takes comfort in the “quietness and the proud look” of the shop. That Holly finds Tiffany's so soothing is interesting because it suggests that she covets wealth and status. And yet, her feelings about Tiffany's appear to have more to do with her own personal development than anything else. To that end, she says that she wants to find a way to feel the way she feels at Tiffany's all the time, regardless of where she is. If she could manage to do this, she says, she would furnish her apartment and settle down. Because Holly lacks this overall feeling of contentment, though, she continues to put off actually investing herself in her current circumstances, refusing to name her cat or treat her apartment like a true

home.

“Fred's that boy upstairs? I didn't realize he was a soldier. But he *does* look stupid.”

“Yearning. Not stupid. He wants awfully to be on the inside staring out: anybody with their nose pressed against a glass is liable to look stupid. Anyhow, he's a different Fred. Fred's my brother.”

Related Characters: Mag Wildwood, Holly Golightly (Lulamae) (speaker), Fred, The Narrator

Related Themes: 



Page Number: 39

Explanation and Analysis

This exchange takes place between Holly and Mag Wildwood while they're sitting on Holly's fire escape. As the narrator listens to them, he hears the things they have to say about him, and Holly perfectly captures what he wants most: to be “on the inside staring out.” This seems to be exactly why the narrator is so interested in Holly, since becoming close with her would help him feel as if he's part of her exciting life, therefore helping him feel less like a distant observer. On the whole, though, the narrator is the kind of person who watches things play out from afar. For this reason, Mag Wildwood looks down upon him, thinking that he's stupid simply because he keeps to himself and isn't as extroverted as she is. Of course, what she doesn't know is that the narrator doesn't actually keep to himself at all and takes a great deal of interest in other people, as evidenced by the fact that he listens to this entire conversation while spying on Holly and Mag from his window.

[...] Holly wanted to know about my childhood. She talked of her own, too; but it was elusive, nameless, placeless, an impressionistic recital, though the impression received was contrary to what one expected, for she gave an almost voluptuous account of swimming and summer, Christmas trees, pretty cousins and parties: in short, happy in a way that she was not, and never, certainly, the background of a child who had run away.

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae), The Narrator

Related Themes:  



Page Number: 43

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator comments on the fact that Holly refuses to let him learn about her past. No matter how close they get to each other, Holly avoids talking specifically about her upbringing, not wanting to tell the narrator what her life was really like. For this reason, her stories are “impressionistic,” as if she’s vaguely imitating what she’s heard about happy lives. This makes sense, considering that she doesn’t know what it means to be content with her life. It is perhaps because the narrator senses that she is being “elusive” that he continues to fixate on her, becoming more and more intrigued by her private life. The more she obscures, it seems, the more he wants to find out everything there is to know about her. In this way, the obsession he developed about her before they became friends continues even after they grow close.

☹️ When I married Lulamae, that was in December, 1938, she was going on fourteen. Maybe an ordinary person, being only fourteen, wouldn’t know their right mind. But you take Lulamae, she was an exceptional woman. She knew good-and-well what she was doing when she promised to be my wife and the mother of my churren.

Related Characters: Doc Golightly (speaker), Holly Golightly (Lulamae), The Narrator

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 54


Explanation and Analysis

Doc Golightly says this to the narrator after following him to a diner and telling him that he’s Holly’s husband. As he explains the details of Holly’s past, he says that he married her when she was only 14 years old. Right away, Doc becomes defensive, as if he can sense that the narrator’s judging him for marrying such a young girl. To make his case, he claims that Holly has always been an “exceptional woman,” somebody who was “in her right mind” even when she was a young adolescent. Of course, this argument is quite weak, since it doesn’t matter whether or not Holly was “in her right mind” when she married Doc. After all, most young people are capable of grasping the concept of marriage, but this doesn’t mean they’re emotionally ready

for the maturity that comes along with an adult relationship. Nonetheless, Doc married her, a fact that shows readers that Holly has been dealing with male desire for a long, long time.

☹️ “The night I proposed, I cried like a baby. She said: ‘What you want to cry for, Doc? ‘Course we’ll be married. I’ve never been married before.’ Well, I had to laugh, hug and squeeze her: *never been married before!*”

Related Characters: Doc Golightly (speaker), Holly Golightly (Lulamae), The Narrator

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 55

Explanation and Analysis



Doc says this to the narrator while telling him about his marriage to Holly when she was only 14 years old. Although he has already made the claim that Holly was mature enough to know exactly what she was doing when she agreed to marry him, what he says in this passage contradicts this notion. After all, she reveals her youthful naivety when she says, “‘Course we’ll be married. I’ve never been married before,” a statement that underscores her inexperienced approach to the entire institution of marriage. When she says this, she makes it seem as if marriage is little more than a novelty, something interesting that everyone should experience at some point. In reality, though, getting married is a mature thing to do, something that generally requires quite a bit of emotional commitment and vulnerability. This, of course, is undoubtedly a large part of why Holly eventually leaves Doc, since she realizes after maturing that she isn’t married to him for the right reasons.

“Never love a wild thing, Mr. Bell,” Holly advised him. “That was Doc’s mistake. He was always lugging home wild things. A hawk with a hurt wing. One time it was a full-grown bobcat with a broken leg. But you can’t give your heart to a wild thing: the more you do, the stronger they get. Until they’re strong enough to run into the woods. Or fly into a tree. Then a taller tree. Then the sky. That’s how you’ll end up, Mr. Bell. If you let yourself love a wild thing. You’ll end up looking at the sky.”

[...]

“Good luck: and believe me [...]: it’s better to look at the sky than live there. Such an empty place; so vague. Just a country where the thunder goes and things disappear.”

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae) (speaker), The Narrator, Doc Golightly, Joe Bell

Related Themes:  



Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

Holly says this to Joe Bell and the narrator the day after Doc Golightly returns to Texas without her, having failed to convince her to come home with him. While drinking at Joe’s bar, Holly says that Doc’s mistake was to “love a wild thing.” By saying this, she suggests that she isn’t the kind of person who can let herself be confined by someone else’s expectations. In this passage, it becomes clear that she deeply respects Doc and doesn’t hold it against him that he married her when she was so young. All the same, though, Holly prioritizes her own independence and freedom over his desire to lead a domestic life with her, and instead of feeling bad about not submitting to his wishes, she says that “you can’t give your heart to a wild thing” and expect it to stick around. To do that, she suggests, is to risk heartbreak, since people like her who value autonomy will almost always go their own way, leaving a disappointed lover staring futilely after them. This, however, isn’t to say that “wild things” are particularly happy when they’re on their own. Continuing her metaphor about birds flying away, Holly says that it’s quite lonely to live in the sky, which she notes is an “empty place.” It’s easy to see that, when applied to her own life, this metaphor implies that Holly is free and independent but also deeply lonely.

“Or, and the question is apparent, was my outrage a little the result of being in love with Holly myself? A little. For I was in love with her. Just as I’d once been in love with my mother’s elderly colored cook and a postman who let me follow him on his rounds and a whole family named McKendrick. That category of love generates jealousy, too.”

Related Characters: Mag Wildwood, Rusty Trawler, Holly Golightly (Lulamae), The Narrator

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

This passage appears shortly after the narrator catches a partial glimpse of a newspaper headline announcing that Rusty Trawler is getting married for the fourth time. Unable to see the rest of the article, the narrator assumes that Holly is the person Rusty is about to marry, though in reality Mag is his new fiancée. Immediately, the narrator is consumed by jealousy. Naturally, he wonders why, exactly, he feels this way, concluding that he must be in love with Holly. This is an interesting development, since nothing he has previously said has indicated that he has romantic feelings for her. As he continues to think about his feelings for her, though, it becomes clear that the love he feels is quite unique and has little to do with sexual attraction or romantic connection. Instead, the narrator is obsessed with Holly in the same way that he was obsessed with his mother’s cook as a child. What’s most interesting about this is that the narrator feels genuinely jealous about the idea of Holly marrying Rusty without telling him, a fact that suggests that even platonic love is quite complex and difficult to understand. Accordingly, this passage (in which the narrator interrogates his strong feelings for Holly) is significant because it helps readers engage with the idea that not all love has to be romantic and that even nonsexual connections can be nuanced and multilayered.

“Certain shades of limelight wreck a girl’s complexion. Even if a jury gave me the Purple Heart, this neighborhood holds no future: they’d still have up every rope from LaRue to Perona’s Bar and Grill— take my word [...]. And if you lived off my particular talents. Cookie, you’d understand the kind of bankruptcy I’m describing.”

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae) (speaker), Sally Tomato, The Narrator

Related Themes:**Page Number:** 81**Explanation and Analysis**

Holly says this to the narrator while trying to explain to him why she's going to flee the United States. She is about to get bailed out of jail, but she has decided to flee the country to Brazil because she knows that she might receive a real prison sentence once her case actually goes to trial. When the narrator tries to dissuade her from doing this, Holly insists that her life in New York City is all but ruined, saying she wouldn't be able to stay in the city even if the jury found her not guilty of helping Sally Tomato run a drug ring (which, of course, she *did* do). This is because her livelihood depends upon whether or not people look up to her in society. Now that she has been arrested, she has attracted too much negative attention. If she stays, she claims, restaurants like LaRue and Perona's Bar and Grill will keep her from entering. Indeed, this kind of "limelight" will also prevent rich men from wanting to take her out in public. And since this is how she sustains herself, she will no longer be able to stay afloat financially. Consequently, she has decided to go to Brazil, where her reputation is as of yet untarnished by bad publicity.

☛ Flanked by potted plants and framed by clean lace curtains, he was seated in the window of a warm-looking room: I wondered what his name was, for I was certain he had one now, certain he'd arrived somewhere he belonged. African hut or whatever, I hope Holly has, too.

Related Characters: Holly Golightly (Lulamae), The Narrator**Related Themes:****Related Symbols:****Page Number:** 87**Explanation and Analysis**

This is the final passage in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, in which the narrator explains that he kept his promise to Holly that he would continue looking for her cat after she fled the country. Each day, he goes to Spanish Harlem to try to find the cat, since that's where Holly set it free on her way to the airport (a mistake she regretted almost instantly). And though Holly never gave the cat a name because she didn't want to believe she was actually emotionally attached to it, the narrator is certain it must have one now, since he finds it sitting in a beautiful living room. It has, it seems, found the kind of home Holly couldn't bring herself to provide. Since Holly herself is a wanderer who is constantly searching for a sense of belonging, it's quite significant that her cat manages to find the domestic peace that she so desires but has seemingly resisted at every turn. Looking at the cat, the narrator hopes that Holly has found a similar sense of contentment and belonging—ultimately indicating that he worries she'll be searching for this forever.



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.

BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S

The unnamed narrator remembers his first New York City apartment, a brownstone he lived in during the early 1940s. It wasn't a particularly nice apartment, but it made him feel like he had the space he needed to become a true writer, which is what he was primarily focused on during the time. And yet, despite his trade, he never considered writing about his neighbor, a woman named Holly Golightly. In fact, he might never have written about her if it hadn't been for Joe Bell, the owner of a bar that the narrator and Holly used to frequent. Years after the narrator last saw Holly, Joe Bell calls him and tells him to come to the bar, and the narrator senses right away that Joe must have news about Holly. After all, their friendship with Holly is the only thing they've ever had in common.

Joe Bell makes the narrator a strong drink and tells him that a photographer named Mr. I. Y. Yunioshi, who used to live in Holly and the narrator's building, was recently traveling in Africa when he came upon a curious piece of art. Saying this, Joe hands a picture to the narrator. The picture shows an African man holding a woodcarving of a woman's face, and the narrator admits that it looks exactly like Holly. Joe insists it must be her, and then he tells the narrator what Yunioshi told him—namely, that the woodcarver claimed that a woman and two men came to the village of Tocol on horseback. The men were sick and needed a place to rest, so the group stayed in Tocol until they recovered. During this time, the woman took up with the artist, who made the sculpture of her.

Finishing his story, Joe Bell notes that he doesn't believe Holly would really have slept with the woodcarver, though he believes the rest of the story. This, in turn, means Holly must be in Africa. This is the first news both he and the narrator have heard of her in years, though the narrator doesn't know what to make of it. He says she's probably never even been to Africa, so Joe asks him where *he* thinks Holly is. In response, he posits that perhaps Holly is dead or in a "crazy house." Or, he says, maybe she's married and living right here in New York. Joe disagrees, maintaining that he would have seen her if she were in New York. After all, he looks for her wherever he goes, thinking only of her when he's walking the streets.

At the very outset of Breakfast at Tiffany's, Capote's respective interests in privacy, wealth, and independence emerge, as the narrator notes that his apartment—though unglamorous and cheap—gave him a sense of artistic and intellectual freedom when he first moved to New York. To that end, having a space to himself allows him to feel like a legitimate writer, somebody who will be able to focus on his craft without any interruptions. It doesn't matter to him that he doesn't have a fancy, expensive apartment. All that matters, it seems, is that he has a place to grow into himself—a place he belongs.



It's not yet clear why the narrator and Joe Bell are so interested in Holly and her whereabouts. The only thing readers can piece together at this point is that neither of them have been in touch with Holly herself, despite the fact that they're evidently so concerned about her. This, in turn, hints at the unyielding fascination in Holly's life that seemingly all of the characters in the novella adopt, demonstrating even at this early stage that people tend to obsess over the details of her private life.



As the narrator and Joe speculate about Holly's whereabouts, it becomes increasingly obvious that they are rather obsessed with her. Furthermore, it's also clear that Holly is a mysterious, elusive figure, the kind of person who attracts attention but manages to confound the people who want to know the details of her life. As a result, people don't know what to think of Holly, assuming that she must be "crazy" simply because she wants to preserve her independence. At the same time, though, it's worth noting that readers don't know what, exactly, has happened to make Holly disappear, thereby endowing her with an even greater sense of mystery that effectively puts readers in the same position as people like the narrator and Joe Bell, who are so eager to find out what has happened to her.



The narrator says he didn't know Joe Bell was in love with Holly, and this comment unsettles Joe, who focuses on putting the photograph away. The narrator gets up to leave, but Joe stops him and says he *did* love Holly but that it didn't have much to do with a physical sense of lust, though he has indeed fantasized about her in that way. The older he gets, he says, the more he thinks about sex, as if not being able to act on his urges has made it harder to ignore them. Just before the narrator leaves, Joe asks if he believes Holly was in Africa, but the narrator doesn't answer, instead simply saying that—either way—she's gone.

The narrator thinks back to when he first became aware of Holly. It's the early 1940s, and he has been living in the brownstone for a week when he notices she has an interesting card affixed to her mailbox. "*Miss Holiday Golightly, Traveling*," it reads, causing the narrator to wonder why she added the word "traveling," since she's clearly not away. He knows this because he's awoken one night by the sound of Mr. Yunioshi yelling at her. Because Holly lost her key, she buzzes his apartment whenever she comes home late and needs to be let in. For this, Yunioshi admonishes her, but she mollifies him by saying that she'll let him take scandalous pictures of her if he stops complaining, though she evades him when he asks when, exactly, this will happen.

The narrator creeps into the hall and peers downstairs to see Holly entering the building with a man, though she quickly says goodbye to him and closes her apartment door before he can get inside. Immediately, the man complains to Holly through the door, reminding her that he paid for her and her friends' dinner and that he therefore deserves to come in. However, she doesn't reply, so he angrily prepares to knock down the door, though he drops this idea and turns to leave. Just before he exits the building, Holly pokes her head out and calls after him, saying that the next time a woman asks him for some "powder-room change," he should give her more than 20 cents.

The fact that Joe Bell loves Holly and fantasizes about her in a sexual manner suggests that the obsessions men develop about her often have to do with romance and lust. This, it seems, is largely why Joe is so interested in what has happened to her. However, it's notable that the narrator himself doesn't mention any kind of romantic interest in Holly—a sign that their relationship wasn't defined by attraction or desire.



That Holly adds the word "traveling" on her card presents her as the kind of person who doesn't like to settle down. Although she is living full-time in the brownstone, she presents herself as if she's always on the move, perhaps because she doesn't feel like she has truly settled down. On another note, the fact that Holly quells Mr. Yunioshi's anger by promising to pose nude for him indicates that she knows how to use her sexuality to her own advantage, well aware that she can lord her beauty over men in order to make her own life better.



In this scene, readers see that Holly is quite capable of using her sex appeal to her own benefit. By fraternizing with this man, Holly manages to eat a free meal. More importantly, she doesn't do anything she doesn't want to do, ultimately refusing to have sex with the man regardless of what he thinks he "deserves." In turn, Holly demonstrates her power and independence without making any sacrifices. On another note, it's worth keeping in mind that the narrator watches this entire scene play out without Holly's knowledge. This is yet another indication that the people surrounding her are so drawn to her that they obsess over—and encroach upon—her private life.



Holly starts buzzing the narrator's door when she comes home late instead of Mr. Yunioshi's. Although the narrator lets her in, they have yet to actually meet. One time, he sees her in a fancy restaurant surrounded by a group of men, and though the narrator is excited to be in such an expensive restaurant (a relative of his is paying for his meal), he watches Holly let out a bored yawn, which diminishes his excitement. During this period, he sees a beautiful and lavish **birdcage** in a storefront window and fantasizes about owning it, though he knows he'll never be able to afford it because it costs \$350.

Holly remains largely unaware of the narrator, though he's intensely focused on her life. Becoming something of an "authority" on her comings and goings, he reads scraps of letters from soldiers that Holly rips up and leaves in the trash outside her apartment. He also learns that she reads tabloids and astrology columns, smokes Picayune cigarettes, has a **cat**, and likes to play the guitar on her fire escape on nice days. When she does this, he listens from above, noting that she enjoys showtunes in addition to several folksy songs that seem incongruous with her otherwise metropolitan persona.

The narrator finally has his first in-person encounter with Holly in September. While reading in bed and drinking whiskey, he senses that he's being watched. Just then, he realizes Holly is on the fire escape and knocking on his window. After spilling his whiskey, the narrator lets Holly in, and she explains that she brought home a very drunk man she wants to avoid. Normally the man quite charming, she says, but he's terrible when he's drunk, so she came upstairs to wait until he falls asleep. She also notes that the narrator looks like her brother, Fred, and decides to call him by that name. Going on, she says that she and her three siblings used to sleep in the same bed, and Fred was the only one who let her snuggle close to him for warmth. When she asks if the narrator thinks she's crazy, he says no.

Looking around, Holly asks how the narrator could possibly live in such a small, depressing apartment, and he says it's easy to get used to. In response, she says she never gets used to *anything*. In fact, she believes that anyone who gets used to something "might as well be dead." Seeing a stack of books on a desk, Holly asks what the narrator does, and he says that he writes. Hearing this, she says she thought most writers were old, though she doesn't mind this because older men can be quite appealing. When she asks if the narrator has ever sold a piece of writing, he shyly admits that he hasn't, so she tells him that she'll help him with his career.

When the narrator starts letting Holly in at night, he becomes part of her life in a small, fleeting way. Although they have yet to meet, Holly now depends upon the narrator in a certain regard, counting on the fact that he'll let her into the building. That she never questions whether or not the narrator will do this is a testament to her ability to convince people to do things for her—a skill that seemingly comes quite easily to her, considering that she doesn't even do anything to persuade the narrator to help her in this way. What's more, the narrator's interest in the birdcage shows readers that there are certain monetary limitations that keep him from living the life he'd like to have, though he otherwise seems unbothered by his lack of money.



Simply put, the narrator apparently has no problem violating Holly's privacy. This is because he has developed something of an obsession, wanting nothing more than to know about her and the way she lives her life. This is perhaps because he himself is a rather lonely man, though it might also have something to do with the fact that Holly is a very magnetic, fascinating person. In all likelihood, the narrator's fixation on her is a combination of both these things.



The beginning of Holly and the narrator's official friendship is quite strange, though it completely fits with Holly's personality and, for that matter, the narrator's passive nature. Because he's so interested in her, he hardly minds that she has just climbed through his window in the middle of the night. Instead of getting upset, he's enthralled by her vibrant spirit, clearly relishing her presence. When the narrator lets Holly choose a name for him, readers see how willing he is to give up his own agency in order to please Holly. He will, it seems, do whatever she wants.



Holly's assertion that anyone who gets used to things "might as well be dead" underscores her overall restlessness. For the same reason that she adds the word "traveling" to the card on her mailbox, she abhors the idea of becoming accustomed to a certain way of life. This suggests that Holly wants to be in a state of constant motion, preferring change over consistency.



Holly asks for a drink and then urges the narrator to read her one of his stories. He obliges, but is quite hurt when it's clear at the end of the story that she didn't find it particularly interesting. She says she likes lesbians but doesn't find stories about them interesting—a comment that surprises the narrator, who hadn't intentionally written a story about lesbian women. Nonetheless, he doesn't correct her, thinking that it would be even more embarrassing to have to explain the story to her. Moving on, Holly asks the narrator if he knows any lesbians because she wants to find a roommate. According to her, lesbians are “wonderful homemakers” and therefore make the best roommates.

Looking at the clock, Holly can't believe it's already 4:30 in the morning. She asks the narrator what day it is, and he tells her that it's Thursday—an answer that thoroughly disturbs her. When he asks why she dislikes Thursdays, she says she doesn't, except for the fact that she never remembers when they're coming. Going on, she explains that she goes every Thursday to Sing Sing prison. By this point, the narrator is too intrigued by Holly to remember that she insulted him by responding negatively to his story.

Holly says she visits a man named Sally Tomato on Thursdays. She makes the narrator promise not to repeat this story, then says that Sally is a mobster. Apparently, Sally's lawyer contacted her and offered her \$100 per week to visit Sally in prison on Thursdays, saying that Holly would be cheering him up with her company. In response, she told the lawyer that she doesn't turn “tricks.” She also admits to the narrator that she didn't think \$100 was enough. After all, she says, she can get at least that much from the rich men she goes out with, adding, “any gent with the slightest chic will give you fifty for the girl's john, and I always ask for cab fare too, that's another fifty.” Nonetheless, Holly agreed to visit Sally because the lawyer claimed that he once saw her from afar and greatly admired her.

Homosexuality plays an interesting role in Breakfast at Tiffany's. Capote never identifies any of the characters as gay, but the topic arises frequently throughout the novella, as if homosexuality is almost constantly on their minds. Of course, Capote himself was gay, and many readers see the unnamed narrator as something of a stand-in for the author. As such, it makes sense that the narrator might write a story about homosexuality, though this argument is flawed, since anybody—regardless of their sexual orientation—might write a story like the narrator's. All the same, these fleeting mentions of homosexuality are worth tracking as the novella progresses, since sexuality in general is one of the book's primary concerns, as is the interestingly unromantic but fiercely close nature of Holly and the narrator's relationship.



It's important to note that the narrator is very sensitive about his writing. In his eyes, Holly can seemingly do no wrong, considering that he has no problem with the fact that she climbed into his apartment unannounced in the middle of the night. However, Holly manages to upset the narrator by insulting his story. And yet, the narrator can't stay mad at her because he's too interested in her life to focus on his own feelings. This, in turn, demonstrates just how unable he is to resist Holly's allure.



What Holly says about not doing “tricks” (meaning that she's not a prostitute) is interesting, since she goes on to say that she makes money by going out with rich men. Of course, readers have already seen that she doesn't sleep with men in whom she has no interest, based on the fact that she turned away a disgruntled man after he walked her home. Still, Holly reveals in this moment that she makes her livelihood by dating men in exchange for money. Whether or not this sometimes includes having sex remains unclear, especially because she uses very specific, decent language when talking about her profession, ultimately implying that the men give her cash simply so she can tip the restroom attendants when she goes to the “powder room.” Either way, it seems that visiting Sally Tomato in prison for \$100 per week isn't all that different from the way she normally makes money, as this too is a form of companionship.



Continuing her story, Holly says that she poses as Sally Tomato's niece so that the guards let her visit him. In exchange for \$100, she relays coded messages from Sally to the lawyer, Mr. O'Shaughnessy. When the narrator points out that it sounds like she could get in quite a bit of trouble for doing this, she tells him not to worry about her, saying that she has taken care of herself for quite some time. She then gets into the narrator's bed for a nap as the sun comes up. Lying next to Holly, the narrator can't sleep, which is why he hears her when she starts crying in her sleeping, saying, "Where are you, Fred?" When Holly awakes, the narrator asks why she was crying, but she only gets up and says that she hates "snoops."

The following day, the narrator finds a note from Holly thanking him for letting her in. She promises not to pester him again, but he leaves her a return note saying, "Please do." For the next several days, she doesn't buzz his apartment, and he wonders what she's doing, finding that he misses her chaotic presence. The following Wednesday, he leaves her a note saying that the next day is Thursday, and she responds with a note inviting him to come for a drink that evening. When he arrives, she's nowhere to be seen. Instead, a short, portly man named O.J. Berman opens the door and tells the narrator that Holly's in the shower. O.J. also tries to discern whether or not the narrator was actually invited, saying that men often arrive unannounced at Holly's apartment.

O.J. relaxes when the narrator assures him that he lives upstairs. Having settled this, O.J. talks about Holly, saying that she's a "phony," though he adds that she's also "real" because she legitimately believes everything she says. No matter what, he says, it's impossible to convince Holly of anything. All the same, he likes her just as much as everyone else does. He tells the narrator that he's a talent agent and that he met Holly on the west coast, where he helped her get rid of her accent, which he couldn't quite place, since Holly has never told him where she's from. In fact, O.J. suspects that he'll never know her personal history. Nonetheless, he helped her drop her accent so she could become a movie star, but when he finally got her an audition for a big role, she unexpectedly abandoned him and moved to New York.

Once again, the narrator reveals his fascination with Holly's private life, this time listening to what she says when she talks in her sleep. And though Holly is quite willing to speak openly about many aspects of her life, she demonstrates in this moment that there are certain things she doesn't want people to know about—including, it seems, the traumatic memories about her past that are capable of making her cry in her sleep.



Already, the idea of Holly has fully taken hold of the narrator. Even though they've only spent one night talking to each other, he can't stop thinking about her, as if they've been close for a long, long time. At this point, though, it's unclear if this is because they have a special bond or because everyone is naturally drawn to Holly. Indeed, it seems that people flock to her, a notion that O.J. Berman confirms when he says that men are always coming to Holly's apartment uninvited.



The secrecy surrounding Holly's past aligns with the idea that she doesn't want anyone to know her personal history. This clashes with her otherwise open, unguarded persona, thereby intimating that her way of moving through the world is somewhat calculated. Indeed, she presents herself as someone willing to volunteer information about herself, and this attitude helps her keep secrets, since it makes people think they know her when, in reality, they don't. Furthermore, Holly's decision to move to New York on a whim aligns with her overall restlessness, as if she can't quite find a place that gives her a sense of belonging.



O.J. tells the narrator that Holly informed him that she left for New York because she didn't want to be an actress badly enough. A person has to really want that kind of fame to succeed, she upheld, and she simply didn't have this kind of desire. When O.J. asked what Holly wanted, she told him she didn't know but that she'd tell him when she found out. Looking around Holly's apartment now, O.J. disparages her lifestyle, marveling at the idea that she could possibly want this over a life as a movie star. Speaking to the narrator, O.J. bemoans the fact that Holly wants to live off of "tips" and marry Rusty Trawler. In response, the narrator says he doesn't know Rusty. This, O.J. says, means he must not know Holly very well.

Holly sweeps into the room, a towel wrapped around her body. She asks what rumors O.J. is spreading about her, and he admits that he was telling the narrator that she's crazy. "Fred knows that already," she says. She then makes fun of O.J. for always acting like a bigshot and flaunting the fact that he knows celebrities. Moving on, she tells him that the narrator is a writer and that he's written many fantastic stories. Walking out of the room, she asks if O.J. will make him rich, reminding the narrator as she goes that she's his agent. She also tells them to let in anyone who knocks. And sure enough, there are a great many knocks, as large numbers of men arrive one by one, each of them surprised to see other people there, as if they thought they'd been invited over for a private, intimate evening.

The narrator can't discern any similarities between the men, except that none of them are particularly young. O.J. Berman, for his part, takes advantage of the arrival of new guests to avoid talking to the narrator about his writing, while the narrator himself pretends to study the books on Holly's shelves. As he does this, he notices one man in particular who commands the most attention in the room. The man is large and youthful, as if he hasn't yet lost his baby fat, and he draws attention to himself by making martinis, putting on music, and boisterously introducing people to one another. Holly refers to him as Rusty, asking him to complete various tasks. This, the narrator learns, is Rusty Trawler.

Not only has it become clear that Holly doesn't know where she belongs, it's also evident that she doesn't quite know what she wants in life. This, however, doesn't seem to bother her, as she confidently admits that she doesn't know what she wants. This attitude confounds someone like O.J., who clearly cares first and foremost about wealth. To him, it's unfathomable that Holly would rather live a bohemian life and make her money by going out with rich men. But this is because he doesn't understand Holly or know much about her life—nor, for that matter, does the narrator, who is still slowly piecing together an image of the elusive Holly Golightly.



Holly doesn't take offense at the fact that O.J. is telling the narrator she's crazy because she's used to having people talk about her. In fact, it's likely that she's comfortable with this kind of gossip because she knows that such talk helps spread intrigue about her, ensuring that everyone in her social circles remains fascinated by her. After all, Holly clearly has many admirers, as evidenced by the many men who come to her apartment hoping to spend time alone with her.



Because the narrator is intrigued by Holly's life, he's naturally interested in the men who arrive in large numbers to attend her party. Moreover, he takes a particular interest in Rusty, since O.J. suggested earlier that Holly might marry him. At the same time, though, the narrator also studies the men in the room simply because he has nothing else to do. A shy person who keeps to himself, the narrator would rather watch others than interact with them.



As the narrator looks at Holly's books, he finds a newspaper clipping wedged into one of them. The clipping is about Rusty Trawler, which is how the narrator learns that Rusty became a millionaire orphan in 1908 when his wealthy parents died. His father was killed by an anarchist, and his mother died shortly thereafter of "shock." Since then, newspapers have kept tabs on him, like when he "caused his godfather-custodian to be arrested on charges of sodomy" and, later, underwent three scandalous divorces. He is also widely known as a Nazi sympathizer. Now, as the narrator reads these things about Rusty, Holly approaches him. The narrator asks about her visit to Sally Tomato, but she instantly changes the subject, making it clear that she doesn't want to discuss this matter any further.

Holly asks the narrator what he thinks of O.J., going on to say that she doesn't feel guilty about abandoning him, though she recognizes that she *should* feel bad. Still, she upholds that she wasn't suited to be an actress, and though she would like to become rich and famous someday, she's not yet ready to do this because she doesn't know what kind of life she wants to lead. She would, she says, like to know how to be herself whenever she's rich enough to wake up and "have breakfast at **Tiffany's**." As Holly says this, she holds her nameless **cat**, explaining that she found him walking by the river. Both she and this cat, she says, don't belong to anyone, including each other.

Holly tells the narrator that she doesn't want to truly settle down until she finds a place where she feels a sense of belonging. She then talks about how wonderful she feels whenever she's at **Tiffany's**, though she doesn't particularly care about diamonds. Still, when she gets what she calls "the mean reds"—which she defines as a kind of angsty sadness—she goes to Tiffany's because its beauty makes her feel like nothing bad could possibly happen to her. If she could manage to feel this way in real life, she says, she would finally settle down, furnish her apartment, and name her cat. Saying this, Holly adds that perhaps after World War II ends she and Fred will be able to—but she cuts herself off, instantly changing the subject.

In many ways, Holly and Rusty are similar. After all, both of them attract quite a bit of attention, as people desperately try to gain insight into their personal lives. Whereas everyone knows the details of Rusty's past, though, nobody knows about Holly's personal history. In this regard, then, they are opposites. Forced to lead a life under the public eye, Rusty doesn't hide anything from other people. Holly, on the other hand, is very secretive, as evidenced by her unwillingness to talk to the narrator in this moment about her most recent visit to Sally Tomato.



Once again, Holly confidently admits that she doesn't know what she wants in life. This time, she adds to this sentiment by saying that fame might interfere with her ability to fully come into herself and settle into her own life. This is a fairly wise thing to say—a notion that suggests that, though Holly doesn't know what she wants, she's perfectly aware of what she doesn't want. In keeping with this, she doesn't want to do anything that might make it even harder for her to gain a sense of belonging or self-assurance. Looking at this another way, though, one could argue that Holly abandoned O.J. and a movie career because she didn't want to commit to a certain lifestyle. After all, it's clear that she appreciates independence and freedom, which is why she emphasizes the fact that she and her cat don't belong to each other.



Beneath the surface of Holly's affable charm, she experiences quite a bit of sadness—so much, in fact, that she has given this discontent its own name: "the mean reds." The fact that she goes to Tiffany's jewelry store when she feels this way implies that she wants to find a sense of belonging even though she's unable to. After all, if she were able to settle down, she could finally be the kind of person who shops at Tiffany's and furnishes her apartment and names her cat—in other words, someone who is invested in and emotionally attached to her own life. Unfortunately for Holly, though, she hasn't yet found a way to always feel the way she feels at Tiffany's, so she hasn't let herself fully commit to her current circumstances. On another note, when Holly abruptly stops talking about what she and her brother will do when the war ends, she once again confirms that she wants to keep certain aspects of her life private.



Rusty approaches Holly and the narrator and complains that he's hungry, accusing Holly of not loving him enough to feed him. When Holly tells him to stop complaining, the narrator senses that Rusty loves this kind of attention. Holly then sends him to go make the narrator a drink, and as he turns to do so, he asks if she loves him, but she doesn't answer the question. When Rusty is gone, the narrator asks whether or not Holly actually *does* love Rusty, and she responds by saying that she's well aware of the fact that he's rich (implying that she would benefit from this if she married him) and insinuates that Rusty is gay and that their so-called relationship has nothing to do with love.

Suddenly, a tall model named Mag Wildwood makes a grand entrance and, in a stutter, admonishes Holly for keeping all these handsome men to herself. Holly is unhappy to see her, but Mag doesn't notice. Without hesitation she floats through the party, charming the men until she goes to the bathroom, at which point Holly loudly insinuates that Mag has a venereal disease. When Mag returns, none of the men want to talk to her anymore. Angry, Mag gets drunk and picks fights. Eventually, she drunkenly collapses, and Holly and the rest of the partygoers decide to go elsewhere. On her way out, Holly asks the narrator to put Mag in a taxi. When Holly leaves, Mag rises, starts to confront the narrator, and then falls to the floor. After checking her breathing and pulse, he gives her a pillow and leaves.

The next day, Holly chides the narrator for failing to help Mag, apparently feeling great sympathy for how badly her friend is hungover. For the rest of the weekend, Mag stays with Holly, piquing the narrator's interest—especially when a Brazilian man named José Ybarra-Jaeger accidentally comes to his door instead of Holly's. José is looking for Mag and is, apparently, her boyfriend. He is a Brazilian politician who divides his time among Brazil; Washington, D.C.; and New York.

On the same day that José first appears, he returns in the afternoon with multiple suitcases, and the narrator wonders what's going on downstairs. He later eavesdrops as Mag and Holly sit out on the fire escape with the nameless **cat**. Mag tells Holly that she's lucky because Rusty is, at the very least, American. This means very little to Holly, who says she'll leave America as soon as the war ends, adding that Fred is a soldier. This confuses Mag, who thinks that the narrator is Fred. Accordingly, she says she didn't know he was a soldier, adding that he looks rather stupid. Holly corrects her by saying that the narrator isn't stupid, but simply wants to be "on the inside staring out," which makes him seem dumb. She also clarifies that his real name isn't Fred.

Once again, homosexuality surfaces in Breakfast at Tiffany's, though only as an implication. Indeed, Holly only hints that Rusty is gay, thereby inviting readers to speculate alongside everyone else whether or not he's secretly attracted to men. This kind of speculation is important to note, since it puts readers in a certain headspace, one in which they're encouraged to interrogate the characters' sexual orientations. Since the narrator is so taken by Holly but appears to have no romantic feelings for her, the idea that certain characters might be withholding the true nature of their sexual preferences is especially significant, ultimately supporting the idea that the narrator himself is a closeted gay man.



Mag's presence irks Holly because Mag draws attention away from her. This suggests that Holly likes being in the spotlight, but there is also another—more practical—reason that she doesn't want Mag to distract the men: Holly's livelihood depends upon her ability to entice these wealthy men. If Mag interferes too much, then, Holly won't be able to sustain herself. This is why she spreads a nasty rumor about Mag, effectively neutralizing the threat that Mag poses to Holly's independence and self-sufficiency.



Even after the narrator and Holly become friends, he still finds himself feeling like an outsider, desperately trying to gain information about her life. Forever an observer, he watches from afar as Holly's life unfolds. Once again, then, readers see just how little privacy Holly has, though it remains the case that hardly anyone knows about her past.



Holly's assessment of the narrator is quite accurate, since he wants so badly to be part of her life. As it stands, though, he's an outsider forced to simply observe what goes on in the brownstone. Furthermore, it's worth noting that Holly dreams of leaving the United States. This is a sign that she feels restless in her current existence, yearning to leave everything behind for a new life.



Mag complains that José is Brazilian, saying she finds it hard to wrap her head around the idea of marrying somebody who isn't American. Suggesting it's not so bad that José isn't American, Holly asks if he bites in bed—something that she herself hates. Mag says he doesn't, though she adds that he does laugh. Holly says she likes it when men aren't so serious in bed, and then she asks more about Mag and José's sex life, but Mag doesn't answer because she says she can't remember the details. This, she says, is because she doesn't think about such things, which makes her "normal." Holly concedes that this is indeed a normal way to approach sex, but says she'd rather be "natural."

Although Holly is sometimes guarded about certain elements of her personal life, she has no problem talking about sex and intimacy. Mag, for her part, tries to shame Holly by suggesting that her open-minded approach to these matters is irregular and strange, but this doesn't bother Holly, who makes a distinction between what's "normal" and what's "natural." This point illustrates how little Holly cares about following societal rules. Indeed, she can't be bothered to police herself according to arbitrary conventions. Rather, Holly wants to live an unencumbered life, one in which she can let herself be whomever and however she wants.



Again, Mag complains, saying she doesn't want to move to Brazil. When she describes what it's like, though, Holly says that it sounds rather nice, and Mag jokingly says, "Better you than me." In a reflective tone of voice, Holly agrees, saying, "Better me than you."

Holly doesn't mind the idea of uprooting her life, even if it would mean living somewhere completely different than the United States. This once again underlines Holly's somewhat restless spirit, as she yearns for change in a way that Mag can't embrace for herself, even though she's the one in a relationship with José.



After the weekend, the narrator notices that Mag's name has been added to Holly's mailbox. Opening his own, the narrator finds a letter informing him that a literary magazine wants to publish one of his stories, though they can't pay him. Rushing to Holly's apartment, he shows her the letter in a fit of excitement. Though Holly's initial reaction is unsatisfying because she tells him not to accept unless they pay him, she quickly sees that he merely wants her congratulations, so she suggests that they go to a celebratory lunch. While she gets dressed, she tells the narrator that Mag has moved in, saying that this is good because she's so dumb that Holly could abandon her with the lease if she ever needed to. The narrator listens to her as she rambles on and runs around in various states of undress looking for clothes.

It's worth remembering that Holly promised to help the narrator with his writing career. Now, though, his first success has nothing to do with her, and she even tells him not to go through with it. This is perhaps because Holly is trying to advocate for the narrator, thinking he deserves money, but it also indicates that she doesn't quite understand that getting published—even without payment—is a big deal for him. This frames Holly as somewhat callous and insensitive—an interpretation that seems even more appropriate when she says she wouldn't mind sticking Mag with the lease if she ever needed to. At the same time, though, Holly also sees that she's hurt the narrator's feelings, and she immediately tries to make up for it by taking him to lunch, thereby demonstrating that, though she is perhaps preoccupied by her own life, she still cares about the narrator.



The narrator and Holly drink Manhattans at Joe Bell's, then have lunch in Central Park, stopping by the zoo on their way out, though they quickly leave because Holly hates looking at animals in cages. Frolicking around the park and the city, they have a fantastic time as they talk about their pasts. When Holly tells stories about her personal history, though, she speaks vaguely, hardly divulging any concrete information. Later, they go to a five-and-dime store and steal Halloween masks, skipping gleefully down the street as they make their getaway.

Holly's aversion to seeing animals in cages aligns with her overall approach to life. Indeed, she hates the idea of confinement, prizing independence and freedom above all else. However, why this means so much to her remains unclear, since she's so hesitant to speak honestly about her past.



The narrator and Holly spend quite a bit of time together, but the narrator soon gets a day job that makes it hard for him to see Holly, since she keeps such unconventional hours. While the narrator sleeps, Holly goes out with Rusty, Mag, and José, and the narrator wonders why José spends so much time with this group, ultimately deciding that it must be because of Holly's charm. One day, he spots Holly running into the public library, so he follows her and watches her from afar as she sits at a long table and reads a large stack of books, taking notes as she goes. When she finally leaves, he approaches and looks at the books, which are all about Brazil.

Again, the narrator finds himself wondering about Holly's life as if he doesn't even know her. No matter what he does, it seems, she remains something of a mystery to him. This confirms Holly's idea that the narrator wants to be "on the inside staring out," since he currently feels like an outsider. And yet, the narrator has good reason to wonder about Holly, since her actions are rather inscrutable. When it becomes clear that she's been reading about Brazil, for instance, readers are invited to question why, exactly, she has taken such an interest in José.



On Christmas Eve, Holly and Mag have a party and ask the narrator to come early to help them trim the Christmas tree. When they finish, Holly tells the narrator that she has a present for him. Bringing him into her bedroom, she shows him **the birdcage**. Beside himself, the narrator comments on how expensive the cage was, but Holly disregards this, saying that it amounts to "a few extra trips to the powder room." However, she also makes him promise to never put a living thing inside of it. Agreeing, he embraces her, but she holds out her hand to receive the gift he got her. Knowing that his gift isn't as grand as Holly's, the narrator gives her a St. Christopher's medallion. He knows it isn't all that special, but, at the very least, it's from **Tiffany's**.

Although the narrator doesn't feel like he knows all that much about Holly's private life, there's no denying that they've developed a close—and rather touching—relationship. In this moment, they both give each other thoughtful gifts, proving that they're both attentive to what the other wants. For Holly, this means receiving something—anything—from Tiffany's, helping her feel that much closer to finding the kind of life she wants to lead. And even though Holly gives the narrator the birdcage, she can't keep herself from expressing how uncomfortable she is with the fact that it is something designed to keep a living thing from flying free. This, in turn, is a reflection of Holly's overall discomfort with anything that might curtail her independence or freedom.



In the present, the narrator still has **the birdcage**. However, shortly after Holly gave it to him, he gave it back. This transpires when they have a massive falling out, which happens right after Holly returns from a trip she took in February with Rusty, Mag, and José. While the narrator rubs oil on her back, Holly tells him about the trip, explaining that they went to Key West, Florida first, where Rusty got into an altercation with a group of sailors. He will now have to wear a back brace for the rest of his life. Mag also found her way into the hospital while in Florida, since she got terribly sunburned. Not wanting to spend their vacation in the hospital, José and Holly went to Havana together. When they returned, Mag thought they were having an affair, but Holly dissuaded her by claiming she's attracted to women, not men.

Holly's interest in José takes on new meaning when she tells the narrator this story about their shared vacation. At this point, it becomes rather clear that Holly and José are romantically drawn to each other, though Holly has yet to fully admit this. In fact, she denies Mag's allegations that she and José are having an affair by saying that she's a lesbian, once more bringing up homosexuality in a fleeting way. In this regard, readers are invited to continue questioning the sexual preferences of the novella's characters—an important aspect of the book, since the narrator himself provides no insight into his own orientation.



Holly tells the narrator that she gave one of his stories to O.J. Berman. She says that O.J. is interested in his writing but thinks he's writing about things nobody cares about—a sentiment with which Holly agrees. She then criticizes the subjects the narrator chooses to focus on and bemoans how much description he uses. As Holly does so, the narrator feels as if his hand, which is still rubbing oil on Holly's back, has taken on a mind of its own, wanting badly to smack her. Going on, Holly says that none of his descriptions mean anything, so the narrator asks her to give an example of a work she thinks "means something." Immediately, she names [Wuthering Heights](#) as an example. When she begins to explain why, though, it becomes clear that she's talking about the movie, not the book, causing the narrator to condescendingly say, "Oh, oh, the movie."

Offended, Holly's entire back tenses beneath the narrator's hand, and she tells him that, though it's common for people to feel better than others, it's "customary to present a little proof before you take the privilege." The narrator then says that he doesn't compare himself to Holly or to O.J. Berman because they want different things, insisting that he doesn't want money. When Holly asks him what he *does* want, he says he doesn't know yet, and she responds by suggesting that this is exactly what his stories sound like: like he began writing them without knowing the ending. She also reminds the narrator that he's going to need money, especially since there aren't many people who will buy him expensive birdcages. When he mumbles an apology, Holly tells him that he'll *really* be sorry if he hits her; she can sense, she says, that he wants to.

The narrator does indeed want to hit Holly, but he refrains. Instead, he says he's sorry that Holly wasted her money on him, since she has to work so hard to make it—after all, he adds, "Rusty Trawler is too hard a way of earning it." Instantly, Holly sits up, exposing her breasts, and tells the narrator to get out of her apartment. Accordingly, the narrator marches upstairs, gets [the birdcage](#), and puts outside her door. The next morning, he sees it sitting on the curb waiting for trash collection. Unable to bear the idea of it going to the dump, he defeatedly takes it back inside and puts it in his room.

Again, Holly offends the narrator by speaking critically about his writing. Although they're close, he's unwilling to listen to her opinions about his own work. This, it seems, is the one way that the narrator isn't passive, considering that he's willing to stand up for himself when she speaks disparagingly about his stories. In all other scenarios, he's willing to go along with whatever Holly says or does. When it comes to the narrator's writing, though, his vanity kicks in and he stands up for himself. This, in turn, throws his relationship with Holly out of balance, since she's used to his otherwise flexible, easygoing manner.



It's somewhat hypocritical that Holly criticizes the narrator for not knowing what he wants, since she has admitted multiple times that she has the same problem. Now, though, Holly scolds the narrator for his passive, unintentional way of being, which she claims manifests itself in his writing. Interestingly enough, the narrator ultimately subverts this criticism by standing up to Holly, showing her that he isn't quite as passive as she might think—and this, it seems, is what bothers Holly in the first place. In this moment, then, readers see that Holly and the narrator have a complex relationship that is predicated on Holly's dominance and the narrator's willingness to yield to her.



Holly and the narrator's argument comes to a breaking point when he acknowledges that she makes her money by dating rich men she doesn't even like. Of course, Holly was already aware that the narrator knew this detail about her life, but he has never weaponized the truth against her like this. Consequently, she reacts harshly. In addition, it's worth noting that Holly makes no effort to cover her breasts when she sits up. This indicates that she has been topless throughout the entire scene, even though the narrator hasn't mentioned it. The lack of sexual attraction between them therefore comes to the forefront of the novella, as readers see once and for all that, though they're close to each other, there is clearly nothing romantic about their bond.



The narrator doesn't speak to Holly for quite some time. However, he refuses to sign a petition circulated by his elderly neighbor, Madame Sapphia Spanella, who insists that Holly should be evicted because she is "morally objectionable" and has too many parties. One day in the spring, the narrator notices a suspicious looking man hovering by the mailboxes, peering at Holly's card. He then sees this same man waiting across the street and staring at Holly's apartment. The narrator wonders if he's a detective or if he's perhaps associated with Sally Tomato. While walking to a diner that evening, he notices that the man is following him. Indeed, the mysterious gentleman trails him all the way to the diner, whistling one of the folksy songs that Holly often plays on the guitar.

Unnerved, the narrator confronts the strange man when he sits right next to him at the counter of the diner. After the narrator asks what he wants, the man says he needs his help. He then takes a picture from his wallet and hands it to the narrator. The picture shows six children standing next to the man, who has his arm around one of the girls. Pointing to this girl, the man identifies her as Holly, then shows the narrator Fred. Beginning to understand, the narrator says that the man is Holly's father, but this stops the stranger. First of all, the man tells the narrator, Holly's name isn't Holly, it's Lulamae. Second of all, he's not her father, he's her husband. His name is Doc Golightly, and he's a veterinarian from Texas.

Doc Golightly explains that he's been searching for Holly for five years. He recently received a letter from Fred informing him that she's been living in New York, and he immediately came on a bus. She belongs, he upholds, back at home with her husband and children. Beside himself, the narrator says that the children in the picture couldn't possibly be Holly's children, and Doc clarifies that they aren't her "natural-born" children, since their real mother died two years before he married Holly, who was 14 at the time. Doc admits that most 14-year-olds aren't mature enough to get married, but he says that Holly was always an "exceptional woman" and knew exactly what she was doing when she accepted his proposal. But then, after years of happiness (during which she barely had to do any kind of work), she ran away, leaving behind Doc, his children, and Fred.

The appearance of this strange man serves as a reminder that there is still quite a lot the narrator doesn't know about Holly's life. To compound this lack of knowledge, he once again finds himself in the position of an outsider, since he and Holly are no longer interacting with one another. Once more, then, the narrator is left to piece together what, exactly, is going on in Holly's life. And though their relationship might be on hiatus, it's clear that the narrator's obsessive fascination with Holly continues.



In this moment, readers—and, of course, the narrator—grasp the extent to which Holly has kept her past a secret. Not only has the narrator just heard for the first time that Holly used to live in Texas, but he learns that she was (or perhaps is) married to a much older man. Simply put, Holly has an entire history that has remained a secret until the narrator's conversation with Doc Golightly.



That Doc Golightly believes Holly was mature enough to get married when she was only 14 is obviously problematic and predatory. However, it suggests that Holly has always presented herself in a confident, impressive way, though it's clear that no 14-year-old is old enough to get married, regardless of how adult she seems. To make matters worse, Doc appears unwilling to see that his marriage to Holly curtailed her freedom, finding it mystifying that she would ever want to run away. Instead of recognizing why Holly would want to establish a life of her own once she was old enough to begin an adult life, Doc gets hung up on the fact that she never had to work while living with him—a detail that obviously had nothing to do with why she wanted to leave, since she was likely focused on establishing her own independence, not on whether or not she had to do chores.



Doc Golightly tells the narrator that he found Holly and Fred raiding his farm after they ran away from their cruel foster parents. Apparently, he says, their real parents died of tuberculosis along with their other siblings. When Doc found them, he took them in and cared for them. For several years, Doc claims, they were all happy, but then Holly started reading fashion magazines, which is where he suspects she got the idea to come to New York.

The narrator pays for his and Doc's meal, then goes back to the apartment with him, having agreed to approach Holly and tell her that Doc is there. Doc wants him to do this because he's afraid his presence might shock her and scare her off. On the way to the apartment, the narrator asks about Fred, and Doc says that Fred stayed with him until joining the Army, at which point he started corresponding with Holly and, later, sent Doc her address. Now, he says, he has come to take her home, confident that she'll want to come with him.

When the narrator goes to Holly's door, she's already on her way out. Playfully calling him an idiot, she says she's in a rush and that they can make amends the following day. "Sure, Lulamae," he says. "If you're still around tomorrow." Shocked, she looks at him for a moment before rushing downstairs, calling Fred's name as she goes. When she sees Doc, she halts and retreats in disappointment, but then she touches his face and says hello, kissing his cheek and happily repeating his name. As they embrace, the narrator slips into his own apartment. From inside, he listens as Madame Sapphia Spanella opens her door and shouts at them, telling Holly to do her "whoring" somewhere else.

The next morning, Holly and the narrator drink at Joe Bell's. She tells him she never divorced Doc because the marriage must not have been legal, since she was only 14. She hasn't slept all night, since she's been with Doc since the narrator left them. She spent the evening with him and then took him home. She insinuates that they had sex, saying that she "had to" because Doc truly loves her. Plus, she says, he's a very kind, sensitive man. After that, Holly took Doc to the bus station, and Doc thought she was coming back to Texas with him right up until he boarded the bus without her, though she kept reminding him that she's not 14 anymore. However, she now says that she might as well still be 14—the only difference is that she calls it the "mean reds" when she feels wayward and lost.

When Doc tells the narrator why Holly came to his farm in the first place, readers see that their relationship ultimately helped her ensure that she and Fred would be able to survive. In this sense, then, Holly's marriage to Doc is similar to the relationships she has with wealthy men in New York, in that she utilizes her sex appeal as a way of establishing self-sufficiency and fending for herself.



It's easy to see that Doc's confidence that Holly will return to Texas is unwarranted, since Holly will obviously not want to give up her life in New York. After all, she has created a life of independence and freedom in the city, making it highly unlikely that she'd ever want to go back to depending upon Doc for money, food, and shelter.



It's rather surprising that Holly is happy to see Doc. One might think she wouldn't want to see him, considering that she ran away from him in the first place. The fact that she's glad to reunite with him in this moment therefore suggests that she never disliked him or felt any kind of ill will toward him. Instead, she simply wanted to make her own life, yearning for a sense of freedom that a life with Doc simply couldn't afford her.



When Holly suggests that she "had to" have sex with Doc because he loves her, she makes a rare concession to what other people want (though not a particularly healthy one, considering that she should only engage in sexual activity if she wants to, regardless of how much her partner loves her). Indeed, Holly usually doesn't yield to what others want, though she does insinuate several times throughout the novella that she sometimes ends up having sex with the men who pay to take her out. The difference is that she sleeps with Doc for emotional reasons, whereas she sleeps with rich men for monetary reasons (though it's also worth acknowledging that she might actually want to have sex with these men, too). What's more, Holly's decision to stay in New York underlines the fact that she wants to maintain her independence, though she also suggests that she still hasn't found a sense of belonging, since she often feels just as lost as she did when she was 14 and didn't have much personal freedom.



Turning to Joe Bell, Holly tells him never to love a “wild thing,” which she believes was Doc’s biggest mistake. If Joe loves a wild thing, she says, he’ll end up staring up into the sky, as if watching a bird fly away. Turning to the narrator, Joe says that Holly must be drunk, and though she agrees, she says that Doc ultimately understood her when she told him she couldn’t return to her old life in Texas. Raising her glass to toast Doc’s kindness, she says that it’s easier to look up at the sky than to live there. After all, the sky is a lonely, “empty” place.

When Holly says that the sky is an “empty” place, she intimates that, though freedom and independence are important to her, they don’t necessarily give her a sense of companionship or belonging. Holly is, it seems, still searching for a way to feel settled into her own life without having to sacrifice her autonomy and appetite for change. For now, she has chosen to prioritize independence over all else, but this comes with loneliness and a sense of estrangement from the rest of the world, as if she’s a bird flying into a vast expanse of nothingness.



On the subway several days later, the narrator sees an alarming headline on somebody else’s newspaper. “TRAWLER MARRIES FOURTH,” it reads, but he can’t see the rest. Suddenly, he feels angry, jealous, and disappointed. The thought of Holly marrying Rusty Trawler deeply upsets the narrator—so much that he wonders why, exactly, he feels like this. He then realizes that it’s because he loves Holly, though the kind of love he feels for her is the same kind that he felt for his childhood mailman, his mother’s cook, and an entire family who lived near him when he was a boy. Still, he notes that even this kind of love can lead to jealousy.

The narrator acknowledges in this moment that he loves Holly, but the love he feels for her isn’t romantic. This provides insight into the nature of their relationship, which is quite complex even though they aren’t physically attracted to each other. Indeed, what the narrator wants is to be “on the inside staring out,” as Holly puts it, not on outside staring in. For this reason, he hates the idea that Holly would simply go forth and marry Rusty Trawler without the narrator knowing. Doing this, it seems, would undermine Holly and the narrator’s otherwise close and emotionally intimate relationship, which is clearly just as nuanced and delicate as any romantic bond.



Rushing off the subway, the narrator buys a newspaper and sees that Rusty isn’t marrying Holly, but Mag Wildwood. Confused, he goes back to the brownstone, where Madame Sapphia Spanella greets him and tells him to call the police because somebody is trying to kill Holly. Upstairs, he tries and fails to enter her apartment, but then José appears and opens the door with his own key. Accompanying José is a doctor, who pushes his way inside, walks over broken glass and upturned furniture, and finds Holly collapsed on the bed. José then gives her a sedative, and explains to the narrator that Holly isn’t upset about Rusty’s marriage to Mag—in fact, both she and José are relieved, since they actively wanted to be rid of them. Instead, Holly is upset because she received a telegram from Doc informing her that Fred was killed in action.

That Holly and José both want Mag and Rusty to marry each other once again suggests that they are romantically interested in each other, though José doesn’t fully clarify that they’re in a relationship, thereby leaving the narrator to put the pieces together for himself (once again). Meanwhile, though, Holly is too focused on her brother’s death to care about any of her other relationships. This makes sense, considering that she spoke about Fred quite frequently even when she was trying to keep the details of her past secret.



Holly stops calling the narrator Fred. In the coming months, Holly stays inside and isn't as social as normal. During this period, José moves in with her, and she hardly leaves the apartment except for her weekly visits to Sally Tomato. Slowly, though, Holly begins to furnish the apartment and learn Portuguese. She also starts talking to the narrator about how she's going to marry José and move to Rio de Janeiro. One day, she casually mentions that she's six weeks pregnant. She says she wishes she'd been a virgin when she first had sex with José, quickly adding that she hasn't been with *that* many men—only 11, she says, not counting “what happened” before she was 13, since that doesn't “count.”

One day in autumn, the narrator is waiting near the mailboxes because it's his birthday and he's expecting money from his family. As he waits, Holly passes and suggests they go horseback riding in the park. She adds that she has to go riding to say farewell to her favorite horse in the city. When the narrator asks what she means, she informs him that she and José are moving to Brazil the following weekend. The narrator insists that she can't simply leave everyone behind, but she says she has no friends. After he points out that she has him and Joe Bell and Sally Tomato, she admits that she will indeed miss Sally, though she hasn't seen him for a month. In fact, he was happy when she told him she was leaving the country, saying that this is probably for the best.

Frustrated, the narrator asks Holly if José knows that she's already married. Snapping at the narrator, Holly tells him to stop trying to ruin an otherwise beautiful day, adding that he'd better not tell anyone about Doc Golightly. Mounting their horses, they let the conversation drop, and the narrator begins to enjoy watching Holly stride about so expertly. But just then, a group of teenagers jumps out, scaring the horses and slashing them with small switches. Suddenly, the narrator's horse takes off in fright, sprinting so hard that it's all he can do to hold on. The horse makes its way out of the park and into the city as the narrator clings for his life. Finally, a mounted police officer and Holly manage to catch up and slow the horse down, though only after multiple blocks of hard riding.

Finally, Holly reveals once and for all that she and José are in a romantic relationship. This apparently has a profound effect on her, judging by the fact that she furnishes her apartment—something she said she wouldn't ever do unless she felt as if she truly belonged to her own life. Now, it seems, she no longer feels restless and eager for change, though she also speaks excitedly about moving to Brazil. This, in turn, suggests that any happiness she has about her current circumstances is fleeting and that, in the long run, she still thirsts for change. On another note, when Holly talks about her lovers, she refutes the idea that she might be considered a prostitute simply because of how many people she has slept with—though this doesn't necessarily clarify whether or not having sex with men is part of how she financially sustains herself. When she says that she doesn't “count” the men she had sex with before she was 13, she reveals that men started pursuing her long before it was appropriate to do so—an indication that she was prematurely exposed to sex and adult desire.



Holly's abrupt announcement that she and José will soon be moving undoubtedly comes as a shock to the narrator. Once again, he finds himself on the outside looking in, trying to make sense of Holly's life from afar even though they've become quite close. Still, Holly clearly feels rather alone in the city and is eager to leave, despite the fact that she has the narrator as a friend and has fallen in love with José. In turn, readers get the sense that, though Holly claims she's happy with José, what she's really happy about is the prospect of a new adventure.



The narrator brings up Doc Golightly because he's angry and disappointed to hear that Holly is about to move. Worse, she has just said that she doesn't have any friends in New York, thereby insulting the narrator, since he sees himself as one of her closest friends. For this reason, he tries to put a damper on her otherwise high-spirited mood.



The police officer takes the horses back to the stables while Holly hails a taxi. Inside the car, she asks how the narrator feels, and he thanks her for saving his life, telling her that she's amazing and saying that he loves her. "Damn fool," she says, kissing him on the cheek. Then, all of a sudden, the narrator sees four different versions of her circling before his face, at which point he passes out.

That very same evening, pictures of Holly appear in the newspaper, but the story has nothing to do with what happened in the park. Rather, one of the headlines reads: "PLAYGIRL ARRESTED IN NARCOTICS SCANDAL." One of the articles explains that Holly—whom the writer describes as a popular figure in New York's "café society"—was arrested for helping Sally Tomato run a drug ring from prison. Apparently, Sally's lawyer, Mr. O'Shaughnessy, isn't a lawyer, but a defrocked priest with a long criminal record. The coded messages Holly relayed to him from Sally were orders about how to run the drug ring in his absence.

The narrator knows about Holly's arrest before it appears in the papers, since he was there when two detectives took her into custody. He was in the bathtub while Holly waited to rub a healing liniment on his aching body before putting him in bed. Suddenly, a knock sounded on the door, and when Holly called out that the visitors should enter, Madame Sapphia Spanella came in with the detectives, immediately identifying Holly and, seeing the narrator in the nude, insisting that the scene was proof that Holly's a "whore." One of the detectives—a woman—told Holly to come with them, placing her hand on her shoulder. Instantly, Holly called her a "driveling old bull-dyke" and ordered her to take her hand away, at which point the officer slapped her. On her way out, Holly asked the narrator to feed her **cat** in her absence.

When Holly saves the narrator, he forgets his anger and jealousy. Instead of focusing on the fact that Holly is going to leave him behind in New York, he concentrates on how much she means to him as a friend. When he tries to show her affection by expressing how grateful he is to her, though, she only calls him a "damn fool," as if reciprocating this sentiment would require too much intimacy and effort. With this in mind, readers see how hesitant Holly is to fully let people get close to her—even the narrator.



Unfortunately for Holly, her association with the mobster Sally Tomato has finally caught up to her. It's not altogether surprising that she has been implicated in this nefarious scandal, since she willingly passed coded messages between Sally and O'Shaughnessy—an obviously suspicious act that she chose to ignore simply because she liked Sally and because O'Shaughnessy gave her \$100 each week. Now, though, Holly has not only been arrested, but her reputation in the city has been tarnished, as journalists go out of their way to disrupt her identity as a popular member of New York's "café society" of socialites.



Holly's animosity in this moment is in keeping with the fact that she strongly dislikes anything that might curtail her independence and freedom. Needless to say, going to jail would do this, so she doesn't take kindly to the detectives when they arrive and tell her that she has to come with them. Holly also insults the female detective by calling her a derogatory name and assuming she's a lesbian, most likely intentionally provoking the detective because Holly is so angry.



That night, Joe Bell visits the narrator and asks if he thinks it's true that Holly was mixed up in a drug ring. He also insists that they go to his bar and call everyone Holly knows in order to help her post bail. This proves difficult, though, because the narrator has multiple drinks while making these calls. To make matters worse, there aren't very many people to call. When he phones Mag Wildwood and Rusty Trawler and explains what happened, Mag tells him that she and Rusty will sue anyone who tries to associate them with Holly. Finally, the narrator reaches O.J. Berman, who assures him that he has already arranged to post her bail and has contacted best lawyer in New York, saying that, though he doesn't owe Holly anything, he feels obliged to help.

The next morning, Holly is still in jail. The narrator goes to her apartment to feed her **cat**, slipping in through the window. Once inside, he finds José's cousin, who has also come in through the window. The cousin is packing a suitcase full of José's clothes, and he gives the narrator a letter from José, asking him to bring it to Holly. Frustrated, the narrator gathers that José is abandoning Holly, but begrudgingly agrees to give her the letter.

The narrator visits Holly in jail, and she tells him—casual as ever—that she lost her baby because of the hard horseback riding she had to do in order to catch up to him the previous day. Moving on, she speaks somewhat nonsensically about a “fat woman” she's been seeing ever since Fred died. As soon as she heard the news of her brother's death, this woman appeared. She was, Holly says, holding Fred in her lap like a baby. Turning her attention back to the narrator, she asks if he understands now why she lost her presence of mind and trashed her own apartment.

With great regret, the narrator gives José's letter to Holly. In the letter, José informs her that, though he loves her and has always appreciated that she's unique, he can't continue to see her because he must “protect” his own reputation. He is, he admits, a coward. Hearing this, Holly asks the narrator what he thinks, and he says that it is, at the very least, very honest and even somewhat “touching.” Holly, for her part, disagrees, lamenting the fact that she truly loved José.

Even though Holly has previously claimed that she has no friends, the narrator, Joe Bell, and O.J. prove that this isn't true. In fact, O.J. starts trying to help Holly before the narrator even asks him to, demonstrating that there are people Holly can depend upon, even if they can't necessarily depend upon her. (After all, she abandoned O.J. when he got her an audition to be in a movie, effectively jeopardizing his reputation as an agent.) In this way, it becomes clear that Holly isn't quite as alone in the world as she might feel.



Unfortunately, José's choice to abandon Holly in her time of need will undoubtedly confirm her belief that nobody truly cares about her. Of course, this isn't true, as evidenced by the fact that O.J. has already arranged her bail before anyone even asks him to do so. Nonetheless, though, José's actions will make Holly feel as if the most important people in her life will always let her down.



Holly's strange hallucination suggests that she's under quite a bit of emotional pressure. Indeed, losing her brother has put a significant strain on her, and this strain has only been exacerbated by her arrest and miscarriage. Simply put, Holly is at an extreme low point in her life, and the only person there to help her through it is the narrator and, remotely, O.J. Berman and Joe Bell.



Holly finds no solace in the fact that José's letter is honest, since this does nothing to change the fact that the man she loves has abandoned her. Although people are constantly drawn to Holly, José has left her at perhaps the most crucial time possible, worrying more about his reputation than about their relationship. In turn, Holly finds it hard to deny her original belief that she has nobody in her life to depend upon.



Turning her attention to her miscarriage, Holly thanks the narrator, saying that if it weren't for him, she would still be pregnant and would have to live as a single parent. Plus, she's now considering suing the police department by claiming that the detective's slap precipitated her miscarriage. This strikes the narrator as a bad idea, so he urges Holly to be serious, wanting her to think realistically about what she's going to do when she makes bail. She then tells him that she plans to flee the country, saying that she'll use her ticket to Brazil even though she's no longer with José. After all, the ticket is already paid for, and she's never been to Brazil. Beside himself, the narrator tries to impress upon Holly how serious it would be for her to leave the country to avoid a prison sentence, but she remains steadfast in her convictions.

Explaining why she plans to leave the country, Holly says she'll never say anything to incriminate Sally Tomato. She judges everyone based on how they treat her, she says, and he treated her well. And though the state might not be able to prove that Holly is guilty, she knows the attention the trial will attract will all but ruin her reputation in the United States, making it impossible for her to live the life she's built. To emphasize her point, she says that the narrator would understand what she means if he, too, depended on the "particular talents" that are required to make a living the way she does. She then asks the narrator to create a list for her of the 50 richest men in Brazil.

On the day of Holly's flight, she gets out of jail (having delayed her release by pretending to still be unhealthy after her miscarriage). After going straight to the bank, she heads to Joe Bell's bar, knowing it'd be unwise to return to her apartment, which is under surveillance. She then sends Joe to the narrator's apartment to ask him to gather her belongings and bring them to the bar. She wants her jewelry, guitar, clothes, toiletries, and a 100-year-old bottle of brandy. She also wants the **cat**, who tries to evade the narrator. Finally, though, the narrator manages to bring all of these things, including the cat and the St. Christopher's medal that he gave her. Once at the bar, he and Holly drink the brandy. Joe, for his part, refuses to toast with them because he disapproves of Holly's plan.

Holly's decision to flee the country aligns with her appetite for freedom. Although she will soon be let out on bail, there's no guaranteeing that she won't receive an actual prison sentence. Needless to say, this would significantly hinder her ability to live a free and individualistic life. Accordingly, Holly has decided to embark upon a life on the run, an existence that will preserve her freedom but ultimately ensure that she's never able to fully settle down.



Holly is well aware that her ability to sustain herself is directly linked to whether or not people admire and covet her. If she is no longer seen as a popular woman in New York's "café society," then rich men won't want to go out with her, and she'll lose her income. Because of this, Holly has resolved to leave the country, apparently planning to continue to date rich men as a way of supporting herself.



Up until the very end of the novella, the narrator does whatever Holly wants him to do, even if he doesn't want to do it. Indeed, the narrator doesn't want Holly to leave, but he proves himself essential to Holly's plan when he agrees to collect her belongings and bring them to her at Joe's bar. Once again, then, readers see how passively willing the narrator is to make sacrifices for Holly. This, of course, is because he loves her, though not in a romantic way.



Despite Joe's disapproval, he calls a limo to take Holly to the airport, unable to resist showing her one last kindness. Giving her flowers, he says farewell and rushes to the bathroom, trying to hide his emotion. Holly and the narrator then get in the car and start toward the airport, but Holly tells the driver to stop in Spanish Harlem. Getting out, she sets the **cat** on the curb and tells him to go away. In response, he rubs up against her leg and doesn't move, so she gets back in the car and tells the chauffeur to drive. Trying to justify her decision to let him go, Holly says that she and the cat have never belonged to each other. Cutting herself off, though, she orders the driver to stop and dashes down the street in search of the cat.

The **cat** is no longer where Holly left him. Regretting her decision, she cries out that she and the cat truly *did* belong to one another. Hearing this, the narrator promises to come back to find the cat after Holly leaves. This soothes Holly to a certain extent, but she admits that she's afraid of what she's about to do, suddenly realizing that her life of aimless detachment might continue forever. She laments the fact that she never knows what belongs to her until she gets rid of it, but then she gets back in the car and tells the driver to take her to the airport.

Months pass, and the narrator doesn't hear from Holly. That Christmas, Sally Tomato dies, and the newspapers mention Holly in the articles about him, but there's otherwise very little press about her. That spring, the narrator finally receives a postcard from Holly, who tells him that she disliked Brazil. She's now in Buenos Aires, which she loves. It's not quite **Tiffany's**, she says, but it's close. She is involved with a wealthy lover who has a wife and seven children, so she's looking for an apartment of her own. She promises to send the narrator her address when she has one. But this is the last he hears from her.

Although Holly would like to think that she hasn't developed attachments to the life she's about to leave, she realizes in this moment that she truly has cultivated meaningful relationships. This, in turn, will make it that much harder for her to leave the country, though she has already started the process. Still, she suddenly finds herself hesitating to go through with her original plan.



The gravity of what Holly is about to do dawns on her in this moment, as she realizes that she'll never be able to recover all she's about to cast away. Like the cat, her life in America will soon be gone, since she won't be able to return to the country without getting arrested and put in prison. And though this prospect didn't seem all that daunting at first, it now feels dizzyingly real because it's accompanied by a sense of finality—or, rather, by the opposite of finality, since Holly realizes that fleeing the country will force her to spend the rest of her life on the run, making it that much harder to find a sense of belonging. However, she is also used to putting the past behind her and transitioning into entirely new lifestyles, which is why she's able to will herself back into the limo.



When the narrator hears from Holly, it's evident that Holly isn't particularly attached to anything. Like she did in New York, she's supporting herself by dating rich men (in particular, a married man with seven children), but she doesn't have a permanent address, ultimately indicating that she hasn't found the sense of belonging that she hopes to find before settling down. Holly is, it seems, still searching for an elusive kind of happiness—one she might never find.



The narrator is sad that Holly never sends him her address, especially because he has so many things to tell her. For starters, he has sold several stories. He's also heard that Rusty and Mag are getting divorced. As for himself, he's moving out of the brownstone because it feels "haunted." Most of all, though, he wants to tell Holly that he found her **cat**. For weeks after Holly left, the narrator went to Spanish Harlem to search for the lost animal. Finally, he found the cat sitting inside somebody's apartment, perched in the window of what looked like a cozy room. The narrator couldn't help but wonder what the cat's name was, feeling sure that he finally had one now. After all, the cat had clearly found a home in which he belonged. And wherever she is, the narrator thinks, he hopes that Holly has, too.

In many ways, Breakfast at Tiffany's is a story about the natural desire to belong. Even animals, Capote intimates, hope to find the contentment that comes along with settling into a pleasant and fulfilling life. As for Holly, it remains unclear whether she will ever manage to attain what her nameless cat now has, ultimately intimating that, though everyone yearns for this kind of fulfillment, such happiness and assurance are still rather rare and elusive things.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Lannamann, Taylor. "Breakfast at Tiffany's." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 10 Dec 2019. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

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Lannamann, Taylor. "Breakfast at Tiffany's." LitCharts LLC, December 10, 2019. Retrieved April 21, 2020.
<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/breakfast-at-tiffany-s>.

To cite any of the quotes from *Breakfast at Tiffany's* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Capote, Truman. *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Vintage. 1993.

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Capote, Truman. *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. New York: Vintage. 1993.