The Moon is Down

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN STEINBECK

John Steinbeck was born in California only two years after the turn of the 20th century. He attended Stanford University in 1919, though he left without earning a degree six years later, at which point he worked as a journalist and manual laborer in New York City. During this time he tried his hand at a career in writing, but had trouble getting his work published and so returned to California to work a series of labor jobs. In 1935, Steinbeck first found literary success with *Tortilla Flat*, which follows the exploits of a group of Mexican-Americans in Monterey, California. In the following years, Steinbeck wrote several novels that focus on farming life and its difficulties. The most famous of these is arguably 1937's *Of Mice and Men*. In 1939, Steinbeck published *The Grapes of Wrath*, which garnered him significant critical acclaim, including a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. Following his success with *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck went on to publish other notable works, including the 1952 novel, *East of Eden*. In 1962, Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Steinbeck, a lifelong smoker, died in New York City in 1968, at age 66.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Moon Is Down deals with the Second World War and the spread of Nazi Germany's rule throughout Europe. In fact, it was composed in an effort to disseminate anti-fascist sentiments in German-occupied countries. At the time of its composition, Steinbeck was involved with an organization called the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), a government group that was a predecessor to the CIA. Working voluntarily for the COI in the early 1940s, Steinbeck and the group's leader decided that the author should compose a piece of anti-fascist propaganda. Because Steinbeck had recently met a handful of northern European refugees who had fled their countries to escape German occupation, he resolved to write a fictional story about the relationship between military occupiers and the citizens they oppress. The result was *The Moon Is Down*, which slipped through the hands of German censors in Europe, making its way covertly from country to country and undergoing many translations and printings in underground presses. By the end of World War II in 1945, the book existed in French, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, and Italian editions.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Moon Is Down was published only three years after one of Steinbeck's most famous novels, *The Grapes of Wrath*, a stunning feat of American Realism that examines the horrific destitution of poor people in Oklahoma's Dust Bowl during the country's Great Depression. Whereas Steinbeck delivers unflinchingly honest and often unflattering portraits of his characters in *The Grapes of Wrath*, in *The Moon Is Down* he treats almost every figure with some measure of sympathy. Comparing the two books, detractors have criticized Steinbeck for this—arguing that depicting Nazi-esque characters as thoughtful, sensitive human beings was too lenient and too much of a departure from the rugged realism he displayed in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Consequently, *The Moon Is Down* occupies an interesting and somewhat controversial place in Steinbeck's canon—a short and often satirical piece of propaganda, it is at once lighter and more politically charged than novels like *The Grapes of Wrath* or *East of Eden*. Although *The Moon Is Down* is of legitimate literary merit in and of itself, it falls into a category of anti-fascist storytelling used to bolster the spirits of people living in Nazi-occupied Europe. A similar book is a French novel by Jean Bruller (who went by "Vercors" during the war) called *The Silence of the Sea*, a slim work that, like *The Moon Is Down*, depicts German soldiers as human despite their deeply immoral actions. Both of these anti-fascist pieces were published in 1942 and circulated throughout Europe despite the Germans' attempts to ban them.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Moon Is Down
- **When Written:** 1941
- **When Published:** March 1942
- **Literary Period:** American Modernism
- **Genre:** Propaganda, Wartime Fiction, Novella
- **Setting:** An unnamed northern European country during World War II.
- **Climax:** British allies drop aid packages to the townspeople containing dynamite, which the townspeople plan to use to destroy the invaders' railroad system
- **Antagonist:** Fascism and the authoritarian mindset that drives the invaders to oppress and conquer the townspeople
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Macbeth. The title of *The Moon Is Down* comes from a line in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. Immediately before encountering Macbeth on his way to kill the sleeping king, Banquo asks Fleance how his night is going, and Fleance responds by saying, "The moon is down; I have not heard the clock." Scholars have

pointed out that Steinbeck borrows this line as a way of foreshadowing the imminent and unforeseen dangers the invaders face at the hands of the townspeople they attempt to subjugate.

Broadway & Big Screen. In April 1942, just a month after its publication, *The Moon Is Down* was adapted for the stage and appeared on Broadway. The following year it was made into a movie.

PLOT SUMMARY

One Sunday morning an unnamed European town is invaded by a foreign military. The village's twelve soldiers are at a competition organized by a storekeeper named Mr. Corell. This competition is in the woods outside of town, and by the time the troops realize what's happened, it's already too late—the enemy has overtaken the village. Still, several soldiers try to fight back, but they're either killed or taken hostage. In the aftermath of the siege, the townspeople slowly learn that Mr. Corell has been working as an informant for the foreign military, and aided them as they prepared to conquer the village as part of their authoritarian government's larger expansion throughout Europe.

As whispers circulate about Mr. Corell's involvement, Mayor Orden prepares to receive the invaders' military leader, Colonel Lanser. Madame Orden, his wife, fretfully trims his ear hairs while his confidante, the local historian and physician Doctor Winter, discusses the nature of the colonel's imminent visit. Madame wonders if they should offer the colonel tea or wine, asking, "Didn't people in the old days—the leaders, that is—compliment each other and take a glass of wine?" Doctor Winter confirms that this used to be the case, but Mayor Orden decides not to "compliment" Colonel Lanser when he arrives, explaining that the townspeople wouldn't approve of such a gracious, accepting gesture to the enemy.

When Colonel Lanser arrives, he apologizes for the unpleasantness caused by the invasion. He presents himself rather sheepishly, telling the mayor that he respects him and that he sees the military occupation of the town as nothing more than a "business venture." He then asks Orden to cooperate with him, insisting that invasions and occupations go more smoothly when the conquered leader sets a precedent of civility for his people to follow. In addition to informing Orden that the high-ranking military officials will take up residence in his—Orden's—house, he asks the mayor whether or not the man intends to help the invaders govern the villagers. Orden evades the question, saying, "You won't believe this, but it is true: authority is in the town. I don't know how or why, but it so." He then clarifies that he will not act against the villagers' will.

Despite Mayor Orden's unwillingness to cooperate with the invaders, he allows them to set up living quarters in his home, accommodating the strict and procedural Captain Loft, the reserved and literal-minded Major Hunter, the kindly Captain Bentick, and the naïve Lieutenants Prackle and Tonder, along with Colonel Lanser himself. The men come in and out of the house, trading patrol shifts and talking about their experiences in town. Lieutenant Tonder, for his part, expresses an early sense of optimism, saying that he might even settle in the town after the war is over, since the people seem pleasant. Meanwhile, Major Hunter spends the majority of his time designing a railroad system that runs from the town's profitable coal mine to the waterfront. This project is central to the invaders' mission and is the reason why Colonel Lanser told Mayor Orden that the occupation of the town is nothing but a "business venture," since the soldiers have been given orders to extract and export the village's coal.

One day, Captain Loft comes into the common room where Major Hunter is busy drawing his plans for the railroad. He complains that he's just seen Captain Bentick patrolling without his helmet, which he finds improper because he believes all soldiers should "maintain a military standard, an alertness, and never vary from it." Colonel Lanser then sends Loft to relieve Captain Bentick from his post overseeing the coal miners. On his way, Loft comes upon Alexander Morden, a miner who has worked himself into a rage about the forced labor to which the invading military is subjecting him. Alexander rushes toward Loft, but Captain Bentick intervenes, and the enraged miner drives a pickaxe into Bentick's head.

When he hears Captain Bentick has been killed by a miner, Colonel Lanser tells Mayor Orden that Alex will have to be put to death. He explains to Orden that it would be best if this death sentence came from him, the mayor, since this would communicate to the townspeople that they should cooperate with the invaders. He tells Orden, "If you wish to save your people from hurt, you must help us to keep order." Mayor Orden refuses to do this, pointing out that he doesn't even have the legal right as mayor to sentence a citizen to death. Colonel Lanser makes several remarks implying that he understands and sympathizes with Orden's dilemma, but when they finally hold the trial, he sentences Alexander to death by firing squad. Seconds after the young man is shot, however, somebody throws an unidentified object through the window of the mayor's house, injuring Lieutenant Prackle and surprising the colonel. Colonel Lanser begins to understand that it will be harder than he thought to beat this population into submission.

In the following weeks, the invaders have trouble making progress on the railroad project. The tracks constantly break, and English forces occasionally drop bombs intended to destroy the mine. The townspeople bitterly resent the soldiers, treating them with intense scorn and often refusing to speak to or acknowledge them. This weighs heavily on Lieutenant

Tonder, who originally hoped to establish meaningful relationships with the villagers. Despite his fantasy, relations between the soldiers and the town continue to worsen, and the soldiers find that they must remain vigilant at all times or else risk getting killed. This deeply troubles Tonder, who quickly becomes disillusioned. At one point, he challenges Captain Loft and Lieutenant Prackle by asking them if they think the town is *really* conquered. The two men resent Tonder's pessimism, but he presses on, likening the military effort to "flies" that "conquer the flypaper." Prackle begs for him to stop speaking this way until, eventually, Loft steps in and slaps Tonder clean across the face, saying "Stop it, Lieutenant! Do you hear me?"

One night long after the town's curfew, Mayor Orden's cook, Annie, sneaks past the patrolling guards and visits Molly Morden's house. Molly, who was married to Alex Morden before he was executed, lets her in and asks why she's come. Annie tells her that the Mayor will be coming to her house that night because he needs a safe place to speak with two fishermen, Will and Tom Anders. Apparently, the fishermen's brother, Jack, has been killed by the invaders for destroying one of their cars, and now the military is searching for Will and Tom, who plan to steal Mr. Corell's boat and set off that night for England. Having confirmed that Molly's house is free of danger, Annie sets off again to tell the mayor the coast is clear. However, just after Annie leaves, Lieutenant Tonder knocks on Molly's door and asks to be let in. Once inside, he tells her that he's seen her about town and that he's lonely and just wants to talk to her. She realizes he doesn't recognize her, despite the fact that he commanded the firing squad that killed her husband. In order to get him to leave, she tells him she'll talk with him for a little while, but that he has to leave and come back another time. Finally, he agrees to do so, and takes his leave.

Not long after Lieutenant Tonder exits Molly's house, Annie returns with the mayor, Doctor Winter, and the Anders brothers. The Mayor tells the two brothers that he needs their help: when they reach England, they are to tell English officials about the town's invasion and ask them to send explosives. These explosives, Mayor Orden explains with Doctor Winter's help, will enable the villagers to blow up the invaders' railroad and defend themselves against the military. The two brothers agree to this plan. Suddenly, there is a knock at the door, and Molly quickly ushers everybody out the back entrance. On his way, Orden says, "Molly, if you're in trouble, let us help you," to which she replies, "The trouble I'm in no one can help me with." When the room has completely emptied, she picks up a large pair of scissors and hides them inside her dress before saying, in a sweet voice, "I'm coming, Lieutenant, I'm coming!" When Lieutenant Tonder enters, she stabs him to death before fleeing the town.

Shortly thereafter, a plane flies over the town and drops countless blue packages, which scatter throughout the village. As the invaders make haste to analyze what these packages hold, the townspeople scurry about collecting them. By the time Major Hunter identifies the packages as containing small but effective bundles of dynamite, the villagers have already collected a great many them. Inside, there are instructions about how to properly use the dynamite, including a step-by-step procedure outlining the best way to blow up the railroad. Colonel Lanser frets over this new development, realizing how quickly he is losing control over the situation. To make matters worse, he discovers that Corell has gone over his head by writing to the government and obtaining official permission to play a more instrumental role in the town's proceedings. As such, Corell advises Lanser to arrest Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter in the hopes of pacifying the townspeople. Lanser begrudgingly follows this advice, taking both men into custody and telling Orden that if he doesn't urge his people to not use the dynamite, he will be killed.

In a conversation with Doctor Winter after they've both been arrested, Mayor Orden tries to remember the speeches Socrates delivered before he was put to death. As he fumbles through the lines, Colonel Lanser enters the room and listens eagerly, clearly sympathizing with this man whom he respects and for whom he feels sorry. When Orden finishes, Lanser tries to convince him to urge his people not to use the dynamite, implying that if the mayor would simply *try* to stop the destruction, Lanser might be able to spare his life. But Mayor Orden remains steadfast in his conviction that the people must do as they see fit. In the distance, two explosions sound, and Orden stands stiffly before revealing a small smile. On his way toward the door—and, presumably, toward his own death—he turns to Doctor Winter and quotes Socrates' last words to his friend: "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius. Will you remember to pay the debt?" Doctor Winter lightly shuts his eyes, pausing before saying, "The debt shall be paid."

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Mayor Orden – The mayor of the unnamed town where *The Moon Is Down* takes place. Orden has been mayor for so long that when the citizens hear the word "mayor," they immediately think of him. Despite his harmless and light-spirited air—which his wife, Madame Orden, constantly tries to correct—he is a skilled democratic leader who commits himself to following the wishes of his populace. This approach to leadership—which prizes the importance of listening to the townspeople above all—naturally contrasts with the invaders' ideas about authority and leadership. In particular, Colonel Lanser tries to manipulate Mayor Orden's influence over the townspeople, hoping to use the mayor's popularity to subjugate the villagers without conflict. However, Orden recognizes Lanser's tactics and patiently explains (whenever the conversation arises) that his

town is a healthy democracy and, as such, will act out its will regardless of what its leader tells them to do. As if to demonstrate his willingness to allow others to influence his style of political leadership, he keeps the town's local historian, Doctor Winter, at his side at all times, often turning to the man for advice and wisdom. Mayor Orden's unwavering selflessness and commitment to democratic ideals find fullest expression at the end of the novella, when he goes to meet his death with peace of mind, having chosen to sacrifice himself rather than act against the interests of his people.

Colonel Lanser – The highest ranking military invader. Colonel Lanser fought in World War I, invading Belgium and France as a young man. Because of this, he has a pessimistic view of "what war really is in the long run,"—seeing it as nothing but "treachery and hatred" that leads only to "new weariness and new hatreds." As a way of dealing with his own misgivings about war, he tells himself that he's merely a soldier carrying out orders and that he shouldn't question his duty. Still, his pessimism is apparent in his dealings with Mayor Orden, a man he treats with respect and civility, acting as if the invasion is only a "business procedure." This naïve approach stems from his unwillingness to admit that this new war will be just as gruesome and futile as the previous, but also his knowledge that maintaining the appearance of order and polite decorum is critical to getting the upper hand in war. When Mayor Orden refuses to carry out Lanser's orders, Lanser becomes increasingly exasperated, partly because Orden's arguments about the nature of democracy seem to ring true to him given his past experiences. Nonetheless, he is bound by his military duty and his affiliation with a fascist regime, and therefore is forced to resort to violent and oppressive measures. Lanser is a deeply frightening character, not because he lacks a moral compass altogether, but because he seems to willfully and stoically *deny* what he knows to be right.

Doctor Winter – The town's local historian and physician, and Mayor Orden's confidante. Winter is an intelligent man who has known Orden since boyhood. His intelligence and wisdom arise from his gentle simplicity and penchant for unhurried observation. It is exactly this capacity for observation that puts Colonel Lanser on edge the first time the two meet, when Winter alludes to the fact that he will include the invasion in the history he's writing about the town. This remark is a calculated attempt to remind the colonel that, as an fascist invader, he is on the wrong side of history—it is exactly this kind of subtle but meaningful aside that marks Doctor Winter as a shrewd man worthy of standing at the mayor's side as both an advocate for democracy and a moral anchor.

Captain Loft – A captain serving under Colonel Lanser in the military regiment that invades the town. Captain Loft is "as much a captain as one can imagine," a man who believes that being a soldier is the highest and most honorable occupation to which a person can aspire. Of all the soldiers, Loft is the most orderly, paying attention to every detail because he believes it is his (and his comrades') duty to uphold certain "military standards" of behavior, thinking that maintaining these standards greatly affects how civilians view the invaders' authority. In this way, Loft serves as an extreme example of what it might look like for a person to be wholly and unquestioningly committed to a fascist regime. Indeed, even his fellow soldiers tire of his insistence upon adhering to procedure and decorum, and his wholehearted investment in the war provide a contrast to Colonel Lanser's weary pessimism regarding their role as conquerors.

Lieutenant Tonder – A lieutenant in the military regiment that invades the town. Tonder first arrives with the starry-eyed naïveté of a young man unprepared for the harsh realities of war, even fantasizing at one point about dying a brave death while triumphant classical music swells over a battlefield. At the same time, he is a sensitive poet who dreams of the "perfect, ideal love of elevated young men for poor girls." This desire to fall in love with a disempowered woman comes to fruition when, after having become psychologically unhinged due to a lack of human connection, he sneaks into Molly Morden's house at night and pleads with her to spend time talking with him. Unbeknownst to him, Molly is the widow of Alexander Morden, a man executed by a group of soldiers commanded by Tonder. Since this event, Tonder has seen that—despite his earlier assumption that the villagers would revere the soldiers and welcome them—the war effort is useless and bleak, a sentiment he expresses at one point by noting that conquest is like flies conquering a strip of flypaper. When he speaks these ideas aloud, Lieutenant Prackle pleads with him to stop and Captain Loft slaps him in the face. This is not the only repercussion he experiences for speaking openly about his misgivings—in fact, Molly Morden stabs him to death with a pair of scissors after he tells her he wants to spend time with her and forget about the war for a little while.

Lieutenant Prackle – Like Lieutenant Tonder, Prackle is an inexperienced young man who assumes his involvement in the military is worthwhile no matter what the cause. He is idealistic and "sensitive," a man who prides himself in condemning art he believes goes against the regime he serves. In this way, Steinbeck portrays Prackle as person who will blindly and vigorously follow his nation regardless of its creed. It is this disposition that drives him to oppose Lieutenant Tonder when the latter openly complains about the war. Nonetheless, after Tonder's death, Prackle himself begins to lose faith, admitting to Colonel Lanser that he wants to go home. Unfortunately for him, Lanser reminds him that he has a duty as a soldier to serve his country, telling him, "We can't take care of your soul." Disheartened but obedient, Prackle calmly stands and thanks the colonel for his advice, demonstrating how hopelessly bereft he is of any ability to think critically about his own actions or role in the war.

Major Hunter – An engineer in the military that invades the town. Major Hunter is more of an arithmetician than a soldier, and spends the vast majority of his time indoors, where he sketches engineering plans for the railroad the invaders are building between the town's coal mine and the waterfront. A literalist, he is very technically-inclined and rarely does more than work on his drawings, occasionally adding a remark or two to whatever conversation people like Colonel Lanser or the lieutenants are having around him as he works. He even enjoys his work, delighting in how much he gets to design and engineer because of the fact that the townspeople are constantly destroying the railroad system. It's a pleasure for him to have a seemingly never-ending amount of work, and so he's unfazed by the bombs that so consistently set his projects behind schedule.

George Corell – A man who has lived for some time in the town as a well-liked storekeeper, but who has actually been serving as an informant for the invading military. In addition to telling the invaders which people in the town owns guns (along with other information pertinent to conquering the village), Mr. Corell organizes a competition in the woods so that the townspeople will be unprepared on the day the invading military arrives. His betrayal comes as a great shock to everybody, especially Mayor Orden, who in the past has collaborated with Corell on various governmental projects, such as the building of a hospital. When Doctor Winter chastises Corell for collaborating with the invaders, Corell defends himself by saying, "'I work for what I believe in! That is an honorable thing.'" Of course, this does little to pacify the townspeople's anger, and Orden refuses to speak with Corell any further. Later, Corell tries to convince Colonel Lanser to appoint him as mayor, but Lanser tells him it would be better for Orden to remain in power, since the people trust him. Lanser also advises Corell to leave the village, since it is no longer a safe place for him to stay given how angry everybody is at him. Nonetheless, Corell decides to stay and even goes over Lanser's head to obtain permission from the government to play a more significant role in the town's post-invasion operations. In this way, Corell is portrayed as a power-hungry man with no loyalty or sense of shame.

Madame (Sarah) Orden – Mayor Orden's wife. Madame is eternally concerned with making sure her husband is presentable and ready to receive guests. On the day of the town's invasion, she even busies herself with trimming his ear hair. She also takes pains to prepare the household for Colonel Lanser's first visit, wondering all the while whether or not she and her husband should follow various customs such as offering the invaders wine upon their arrival. In this way, she reveals herself to be somebody who invests herself in appearances and decorum, but also in doing the right thing. In keeping with this temperament, she often criticizes Joseph (the family's servant) and Annie (the cook) regarding their behavior.

Joseph – The servant in Mayor Orden and Madame Orden's home. Joseph is obsessive and easily overwhelmed, often making matters more complicated than they need to be. He yearns to have an "opinion" about the invasion—wanting to be able to say something interesting and worthwhile about the events to Annie, the cook—but finds himself unable to come up with anything on his own. Instead, he directs his attention to the house's furniture, trying to put the chairs perfectly in order but finding that somebody always moves them an inch or so. "In a world where Mayor Orden was the leader of men," Steinbeck writes, "Joseph was the leader of furniture, silver, and dishes." As such, Joseph often rushes to a chair after somebody has stood up, correcting its position and monitoring the other pieces of furniture. His attention to these matters is indicative of the novella's overall concern with the matters of order and control—concepts that dominate many of the characters' inner lives.

Annie – Mayor Orden and Madame Orden's cook. Annie has a strong temper and a fierce spirit, which she displays early on by dumping a pot of boiling water onto a group of soldiers during Colonel Lanser and Mayor Orden's first meeting. She does this simply because these soldiers are standing on the back porch and watching her through the window. Annie also has a knack for skillfully sneaking around the town after curfew, often running furtive errands for Mayor Orden and serving as a lookout when he secretly visits Molly Morden's house to help organize Will and Tom Anders' (two local men) escape from the town.

Captain Bentick – A member of the invading military. Captain Bentick is a friendly man who's a bit too old to be a lowly captain, though his unambitious military career doesn't bother him. Instead, he focuses on other, more pleasant things, like his penchant for dressing in the style of a distinguished Englishman. In fact, his love of British culture is so strong that he smokes an English pipe and vacations in Sussex whenever he has the chance. Unfortunately for him, though, he is the first soldier to die in the town. This happens when Captain Loft comes to relieve him one day from his shift overseeing the coal miners. Enraged by the fact that he's being forced to work, a local miner named Alexander Morden attacks Loft, at which point Captain Bentick intervenes and receives a pickaxe to the head.

Alexander Morden – A coal miner and local villager married to a woman named Molly Morden. While working in the mines one day, Alex refuses to continue, arguing that he's a free man and thus doesn't have to toil for the invading military. Captain Loft tries to subdue him, as does Captain Bentick. In the commotion, Alexander drives a pickaxe into Bentick's head. The kindly old captain dies, and Alex is taken as a prisoner. Colonel Lanser tells Mayor Orden that the young man must be put to death, requesting that the order come from Orden himself. Feeling deep sympathy for Alex, the mayor refuses to sentence

him. Regardless, the miner is found guilty and executed by a firing squad commanded by Lieutenant Tonder.

Molly Morden – A local villager who is widowed after her husband, Alexander Morden, is executed by firing squad for having killed Captain Bentick. When Mayor Orden secretly organizes an escape plan for two local men, Will and Tom Anders, he uses Molly's house as a safe place to speak with the two fugitives. Despite Orden's belief that Molly's house is safe, though, the meeting is interrupted by Lieutenant Tonder, who has taken a liking to Molly after watching her in the streets, deciding she must be a kind woman. Tonder tells Molly in a previous meeting (right before Mayor Orden arrives) that he wants to "forget the war … just for a little while" so that he and she can "talk together like people." What Tonder has failed to remember is that he was the one to command the firing squad that killed Molly's husband. When he returns to her house later, Molly stabs him to death with a pair of scissors and then flees town.

Will Anders – A local fisherman. Will and his brother Tom steal Mr. Corell's boat and sail in the dead of night to England. They do so in order to escape the invaders, who are searching for them because their other brother, Jack Anders, blew up a car. Before they leave, they secretly meet with Mayor Orden in Molly Morden's house, where he tells them to ask British forces to send aid—dynamite in particular—to the town once they've arrived in England. On their way to steal the boat, they try to bring Mr. Corell along so that they can throw him overboard, but he manages to escape. Despite this hiccup in the brothers' plan, they clearly succeed in relaying Mayor Orden's message, since not long after their departure a plane flies over the town and drops packages of dynamite to be used against the invading military.

Tom Anders – A local fisherman, and Will Anders's brother. With Will, Tom escapes the town after Jack Anders—his other brother—is killed for having blown up a car. Also with Will, he is involved in Mayor Orden's plan to ask British forces to drop packages of dynamite to help the town fight its invaders.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Jack Anders – Will and Tom Anders's brother, who is killed after destroying a car. Jack's fate forces his brothers to flee the town, since the military hunts down family members of rebellious citizens.

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.

DEMOCRACY AND CONQUEST

In *The Moon is Down*, John Steinbeck celebrates the power of democracy by examining the ways in which a society built upon the principles of equality and fair governmental representation is capable of resisting the power of authoritarianism. Written with the intention of giving hope to Nazi-occupied European nations toward the end of the Second World War, Steinbeck's novella suggests that fascist invaders underestimate the power of democratic unity. For example, when Colonel Lanser and his troops (the book's Nazi equivalents) invade the unnamed town where the story takes place, they fail to understand that brute force won't guarantee successful conquest. Mayor Orden, on the other hand, knows that the invaders will never be able to fully control his town because they haven't won the faith and support of the townspeople. "'The people don't like to be conquered, sir, and so they will not be,'" he explains to Colonel Lanser. "'Free men cannot start a war, but once it is started, they can fight on in defeat. Herd men, followers of a leader, cannot do that, and so it is always the herd men who win battles and the free men who win wars.'" In this way, Steinbeck argues that democracy—which gives power to all people, not just to a ruler or ruling class—acts as a bulwark against total subjugation. The novella has a clear and hopeful message that true conquest and defeat are impossible in free-thinking nations with democratic leadership.

Mayor Orden himself is a living manifestation of a purely democratic leader. He won't act or make decisions without first understanding what the people he represents want from him. In their first meeting after the town has been invaded, Colonel Lanser asks Orden if he will cooperate. "'I don't know,'" Orden answers honestly. "When the town makes up its mind what it wants to do, I'll probably do that.'" This approach to leadership baffles Colonel Lanser, who comes from a governmental system that revolves around authoritative rule. With this in mind, he says, "'But you are the authority,'" to which Mayor Orden responds: "'You won't believe this, but it is true: authority is in the town. I don't know how or why, but it is so. This means we cannot act as quickly as you can, but when a direction is set, we all act together.'" This approach to governance is deeply democratic, since Mayor Orden appears willing to follow through with whatever his people decide. When Orden says "you won't believe this," he picks up on the fact that Colonel Lanser operates within an entirely different system of government, one in which the nuances of democratic rule are all but unfathomable—and he also seems to acknowledge that true democracy such as this is a rare and fragile thing. This ultimately highlights the difference between Lanser and Orden's two styles of governance: one prizes democracy while the other prizes conquest and authoritarianism.

Perhaps some of Orden's willingness to accept whatever his

people decide comes from his understanding of the democratic process, wherein an official comes to power not by forcing him- or herself to the top, but rather by getting elected to office by the town's (or country's) population. This approach underlines the fact that whatever power governmental officials possess depends on the support of their constituents. In turn, Mayor Orden recognizes that he is nothing more than an elevated citizen himself, an idea he expresses to Lanser when he says, "'I am of this people […]. Some people accept appointed leaders and obey them. But my people have elected me. They made me and they can unmake me. Perhaps they will if they think I have gone over to you.'" By saying that his people might "unmake" him if he aligns with the invaders, Orden cunningly finds a way to avoid helping Colonel Lanser control the townspeople. In doing so, he shows Lanser that it will be difficult to conquer these villagers because they have the ability to make and "unmake" powerful people.

It is clear from Colonel Lanser and Mayor Orden's conversation that the idea of consensus is important when it comes to matters of conquest. In fact, both the invaders and the invaded people believe it's crucial to have some sort of unifying governance. The difference, however, is that the conquerors' idea of unity is based on an authoritarian, top-down model of power that strips citizens of their agency. Mayor Orden and his constituents, on the other hand, believe in banding together as one political body. In other words, because the invaders attempt to *force* consensus onto the town by repeatedly threatening the mayor, they render the very idea of unity impossible, instead creating an atmosphere of subjugation that ultimately only serves to bolster the townspeople's will to resist. At the same time, Colonel Lanser understands that a government can't invade a town and simply expect the inhabitants to instantly accept new leaders. This is why he tries to manipulate Mayor Orden's democratic influence, a tactic he explains in conversation with Corell, the man who organized the invasion. Lanser tells Corell: "'Mayor Orden is more than a mayor. He is his people. He knows what they are doing, thinking, without asking, because he will think what they think. By watching him I will know them.'" Unfortunately for Lanser, trying to extort an elected official's political influence is an inherently authoritarian tactic, and Orden recognizes this—ultimately choosing to sacrifice his life rather than allow himself to be manipulated in the service of authoritarian rule.

In addition to demonstrating that authoritarianism is ineffective against true democracy, Steinbeck also shows that conquest leads to different forms of alienation. Figures like Lieutenant Tonder and Lieutenant Prackle, for example, arrived in the town with the naïve impression that the villagers would both accept their authority and allow them to integrate socially, but they both find themselves unable to have meaningful interactions with the townspeople. Tonder even says, "'[…] it's a nice country, nice people. Our men—some of them—might even settle here,'" a statement that reveals his unrealistic hope that he will get along with the very people he's trying to subordinate. Later, when this proves impossible, he understands that a force larger than himself—the force of fascism—has rendered him unable to relate to the villagers.

Lieutenant Tonder recognizes that his country has only conquered the town on the most superficial level, and that the more he and his comrades fight to subjugate the villagers, the more the villagers will resist both ideologically and physically. These thoughts cause him to doubt whether his country has truly succeeded in their invasion of enemy land. "'Captain, is this place conquered?'" he pessimistically asks Captain Loft. Loft says yes, and Tonder eventually voices his skepticism, saying, "'Conquest after conquest, deeper and deeper into molasses. […] Maybe the Leader is crazy. Flies conquer the flypaper. Flies capture two hundred miles of new flypaper!'" Tonder's "flypaper" metaphor speaks to the idea that conquest in democratic lands is futile, for it is seemingly impossible to stamp out resistance in nations where free-thinking rules the day. In this case, the invaders are the "flies" that flock to the sticky "flypaper," foolishly thinking that occupying new territories leads to successful conquest. In reality, this is not the case, and the invaders find themselves ensnared in long, complicated wars, equivalent to being stuck to a strip of "flypaper." In this way, Steinbeck shows that the soldiers' occupation of the town does not mean they've successfully conquered its people.

In keeping with the overarching idea that democratic nations are capable of resisting fascism long after they've been invaded, Mayor Orden puts his faith in his people to commit themselves first and foremost to the health and strength of their democratic union instead of surrendering simply because he—the mayor—has been arrested. Orden voices this idea in response to Colonel Lanser's last-ditch effort to break the townspeople's spirits by arresting Mayor Orden and threatening him with death—a move the colonel hopes will discourage further resistance: "'They can't arrest the Mayor,'" Orden explains. "'The Mayor is an idea conceived by free men. It will escape arrest.'" By saying this, Orden reveals that the true power of a democracy is its devotion to a set of ideals, not to a particular man. As such, it is naïve of the invaders to think that they can break apart a democratic body by executing its leader. This kind of thinking is modeled on their own authoritarian concepts of governance, meaning that they have once again failed to grasp how a truly egalitarian society operates. Although the novel ends before the occupying military forces are defeated, Steinbeck suggests that nothing can squash the spirit of democracy in this town—and that, even after Mayor Orden is gone, the townspeople will carry on fighting until they are victorious.

EMPATHY AND THE EFFECTS OF FASCISM

Although the invaders in *The Moon is Down* are the book's antagonists, Steinbeck invites readers to empathize—at least on some level—with the fact that the invaders have been tasked with the seemingly impossible mission of controlling a resilient community that automatically hates them and everything they stand for. Steinbeck does this by devoting significant portions of the novella to conversations between invading military officials, many of whom express doubts about what they're doing in the town and whether it's working. By showing readers that soldiers like Lieutenant Tonder, Lieutenant Prackle, and even Colonel Lanser question their own actions, Steinbeck allows otherwise irredeemable characters a certain amount of humanity—something for which Steinbeck was criticized when *The Moon is Down* came out because people claimed that this was akin to was portraying Nazis in a sympathetic light. Although this may be the case, it's worth noting that characters like Colonel Lanser ultimately fail to successfully carry out their orders. And although these soldiers may be portrayed as complex—rather than purely evil—characters, they're still unable to transcend or disavow their loyalty to a fascist country, meaning that they're ultimately tragically stranded in their own delusions, unable to connect with the townspeople or even to one another. The result is a book in which every character—even those with the most inhumane views—is nevertheless vividly and richly humanized by Steinbeck.

Steinbeck uses Colonel Lanser to show that commitment to a fascist regime short-circuits a person's empathetic capabilities. Strangely enough, Lanser respects Mayor Orden and his people, despite his duty to subdue them. After one of the town's coal miners kills Captain Bentick, Colonel Lanser asks Mayor Orden to sentence the man to death, thinking that it would be best if the sentencing came from the town's mayor. When Orden argues against this, Lanser says, "'Personally, I have respect for you and your office, [...] you see, what I think, sir, I, a man of certain age and certain memories, is of no importance. I might agree with you, but that would change nothing. The military, the political pattern I work in has certain tendencies and practices which are invariable.'" In this passage, Lanser comes close to saying that he is of the same mind as Mayor Orden when it comes to the useless cruelty of sentencing the coal miner to death. However, his ability to sympathize with Orden remains purely hypothetical: Lanser says he *might* agree with Orden—*if*, that is, he were allowed to think for himself instead of having to operate in a rigid military system that has "invariable" policies and practices. In this way, Lanser allows his role as a colonel in a fascist military to overshadow his capacity to show human empathy and compassion for the inhabitants of Mayor Orden's town. Indeed, he fails to see his wretched duty as anything but inescapable.

This kind of commitment to the fascist regime wears on the invading soldiers throughout *The Moon is Down*—a fact that speaks to how unnatural it is to behave with such a lack of compassion for fellow human beings. The strongest example of the harmfulness of this attitude comes when Lieutenant Tonder—driven mad by his feeling that successful conquest is impossible—sneaks out in the middle of the night to visit Molly Morden. Molly is the executed coal miner's widow, but this isn't why Tonder seeks her out (he isn't even aware of her relation at first). Rather, he comes to her house because he's desperate for human connection. He says, "'Just for a little while, can't we forget this war? Just for a little while. Just for a little while, can't we talk together like people—together?'" What he says here is important because it implies that he and Molly can't "talk together like people" so long as the war continues—therefore, he asks her if they can "forget" the war for "a little while." In the same way that Colonel Lanser can't exercise his empathetic faculties because of the demands his military and country have put on him, Tonder can't connect with Molly without blocking-out the reality of the war. Unfortunately for him, it is too much to ask the wife of a man who was executed by the military to simply "forget" about the war, and she stabs the lieutenant to death with a pair of scissors. Therefore, Steinbeck implies that—despite his desire to connect with Molly—Tonder is unable to escape the consequences of his affiliation with the fascist regime.

Not only are the invaders unable to connect with the townspeople, they also have trouble relating to one another. This is because each official approaches the war and the invasion in his own way: Colonel Lanser accepts and carries out his orders pessimistically, knowing from past experiences how hard it is to win a war; Captain Loft applies an overzealous and idealistic vigor to his duties; Lieutenants Prackle and Tonder,—though they start off starry-eyed and hopeful about the possibility of military success, grow more and more dispirited with the war effort and more and more dysfunctional as a result. Tonder and Prackle's relationship is particularly interesting because they both experience the same kind of disenchantment, but at different times. When Tonder first starts complaining about the war, saying that trying to conquer a democratic nation is like "flies [trying to] conquer the flypaper," Prackle cuts him off, imploring Captain Loft to stop Tonder from speaking so dispiritedly: "'I wish you'd make him shut up. I wish you would shut him up. Make him stop it,'" he says. This is because Prackle has the same reservations as Tonder, but hasn't yet resigned himself to this attitude. Rather than bonding with his comrade over their shared misgivings, Prackle sees it as his patriotic duty to "shut him up." Thus, he renders any empathy or fellow-feeling off limits. It isn't until later—after Tonder has been killed—that Prackle dares speak up about his own discontent, telling Colonel Lanser, "'I don't like it here, sir.'" It's a shame that he didn't tell this to Tonder, who desperately needed somebody to relate to. Whereas a

conversation with Tonder about the hopelessness of their mission may have soothed both men, Prackle's statement to Lanser only elicits a reprimand, as Lanser says, "'You're not a man any more. You are a soldier." This statement, too, shuts down any possibility of human connection, since Lanser explicitly denies Prackle's humanity. This lack of compassion and empathy, Steinbeck shows, is intertwined with fascist ideology, and is one of the qualities that alienates the invaders from one another and the townspeople, ultimately dooming them to fail in their mission.

ORDER, CONTROL, AND HIERARCHY

The Moon is Down studies how authoritarian regimes try to implement order as a way of cementing their control over people. Throughout the novel, Colonel Lanser calls upon Mayor Orden to help him enforce—and to a certain extent regain—a sense of order over the townspeople. Of course, this is somewhat ironic, considering that the invaders themselves were the ones to disrupt the town's order in the first place when they arrived with their weapons and fascist ways. Although Mayor Orden may seem to have no control over the townspeople, this is only because he invests himself in a different *kind* of order than Colonel Lanser: one decided upon not by political authorities, but by the people themselves. As such, Orden represents an altogether different sense of order: one that doesn't depend on hierarchy or control *of* the people, but on equality and control *by* the people.

The obsessive Captain Loft is a perfect example of a person who invests himself in order, form, and control. Even amongst his own people, he advocates for total adherence to the rules and regulations laid out by "the Leader." He argues that he and his fellow invaders must work within their hierarchal roles to exemplify to the townspeople that orderliness equals power. For example, when Captain Bentick goes on patrol without wearing his military-issued helmet, Loft criticizes his actions, saying, "'It's bad practice to leave it off. It's bad for the people here. We must maintain a military standard, an alertness, and never vary from it. We'll just invite trouble if we don't.'" As he sees it, straying from the established rules will only "invite trouble." He believes that by maintaining an appearance of order, he and his fellow soldiers simultaneously create an appearance of control over the conquered village. This commitment to decorum is essentially a commitment to military hierarchies, but it does little in the way of actually influencing the townspeople, who rebel against the invaders regardless of whether or not the soldiers are following "military standard[s]."

Steinbeck seems to suggest that governmental and militaristic hierarchies have little influence on a community's freedom of thought or freedom of speech by showing how the townspeople disseminate information without the knowledge of the invaders. Whispers and messages travel throughout the community, and the invaders find it immensely difficult to stop or control this spread of information. Even Mayor Orden at one point wonders how it could be that the population he supposedly represents often knows things before he does. Doctor Winter replies by saying, "'That is a great mystery. That is a mystery that has disturbed rulers all over the world—how the people know. It disturbs the invaders now, I am told, how news runs through censorships, how the truth of things fights free of control. It is a great mystery.'" By saying, "It disturbs the invaders now, I am told," Winter slyly *proves* the extent to which "news runs through censorships," since he himself seems to have been told something that the invaders would most likely not want him to know—that it disturbs them—and is now passing it on. When he says that "the truth of things fights free of control," he asserts that justice naturally struggles against oppression until the truth evades all censorship. This means that any effort made by the invaders to impose order is futile when it comes to the power of free speech and the dissemination of information.

Unlike Colonel Lanser, Mayor Orden understands that "the truth of things fights free of control" no matter how hard a regime tries to control the people it wants to oppress. In fact, Orden readily relinquishes his own personal "control," understanding and accepting that his influence over his constituents only operates insofar as he accurately represents their needs. This is much to the dismay of Lanser, who wants to use the mayor's authority to his own advantage. Trying to explain that this is a flawed approach, Orden says, "'You don't understand. When I have become a hindrance to the people, they will do without me,'" indicating that the people control *him*, and not the other way around. It's clear that Steinbeck has some fun with this dynamic between Orden and Lanser, especially when one considers that Orden's name very closely resembles the word "order," a fact that perhaps mocks Lanser's belief that the mayor is a person who can control his people. "'Mayor Orden,'" Lanser says earlier in the book, "'you know our orders are inexorable. We must get the coal. If your people are not orderly, we will have to restore that order by force. We must shoot people if it is necessary. If you wish to save your people from hurt, you must help us to keep order. Now it is considered wise by my government that punishment emanate from the local authority. It makes for a more orderly situation.'" It's worth noting that in addressing the mayor, Lanser uses the word "order" no less than five times, thereby emphasizing his conviction that Orden's duty is to control his people. However, as Orden has told him, Lanser's ideas about a mayor's powers are mistaken because they fail to take into account the principle that the mayor is only powerful as a representative of his people, thus rendering it impossible for him to abuse his position to subjugate his constituents.

APPEARANCES AND CIVILITY

The fascist military in *The Moon is Down* tries to give the impression that it operates according to rules of civility, hoping to convince the townspeople that this wartime invasion is a simple political matter and not a violent assault on freedom and democracy. Colonel Lanser even tells Mayor Orden that the occupation of the town is "'more like a business venture than anything else.'" In doing so, he tries to ease his own conscience regarding his role in the war while simultaneously ensuring that the people he must subordinate stay calm and even unaware of the true significance of what's happening. His logic is clear: if he and his soldiers appear to be civil, he hopes the villagers will not recognize their freedom being taken away from them and refrain from retaliating—like frogs in boiling water. As such, it becomes evident that appearances are of great importance during wartime. While the invaders carefully monitor their comportment so as not to upset the delicate balance of things (despite having already disturbed it beyond measure), the mayor and other townspeople pay close attention to what is happening beneath the thin veneer of civility.

From the very beginning of the invasion, the townspeople weigh the importance of treating the invading military amicably. As Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter prepare to meet with Colonel Lanser for the first time, Madame Orden asks if they should offer the colonel a glass of wine when he arrives. "'I don't know,'" says Doctor Winter. "'It's been so long since we conquered anybody or anybody conquered us. I don't know what is proper.'" That Winter uses the word "proper" indicates that he perceives invasion and conquest as a somewhat ritualized process that calls for specific behavior. The mayor, for his part, objects to the idea of offering the enemy a glass of wine, and his wife replies by saying that the rest of the townspeople are in the central square listening to the invaders' bands play triumphant music. "'If they can do that,'" she says, "why shouldn't we keep civilized procedure alive?'" It's noteworthy that this "civilized procedure" Madame Orden references has thus far been put into practice—rather strategically—by the invaders themselves, who are trying to placate the villagers with friendly music. Indeed, Mayor Orden implies that the military's supposedly "civil" behavior only *appears* to be friendly by reminding Doctor Winter and Madame that "'Six town boys were murdered this morning.'" When he says this, Winter and his wife are forced to recognize that the appearance of civility in times of war is no more than that: an appearance.

In addition to the clear contradictions inherent in notions of civility during wartime, it becomes overwhelmingly apparent that Colonel Lanser's insistence on amicability is first and foremost a tactical move. He says as much when he tells Mayor Orden during their first meeting, "'We want to get along as well as we can.'" He then continues by saying—as previously mentioned—that the invasion is something of a "business venture," justifying this statement by explaining, "'We need the coal mine here and the fishing. We will try to get along with just as little friction as possible.'" By framing the military occupation of the town as a "business venture" in which the soldiers will try to "get along with just as little friction as possible," Lanser tries to coax Orden into a mindset of comfort and complacency, changing the nature of their relationship from wartime enemies to simple businessmen. This is a strategic way of manipulating the enemy, a testament to how the guise of civility can be used to bring about blatantly uncivilized circumstances—namely, the total domination and oppression of helpless civilians with the aim of extracting their resources to support a hostile war effort.

Although Colonel Lanser uses an air of civility to try to manipulate Orden and the townspeople, he also does so because he understands how brutal and unfortunate war can be, and he wants to avoid such barbarity for as long as he can. This is not the case for Captain Loft, who is deeply invested in the idea of keeping up certain militaristic appearances. The first description of him in the novella nicely outlines his tendency to obsess over small details: "He knew every kind of military courtesy and insisted on using it all." Steinbeck often uses Loft to insert a certain amount of comedic relief into *The Moon is Down*, but he also utilizes the nitpicky captain to illustrate what it might look like for a soldier to commit himself fully to the notion that "military courtesy" can be a source of power. Indeed, the narrator notes that even Loft's superiors sometimes feel threatened by his strict cultivation of his military image, and that "Generals were afraid of him because he knew more about the deportment of a soldier than they did." Unlike Colonel Lanser, then, Loft is dedicated to behaving like a soldier as an end in and of itself. While Lanser recognizes that civility and military "courtesies" can sometimes prove effective when it comes to matters of conquest, Loft lives and breathes military protocol simply because it reaffirms his own identity and the power structure it exists within.

Colonel Lanser's decision to frame the invasion as a simple "business procedure" is not the only tactical move he makes when it comes to how he cultivates the military's outward appearance. Indeed, his whole method of leadership is based on how the town perceives certain actions, and these actions aren't always meant to communicate harmlessness or amicability. Rather, he sometimes adopts an exaggeratedly authoritarian model of leadership, doing so precisely because it will intimidate the villagers. He admits this approach to Mayor Orden while trying to convince him to sentence Alexander Morden—a miner who killed Captain Bentick—to death. "'You know as well as I that punishment is largely for the purpose of deterring the potential criminal,'" he says to Orden. "'Thus, since punishment is for others than the punished, it must be publicized. It must even be dramatized.'" His assertion that punishment must be "dramatized" emphasizes the extent to

which he believes his power and claim to leadership depend on the message he sends to the town. Simply put, then, punishment becomes nothing more than a matter of performance. In the same way that the civility Colonel Lanser shows to Mayor Orden is merely a tactical move, his manner of "dramatizing" punishment is a manipulative way of giving the townspeople the impression that the fascist regime is powerful and poses a danger to their own lives. By presenting punishment as a performance, Lanser inadvertently implies that he is only *acting* like a cruel military leader. In this way, Steinbeck portrays him as a spineless man only capable of effecting various airs, but incapable of behaving in a way that reflects what he actually believes in. Given the fact that Lanser is pessimistic about the war, it would be reasonable to suggest that he might even secretly sympathize with Mayor Orden and the townspeople—and that it is perhaps precisely *because* of these feelings that he devotes so much of his energy to cultivating the appearance of loyalty to his own regime. Unfortunately, this performance of loyalty keeps him from acting like a moral human being, and no amount of feigned civility can change this. Consequently, the novella implies that focusing on appearances can stand in the way of leading an ethical life.

SYMBOLS

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

THE PALACE

Mayor Orden and Madame Orden's palace serves as a hub of influence in *The Moon Is Down*. At least, this is what Colonel Lanser and his soldiers hope when they decide to take up quarters on the palace's second floor. "We have found that when a staff lives under the roof of the local authority, there is more tranquility," Lanser tells Orden. In other words, the conquerors want to appear as if they're working together with the "local authority" so that the townspeople are less likely to resist their orders. In this way, Lanser conflates the palace with power and control, treating it as emblematic of Mayor Orden's leadership. Of course, Orden himself rejects the notion that as mayor he has the authority to command his people—rather, he prefers to allow *them* to inform *his* decisions—and so Lanser's occupation of the palace does very little in the way of helping to pacify or subordinate the villagers. Furthermore, the palace itself is symbolic of the negative effect the invaders have on the town. Indeed, at the end of the novella, Doctor Winter notices that one of the drawing-room chairs—which were all so perfectly and meticulously tended by Joseph before the conquerors arrived—has a rip in its upholstery. As such, what was once a sterling set of furniture now shows the marks of wear and fatigue, further highlighting how Colonel Lanser and his soldiers are a detriment to the town. Ironically enough, the invading soldiers now live in the very palace they're destroying, and although they've come no closer to fully conquering or dominating the villagers, they have trapped themselves within a deteriorating environment they once thought communicated power and supremacy. In this way, the palace *is* a symbol of authority and power, but it symbolizes the authority of the people and the power of democracy rather than the power of any one man or group of men.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *The Moon is Down* published in 1995.

Chapter 1 Quotes

"The Mayor looked steadily at her for a moment and his voice was sharp. "Madame, I think with your permission we will not have wine. The people are confused now. They have lived at peace so long that they do not quite believe in war. They will learn and then they will not be confused any more. They elected me not to be confused. Six town boys were murdered this morning. I think we will have no hunt breakfast. The people do not fight wars for sport."

Related Characters: Mayor Orden (speaker), Colonel Lanser, Madame (Sarah) Orden

Related Themes:

Page Number: 10

Explanation and Analysis

Mayor Orden says this to his wife when she asks whether or not they should serve Colonel Lanser wine or tea when he arrives at the palace for the first time. This is a noteworthy moment because it is one of the only times throughout the entire novella in which Orden makes a decision without first deferring to his citizens. "The people are confused now," he says, meaning that the commotion and chaos of that morning's invasion has temporarily put the townspeople out of sorts. As such, he sees it as his duty to act in the way he *thinks* they would want him to act if they were less "confused." The town has seen very little action in recent years when it comes to conquest and war, but Orden is confident that the villagers will soon learn what it's like to live in an invaded country—and when they do, they'll know that conquerors should be met with scorn. With this in

mind, he decides to not follow the customary tradition of offering conquerors a glass of wine, realizing that he must appear strong because that's what his constituents will want once they've come to their senses. What's interesting, then, is that the only time in *The Moon Is Down* that Orden asserts his individual power is when he's doing so to best serve his people, a fact that further proves his commitment to the democratic process.

> And Orden said, "Yes, that's clear enough. But suppose the people do not want to work the mine?"
> The colonel said, "I hope they will want to, because they must. We must have the coal."
> "But if they don't?"
> "They must. They are an orderly people. They don't want trouble." He waited for the Mayor's reply and none came. "Is that not so, sir?"
> Mayor Orden twisted his chain. "I don't know, sir. They are orderly under their own government. I don't know how they would be under yours. It is untouched ground, you see. We have built our government over four hundred years."

Related Characters: Colonel Lanser, Mayor Orden (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Mayor Orden and Colonel Lanser discuss how the townspeople will react to having been conquered. Orden is clearly testing the limits of Lanser's power, feeling out how much leniency there will be under this new regime. This is clear when he asks, "But suppose the people do not want to work the mine?" At the same time, Lanser is also testing the waters, so to speak, as he tries to discern whether or not Orden's people will easily submit to the conquerors. In doing so, he subtly tries to convince the mayor into seeing things from his perspective, a tactic evidenced by the fact that he makes two hopeful statements about the villagers: that "they are an orderly people" and "they don't want trouble" before asking, "Is that not so, sir?" In this moment, it's as if Lanser thinks getting Orden to agree with him about the villagers' "orderliness" will *make* it true that they "don't want trouble." Of course, Mayor Orden is unwilling to promise that his people will accept the invaders—a point he argues by highlighting the fact that one can't simply expect an entire community to give up its way of life to show loyalty to a new and overbearing regime.

Chapter 2 Quotes

> Lieutenants Prackle and Tonder were snot-noses, undergraduates, lieutenants, trained in the politics of the day, believing the great new system invented by a genius so great that they never bothered to verify its results. They were sentimental young men, given to tears and furies.

Related Characters: Lieutenant Prackle, Lieutenant Tonder

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Steinbeck writes these words about Lieutenant Tonder and Lieutenant Prackle as a way of introducing the two young men. In this manner, he presents them as naïve and idealistic, a characterization he achieves right away by calling them "snot-noses" and relating their young sense of entitlement to "the politics of the day." Even more importantly, he emphasizes the inordinate amount of faith the two lieutenants place in their regime. In fact, Steinbeck uses the word "great" twice in the same sentence, saying that Tonder and Prackle believe the "great new system [was] invented by a genius so great" that they need not even "verify its results," meaning that their confidence in their government is so strong that they think it's unnecessary to think twice about the regime's actions. The repetition of "great" shows just how intensely the lieutenants admire the system to which they belong—of course, any admiration this strong seems suspicious, as if they purposefully turn a blind eye to their government's shortcomings or wrongdoings in order to enjoy affiliating themselves with something "great." In this way, Steinbeck illustrates how unthinking young men often tend to idolize the hierarchies they think give them power.

> Lanser had been in Belgium and France twenty years before and he tried not to think what he knew—that war is treachery and hatred, the muddling of incompetent generals, the torture and killing and sickness and tiredness, until at last it is over and nothing has changed except for new weariness and new hatreds. Lanser told himself he was a soldier, given orders to carry out. He was not expected to question or to think, but only to carry out orders; and he tried to put aside the sick memories of the other war and the certainty that this would be the same. This one will be different, he said to himself fifty times a day; this one will be very different.

Related Characters: Colonel Lanser

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

This description of Colonel Lanser outlines his general approach to war and conflict. Steinbeck places an especially heavy emphasis on the colonel's pessimistic outlook by using words like "treachery," "hatred," "torture," "killing," "sickness," and "tiredness." To make this point—that war leads only to this kind of weary futility—even stronger, Steinbeck then writes: "at last it is over and nothing has changed." This mentality of Lanser's is important to remember throughout the novella, as his skepticism and general "weariness" seems to hover around him at all times. However, he rarely lets this perspective affect his ability to "carry out orders." This is because he focuses on the fact that he believes he is expected not "to question or to think, but only to carry out orders." As such, he denies himself a sense of agency as a way of accepting his wretched role in a war in which he doesn't seem to believe. Consequently, Steinbeck implies that a person can't be both a moral actor and a conqueror—instead, one must choose between the two, and Lanser has chosen to be a conqueror.

> In marching, in mobs, in football games, and in war, outlines become vague; real things become unreal and a fog creeps over the mind. Tension and excitement, weariness, movement—all merge in one great gray dream, so that when it is over, it is hard to remember how it was when you killed men or ordered them to be killed. Then other people who were not there tell you what it was like and you say vaguely, "Yes, I guess that's how it was."

Related Characters: Colonel Lanser

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

This passage comes directly after Steinbeck's description of Colonel Lanser, who he's just described as someone who follows orders even when doing so means ignoring his own moral compass. The idea that "outlines become vague" in times of war perhaps sheds some insight into how Lanser justifies working for a cause he doesn't believe in. By reassuring himself that he's merely a military official carrying out his duties, he descends into a "great gray dream" in which morality is difficult to define and even harder to separate from the importance of carrying out orders. Indeed, Lanser's own thoughts—about the brutality of war and the futility of conquest—"merge" with the tasks immediately at hand, like "kill[ing] men or order[ing] them to be killed." Above all, this muddled vagueness is a defense mechanism, a way that soldiers carry out their unconscionable duties without blaming themselves for doing terrible things; they allow "a fog" to "creep over the mind" and obscure their consciences.

> Then Corell said insinuatingly, "Are you afraid, Colonel? Should the commander of this occupation be afraid?"
> Lanser sat down heavily and said, "Maybe that's it." And he said disgustedly, "I'm tired of people who have not been at war who know all about it." He held his chin in his hand and said, "I remember a little old woman in Brussels—sweet face, white hair; she was only four feet eleven; delicate old hands. You could see the veins almost black against her skin. And her black shawl and her blue-white hair. She used to sing our national songs to us in a quivering, sweet voice. She always knew where to find a cigarette or a virgin." He dropped his hand from his chin, and he caught himself as though he had been asleep. "We didn't know her son had been executed," he said. "When we finally shot her, she had killed twelve men with a long, black hatpin. I have it yet at home. It was an enamel button with a bird over it, red and blue."
> Corell said, "But you shot her?"
> "Of course we shot her."
> "And the murders stopped?" asked Corell.
> "No, the murders did not stop."

Related Characters: Colonel Lanser, George Corell (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Colonel Lanser explains to Mr. Corell that the townspeople are dangerous despite their seeming friendliness. Mr. Corell, for his part, wants to stay in the village because he feels at home there, but Lanser insists that Corell is unsafe because he has betrayed the villagers. Lanser predicts they will eventually retaliate against Corell, but Corell doesn't believe him, so Lanser tells this story about the small old woman he encountered in Brussels

during the First World War. He presents the woman as trustworthy and kind—somebody who has willingly accepted the new regime being forced upon her and her people—but the woman's subservience and respect were an act, and the soldiers paid dearly for believing in it. This is perhaps why Colonel Lanser spends so much time in *The Moon Is Down* cultivating his own appearance: he has seen how effective a person can be if the enemy believes he is benign, or even trustworthy. As such, Lanser's story serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it warns Corell against being too sure of his own safety, reminding him that it's wise to be a little "afraid" during an occupation. On the other hand, it reveals his understanding that appearances can be manipulated and used tactically during wartime.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ Winter said, "I would guess it is for the show. There's an idea about it: if you go through the form of a thing, you have it, and sometimes people are satisfied with the form of a thing. We had an army—soldiers with guns—but it wasn't an army, you see. The invaders will have a trial and hope to convince the people that there is justice involved. Alex did the captain, you know."

Related Characters: Doctor Winter (speaker), Alexander Morden, Mayor Orden

Related Themes:

Page Number: 43

Explanation and Analysis

Doctor Winter says this to Mayor Orden as the two friends discuss Alexander Morden's upcoming trial. In this moment, Orden has just asked Winter why the conquerors think it's necessary to hold a trial for Alex in the first place, since it's indisputable that the young man killed Captain Bentick. Furthermore, the entire process of justice is clearly a ruse, since the invaders quite obviously have no intentions of pardoning Alex. What's important about Winter's response to these questions is his assertion that the trial's primary purpose is to uphold a semblance of "form" and order. The passage highlights one of the novella's main themes: how great injustices can be committed without dissent as long as the appearance of order is maintained. Indeed, Winter says that "sometimes people are satisfied with the form of a thing," suggesting that in times of crisis what people desire most is to be made to feel that everything is under control. Even though everybody knows the invaders will kill Alex Morden, they would be even more enraged and dispirited if the conquerors simply executed the young man without making even an empty gesture toward some semblance of orderly procedure or justice.

❝ At last Orden answered, "Why didn't you shoot him then? That was the time to do it."

Lanser shook his head. "If I agreed with you, it would make no difference. You know as well as I that punishment is largely for the purpose of deterring the potential criminal. Thus, since punishment is for others than the punished, it must be publicized. It must even be dramatized." He thrust a finger in back of his belt and flipped his little dagger.

Related Characters: Mayor Orden, Colonel Lanser (speaker), Alexander Morden

Related Themes:

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

This conversation between Colonel Lanser and Mayor Orden occurs just before Alexander Morden's trial. Despite an earlier conversation with Doctor Winter in which Winter guessed that the invaders want to stage a trial for Alex merely for the show of it, Mayor Orden is perplexed as to why the conquerors intend to try the young man even though they know they'll execute him eventually. Lanser's response to this question is frank, as he explains that "punishment" must sometimes be "dramatized" so as to discourage other "potential criminal[s]" from committing the same crimes. As if to emphasize the importance of performative acts that highlight the invaders' power, he then slips his finger in his belt to "flip" his "little dagger," an ornamental knife worn for the sole purpose of making the colonel look distinguished. By including this detail, Steinbeck shows readers that this is a man consumed by appearances, constantly searching for ways to remind subordinates of his high-ranking position as a way of making his duties easier to carry out without resistance.

Lanser said, "No; it is true whether you believe it or not: personally, I have respect for you and your office, and"—he put his forehead in his hand for a moment—"you see, what I think, sir, I, a man of a certain age and certain memories, is of no importance. I might agree with you, but that would change nothing. The military, the political pattern I work in has certain tendencies and practices which are invariable."
Orden said, "And these tendencies and practices have been proven wrong in every single case since the beginning of the world."
Lanser laughed bitterly, "I, an individual man with certain memoires, might agree with you, might even add that one of the tendencies of the military mind and pattern is an inability to learn, an inability to see beyond the killing which is its job. But I am not a man subject to memories. The coal miner must be shot publicly, because the theory is that others will then restrain themselves from killing our men."

Related Characters: Mayor Orden, Colonel Lanser (speaker), Alexander Morden

Related Themes:

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Colonel Lanser tries to appeal to Mayor Orden by telling him that he has "respect" for him. Although this assertion seems, by nature of the context, mostly manipulative and patronizing, it's worth noting that Lanser does, on some level, appear to sympathize with Mayor Orden. He even says he "might" agree with Orden regarding the fact that killing Alex Morden won't deter the townspeople from resisting the conquerors. But whatever fellow-feeling he shows himself capable of is destroyed when he immediately reverts back to his standard way of thinking, which he uses to align himself with the military, upholding that "the political pattern" he works in is "invariable." In this statement, he frames himself as essentially powerless. As such, he ironically assumes a position of power over Mayor Orden by discounting his own personal agency. In fact, he doubles down on this self-deprecating willingness to ignore his own humanity when he says that he is "not a man subject to memories," thereby portraying himself as a dumb brute who thoughtlessly carries out military orders.

Chapter 5 Quotes

Tonder got out his handkerchief and blew his nose, and he spoke a little like a man out of his head. He laughed embarrassedly. He said, "I had a funny dream. I guess it was a dream. Maybe it was a thought. Maybe a thought or a dream."
Prackle said, "Make him stop, Captain!"
Tonder said, "Captain, is this place conquered?"
"Of course," said Loft.
A little note of hysteria crept into Tonder's laughter. He said, "Conquered and we're afraid; conquered and we're surrounded." His laughter grew shrill. "I had a dream—or a thought—out in the snow with the black shadows and the faces in the doorways, the cold faces behind curtains. I had a thought or a dream."
Prackle said, "Make him stop!"
Tonder said, "I dreamed the Leader was crazy." […]
And Tonder went on laughing. "Conquest after conquest, deeper and deeper into molasses." His laughter choked him and he coughed into his handkerchief. "Maybe the Leader is crazy. Flies conquer the flypaper. Flies capture two hundred miles of new flypaper!" His laughter was growing more hysterical now.

Related Characters: Captain Loft, Lieutenant Tonder, Lieutenant Prackle (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 68

Explanation and Analysis

Here Lieutenant Tonder doesn't hold back from voicing his grave misgivings regarding the war and the nature of conquest in general. In turn, his decision to speak honestly about his skepticism is met with anger, fear, and scorn. This is in part because fascist regimes thrive on limiting what people can say about the government. Tonder, then, is blatantly defying a central tenant of fascist order by calling the Leader's decisions into question. Prackle, who's still invested in believing the propaganda set forth by his government, desperately wants Tonder to stop speaking this way. After all, to admit that the Leader's plans are flawed—or to go so far as saying that the Leader is crazy—is to lose faith in the entire endeavor, and faith is most likely the only thing keeping somebody like Prackle going under such bleak circumstances. Tonder, on the other hand, is willing to reject the notion of conquest outright, likening their entire military campaign to "flies" conquering "flypaper." And he's right: the soldiers are stuck in the town, unable to control it but constantly telling themselves that they have all the power simply because they are there. From this perspective, occupation alone doesn't necessarily lead to victory in conquest—a fact of which Tonder is

increasingly, painfully aware.

Chapter 6 Quotes

He sat down. "I'm sorry." After a moment he said, "I wish I could do something. I'll have the snow pushed off the roof."
"No," said Molly, "no."
"Why not?"
"Because the people would think I had joined with you. They would expel me. I don't want to be expelled."
Tonder said, "Yes, I see how that would be. You all hate us. But I'll take care of you if you'll let me."
Now Molly knew she was in control, and her eyes narrowed a little cruelly and she said, "Why do you ask? You are the conqueror. Your men don't have to ask. They take what they want."
"That's not what I want," Tonder said. "That's not the way I want it."
And Molly laughed, still a little cruelly. "You want me to like you, don't you, Lieutenant?"

Related Characters: Molly Morden, Lieutenant Tonder (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

This interaction between Molly and Lieutenant Tonder is more complicated than it first appears. They are speaking to one another for the first time, sitting in Molly's dark house after Tonder has just snuck through the streets to visit her in the middle of the night. Although the exchange seems rather straightforward, it is actually complex because of Tonder's mixed feelings. On the one hand, Tonder genuinely wants to help Molly and feel close to her, as made clear by his statement that he'll "take care of" her if she lets him. This sentiment makes Tonder seem kind and innocent, especially considering the fact that Molly most likely expected him to come into her house and rape her. Instead, he sits with her and offers to "take care" of her. Nevertheless, it can hardly be argued that Tonder is innocent. When Molly says, "Why do you ask? You are the conqueror. Your men don't have to ask. They take what they want," Tonder's response reveals that there is some degree of coercive desire behind his actions: "That's not what I want," he says. "That's not the way I want it." Essentially, he says that forcing Molly into giving him what he wants is not *the way* he wants it, a statement that implies that *does* want her in the sexual sense she has implied. In fact, he wants to manipulate the situation so that he gets what he wants—her body—without having to feel guilty about "the way" he has gotten it. When Molly recognizes what Tonder wants, she sees that the kindness he has shown her has less to do with human morality than with self-interest and carnal greed—and she seizes the opportunity to exploit Tonder's naïve desire to become intimate with an enemy. Later on in the book, Molly tricks Tonder into thinking she will sleep with him but stabs him to death instead.

Chapter 7 Quotes

"Good. Now I'll tell you, and I hope you'll understand it. You're not a man any more. You are a soldier. Your comfort is of no importance and, Lieutenant, your life isn't of much importance. If you live, you will have memories. That's about all you will have. Meanwhile you must take orders and carry them out. Most of the orders will be unpleasant, but that's not your business. I will not lie to you, Lieutenant. They should have trained you for this, and not for flower-strewn streets. They should have built your soul with truth, not led along with lies."

Related Characters: Colonel Lanser (speaker), Lieutenant Prackle

Related Themes:

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

Colonel Lanser says this to Lieutenant Prackle when the latter complains of wanting to go home, saying he dislikes that all the townspeople—including a girl he has taken a fancy to—detest him and the other soldiers. Colonel Lanser's response is harsh and once again shows his belief that one must sacrifice his own humanity in order to properly serve the military. When he says, "If you live, you will have no memories," readers are reminded of Lanser's earlier conversation with Mayor Orden, in which he insinuates that he's a "man of certain memories," memories that have taught him about the utter futility of war. Of course, in that moment—as in this one—Lanser backs away from fully committing to this line of thinking, instead foregrounding his involvement with the military and drawing a stark demarcation between what it means to be a "man" and a "soldier." He emphasizes this distinction by telling Prackle, "You're not a man any more. You are a soldier." Although he sympathizes somewhat with the disappointment Prackle feels (because the government trains soldiers for "flower-strewn streets" instead of the harsh realities of war and conquest), he refuses to go

against his duty as a colonel—a refusal that repeatedly renders him incapable of human feeling and true empathy.

Chapter 8 Quotes

❝ Winter walked to one of the gilt chairs, and as he was about to sit down he noticed that its tapestry was torn, and he petted the seat with his fingers as though that would mend it. And he sat down gently because it was torn.

Related Characters: Mayor Orden, Joseph, Doctor Winter

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 105

Explanation and Analysis

Although this is a brief moment and a small detail, it illuminates an important thematic element of *The Moon Is Down*. These short sentences come after Doctor Winter and Mayor Orden have been arrested, when the town has been thrown into chaos by the sudden delivery of many packages of dynamite. Readers should bear in mind the meticulous care Joseph applies to the organization of furniture earlier in the novella, when he frantically straightens the chairs. By directing focus to the chairs again in this moment, Steinbeck subtly shows that all sense of order in the village has been demolished. Indeed, the "tapestry" of this chair is "torn" after the officers have used the palace as their headquarters, a fact that reflects the influence the conquerors have had on the everyday aspects of the small town itself. Although people like Lanser and Captain Loft are obsessed with establishing order and maintaining certain appearances, it becomes evident that they are the very harbingers of calamity and disorder. In turn, this shows that the invaders' idea of order is primarily about asserting their own sense of control over others, regardless of the destruction it causes.

❝ You know, Doctor, I am a little man and this is a little town, but there must be a spark in little men that can burst into flame. I am afraid, I am terribly afraid, and I thought of all the things I might do to save my own life, and then that went away, and sometimes now I feel a kind of exultation, as though I were bigger and better than I am, and do you know what I have been thinking, Doctor? […] Do you remember in school, in the *Apology*? Do you remember Socrates says, "Someone will say, 'And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end?' To him I may fairly answer, 'There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether he is doing right or wrong.'"

Related Characters: Mayor Orden (speaker), Doctor Winter

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 106

Explanation and Analysis

Mayor Orden speaks these words to Doctor Winter as the two men sit in the drawing-room, under arrest. No longer able to deny that he's going to be executed because of his unwillingness to interfere with the townspeople and their attempts to attack the conquerors, he turns his attention to Socrates' inspiring ideas about morality—ideas people like Colonel Lanser clearly has failed to take to heart. Indeed, whereas Mayor Orden (and, for that matter, Socrates) is a man willing to die in order to do the "right" thing, Lanser is a spineless soldier who ignores his own moral inclinations for the sake of following a merciless regime. In this way, Orden has nothing to be "ashamed" of, but Lanser should—and on some level seems to—be embarrassed of his lack of integrity, his tendency to "calculate the chance of living or dying" rather than simply "whether he is doing right or wrong."

Orden fingered his gold medallion. He said quietly, "You see, sir, nothing can change it. You will be destroyed and driven out." His voice was very soft. "The people don't like to be conquered, sir, and so they will not be. Free men cannot start a war, but once it is started, they can fight on in defeat. Herd men, followers of a leader, cannot do that, and so it is always the herd men who win battles and the free men who win wars. You will find that it is so, sir."
[...] Madame broke in plaintively, "I wish you would tell me what all this nonsense is."
"It is nonsense, dear."
"But they can't arrest the Mayor," she explained to him.
Orden smiled at her. "No," he said, "they can't arrest the Mayor. The Mayor is an idea conceived by free men. It will escape arrest."

Related Characters: Madame (Sarah) Orden, Mayor Orden (speaker), Colonel Lanser

Related Themes:

Page Number: 111

Explanation and Analysis

In this moment, Mayor Orden tries one last time to explain to Colonel Lanser that fascism is no match for a democratic community of free thinkers. This conversation takes place at the end of the novella, just before Mayor Orden is presumably executed for not telling his people to refrain from using dynamite against the conquerors. Using his final opportunity to teach Lanser the ways of democracy, he emphasizes the resilience inherent in groups of "free men" who "don't like to be conquered." As he says this, he toys with his "gold medallion," which readers recognize as a "chain of office" that marks him as mayor. This is highly symbolic, for Orden is once again fulfilling the role of an ideal democratic mayor by recognizing that his position is first and foremost an "idea conceived by free men." Unlike officers such as Captain Loft, Orden derives no pleasure or sense of personal power from his title. Instead, he understands that his mayoral office is more of a concept than anything else, and it is the strength of this concept that makes democracies so difficult to destroy. After all, people can be captured and executed, but ideas will always "escape arrest," and this is what will enable Orden's citizens to "fight on in defeat," continuing to resist even after their leader has been killed.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

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

CHAPTER 1

One Sunday morning a group of invaders storms an unnamed town. The local policeman and postman, who are out at sea on a rowboat they borrowed from Mr. Corell, a popular storekeeper, watch the enemies fly toward the village. As they make haste toward land, the plane discharges parachutists, who find the town mostly empty, since the twelve local soldiers are six miles into the woods participating in a shooting competition organized by Mr. Corell. By the time the local military men arrive to defend their beloved town from the invaders, it's already too late—six are killed, three are taken hostage, and three flee into the mountains.

Steinbeck immediately establishes The Moon Is Down *as a tale of conquest by showcasing the policeman and the postman's complete helplessness as they watch enemy invaders storm their town. That these two men are government officials is significant, as it foreshadows the clash between the village's local officials and the invaders' much broader network of power.*

The invaders quickly take over the town, playing loud triumphant music in the central square, where the citizens gather to observe the spectacle with looks of surprise and confusion. Meanwhile, the enemy soldiers take up residence in Mr. Corell's large warehouse and send word to Mayor Orden, the town's top official, that their commander, Colonel Lanser, will be visiting the mayoral **palace**.

The fact that the conquerors play music in the central square for all to see illustrates their desire to appear civil and friendly even during a time of war and violence. In addition, they send the same kind message of feigned civility by courteously alerting Mayor Orden of Lanser's imminent visit, a gesture that can almost be construed as polite, since it gives the mayor time to prepare as if he were about to entertain dinner guests.

Inside the **palace's** drawing room, the mayor's servant, Joseph, frets over the placement of the chairs, worrying about their exact orientations while the town's local historian and physician, Doctor Winter, sits by the fireplace. Winter reminds Joseph that the invaders are a "time-minded people," saying that they will most likely be punctual. "They hurry toward their destiny as though it would not wait," he tells the anxious young man. "They push the rolling world along with their shoulders." Joseph agrees, though he dislikes the conversation because it won't help him in formulating a clear opinion about the town's current circumstances.

Joseph's obsessive placement of the chairs serves as the novella's first instance of meticulous attention to order and control. Rendered helpless by the fact that his town has been invaded by enemies, Joseph seeks to hold onto a sense of agency and order by perfectly arranging the furniture. Likewise, he yearns to have an "opinion" about what's going on so that he can be involved in the situation and, thus, have some modicum of control. Doctor Winter, on the other hand, accepts that he's powerless against the invaders, as evidenced by his remark that the conquerors seem to push the entire world with their military might.

Doctor Winter asks Joseph where Mayor Orden is, and Joseph says the mayor's wife, Madame Orden, is currently trimming his ear hairs in preparation for Colonel Lanser's visit. Winter stands up, and Joseph takes the opportunity to put his chair exactly where it should be. Just then, a helmeted man appears outside the door. Joseph and Doctor Winter let him in, thinking he is the colonel, but the man tells them his name is Captain Bentick and that he has arrived in anticipation of the colonel in order to carry out various "military regulations," such as searching the premises and residents for weapons. "I hope you will pardon us," he says sheepishly to Doctor Winter as another sergeant pats down the physician's pockets.

Once again, civility comes to the forefront, as Bentick absurdly asks for Winter to "pardon" him and his comrade for patting them down. It's clear from the outset that this regime wants desperately to maintain an appearance of politeness, despite the fact that they are conquerors who are forcing themselves on the town. Of course, the other side also seems to consider appearances, as evidenced by Madame's insistence that Mayor Orden have his ear hairs trimmed. Both sides, then, clearly want to make a positive impression in the other's eyes.

"I believe there are some firearms here?" Captain Bentick asks, opening a notebook in reference. When Doctor Winter expresses his surprise at how much Captain Bentick already knows about the town, Bentick says, "Yes, our local man has been working here for some time." He then tells Winter that Mr. Corell is an informant for the military, a fact that deeply surprises the doctor because of how well-regarded Corell is in the town.

Though it comes as no surprise to readers that Corell is the informant—since he sent the entire population away at precisely the right time for the conquerors to arrive unchallenged—Winter's shock once more speaks to how much importance characters in The Moon Is Down *place on appearances. Indeed, the doctor is baffled by the revelation because of Corell's sterling reputation, a testament to how a person can manipulate his or her appearance to deceive others. This, perhaps, is precisely what the invaders are trying to do by behaving with such civility.*

Mayor Orden finally emerges from having his ear hairs trimmed, wiggling a stubby finger into his right ear while the bright white hair atop his head fights to stand up after having been combed. Captain Bentick introduces himself and then goes to collect the two guns Mayor Orden owns. When he leaves, Doctor Winter talks to Mayor Orden and Madame Orden about how to appropriately receive Colonel Lanser. Madame asks whether they should serve tea or wine, and Doctor Winter replies, "I don't know. It's been so long since we conquered anybody or anybody conquered us. I don't know what is proper." Mayor Orden, for his part, expresses that he thinks they shouldn't offer *anything*, because he doesn't want to drink with the conquerors. "Didn't people in the old days—the leaders, that is—compliment each other and take a glass of wine?" his wife asks.

Doctor Winter perfectly represents the confused role of civility in wartime when he says he doesn't know what is "proper" in times of conquest. This word implies that there are rules of behavior one must call upon when dealing with enemies, a sentiment echoed by Madame's reference to "the old days." Unlike his wife, though, Mayor Orden seems comfortable forgoing these outdated traditions, breaking with expectations and rejecting the notion that one must remain civil in such times. Even his hair communicates this resistance to superficial appearances as it tries to stand up after having been combed. In this way, he embodies resistance, subversion, and strong will—even if only when it comes to putting on false appearances.

Despite his wife's insistence that they offer the colonel something to drink, Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter determine that the townspeople might not like it if their leader drank with the invader. Madame protests, saying that the villagers are calmly listening to the invaders' music in the square—"If they can do that, why shouldn't we keep civilized procedure alive?" she asks. Nonetheless, Mayor Orden doesn't change his opinion, reminding her that the invaders killed six townspeople that very morning and that, though the villagers might be "confused" right now about how to act, they elected him to *not* be confused and, because of this, he will not drink wine with the enemy.

Orden's rejection of Madame's notions regarding "civilized procedure" calls upon the town's structure of democracy, emphasizing his responsibility to do what's best for his people. By reminding his wife that the invaders killed six people that very morning, he also reminds others that the enemy's civility is merely an act. Although it's true they are going through the motions of "civilized procedure," Orden sees that it is only a performance, and that he—as a democratic leader—must keep this in mind as he moves forward in his dealings with these manipulative conquerors.

When Colonel Lanser arrives, a helmeted man announces his presence and steps to the side, revealing the colonel and a man in a black suit, who Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter recognize as Mr. Corell. Lanser asks if Winter is an official, and Mayor Orden assures him that although his friend is not technically affiliated with the government he is writing a local history and deserves to be present. Colonel Lanser accepts this, saying that perhaps Winter will be including the invasion in his history. He then introduces the men to Mr. Corell, though they already know who he is. This is when Mayor Orden discovers that it was his friend the storekeeper who sold out the town. Orden is beside himself, saying: "George, this isn't true! You have sat at my table, you have drunk port with me. Why, you helped me plan the hospital! This isn't true!"

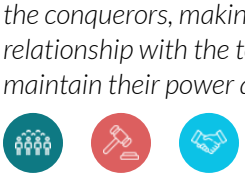
Once again, Mayor Orden is reminded that the appearance of civility often allows a person to manipulate others. When he says, "You have sat at my table," he underlines the fact that closeness and politesse are, apparently, poor indicators of a person's true trustworthiness and morality. On another note, Doctor Winter's role as the local historian places him in an interesting position, since he will be recording the events, an act that imposes a certain kind of order on a town's history by organizing it into a narrative. Indeed, Lanser seems aware of the power inherent in this task, and his acknowledgement that the invasion will make it into Winter's records indicates a possible uneasiness regarding the fact that he—Lanser—is on the wrong side of history.

Mr. Corell justifies his actions to Mayor Orden, saying, "I work for what I believe in! That is an honorable thing." Nevertheless, Orden is furious and refuses to speak with Colonel Lanser until Corell leaves. When Corell argues that he deserves to be present for this meeting, Lanser orders him to leave. Finally, Corell obeys, since he doesn't outrank the colonel.

In this moment, Colonel Lanser relies upon military hierarchy to convince Corell to leave. Interestingly enough, he does so at the request of Mayor Orden, an act that possibly indicates a small amount of empathy for the mayor, though it's also arguable that Lanser only tells Corell to leave because he sees it will be easier to deal with Orden if the man isn't angry about having to speak in front of somebody who betrayed him.

Not long after Corell leaves, Mayor Orden and Colonel Lanser's conversation is interrupted by **the palace**'s cook, Annie, who complains to the mayor and his wife that there is a group of soldiers on the back porch and that they keep looking through the kitchen window at her. Lanser assures her that this is only "military procedure" and that they won't bother her. When she leaves, he turns his attention to Orden, saying, "We want to get along as well as we can. You see, sir, this is more like a business venture than anything else. We need the coal mine here and the fishing. We will try to get along with just as little friction as possible."

Yet again, the word "procedure" appears in the text, once more illustrating that the characters in The Moon Is Down *cling to notions of order in a time of general upheaval. Of course, a military invasion isn't merely a "procedure," but Lanser is eager to frame his fascist, oppressive military campaign as a mere "business venture" in a meager effort to soften its impact. It is worth noting that getting along "with just as little friction as possible" would primarily benefit the conquerors, making their job infinitely easier. As such, a civil relationship with the townspeople will ultimately help the invaders maintain their power and get what they want.*



After Colonel Lanser explains to Orden that the rest of the country has also been invaded, the mayor asks if there has been any resistance. The colonel admits there has been, but says any retaliations have been easily resolved by the invaders. Still, Orden takes a pleasure in knowing that civilians have resisted. At this point, Lanser asks if Orden plans to cooperate, explaining that he himself is "more engineer than soldier" and saying the bottom line is simply that he and his soldiers must extract coal from the town's mine. Orden points out that it's possible the villagers won't want to cooperate, asking the colonel what will happen if this is the case. "They must," Lanser says, "They are an orderly people. They don't want trouble. Is that not so, sir?" To this, Orden truthfully says he does not know.

Given Lanser's eagerness to maintain a civil relationship with Orden and the townspeople, it comes as no great shock that he tries to coax the mayor into acknowledging that the villagers are "an orderly people." When he asks, "Is that not so, sir?" it's clear he's trying to manipulate Orden. After all, if he convinces Orden that the villagers are "orderly" and therefore "don't want trouble," then the mayor will perhaps agree to go along with Lanser's guise of civility, cooperating in the name of preserving this supposed "order."

Continuing their discussion regarding whether or not the village will cooperate with the invaders, Colonel Lanser says that his government hopes to keep Orden as the town's mayor. In fact, Lanser says that Orden is to "give the orders" and penalize people when necessary. Arguing that this system won't work, Orden says the only power he has is to represent the needs and wishes of the people. "Some people accept appointed leaders and obey them," he explains. "But my people elected me. They made me and they can unmake me. Perhaps they will if they think I have gone over to you. I just don't know." He elaborates on this point by saying that the villagers don't like it when other people think for them.

As Lanser tries to trick Orden into helping the invaders by framing the process as a matter of "order," the mayor reminds Lanser of the impressive ability of a democracy to resist authoritarian rule. He highlights this point when he affirms that the "people" can unmake him just as well as they "made" him in the first place. It is this democratic process, he shows the colonel, that enables and encourages freedom of thought. While Lanser is interested primarily in a forced sense of "order," Orden is interested only in serving a public body that bases itself on notions of equality, fair representation, and independence.

Interrupting Colonel Lanser and Mayor Orden's conversation, Joseph comes into the room and reports that Annie is growing increasingly agitated about the soldiers on the back porch. Madame tells him to calm her down, and discussion turns back to more immediate matters as Lanser asks Orden if the higher ranking invaders can stay in his palace. He explains that when the military lives with the "local authority," it sets a precedent of collaboration for the townspeople. "Am I permitted to refuse this honor?" asks Orden. "I'm sorry," Lanser says. "No. These are the orders of my leader."

Once more, Lanser invests himself in creating an atmosphere that communicates a certain message to the public, thereby putting his confidence in the utility of keeping up certain appearances—as if the invasion is as much a theater performance as it is a military campaign. In keeping with his general skepticism, Orden yet again exposes the superficiality of these appearances by asking whether or not he is "permitted to refuse" the "honor" of hosting the officers. This statement forces Lanser to admit that their relationship isn't predicated on an equal balance of power—a fact that destroys any pretense of civility.

A loud scream issues from the kitchen, and Joseph bursts through the door. He announces that Annie has thrown boiling water out the window and onto the soldiers on the back porch. A soldier comes in and asks if he should arrest her, since she scalded several men and bit another. Lanser thinks for a moment before ordering the soldier to let Annie go and to tell the rest of the men to leave the porch. Turning to Mayor Orden, he points out that he could have Annie shot or imprisoned, but then he focuses again on more logistical matters, telling the mayor that it is of the utmost importance that the invaders and the townspeople get along so that the military can export the village's coal with ease.

That Colonel Lanser orders the soldiers to leave the porch shows that he has an interest in keeping tensions down for as long as possible, even in the face of outright insubordination—after all, it's true that he could execute Annie if he wanted. Whether this display of mercy is genuine or calculated, however, is unclear, and the fact that he immediately turns his attention back to the exportation of coal suggests that he is less concerned about the soldiers' relationship with the townspeople than he is about efficiently carrying out his duties.

Before leaving the mayoral **palace**, Colonel Lanser asks Orden again whether or not he intends to cooperate with the invaders. Orden explains that he won't know what he will do until he learns what the townspeople want from him. "But you are the authority," Lanser points out. "You won't believe this," Orden says in reply, "but it is true: authority is in the town. I don't know how or why, but it is so." He repeats that he doesn't know what he will do yet.

Yet again, Mayor Orden emphasizes the fact that his town is built upon a democratic model of governance. Unlike Lanser's fascist conception of "authority" as absolute and singular, the village acts as a unified whole capable of negotiating with itself until it reaches a decision. As such, Orden is bound to whatever the villagers decide, and will not use his voice to drown out his constituents.

CHAPTER 2

Six ranking officials of the military move into the top floor of Mayor Orden's **palace**. Captain Bentick is a kind man obsessed with acting like a British gentleman. Major Hunter is an arithmetician who spends most of his time drawing and engineering plans for a railroad that will run from the town's coal mine to the waterfront. Captain Loft is stern, young, and vigorously committed to following military protocol, especially in terms of appearances. Lieutenant Prackle is naïve and idealistic, a man who hates "degenerate art" and prides himself in his commitment to his country's leader. Finally, Lieutenant Tonder is a "dark romantic" who imagines falling in love with one of the village women and fantasizes about dying a heroic death on the battlefield. Because there isn't much room in the palace, these men are thrown into close quarters as they trade patrol shifts and pass time in the common area.

Steinbeck's cast of soldiers all represent some form of naiveté, since none of them seem to understand the grim reality of war. Captain Loft is so overly committed to maintaining the proper appearance of a soldier that he seems incapable of acting like an actual human being. As for the others, each one either underestimates the brutality of war (as is the case for Prackle and Tonder) or isolates himself from the reality of the circumstances altogether (as is the case for Major Hunter). In this way, Steinbeck portrays the officers as being emotionally ill-equipped for the difficulties of conquest.

Colonel Lanser is the most experienced of all the soldiers, having been involved in World War I twenty years before, when his country invaded Belgium and France. As such, he knows that war is nothing but "treachery and hatred," and he understands that most military occupations are futile and violent. Still, he tells himself that he must carry out his orders no matter what he thinks. As a way of keeping his pessimism at bay, he tells himself, "This one will be different," sometimes uttering the phrase fifty times in a given day.

The fact that Lanser harbors skepticism about the war effort supports the idea that he's capable of feeling empathy for the townspeople, for he knows that he and his soldiers bring nothing but "treachery and hatred." Unfortunately, though, this empathy is undermined by his stubborn commitment to the fascist regime he serves, and he negates his capacity for true human emotion by immersing himself in the task of carrying out orders no matter what they are or who they hurt.

One day, Captain Loft enters **the palace** after a patrol shift. While taking off many pieces of equipment, he tells Major Hunter and Lieutenant Prackle that he has just seen Bentick, who is overseeing the townspeople as they labor in the coal mine. Loft says Bentick is crazy because he's wearing a cap instead of a helmet. "Why shouldn't he wear a cap?" Major Hunter asks, looking up from his design plans. "There hasn't been any trouble." Loft disregards this last statement, informing the major that it's "bad practice" not to wear a helmet. "It's bad for the people here," he says. "We must maintain a military standard, an alertness, and never vary from it. We'll just invite trouble if we don't." When Hunter asks why Loft thinks this, Loft explains that he doesn't *think* it—he was paraphrasing a military manual on how to behave in occupied countries.

In this scene, Steinbeck pokes fun at Loft's willingness to let a manual overshadow his own ability to think for himself. Loft reveals that he places very little value in his own opinions. Rather, he throws his faith into rules and regulations, blindly following them and never stopping to consider his own opinions. It's significant, too, that the manual frames any divergence from "military procedure" as "bad for the people." In this way, the fascist regime espouses a belief that the invaders' authoritarian presence actually benefits *the townspeople if executed correctly—an idea that Loft seems to have internalized.*

Lieutenant Tonder enters the room and looks over Hunter's shoulder, asking why he's designing a bridge. Embarrassed, Hunter tells him the drawing is for a model train set he has in his backyard at home. When Colonel Lanser arrives, he asks Captain Loft to go relieve Captain Bentick from his shift in the mines. "May I suggest, sir, that I only recently came off duty?" Loft says, explaining that he's only mentioning this "for the record." Colonel Lanser picks up on what he means, asking the captain, "You like to be mentioned in the reports, don't you?" Captain Loft admits that he does, since a certain amount of mentions will win him recognitions that he says are "milestones in a military career." This comment seems to fatigue Lanser, who says, "Yes, I guess they are. But they won't be the ones you'll remember, Captain."

Lanser's exasperated statement that Loft won't remember his awards but will remember other things once again brings to the foreground the colonel's pessimism regarding the nature of war. Indeed, by saying this he implies that the rewards the military puts in place only reinforce a useless kind of hierarchy that, in the long run, has very little importance. As such, Loft's obsession with looking good on "the record" proves rather pointless, a fact that highlights the young man's failure to grasp the true gravity of war.

After Loft leaves, Lieutenant Prackle asks Lanser when he thinks they will win the war, admitting that he's eager to go home, even if only for a furlough at Christmastime. Lieutenant Tonder, on the other hand, chimes in and makes it clear that he wants to stay in the town for as long as possible, expressing that he might even remain after the war because "it's a nice country, nice people." He points out that there are some beautiful farms and that, "if four or five of them were thrown together, it would be a nice place to settle."

Tonder's statement that "four or five" farms could be "thrown together" to make one "nice place to settle" is an absurd representation of the soldiers' greediness. Indeed, men like Tonder fail to see the war as anything but an opportunity to gain power. In addition, Tonder exhibits an unrealistic outlook about the outcome of the war, seeming to believe that the townspeople would accept him settling down amongst them after the war. This mindset shows an utter lack of perspective and empathy, since Tonder is seemingly unable to understand that he would be mercilessly depriving the villagers of their own land if he were to turn "four or five" of their farms into just one of his own.

Mr. Corell pays **the palace** a visit to speak to Colonel Lanser, who introduces Corell to the other officers. Lanser tells Corell he did a good job in helping take over the town, though he wishes Corell had organized it so it wasn't necessary to kill six people. "Six men is a small loss for a town of this size, with a coal mine, too," Corell says. Lanser agrees that sometimes violence is necessary, though he implies that in this situation it probably could have been avoided. Corell then asks to speak with the colonel alone, and Lanser dismisses Tonder and Prackle, leaving Major Hunter in peace because the man hears nothing while working on his engineering projects.

It is unclear whether Lanser regrets having killed six townspeople on the day he and his soldiers arrived because it was a strategic misstep, or because he genuinely would prefer to reduce the number of lives lost. Corell, on the other hand, demonstrates complete apathy regarding human life, and his statement that "six men is a small loss for a town of this size" is a perfect example of how a fascist commitment to conquest is often used to justify immoral acts.

Lanser notices Corell has a bandage on his head and asks him if the villagers have already tried to kill him. Corell claims his injury is from a stone that fell on his head, but Lanser is skeptical. This leads to a conversation about Corell's general safety in the town. Despite Lanser's insistence that conquered townspeople never take kindly to a person who betrayed them, Corell insists that "these aren't fierce people" and that they respect him. He then requests that he be made mayor, but Lanser tells him this would be unwise, explaining that it will be best if Orden remains in this position. Because he's certain the townspeople will eventually revolt, Lanser explains, he needs to work with a mayor who knows what's going on in the village. "I think you will never again know what is going on here," he explains to Corell.

Lanser and Corell approach conquest in two different ways. While Lanser wants to work with the mayor to exploit the town's democratic process, Corell wants to usurp Orden's leadership and rule the town himself. Although Lanser's approach is primarily tactical—rather than empathetic—his willingness to work with *Orden shows that he understands (on some level) that pure authoritarian rule is less effective than democratic governance. Otherwise, he wouldn't try so hard to collaborate with Orden.*

Corell becomes frustrated, saying he deserves a position of power. Lanser goes on, saying, "Mayor Orden is more than mayor. He is his people." Seeing that arguing will lead him nowhere, Corell accepts Lanser's position, but asks that he be allowed to remain in the town until he receives further orders from the official government. Lanser agrees, but tells Corell to be cautious and to wear a helmet at all times. When Corell says this isn't necessary because of how kindhearted the villagers are, Lanser says, "There are no peaceful people." Corell, in turn, points out that they have already defeated the town and thus have little to worry about, but Lanser remarks, "Defeat is a momentary thing." He then tells a gruesome story about his experience in WWI, and Corell asserts that a colonel shouldn't speak this way in front of his soldiers.

The origins of Lanser's war-related pessimism become obvious in this moment, when he reveals his wretched memories about the First World War. With these traumatizing experiences driving his decisions, it makes sense that he's eager to approach the situation in the town with diplomacy, even if this diplomacy or civility is purely tactical. After all, he has seen the kind of violence and horror that comes from authoritarian rule and conquest, and so wants to try asserting his regime's power in the most benign way possible.

At that moment, Captain Loft comes swiftly into the room and informs Colonel Lanser that Captain Bentick has been killed. Apparently, as Loft was relieving Bentick in the mines, an enraged miner complained, claiming the military had no right to make him work. As Loft tried to calm him down, he rushed aggressively forward, at which point Bentick jumped in the way, and the miner buried his pickaxe in the captain's helmetless head. Loft tells Lanser that the miner has been taken prisoner. "So it starts again," mutters Lanser. "We will shoot this man and make twenty new enemies. It's the only thing we know, the only thing we know." He then asks Loft to send Mayor Orden to see him as soon as possible.

It's significant that violence erupts right after Lanser has spent time trying to convince Corell they must rule the town with as much civility as possible. This suggests that, though Lanser's attempt at civility reveal his understanding of the horrors of war, it's also wrong to think that conquest can be achieved without violence. In this way, Steinbeck illustrates that a wrong action cannot actually be done rightly, and that fascism and conquest naturally invite violence whether or not the invaders act under the guise of civility.

CHAPTER 3

The townspeople move slowly and somberly through the day. In the mayoral **palace**, Joseph and Annie try awkwardly to move a large table into the drawing-room, where a trial is soon to be held. As they do so, they talk about Alexander Morden, the man who killed Captain Bentick in the mine. Joseph tells Annie that the trial will be for Alexander, who used to be an alderman. Annie is enraged to hear that the soldiers will most likely shoot Alex after the trial, but Joseph soothes her with rumors he has heard—like that two men escaped from the town the night before, and that people are talking about killing Mr. Corell.

Yet again, Joseph is seen organizing furniture, the one act in which he's able to find a sense of power or control—although the fact that he's moving the table into the draw-room for the military officers to use it during Alex's trial shows the extent to which his usual activity has come to be dominated by the invaders. In the same way that Colonel Lanser wants to use Mayor Orden's democratic influence to his own advantage, the conquerors benefit from other townspeople's desire to maintain a sense of order.

Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter come into the drawing-room, dismiss Joseph and Annie, and discuss the upcoming trial. After several minutes, Molly Morden, Alex's wife, enters and asks to speak to the mayor. She says the townspeople have been talking and that everybody believes Orden will be the one to sentence poor Alex. "It will be your words that send him out," she says. This baffles Orden, who wonders how the citizens of his town could know his actions before even he does. "That is a great mystery," Doctor Winter says. "That is a mystery that has disturbed rulers all over the world—how the people know. It disturbs the invaders now, I am told, how news runs through censorships, how the truth of things fights free of control." Before Molly leaves, Orden promises her he won't sentence Alex to death.

It is notable that Orden is surprised to learn the townspeople have anticipated the outcome of the trial, considering that he has already told Lanser that "authority" lies in the village. When Winter asserts that the dissemination of knowledge despite censorship has "disturbed rulers all over the world," he illuminates that one of fascism's weaknesses is allowing people to propagate the "truth." Fascist regimes depend upon the total subordination of a population, and this kind of subordination only succeeds when speech is controlled by the government itself.

Just as Molly departs, Colonel Lanser arrives. He asks to speak to the mayor privately, so Doctor Winter takes his leave. Lanser opens by expressing his sorrow over the circumstances that have led to Alexander's trial, but Orden cuts to the chase, asking why, if Colonel Lanser intended to kill the young man anyway, he didn't simply shoot Alex in the coal mine. Lanser admits that he agrees with Orden's point of view, but notes that punishment must be dramatized in order to discourage other potential criminals. As expected, he asks Orden to be the person to issue the death sentence, an approach he thinks will help keep order over the townspeople.

Yet again, Lanser tries to use Mayor Orden's position of leadership to trick the villagers into subservience. Above all, this is just another kind of appearance—this time, though, the appearance Lanser is trying to cultivate is not one of his own civility, but one of Orden's brutality, which is why he wants to "dramatize" Alex's sentencing. By doing so, he hopes to deter other villagers from rebelling and also show that Orden is cooperating with the enemy.

Mayor Orden insists that he isn't qualified to sentence Alexander Morden to death, since this falls outside the purview of a mayor's duty. He criticizes Lanser for his obsession with pretending like this is a simple matter of law-breaking, rather than a complicated war-time situation. Exasperated, Lanser asks if he can sit, and Orden says, "Why do you ask? That is another lie. You could make me stand if you wished." Still, Lanser maintains that he respects Orden, saying, "You see, what I think, sir [...] is of no importance. I might agree with you, but that would change nothing. The military, the political pattern I work in has certain tendencies and practices which are invariable."

By saying that his own thoughts are "of no importance" when it comes to carrying out military orders, Lanser relinquishes his own agency and capacity to act upon any feelings of empathy. Instead, he devotes himself to the military and its protocol, throwing his faith into a "political pattern" that is "invariable." It is exactly this belief that keeps Lanser from being deterred by his own misgivings. He finds himself aligned with a fascist regime that champions authoritarianism above all else—and he represents himself as helpless because of this.

Lanser continues by emphasizing that he needs Orden's help to control the situation. Finally, Orden says that if Lanser shoots the men who killed the six townspeople on the day of the invasion, then he—Orden—will sentence Alex. Of course, Lanser cannot agree to this, and thus resolves to sentence Alex himself. He looks at Orden, smiles, and says, "We have taken on a job, haven't we?" Orden agrees, saying, "Yes, the one impossible job in the world, the one thing that can't be done." When Lanser asks what the mayor is referring to, Orden says, "To break man's spirit permanently."

Once more, Orden demonstrates his wise belief that the power of fascism and authoritarianism pales in comparison to the power of democratic rule, which allows for citizens to live as free people, therefore bolstering their "spirit[s]." Oppression, on the other hand, tries to "break" a population's will, a task that is violent and deeply harmful but never lasting.

CHAPTER 4

Snow falls heavily over the town as the villagers wait for the verdict of Alexander Morden's trial. Inside the drawing room, Captain Loft reads a statement of the events in the coal mine, and Orden tells Alex to sit down, asking a guard to give the young man a chair. Loft objects to this, saying that it is "customary for the prisoner to stand," but Orden waves this off, suggesting that, if this is the case, Loft can write in the report that the prisoner stood. "It is not customary to falsify reports," Loft says, but Colonel Lanser tells him to move on. When it finally comes time to sentence Alex, Lanser asks, "Do you want to offer any explanation? I can't think of anything that will change the sentence, but we will listen." Again, Loft interjects, saying he doesn't think the colonel should say this, as it implies that "the court is not impartial."

Even when dealing with his own comrades, Captain Loft is a stickler for order and procedure. When he criticizes Colonel Lanser, he shows that he's unafraid of challenging his superiors, even if doing so risks making the officers look divided. As such, respecting protocol becomes for him an end in and of itself. Rather than following the rules because it communicates power and unity, he insists upon orderliness for the mere sake of orderliness. Orden, by contrast, shows himself once again to be deeply unconcerned with rules for their own sake, exhibiting instead an adaptable and human style of democratic leadership.

Alex explains to the makeshift court that he lost his temper in the mines because he's a free man who shouldn't have to work against his will for the invaders. He says he actually meant to hit Loft, but Colonel Lanser ignores this, saying it doesn't matter who he hit; "Are you sorry you did it?" he presses. Then, to the officers sitting next to him, Lanser says, "It would look well in the record if he were sorry." Alex says he isn't sorry, but Lanser declares that the record should show that "the prisoner was overcome with remorse."

Similar to how Lanser shows a concerned awareness of Doctor Winter's role as the local historian, here he blatantly falsifies the record (in defiance of Loft's assertion that doing so is "not customary") so that it demonstrates the invaders' power over the townspeople. As such, he tries to support the notion that resistance is futile and only leads to "remorse."

Mayor Orden steps toward Alex and tells him that his act of "private anger" was "the beginning of public anger." The young man is then taken outside, where Lieutenant Tonder is commanding the firing squad. Mere moments after the shots are fired, a shout sounds outside and something crashes through the drawing-room window. Lieutenant Prackle, who was standing in front of the window, grabs his shoulder, injured. Colonel Lanser jumps to his feet, shouting, "So, it starts!" He orders Captain Loft to go search for tracks in the snow while others look for guns throughout the town—anybody found with a firearm will be taken hostage, he declares. He turns to the mayor and tells him that he's being placed in "protective custody."

Colonel Lanser's exclamation, "So, it starts!" recalls what he said upon first learning of Captain Bentick's death: "We will shoot this man and make twenty new enemies." He again demonstrates his understanding that war only breeds more and more violence. Nonetheless, his commitment to the fascist regime requires that he carry out his duty, and here he quickly forgets his characteristic pessimism and jumps to action, ordering his men to respond to the situation immediately and forcefully.

CHAPTER 5

Months go by, and the houses in the villages stoop underneath the weight of snow. As for the coal mining operation, it progresses very slowly, since the miners make mistakes and the machinery frequently breaks. Worst of all for the invaders, the townspeople look upon them with intense scorn, hating them and waiting to take revenge. Death, it seems, is "in the air," as accidents befall the railroad project and British forces occasionally bomb the mine from above. The invaders try to control the food supply but find it impossible to starve the miners into submission, since the men need sustenance to work efficiently. Under these conditions, the soldiers must stay constantly vigilant, since the townspeople are eager to take advantage of any perceptible weakness. Indeed, if a military man drinks, he disappears, and if he goes "alone to a woman," "some snowdrift receive[s] his body."

At this point in The Moon Is Down, *Steinbeck shifts his attention to the failing fascist effort to oppress the townspeople. The hostility of the environment in which the soldiers are forced to live is the natural result of their attempts to subordinate the villagers, and the constant setbacks are seemingly unavoidable as a result. This suggests that total conquest is a much more complicated task than any of the invading forces may have thought. Indeed, Tonder's desire to settle in the town after war now seems even more naïve and unlikely than before.*

In these tense conditions, the officers seek refuge in the mayoral **palace**. One night, Prackle, Tonder, and Hunter sit in the darkness, the room lit only by lanterns because the town's dynamo has been damaged, leaving them with no power. Finally, after some gloomy talk, the power is restored, and Tonder starts speaking about how badly he wants to go home. Prackle pokes fun at him, taunting him for having originally said he wanted to settle down in the town forever. This remark works Tonder into a fit, and he doesn't calm down until saying, "There's a girl in this town, a pretty girl. I see her all the time. She has blond hair. [...] I want that girl." Prackle replies, "Watch yourself. Watch your nerves," just before the power goes out again.

What Tonder seems to lack most acutely in this moment is human connection. He finds that even Prackle—a fellow lieutenant—is reluctant to empathize with him, instead telling him to "watch [his] nerves." Unfortunately, his loneliness inspires in him a certain greediness. He says he "wants" a certain girl in town, implying by his word choice that he thinks he can have or own her. Even though he's suffering from the loneliness created by his fascist regime, he bases his conception of love on an authoritarian model of power and ownership, meaning that he only perpetuates the same ideals that have left him lonely and disenchanted in the first place.

Tonder continues voicing his aggravations, which revolve around loneliness and a feeling that the war isn't going as well as their government says. Captain Loft enters, and Tonder asks if he hears news from home very often. Loft faithfully recites the optimistic news the government propagates (that they're winning the war), and Tonder asks if he *really* believes this. Tonder presses harder, growing increasingly skeptical and pessimistic until finally saying, "Captain, is this place conquered?" When Loft says, "Of course," Tonder replies in a wild voice, "Conquered and we're afraid; conquered and we're surrounded." Prackle interjects, pleading with Loft to silence Tonder, but the crazed lieutenant Tonder goes on, laughing, "Conquest after conquest, deeper and deeper into molasses. [...] Flies conquer the flypaper. Flies capture two hundred miles of new flypaper!" Loft slaps Tonder, ordering him to stop. Defeated, Tonder slumps to the table, mumbling, "I want to go home."

Tonder's metaphor of flies conquering flypaper nicely highlights the fascist regime's flawed thinking when it comes to conquest. When he says, "Flies capture two hundred miles of new flypaper!" he emphasizes the absurdity inherent in believing that a military presence is equal to victory and total subordination. Indeed, his metaphor calls into question the very nature of military occupation, showing that just because a town has been invaded doesn't mean it's actually conquered. With soldiers disappearing, bombs dropping, and the railroad constantly breaking, it's easy to see that the conquerors have very little control over the townspeople. Furthermore, whatever power they do have is purely superficial, and soldiers like Tonder are the ones who are truly trapped and disempowered by the military occupation.

CHAPTER 6

On a cold night, soldiers patrol the snow-covered streets, walking by dark houses with shuttered windows. Inside one of these houses, Molly Morden sits knitting in the low light of a small lantern. She hears the footsteps of patrolmen outside—they grow in volume and fade away as the men pass. When it's quiet again, three sharp knocks sound on the door. Molly opens the door to find Annie, who steps quickly inside and tells her that the mayor is about to arrive with two men named Will and Tom Anders. She gives Molly a piece of meat she stole from Colonel Lanser's plate. She then tells Molly that the Anders boys are going to sail for England that night because their brother, Jack, has been shot for destroying a car. "The soldiers are looking for the rest of the family," she says. "You know how they do."

For the first time in the novella, it's clear that Mayor Orden is willing to do more than refuse to cooperate with Colonel Lanser. Indeed, his involvement with the Anders' escape plans shows that he's actively conspiring against the invaders. The fact that the soldiers are looking for Will and Tom merely because their brother rebelled against the military says something about how fascist regimes take punishment to great lengths, extending their wrath to anybody associated with insubordination. This is, of course, an attempt to control the population, but it clearly only inspires new kinds of subversion and retaliation.

Annie explains to Molly that the mayor needs to speak to the Anders before they sail, though she doesn't know why. She says that they'll be along in 45 minutes, and slips out to go tell Orden the coast is clear. After she leaves, Molly hears knocks on her door and opens to find Lieutenant Tonder. "I don't mean any harm," he says. When she asks what he wants, Tonder says, "Miss, I only want to talk, that's all. I want to hear you talk. That's all I want." He then insists that he only wants to spend time with Molly because he's seen her in the streets and she seems nice. "Just for a little while, can't we forget this war?" he pleads. "Just for a little while, can't we talk together like people—together?"

Tonder's question, "Can't we talk together like people—together?" once more demonstrates his inability to recognize the wartime situation for what it is: a hostile military takeover. Of course, it would be easy for him *to "forget this war," since he isn't suffering like the townspeople are. Furthermore, his repetition of the word "together" shows his intense need for human connection, something of which his time in the military has evidently left him feeling deprived. It is heavily suggested that Tonder has come to Molly's home looking to sleep with her, which makes his pleading—and her limited agency in light of his position—all the more sinister.*

Having let Tonder inside, Molly says, "You don't know who I am, do you?" She realizes that he's lonely, and decides to let him sit down for fifteen minutes. The house creaks, and he asks if somebody else is inside, but she explains that it's just the snow, which is heavy on the roof because she doesn't have a husband to shovel it off anymore. "Who did it?" Tonder asks. "Was it something we did?" When Molly nods, he offers to push the snow off her roof, but she asks him not to because it would make people think she had sided with the enemy.

The fact that Tonder doesn't recognize Molly as the wife of Alex—the man Tonder himself executed with his own firing squad—shows how little effort he has put into actually assimilating into the town. To be fair, this is at least partly because it's nearly impossible for an invader to integrate into the village, but Tonder's inability to recognize Molly shows that his desire to connect with her is primarily self-interested, since if he really cared about her, he would probably try to get to know her before appearing in the middle of the night on her doorstep.

Tonder tries desperately to elicit kindness from Molly, even reciting a short poem he claims he wrote for her, though she recognizes the lines as a famous poem by the German poet Heinrich Heine. When she points this out, they laugh together for a moment, and Tonder says, "They told us the people would like us, would admire us. They do not. They only hate us." Eventually, Molly starts speaking bluntly to Tonder, provoking him by acknowledging that he clearly wants to sleep with her, though he denies this, saying, "Please don't hate me. I'm only a lieutenant. I didn't ask to come here. You didn't ask to be my enemy. I'm only a man, not a conquering man." Molly admits she understands this, but she starts talking about her memories of Alex, telling Tonder that he was the one to kill her husband. Finally, he leaves, but only after promising he'll come back.

For the shortest moment while they are laughing, Molly and Tonder exemplify what it might look like if the townspeople and invaders got along. It's worth noting that this brief connection comes about when they share a laugh—an inherently human thing that reminds them that they're both people living in a chaotic world where the allegiances that divide them may seem arbitrary. Nonetheless, this moment doesn't have the power to transcend the lack of empathy set forth by Tonder's fascist regime, and nothing can make Molly forget that this man has aligned himself with a group of people willing to conquer and kill her and her fellow countrymen.

Moments after Tonder's departure, Annie returns to Molly's house and asks Molly why a soldier was in the house. Although she's somewhat suspicious of Molly, she fetches Mayor Orden, Doctor Winter, and Tom and Will Anders, who are all waiting outside. Once inside, Orden addresses the Anders brothers, saying that he's heard they're going to bring Mr. Corell with them. "It isn't good to see him in the streets," Will Anders says, explaining that they'll snatch the man as he takes a nightly midnight stroll, forcing him down to the docks where his boat is tied. Orden tells the boys that he wants them to ask British officials upon their arrival to send explosives to the town. "Then we will be armed, secretly armed," he says. "If they will even give us dynamite to hide, to bury in the ground to be ready against need, then the invader can never rest again, ever!"

Orden's idea that the threat of dynamite would interfere with the invaders' "rest" wisely picks up on the fact that the soldiers are growing weary and anxious. By attacking them in their moment of rest, he preys on their growing paranoia, a tactic that recalls Prackle's advice that Tonder "watch [his] nerves." In this sense, conquest seems to lead to an epidemic sense of insecurity, perhaps because people like Tonder sense that their task is futile and that they'll never fully succeed in subordinating the villagers.

Tom and Will Anders agree to make a plea for explosives to the English government when they arrive. At that moment, Annie comes rushing into the room from where she's been keeping guard at the front door. She reports that a soldier is coming up the path. Having learned that Tonder was inside Molly's house not long ago, Orden asks the young widow if she's in trouble. "The trouble I'm in no one can help me with," Molly says solemnly, ushering her guests out the back door. As Tonder raps the front door, she picks up a pair of knitting scissors and slips them into her dress, saying, "I'm coming, Lieutenant, I'm coming!"

When Molly sweetly sings out, "I'm coming, Lieutenant, I'm coming!" it becomes clear that she—like Colonel Lanser—is manipulating the customs of civility. Indeed, the scissors hidden in her dress indicate that she intends to harm Tonder, but her behavior with him up to this point has remained within the realms of courtesy. In this way, Steinbeck shows that soldiers aren't the only people who can hide wicked intentions behind cordial outward appearances.

CHAPTER 7

In the middle of a dark, cold night, patrolling soldiers hear the buzz of airplane engines above. At first they think the village is about to be bombed once more, but then they realize the planes are flying high and circling, which they don't normally do if they're about to drop bombs. As the planes circle, their underbellies open and release hundreds of small objects that sail through the air with little blue parachutes. In the fields and streets and on rooftops, these blue packages poke out of the snow. The soldiers collect several of these mysterious items and bring them to the palace, where Colonel Lanser, Captain Loft, and Major Hunter examine them. Hunter tells Lanser that the packages contain sticks of dynamite that, while simple, would prove quite effective in destroying the railroad or attacking the military.

The arrival of the packages in the town tells readers that the Anders made it safely to England. Despite the fact that Major Hunter identifies the dynamite as simplistic, Orden's plan to wear out the invaders' nerves seems as if it will come to full fruition, since now the officers must bear in mind the damage the villagers will be capable of inflicting on them. That his plan has succeeded indicates once again that fascist conquest can't disable a vigorous democratic community, which will inevitably find ways to triumph over authoritarian rule.

The officers continue discussing what to do about the packages. Apparently, the dynamite comes with a piece of paper instructing civilians how to use it effectively, detailing the best ways to damage railroads, bridges, "transmission poles," and even trucks. Lanser tells his men that the capital has ordered him to "stamp this out so ruthlessly" that the English forces won't drop the packages in other towns. The government has also instructed him to booby trap the packages, but Lanser finds this suggestion ridiculous, since the villagers are too smart to fall for such obvious tricks. Loft objects to his attitude here, saying that something *must* be done and that Lanser is too much of a defeatist. "This is a new kind of conquest," Lanser replies. "Always before, it was possible to disarm a people and keep them in ignorance. Now they listen to their radios and we can't stop them."

Yet again, Lanser shows himself capable of comprehending the nature of conquest—namely that it simply doesn't work in a straightforward manner. Especially now, when communication runs unchecked throughout the community, it's no longer "possible to disarm a people and keep them in ignorance." His assertion that the townspeople are too intelligent to fall for booby-trapped packages once again shows that he has a certain amount of respect for the villagers—suggesting that perhaps some of his feigned civility has been genuine.

While Lanser and Loft argue about what to do, Mr. Corell arrives. Before Loft leaves, Lanser relents and allows him to investigate the situation further, telling him to bring along Lieutenant Prackle, too. In turn, Loft expresses that he's uncomfortable with the way Prackle has been behaving lately, stating that the young man has turned "jumpy" and "gloomy." "Yes," says Lanser, "I know. […]It was a kind of shock to [these young men] to find out that they aren't a bit braver or brighter than other young men."

In this moment, Lanser criticizes his own regime's propaganda, which promotes national pride by filling its soldiers with grand ideas about their own superiority over others. This is precisely what undid Tonder, who was "shocked" when it became obvious the townspeople hated him and didn't think he was so glorious. Prackle is only now succumbing to the same disappointment, though Tonder could have used his friend's sympathy weeks ago, when he was expressing his own feelings of disillusionment about the war effort.

After Loft leaves, Lieutenant Prackle comes in hoping to speak to Lanser, who anticipates the young man's complaints: "You didn't think it would be this way, did you?" he asks. "They hate us," Prackle replies. Prackle then admits he's taken a liking to a woman in town, but their relationship is strained because of how the townspeople see the invaders. He wants to go home, but Lanser guilts him into accepting that he must stay and finish out his duty, since he's no longer a "man," but a soldier. "You must take orders and carry them out," he says. Then, showing some compassion, Lanser adds that the government should have prepared Prackle for difficult conquests, not unchallenged victories. Regarding Prackle's love interest, he says: "You may rape her, or protect her, or marry her—that is of no importance so long as you shoot her when it is ordered."

The distinction Lanser draws between being a man and being a soldier showcases how he deals with his own misgivings. Although he is pessimistic about war, he simply follows orders, compartmentalizing his emotions so that he can unquestioningly carry out his duties. But in this moment, when he tells Prackle that the young man can do whatever he wants with this new woman (including rape her) as long as he's prepared to kill her, Lanser reveals once and for all that his commitment to his role in the fascist regime greatly overshadows his capacity for empathy.

Upon dismissing Prackle, Colonel Lanser finally welcomes Mr. Corell into the drawing-room. Corell informs Lanser that he has written to the capital because Lanser "refused [him] a position of authority." He reminds Lanser that he urged him to push Mayor Orden out of office, explaining that the colonel should have taken his advice, considering that Orden—he has learned—was in Molly Morden's house on the night Lieutenant Tonder was stabbed to death. Corell reveals that he followed Molly to "the hills," where she was staying with one of Orden's relatives, though she was gone by the time he arrived. Corell also suggests that Orden was involved with the small blue packages, though he can't prove it.

By writing to the capital, Corell effectively exploits the bureaucratic nature of governmental hierarchies, using one authority to cancel out the orders of another. Of course, Corell does all this in order to secure a position of authority for himself, a fact that shows how important it is to the people in a fascist regime to occupy positions that enable them to wield personal power over others, even if those others are their own comrades.

In response to Corell's strong words, Lanser asks him what he is suggesting. "These suggestions, Colonel, are a little stronger than suggestions," Corell says, demanding that Orden be taken a hostage because "his life must [be made to] depend on the peacefulness of this community. His life must depend on the lighting of one single fuse on one single stick of dynamite." With a commanding flourish, he brings out a piece of paper from the capital, which affords him a "certain authority" over the situation. As an aside, Lanser asks how Corell was injured, since his arm is in a cast. Corell explains that he was jumped on the night of Tonder's murder, but patrolmen saved him—though the perpetrators still made off with his boat. Just then, an explosion sounds, and Lanser finally submits to Corell, yelling to a sergeant to place Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter under arrest.

Corell and Lanser's relationship is a perfect example of how two people in the same fascist regime are liable to pit themselves against one another in a constant struggle for authority and control. It's worth noting that no such power struggle takes place on the other side, where Mayor Orden governs his people by listening patiently and accepting whatever course of action his people decide upon. In this way, Steinbeck shows fascism to be a dysfunctional system of governance when compared to democratic rule.

CHAPTER 8

Word travels rapidly throughout the town that Mayor Orden has been arrested, but still the citizens swarm the village and countryside to collect the packages of dynamite. Meanwhile, Orden and Doctor Winter remain under arrest, confined to **the palace**. At one point, Doctor Winter comes into the drawing-room and asks to see the mayor, who hears him and steps out of his room—the soldier standing guard does nothing, and the two men speak candidly. Doctor Winter says that the invaders stand no chance of defeating the people, because "in a time of need leaders pop up [...] like mushrooms." In turn, Orden admits he's afraid to die and has been thinking of ways to escape, though he's ashamed to have these thoughts. In turn, Winter points out that he hasn't tried yet to escape and that he won't—in the end, Winter says, everybody naturally thinks this way.

Mayor Orden and Doctor Winter's discussion about their own fears and misgivings serves as a perfect counterpoint to Tonder and Prackle's earlier inability to communicate with one another. Unlike the two lieutenants, who clearly worried about the same things but couldn't bring themselves to console one another, Orden and Winter openly talk about their grievances and insecurities regarding their role in this war. In turn, they provide a model for what true human connection and empathy look like. Steinbeck implies that, whereas fascism fails to create an environment that supports healthy relationships, democracy naturally inspires compassion.

As the two men contemplate their probable demise, Mayor Orden asks Doctor Winter if he remembers Plato's *Apology*, which they learned together in school. He then quotes Socrates' monologue from *Apology*, which includes the lines, "Someone will say, 'And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end?' To him I may fairly answer, 'There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether he is doing right or wrong.'" In this way, the two friends proceed, taking turns piecing together Socrates' monologue, which Orden needs help remembering but delivers quite well nonetheless—after all, he learned these words 46 years ago, when he spoke them at his and Winter's graduation.

Orden's choice to recite Socrates' monologue from Apology is fitting for two reasons. First of all, Socrates is persecuted in Plato's text for unwaveringly doing what he believes is right. This is in keeping with Orden's refusal to cooperate with Colonel Lanser, despite the latter's insistence that cooperation is for the best. Second of all, Socrates speaks these lines before being put to death. It's obvious that this resonates with Orden because he himself faces a possible execution—therefore, he revels in Socrates' brave lines, taking solace in the idea that he will die only because he has acted morally.

As Mayor Orden delivers Socrates' monologue with Doctor Winter's help, Colonel Lanser enters the room and listens attentively. When Orden and Winter argue whether or not a certain word is supposed to be "death" or "departure," Lanser interjects, saying, "'Departure.' It is 'immediately after my departure.'" Later, when Lieutenant Prackle rushes in and tries to get the colonel's attention, Lanser holds out his hand and says, "Shh." Still, Prackle plows on, saying that he and the other soldiers have found townspeople with dynamite. "Hush," Lanser says, and goes back to listening to Mayor Orden speak the words of Socrates.

Lanser's interest in Orden's recitation of Socrates' monologue and his willingness to allow the mayor to finish once again shows his sensitive side. Indeed, this is a man trapped between a natural human tendency toward empathy and a strict adherence to fascist policies and inhumane modes of warfare. For perhaps the first time in the entire novella, he allows his empathy and humanity to win out momentarily as he voluntarily places his duty on hold in order to listen to a man he respects deliver a beautiful monologue.

Finally, Mayor Orden can remember no more of the monologue, and Lanser tells Prackle to have Captain Loft guard the men who were found with dynamite. He then turns his attention to Orden, telling the mayor that "these things must stop," but Orden merely smiles and says that they can't be stopped. "I arrested you as a hostage for the good behavior of your people. Those are my orders," Lanser says. "But that won't stop it," Orden replies, explaining that the people will get along without him as soon as he becomes a hindrance. Madame then emerges from the bedroom and tells Orden he's forgotten to wear his "chain of office," which she puts around his neck.

Here, Orden again reminds Lanser of the primary difference between fascism and democracy: the power of the people. In a democracy, the citizens decide what to do, and any ruler who fails to reflect their wishes is pushed out of the way. It's fitting that his wife puts his "chain of office" around his neck after he says this, as if what makes him a true leader is his acceptance of his own powerlessness and his commitment to serve the people—not to dominate them.

Colonel Lanser asks what Mayor Orden thinks his people would do if he asked them not to light the dynamite. Either way, Orden says, the citizens will move forward with their plans—the only difference is whether or not the mayor makes them brave and proud by refusing to give into the invaders' wish that he condemn anybody who lights a fuse. In response, Lanser suggests that if Orden told the townspeople to behave, then the invaders could perhaps tell their government that Orden begged for his life, thus sparing him. Orden points out that this plan is flawed, since the invaders are unable to keep secrets. He then reveals that Lieutenant Tonder's words about flies conquering flypaper somehow got out, and have been made into a national song of resistance.

The fact that Lieutenant Tonder's metaphor about the flies conquering the flypaper spread throughout the country to became a song of resistance illustrates how superficial and ineffective the invaders' control is, even when it comes to commanding their own people. Despite the appearance of hierarchal control and orderliness that the military cultivates, it's obvious that this fascist regime isn't even powerful enough to keep itself in check. Moreover, this revelation is a testament to the power and pervasiveness of the underground network of communication that exists among the people of this country, proving that the free flow of information is integral to resistance and democracy alike.

Orden speaks frankly with Lanser, telling him it's obvious that although the invaders have the upper hand now, freemen are capable of fighting much longer and with more zeal because they actually believe in their cause. Nonetheless, Lanser voices his commitment to following his orders, a statement that prompts Doctor Winter to ask if the colonel will really stick to these plans even though he knows they're doomed to fail. "I will carry out my orders no matter what they are," he states. At this point, Madame interrupts, saying, "But they can't arrest the Mayor." This comment makes Orden smile. "No," he repeats, "they can't arrest the Mayor. The Mayor is an idea conceived by free men. It will escape arrest." As these words leave his mouth, an explosion erupts in the distance, its echo reverberating throughout the hills.

In this moment, Mayor Orden attributes the strength of democracy to the fact that it is, above all, predicated on freedom of thought and the ideal of equal representation. Since an "idea conceived by free men" can't be censored, therefore democratic rule will never succumb to fascist oppression. No matter how much a conqueror strives to control the way a democratic society operates, it will forever fail to impose its own order over a free people.

Mayor Orden pauses and smiles. Another explosion sounds, now much closer. Looking at his friend, Orden puts his chain of office in Winter's hand. "How did it go about the flies?" he asks. "The flies have conquered the flypaper," Winter responds. Outside, there's another explosion, this time so close the windows break. Orden calls Annie and asks her to stay with Madame, whom he kisses on the forehead before going to the door, where Prackle stands waiting. He turns to Winter and quotes Socrates once more, saying, "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius. Will you remember to pay the debt?" Closing his eyes, Winter says, "The debt shall be paid." Laughing, Orden lays a hand on Prackle's arm, and Prackle jumps at his touch. "I remembered that one," Orden says. "I didn't forget that one." Nodding, Winter says to his oldest friend, "Yes, you remembered. The debt shall be paid."

Once more, Prackle reveals his closed-off manner, jumping away from Orden at the first sign of contact. The novella then concludes with Winter saying, "The debt shall be paid," which he takes from Socrates' speech in Plato's The Phaedo. *In the text, Socrates and Asclepius have this short exchange just before Socrates is put to death. By ending with Asclepius' line, "The debt shall be paid," Steinbeck insinuates that, although Mayor Orden shall die at the hands of the fascist regime, the loss of his life will be avenged by the uncontrollable population of free thinkers and insurrectionaries that he has until now represented.*

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Lannamann, Taylor. "*The Moon is Down*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 16 Nov 2017. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Lannamann, Taylor. "*The Moon is Down*." LitCharts LLC, November 16, 2017. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-moon-is-down.

To cite any of the quotes from *The Moon is Down* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Steinbeck, John. The Moon is Down. Penguin Books. 1995.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Steinbeck, John. The Moon is Down. New York: Penguin Books. 1995.