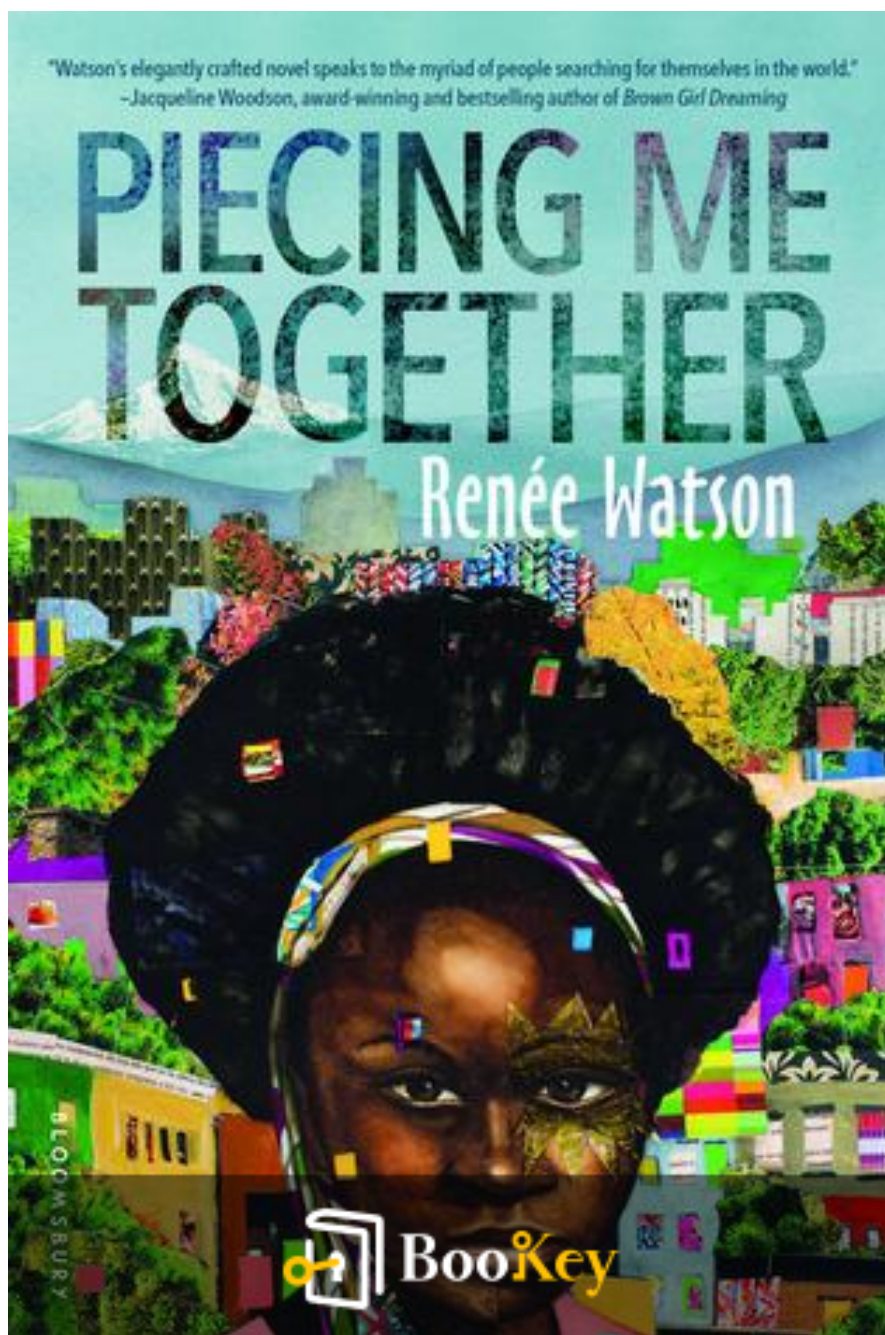


Piecing Me Together PDF (Limited Copy)

Renée Watson



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Piecing Me Together Summary

"Finding Strength and Identity Amidst Society's Challenges"

Written by Books1

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About the book

In **Piecing Me Together**, Renée Watson crafts a poignant coming-of-age narrative that promises to tug at the strings of your heart and engage your mind in a profound dialogue about identity, privilege, and aspiration. Meet Jade, a determined and talented young artist from North Portland with dreams as vibrant as the mosaic collages she creates. As she navigates the challenges of adolescence, Jade grapples with society's expectations, racial dynamics, and the complexities of growing up in a world that tries to define her based solely on where she comes from. Through Watson's insightful storytelling, readers are invited to join Jade on her quest for self-discovery, as she learns to harness her voice and piece together her own future, proving that the path to empowerment is as unique as the art she so lovingly creates. With the themes of understanding and resilience woven into its fabric, this novel will not only resonate with young adults but will also strike a chord with anyone who has ever dared to dream beyond the confines set before them.

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About the author

Renée Watson is a celebrated author and educator known for her poignant and empowering stories that often highlight the experiences of young black girls and women. Born in 1978, she grew up in Portland, Oregon, a city whose diverse neighborhood dynamics have often inspired her creative work. Watson has a multifaceted career that spans across authorship, teaching, and community activism, with a profound focus on fostering cultural understanding through storytelling. Her contributions to literature have been widely recognized, earning her numerous accolades, including the Coretta Scott King Award and a Newbery Honor. Renée is revered for her ability to weave complex themes of race, identity, and socio-economic challenges into heartfelt narratives, making her an influential voice in contemporary children's and young adult literature. Through books like "Piecing Me Together," she continues to empower young readers with messages of resilience, self-discovery, and the importance of nurturing one's dreams.

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Chapter 1 Summary:

In this chapter, we meet Jade, who is preparing for her first day as a junior at St. Francis High School in Portland. Jade finds irony in the Spanish word "éxito," meaning "to succeed," as it suggests an exit—a departure from her familiar life and community. This resonates with her experience, as she leaves her neighborhood friends to attend a prestigious private school.

St. Francis High, where Jade has a full scholarship, represents a significant opportunity and a significant challenge. It is predominantly white and expensive, a world removed from her own. She faces the struggles of fitting in, as her best friend Lee Lee attends Northside, her local school. Jade's mother firmly believes in the advantages St. Francis offers, so despite Jade's initial reluctance, she goes there.

Preparing for the school day, Jade contemplates the importance of appearances, always balanced against the desire not to seem like she tries too hard. Her summer earnings from tutoring are invested in clothes and school supplies, a responsibility her mother encouraged by refusing offers to help with household expenses.

Jade's mother, a devoted worker despite past job setbacks, comes to Jade's room with a familiar annual conversation: the Talk. Each year, her mother urges her to make new friends at St. Francis. Though Jade insists she's



comfortable with her casual friendships there, she misses the silent understanding she shares with Lee Lee—a connection impossible to replicate.

Her mother also reminds her about a meeting with Mrs. Parker, the guidance counselor, who frequently brings Jade opportunities. This time, the prospect of a study abroad program excites Jade, having been a major draw to St. Francis in the first place. Mrs. Parker is a persistent advocate for Jade's success, offering enriching experiences, which can occasionally feel overwhelming yet necessary.

The chapter closes with a light-hearted note, revolving around Jade's addition to the grocery list—mint chocolate chip ice cream—and her awareness of her mother's financial constraints. This anticipation juxtaposes against the fragility of promises in their world, capturing the delicate balance between hope and reality in Jade's life.

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Chapter 2 Summary:

Chapter 4 & 5 Summary:

In Mr. Flores's Spanish class, the protagonist, Jade Butler, finds herself partnered with a classmate she refers to as Glamour Girl—real name Kennedy—known for her focus on appearance rather than academics. Glamour Girl's peppermint candies inadvertently prompt Jade to reflect on her own desires, both for food and more profound ambitions like traveling and using her Spanish skills to open future opportunities.

Later, Jade visits Mrs. Parker, a school counselor who embodies the complex dynamics of privilege and care. Mrs. Parker, a white woman with a racially diverse family, offers Jade candy from her desk and discusses the "Woman to Woman: A Mentorship Program for African American Girls." This program intends to pair young black women with mentors for support and skill development, aiming to aid them in navigating a potentially challenging school environment dominated by cultural stereotypes and expectations.

Jade has a moment of disillusionment as she had hoped for news about the study abroad program, only to be offered a domestic mentorship opportunity instead. Despite initial reluctance, she learns that successful completion of



the mentorship comes with a scholarship offer to any Oregon college. The promise of a scholarship shifts Jade's perspective, and she decides to join the program, recognizing the long-term benefits it may yield.

The chapter closes with Jade filling out a form meant to introduce her to her future mentor, though she leaves the question about what she hopes to gain from the program blank, signifying her uncertainty about the journey ahead and her hope for deeper growth and opportunities.

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Chapter 3 Summary:

In this chapter, we explore an intriguing post-school conversation between the protagonist, their friend Lee Lee, and the protagonist's uncle, E.J. The conversation takes place over bowls of mint chocolate chip ice cream, setting a casual and relatable tone. However, the scene is briefly interrupted when E.J. arrives, filling the room with his strong cologne before humorously attempting to share in the protagonist's ice cream. He eventually retreats to the living room, leaving the two friends to continue their discussion.

The core of their conversation focuses on Lee Lee's history class, which sparks excitement as she shares her admiration for her teacher's unconventional approach to teaching. This teacher delves into historical figures and events often overlooked in traditional textbooks. Lee Lee is particularly impressed by learning about York, an African American slave who participated in the famous Lewis and Clark expedition. This revelation surprises the protagonist, who initially struggles to believe York's involvement in such a significant historical event.

Lee Lee's teacher emphasizes that York's contributions were as vital as those of Lewis and Clark themselves. He was a skilled hunter, set up camps, managed sails, and even saved Clark from drowning. Notably, both York and Sacagawea, a Shoshone woman who also accompanied the expedition,



were allowed to vote on important decisions—a groundbreaking moment for a black man and a woman of their time.

The story takes a darker turn as Lee Lee describes Lewis and Clark's interactions with Native American tribes. They presented gifts and proclaimed the land now belonged to the United States, introducing a distant "great father" as the new leader. However, they concealed the fact that York was a slave and that Jefferson, the President, owned slaves. This contrast raises questions about the true intentions behind these interactions and whether the native people foresaw the consequences.

The protagonist is left pondering the complexities faced by York and Sacagawea. Despite having some freedoms, they had no real power to change the course of history. While the conversation quickly shifts to local school gossip, the protagonist remains preoccupied with thoughts of freedom and powerlessness, reflecting on the untold stories in history and how they shape our understanding of the past.



Chapter 4:

In the chapter "Algo en Común" or "Something in Common," Jade, a high school student, again boards her routine bus to St. Francis, a shared experience that provides a glimpse into her daily life. On the bus, she notices the Book Girl, Samantha, sitting in her usual spot, engrossed in the same book. Their silent camaraderie is interrupted by a man who boards, playing music loudly on his phone and singing off-key, capturing everyone's unwanted attention.

Amid the awkward situation, Jade and Samantha exchange looks, sharing a mutual discomfort. As the man's singing becomes even more intrusive, Jade gestures for Samantha to join her, lifting her bag from the seat to make room. Relieved, Samantha sits beside Jade, quietly thanking her for the rescue. Once the man finally departs, the tension dissolves into laughter.

Introducing themselves, Jade learns that Samantha, or Sam as her friends call her, also attends St. Francis and is in the same Spanish class.

Embarrassed for not having noticed Jade earlier, Sam apologizes, but Jade assures her that it's alright. They talk about their commutes and discover that they both travel long distances—Jade from North Portland and Sam from Peninsula Park.

Jade takes this opportunity to share tips about navigating school—pointing



out shortcuts to avoid crowded halls and advising on which teachers to approach or avoid. When Sam hesitantly asks for lunch tips, Jade invites her to join at the sandwich bar, casually omitting that her own meals are covered by a scholarship. Both agree to meet for lunch, underscoring a budding friendship.

As the bus reaches their stop, they exit and continue discussing St. Francis. Jade is curious about Sam, suspecting there might be more beneath her cheerful exterior. Meanwhile, Sam, full of questions about their school, seems eager to forge this newfound connection. Their growing friendship hints at shared experiences and mutual reliance, emphasizing their common ground in an otherwise diverse environment.

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Chapter 5 Summary:

Chapter 9 Summary: Anticipation and Disappointment

As September fades into memory, the protagonist, Jade, maintains her daily routine of riding the bus, attending school, and spending time with her close friend Sam. In their typical interactions, Sam often humorously reflects on her own unnoticed needs while lightly teasing Jade about meeting someone who could potentially change her life.

Jade's anticipation builds as she prepares for the first meeting of Woman to Woman, a mentorship program she hopes will support her personal growth. Held at a library in Northeast Portland, the session is meant to introduce mentees to their mentors. Before the event, Jade shares a quick exchange with Sam that hints at subtle undercurrents of their friendship and highlights Sam's struggles with feeling overlooked.

Upon arrival at the library, Jade navigates through a sea of mingling attendees, checks in with a greeter, and arms herself with refreshments and an information packet about the mentorship program. She finds comfort in small, unnoticeable acts of collecting food, a survival habit learned from her mother during tougher times. This setting introduces Jasmine, another mentee, and sparks a cautious sense of camaraderie between the two as they



await their mentors.

Sabrina, the program's passionate founder, welcomes everyone with a motivational speech, aiming to highlight the empowerment and unity born from understanding systemic issues—a metaphor of learning to clean a polluted river instead of merely learning to fish. Yet amidst the excited atmosphere, Jade's anticipation turns to disappointment as she realizes her mentor, Maxine, hasn't shown up.

Feeling isolated, Jade reflects on the program's purpose and questions her place in it. Frustrated, she sneaks out of the event, evading the youthful icebreakers designed by Sabrina to foster connections. Outside, an unsettling encounter with a stranger at a bus stop jolts Jade further, unsettling her sense of safety.

Returning home amidst a backdrop of familial challenges—her uncle E.J.'s unsteady post-traumatic life and her mother's seemingly selective awareness of issues—Jade finds solace in the unspoken bond with her mother. Despite recognizing her mother's intuitive nature, she struggles with expressing herself as openly. As her mother departs for work, leaving Jade to ponder her words on being more vocal, Jade grapples with her perceived shyness, realizing she may not be shy but rather uncertain about self-expression.

This chapter captures Jade's journey through expectation, disappointment,

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and the complexities of navigating familial relationships and personal growth in the face of societal challenges.

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Chapter 6 Summary:

In Chapter 10, the protagonist, Jade, is on the phone with her friend Lee Lee, discussing the somewhat childish activities at the Woman to Woman welcome meeting they both attended. Their conversation is interrupted when Lee Lee's aunt demands she hangs up, leaving Jade alone just as her uncle, E.J., begins to prepare the living room for his bed, highlighting the cramped and humble living conditions of their home.

A knock at the door reveals Maxine, who introduces herself as Jade's mentor. Jade is taken aback by Maxine's spontaneous late-night visit and initially refuses to let her inside, worried about the state of the house. Eventually, she allows Maxine in and is surprised when Maxine apologizes for missing the earlier meeting and presents Jade with a thoughtful gift—a collection of art supplies intended to enhance her artistic pursuits.

Maxine is clearly impressed by Jade's art as she peruses her sketchbook, appreciating how Jade transforms perceived ugliness into beauty. Jade describes her passion for capturing the essence of her neighborhood in her art, revealing her creative perspective.

Maxine speaks warmly of her time at St. Francis, where she was active in many clubs—an experience she cherished. This connection with Mrs. Parker, who oversees the Woman to Woman program and helped inspire



Maxine to study abroad in countries like Guatemala and Ghana, is her way of giving back to a community that supported her.

As their conversation unfolds, it becomes evident that Maxine is dealing with personal turmoil involving a turbulent relationship with a man named Jon, hinted at when E.J. recognizes her. This connection casts doubt on Jade's initial impression of Maxine, as she learns her mentor is human too, dealing with personal challenges.

Maxine encourages Jade to embrace opportunities, like studying abroad, emphasizing the life-changing impact of travel and new experiences while sharing her belief that, despite the allure of other places, there is no place like home—a notion Jade finds difficult to fully accept given her current circumstances.

The chapter wraps up with Jade reflecting on Maxine's unexpected role in her life and feeling apprehensive about the mentorship program, questioning what Maxine can truly teach her given the apparent chaos in her personal life. This highlights Jade's internal conflict and skepticism about the path she’s being encouraged to pursue.

Aspect	Chapter Summary
Title & Author	"Piecing Me Together" by Renée Watson

Aspect	Chapter Summary
Chapter	10
Main Characters	Jade, Lee Lee, E.J., Maxine
Setting	Jade's home, primarily in the living room
Plot Summary	<p>Jade talks with Lee Lee about the Woman to Woman meeting, but their call is cut short.</p> <p>The scene highlights the cramped living conditions as E.J. sets up for bed in the living room.</p> <p>Maxine visits Jade, introducing herself as her mentor and apologizes for missing the meeting.</p> <p>Maxine gifts Jade art supplies and appreciates Jade's artwork, especially her perspective on her neighborhood.</p> <p>Maxine shares her academic experiences and involvement at St. Francis.</p> <p>The chapter reveals Maxine's personal struggles via her relationship with Jon.</p> <p>Maxine encourages Jade to pursue new opportunities such as studying abroad.</p> <p>Jade reflects on her skepticism about the mentorship and Maxine's impact on her life.</p>
Themes	<p>Mentorship and guidance</p> <p>Art and self-expression</p> <p>Economic challenges and home conditions</p> <p>Personal growth and opportunity</p>
Conflicts	Jade's doubt about the mentorship program and the genuineness of Maxine as a mentor.



Chapter 7 Summary:

In this chapter, the protagonist starts their morning with a routine breakfast, accompanied by the weather forecast announcing rain. As they pour milk into their cereal, their mother also pours some into her coffee, engaging in a casual conversation about the protagonist's busy schedule. The protagonist is involved in various activities throughout the week, including a National Honor Society meeting, tutoring sessions with a peer named Josiah, and a planned mentoring outing with someone named Maxine on Friday night.

The protagonist's mother is curious about Maxine, the mentor, expressing a desire to meet her and ensuring she has her contact number. The protagonist dutifully writes Maxine's number on the dry-erase board, a familiar routine in their household given the mother's protective nature. Reflecting on past experiences, the protagonist recalls their mother's hesitance in letting them engage with unfamiliar people, a concern rooted in wanting to know "what those people do in their homes."

After finishing breakfast, the protagonist and their mother exchange well wishes for the day as the mother leaves for work, inadvertently demonstrating their close and synchronized relationship through their simultaneous parting words. Despite the door slamming shut, E.J., presumably another family member, remains undisturbed, showcasing his deep and seemingly unshakeable sleep.



As the protagonist heads to the bus stop, they encounter a woman and her young son who appear lost. The woman, unfamiliar with the area, attempts to get directions and, through a brief exchange, reveals she speaks Spanish. Drawing from language skills taught by Mr. Flores, a teacher, the protagonist successfully communicates with her, pointing her in the right direction. This incident allows the protagonist to reflect on Mr. Flores' teachings about real-world conversations being key in learning a foreign language. This encounter is a testament to the practical application of their language education, reinforcing its value and utility not just in foreign travel, as Mr. Flores often emphasized, but also in everyday life.

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Chapter 8:

In Chapter 12, we follow Jade, a character attending St. Francis, a private school, as she navigates an afternoon visit to her friend Sam's house. Both Jade and Sam are adapting to the opportunities and challenges at St. Francis, a school starkly different from their prior educational experiences.

After school, the girls stop by Mrs. Parker's office for candy before heading to Sam's house for the first time. Jade's mother is thrilled that Jade is socializing with friends from her new school. On their way, Sam offers Jade warnings about her home environment, emphasizing its clutter due to her grandparents' habit of hoarding and their strict dietary restrictions due to health issues. Jade learns that Sam lives with her grandparents, due to her mother's inability to care for her, a reality that paints a picture of Sam's family dynamics.

Upon reaching Sam's home, we meet her aloof grandmother, Mrs. Franklin, who suffers from Alzheimer's and occasionally spouts offensive remarks. Mr. Franklin, Sam's grandfather, is more welcoming, engaged in preparing a modest meal. He provides a glimpse of their long-standing residence in Portland and the changes occurring in their neighborhood, underscoring the contrast between stability and the displacement Jade's family experiences.

In Sam's cluttered yet distinctly personal bedroom, the girls engage in a



Spanish study session, using flash cards Jade has crafted. The session is interrupted by a phone call from Sam's mother, highlighting the strained relationship and infrequency of their communication. Jade and Sam then share heartfelt conversations about absent family members—Sam's father who lives afar, her brother serving in the military, and Jade's lack of

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Chapter 9 Summary:

In Chapter 13 of the story, we delve into the dynamics of various relationships, chiefly focusing on Jade, her mother, and Maxine, Jade's mentor in the Woman to Woman program. The program is designed to help young women like Jade flourish by pairing them with mentors. However, there are moments of tension, particularly concerning boundaries and the evolving role that Maxine is playing in Jade's life.

The chapter begins with Jade preparing for a day with Maxine, intending to celebrate her birthday a week early since Maxine will be out of town. As Jade's mother enters the kitchen, Jade informs her of the brunch plans, which does not sit well with her mother. She insists that Maxine should have consulted her first, as Jade still has chores to do, and promptly forbids Jade from going out.

When Maxine arrives, she is met by Jade's mother who, though polite, makes it clear that she disapproves of Maxine's approach to scheduling time with Jade without her consent. Maxine, realizing her oversight, apologizes and acknowledges Jade's mother's viewpoint. Jade expresses her disappointment about not being able to go, but Maxine reassures her that they'll reschedule and promises to communicate better with her mother in the future.



Maxine is invited to stay for a while, and she and Jade retreat to Jade's room, which is a vibrant mess of artistic projects. Here, Maxine gains deeper insight into Jade's artistic talent and marvels at her work, much to Jade's delight. This interaction shows a budding connection between mentor and mentee as they find common ground in their appreciation of art, music, and culture.

Before leaving, Maxine discusses plans to take Jade to a bookstore to buy some art books, after expressing her admiration for Jade's work. Jade's mother agrees but insists on being notified of future outings, showing she values both Jade's artistic talent and her academic abilities. This concession marks a tentative acceptance of Maxine's role in Jade's life, with the understanding that, despite the program's influence, Jade will always be her daughter first.

This chapter paints a picture of a young girl on the brink of maturity, navigating her autonomy while balancing the expectations and protective instincts of her mother. It also highlights the importance of communication and respect in mentor-mentee relationships, underscoring the complexities of fostering growth while maintaining trust and understanding in familial bonds.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: Respect and Communication as Key to Healthy Relationships

Critical Interpretation: In Chapter 13, the essence of communication and mutual respect is crucially demonstrated, particularly in the delicate dynamic between Jade, her mother, and her mentor, Maxine. This chapter triggers a deep reflection on how, in your own life, respecting and valuing the perspectives of those around you can pave the way to stronger, healthier relationships. When conflicts arise, consider taking a step back to acknowledge where others are coming from, and how your actions might affect them. Allow their voices to be heard and take responsibility to amend what may have been disregarded or overlooked. This level of communication fosters trust and lays a solid groundwork for personal and communal growth. As you witness these dynamics unfold in Jade's world, you're reminded to cultivate this approach in your interactions, ensuring that growth and understanding coexist harmoniously.

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Chapter 10 Summary:

In Chapter 14, titled "Happy Birthday," Jade celebrates her birthday amid a series of disappointments, but finds solace in unexpected familial compassion. The day begins on a promising note with her mother preparing her favorite breakfast, pancakes and bacon, as a birthday treat. Her brother, E.J., playfully rushes her to join them before the pancakes get cold. During breakfast, Jade discusses her plans to meet her friends, Lee Lee and Sam, for a celebratory meal, excitedly anticipating their first meeting. She also mentions her father's promise to visit and bring her a gift later in the day.

E.J., however, expresses skepticism about their father's intentions, hinting at his unreliability and perceived dependence on his wealthy fiancée. This sparks a heated argument between Jade and E.J., during which Jade defends her father and calls out E.J. for his lack of employment. The disagreement escalates until Jade withdraws to her room in frustration.

As the day progresses, Jade's birthday plans unravel. Both Lee Lee and Sam cancel on her, each due to reasons beyond their control—Lee Lee is punished by her aunt, and Sam is unexpectedly ill. Unable to blame her friends, Jade is left feeling increasingly lonely and spends the day watching TV and drifting in and out of sleep.

Later, E.J. returns home without speaking to Jade, maintaining the tension



between them. Her father neither visits nor calls, deepening Jade's sense of disappointment. As night falls, Jade turns to music to distract herself from the brewing sadness, relying on a playlist E.J. created for a previous event.

In the midst of this emotional turmoil, E.J. extends an olive branch. He invites Jade to the kitchen where he has prepared a small birthday surprise: two slices of cheesecake, one with a candle. This gesture softens the earlier tension, and the siblings share a heartfelt moment, with E.J. affirming his love for Jade and joking that she is his favorite (and only) niece. This unexpected act of kindness rounds off Jade's birthday on a more positive note, underscoring the sibling bond that persists even through discord.

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Chapter 11 Summary:

Chapter: Gift

As the weekend comes to a close, Monday greets us with relentless wind and rain. I brace against the elements, using my umbrella as a protective shield while holding on tightly to prevent it from being whisked away. Boarding the bus, I navigate its wet interior carefully, seeking a dry seat since someone evidently left their umbrella behind. The absence of my usual bus companion, Sam, leaves the ride quiet and reminiscent of my solitary commutes last year.

Arriving at school, I make my way to my locker, passing familiar faces and exchanging greetings. Unexpectedly, Josiah, a classmate, approaches to wish me a happy birthday, which catches me off guard since it's two days after my actual birthday. I acknowledge his kind gesture and continue down the corridor, where I encounter Mrs. Parker, one of the school's staff. She also extends birthday wishes, though I'm quick to correct her about the date. Her good spirits remain undampened as she cheerfully wishes me a belated celebration.

As I near my locker, I spot Sam standing there, presiding over a display of balloons and a large card that completely transforms the space. Surprised

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and touched by her gesture, I quicken my pace to thank her. Sam embraces me warmly, expressing her regret for missing my birthday lunch. Her thoughtfulness overwhelms me.

Throughout the day, my festive locker acts as a beacon for well-wishers, drawing attention and birthday greetings from both friends and strangers alike. Normally, I'd shy away from being in the spotlight, but today, the extra attention feels like a gift in itself, making an otherwise ordinary Monday feel special and celebrated.

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Chapter 12:

Chapter 17: My Father

After school, I head over to my dad's place. He's not great at keeping surprises, so as soon as I arrive, he tells me he has something for me but hasn't wrapped it yet. He warns me not to go into his bedroom, but I've never intruded there before.

He tells me the gift is something I've desired for a long time, which confuses him since I never frame my photos; I usually alter them. Despite his intent to surprise me, I figure it out quickly. Dad then brings out a digital camera and a mini photo printer, which I've been wanting. It's his way of making up for missing my birthday because something came up that day.

Dad apologizes for not calling on my birthday. His phone battery died, which seems to be a recurring problem for him. When I question him about the real reason for canceling, he admits there wasn't a good one and apologizes sincerely for letting me down.

He hands me new batteries for my camera, and I start taking pictures immediately. Although he's reluctant to be photographed, he lets me take one picture of him. As I do, I'm reminded that we share the same eyes.



Dad invites me to join him in the kitchen. He warms up Chinese food leftovers, and we catch up. He asks about school, specifically what I've been interested in lately aside from art. I tell him about my love for Spanish class, which feels like learning a secret, powerful code.

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Chapter 13 Summary:

In Chapter 19 of the book, the protagonist, Jade, visits Powell's, an extraordinary and vast bookstore, with her friend Maxine. Initially, Jade is not particularly enthused about the trip, but is quickly captivated by the unique atmosphere of the bookstore, which is so large that visitors are given maps to navigate it. They are particularly drawn to the art section, which is expansive enough to be its own room.

In the art section, they are approached by a knowledgeable woman with an Afro who engages them in conversation about Jade's interest in collage art. This woman helps them discover influential works by prominent black collagists, offering insights into the art world that Jade had not previously encountered. The woman introduces Jade to the works of renowned artist Romare Bearden, famed for his evocative collages, and also highlights a book by Mickalene Thomas, an artist known for her mixed-media collages that depict vivid and intricate portrayals of brown women.

Jade is mesmerized by this new style of art, especially Thomas's technique of assembling varied shades and features to create unified portraits. As she browses through the pages, Jade's interest in creating such art is sparked, despite being partially distracted by the conversation about Mickalene Thomas's connections to Portland.



As they make their way to the cashier, Maxine generously offers to buy both books for Jade, who is overwhelmed with gratitude. She asks Jade to repay her by creating great art, emphasizing her support and belief in Jade's potential as an artist.

On the drive home, Jade is absorbed in her new books, reflecting on the inspiration they provide for her own work. Although she feels a sense of awkwardness about the lack of conversation with Maxine, Jade remains focused on absorbing the artistic techniques and styles that can help her shape her identity and expression as an artist.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Inspiration from discovering new art forms

Critical Interpretation: Imagine yourself stepping into the heart of an enormous bookstore, embarking on a journey you initially thought might be unremarkable. But as you wander through towering shelves, you're drawn into the exquisite allure of art that speaks to the soul, in ways you've never experienced before. Here, a simple visit to the art section becomes a transformative moment, opening your eyes to the brilliance of artists such as Romare Bearden and Mickalene Thomas, coupled by the unexpectedly profound guidance from a stranger. You discover styles and techniques that ignite your creative spirit, just as Jade was inspired to explore collage art. The essence lies in embracing the unexpected and letting unique experiences reshape your passions and purpose. Even when encounters with these newfound realms catch you off guard, they instill an invaluable sense of possibility and vision, urging you to create your own rendition of greatness. This pivotal moment can inspire you to not just absorb, but become a vessel for creativity, letting these influences carve your identity and expression in vibrant, bold strokes. "Create great art," becomes not merely a phrase, but a mantra guiding your journey, encouraging you to unravel your potential and become your truest self."

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Chapter 14 Summary:

Chapter 21: Woman to Woman

The "Woman to Woman" program is a mentorship group where twelve girls are paired with twelve mentors, forming a bond akin to having a dozen aunts. These mentors and mentees gather to discuss life, school, and relationships. The setting for this particular meeting is Sabrina's house, notable for its welcoming and spacious atmosphere.

As the group settles in, the girls are encouraged to help themselves to healthy snacks while Sabrina, one of the mentors, introduces the theme of the night: dating. Each mentee is asked to jot down questions about dating and place them in a question box. The reactions among the girls vary—some are excited, like Mercy, Sadie, and Lexus, while others are apprehensive or indifferent.

As the discussion begins, Melanie, a seasoned mentor, shares wisdom passed down from her mother: before engaging in relationships, one must first love and respect oneself. This advice resonates with the group, particularly when another mentor emphasizes the importance of not rushing into serious relationships during a time of personal growth.



Maxine, another mentor, is reluctant to speak, likely reflecting on her own experiences. Brenda chimes in to remind the girls that relationships, including friendships, should bring joy and that they should never tolerate being the punchline or have their feelings dismissed.

The conversation then revolves around how to gain the attention of boys, with Carla advising the girls to remain true to themselves. The topic of recovering from a heartbreak arises, with Melanie assuring the group that, despite the pain, the heartbreak will ease over time.

The evening concludes with Sabrina urging the girls to believe in themselves and their dreams, asserting their worthiness of love and happiness. However, this message prompts a deeper reflection from one of the girls. She contemplates the disparity between the positive affirmations from mentors and the harsh realities she faces as a young Black girl, including societal racism and stereotypes. These experiences often leave her feeling fragmented despite her family's love and support. She questions whether it is possible for someone like her to feel whole in a world that continually tries to break her down.

Ultimately, the session serves as a reminder of the importance of self-worth and resilience in the face of societal challenges, leaving the protagonist pondering the possibility of achieving wholeness amid constant adversity.



Chapter 15 Summary:

In this chapter, we follow Jade and her friend Sam as they begin their Monday morning by walking from the bus stop to their school, St. Francis. Sam, full of energy and curiosity, bombards Jade with questions about plans for the upcoming weekend, particularly whether Jade has commitments with the Woman to Woman program—a mentorship initiative aimed at empowering young women, which Jade participates in. Unfortunately, Jade has to decline Sam's invitation, leaving Sam to jokingly wonder if she might need a new best friend. Despite their limited time together, Jade values their momentary connections, like sharing pastries and coffees at the local Daily Blend café.

As they splash through rain puddles on their way to school, Jade spots Kennedy, previously dubbed Glamour Girl by Jade due to her confident aura and stylish persona, arriving in her car. The two share a friendly wave before Jade hurries indoors, escaping the rain. After parting ways with Sam, who promises to see her at lunch, Jade heads to her locker to unpack.

Soon, Jade hears the unmistakable laugh of Kennedy resonating down the hallway, accompanied by Josiah, another student. Josiah extends a lunch invitation to Zack's, highlighting Kennedy as the designated driver for the trip. Although hesitant, Jade agrees, recalling the money her brother, E.J., sometimes shares with her following successful DJ gigs.



Kennedy greets Jade with a half-smile and a "good morning," revealing an unexpected kindness as she repeatedly offers Jade a ride to school, confused why Jade would choose the bus. When Jade mentions she's from North Portland, Kennedy's expression shifts as dots connect, hinting at assumptions and realizations about Jade's circumstances.

Despite the invitation, Jade remains unsure about lunch plans, questioning her desire to join in. Through this brief morning routine, we glimpse into Jade's world—her friendships, social dynamics, and the subtle class distinctions that play out in her interactions.

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Chapter 16:

In this chapter, the protagonist and her friend Sam find themselves in an awkward social situation that highlights cultural and socioeconomic divides. They join Kennedy, Josiah, and two of Kennedy's friends for a meal. The protagonist is conscious of her size when one of the girls suggests she sit in the front seat of the car to avoid crowding in the back. During their trip to Zack's Burgers, tensions rise as Kennedy becomes visibly frustrated when her food order is incorrect. Her small tantrum over the fries reveals her impatience and entitlement, especially when she complains about wasting calories on food she doesn't like.

The conversation takes a more judgmental turn when one of Kennedy's friends disparages Northeast Portland, unaware that she is insulting Sam's neighborhood. She labels it as "a polished ghetto," expressing disdain with support from Kennedy and the other girls. The protagonist, perceptive to such attitudes, reflects on what they might think of her own neighborhood. Josiah, meanwhile, remains focused on his meal and avoids engaging in the derogatory conversation. Sam stays silent, but her feelings are palpable as the protagonist notes the weight of her gaze.

After the ride, tension still lingers as they sit separately to eat their lunch back at St. Francis. Kennedy's group sits across from Sam and the protagonist, while Josiah is absent, already having finished his meal. In a



moment of solidarity and shared humor, Sam and the protagonist joke about Kennedy's car trip experience, agreeing they never want to repeat it. Despite this resolve, they find common joy in the deliciousness of the burger, leading them to laugh genuinely together. Their laughter confounds Kennedy and her friends, who are oblivious to the inner contentment Sam and the protagonist share despite their dismissive remarks earlier. This chapter beautifully underscores the unspoken bond between the protagonist and Sam, contrasting it with the superficial complaints of Kennedy and her entourage.

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Chapter 17 Summary:

Chapter 24: Hunger and Humiliation

Returning home from school, the protagonist finds a note from her mother along with some money, instructing her to get dinner due to a doctor's appointment. Opting for Dairy Queen, she plans to indulge in a Blizzard despite the cold weather. On her way, she stops by her friend Lee Lee's house, but Lee Lee is not home, so the protagonist sets out alone, wary of walking in the dark despite the early hour.

As she walks, the autumn setting reminds her of the approaching Halloween, with fallen leaves and carved pumpkins adorning the neighborhood. Arriving at a busy Dairy Queen, she encounters a bustling scene: parents wrangling children, a messy dining area, and a group of loud boys engaged in a crude conversation about the attractiveness of various girls.

While waiting for her order, the boys shift their discussion to evaluating the protagonist herself, reducing her to a mere number on their personal scale. Despite their derogatory comments and unwanted attention, she tries to maintain her composure.

Once her order is ready, she decides against eating inside, uncomfortable



with the idea of being scrutinized further. As she leaves, one of the boys attempts to engage her further, hurling insults when she ignores him. She remains silent, refusing to acknowledge his disrespectful remarks.

Boarding a bus home, she refrains from eating her meal, conscious of potential judgments. By the time she arrives home, her fries have grown cold, yet she finds solace in the warmth of her burger. Contemplating how to repurpose the fast-food bag, she envisions crafting something symbolically empowering—perhaps a makeshift dress or a crown, a nod to reclaiming her self-worth and embracing the inner strength her father encourages her to recognize.

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Chapter 18 Summary:

In Chapter 26, titled "El Barrio," the protagonist, Jade, is preparing to meet her friend, Sam, who is visiting her neighborhood for the first time. Sam's apprehensive nature arises from the notions fed by her grandmother about the dangers of Jade's area. Despite these prejudices, Jade agrees to meet Sam at the bus stop to ease her fears.

As November's chill fills the air, Jade heads out to meet Sam, briefly contemplating the disparities in societal concerns over missing white girls versus black and Latino girls. This thought is interrupted by Sam's arrival, who is all smiles, reassuring Jade.

The two head to Frank's shop, a familiar and welcoming spot in the neighborhood, where the owner, Frank, generously offers them free snacks. They are soon joined by Jade's friend Lee Lee, who jokes about Jade's long commute to school and welcomes Sam like an old friend.

Their next stop is Andrea's house, where they meet with friends Andrea and Kobe, who excitedly greet Jade. The group shares corner store snacks and engages in friendly banter about school life. They discuss the differences between their schools, highlighting Jade's ambitious love for languages and their makeshift poetry club—a token of their resourceful camaraderie.



As the afternoon winds down, Sam prepares to head home and calls her grandfather, signaling the end of her visit. As Jade and Lee Lee accompany Sam to the bus stop, Lee Lee expresses surprise over the neighborhood stereotypes held by Sam's grandparents. They reflect on the irony and prejudice lurking in such perceptions, adding humor to their conversation on their way back.

This chapter weaves together themes of friendship, societal perceptions, and the importance of understanding and bridging diverse worlds. It subtly addresses racial and societal biases through the engaging dynamic of the characters while celebrating their unique camaraderie.

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Chapter 19 Summary:

In Chapter 27, the protagonist, Jade, observes the varying perspectives and traditions around Thanksgiving. As part of an annual tradition, Jade and her mom volunteer at the Portland Rescue Mission, joined by friends E.J. and Lee Lee. Jade's mom emphasizes gratitude despite their modest circumstances, hoping one day they can feel thankful without making comparisons to those who have less.

After serving meals at the mission, they gather at Jade's house for a Thanksgiving dinner. The meal prompts a discussion about the meaning of Thanksgiving when Lee Lee recounts a lesson from her teacher, Mrs. Phillips, who views Thanksgiving as a national day of mourning for Indigenous peoples. E.J. recalls Mrs. Phillips from his own school years, describing her as a teacher who encouraged critical thinking about America's history, particularly its celebration of Thanksgiving.

As the conversation unfolds, Jade's mom acknowledges the validity of Mrs. Phillips' perspective, realizing Thanksgiving has traditionally been a day of familial gratitude for her but recognizing that there's a broader historical context to consider. Lee Lee mentions an upcoming cultural exchange with the Native American Youth and Family Center, highlighting an effort to understand Indigenous perspectives.



Feeling introspective, Jade silently absorbs the exchange, coming to realize her lack of awareness about such issues. E.J. expresses a complicated perspective: despite America's faults, he'd still prefer to live there. When asked for her thoughts, Jade mediates, acknowledging the complexities by saying America has both successes to be thankful for and historical injustices to address.

As the evening progresses, the mood shifts to a lighter tone with dessert. Although their homemade peach cobbler doesn't turn out as expected, leading to some good-natured teasing and laughter, the shared experience brings warmth and unity. The chapter closes with the family enjoying games and camaraderie, illustrating gratitude in its many forms—from family togetherness to the simple joy of laughter.

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Chapter 20:

Chapter 28 captures a rainy December weekend that critically explores interpersonal dynamics and socioeconomic contrasts. The chapter opens with Jade being picked up by her mentor, Maxine, whose car is warm like a sauna, providing a contrast to the cold and wet world outside. They set off for the Portland Art Museum, a more traditional museum experience compared to the interactive atmosphere of OMSI, which Jade is slightly familiar with.

As they arrive at the museum, they meet their group and Sabrina, another leader, reiterates museum etiquette—no touching the art and quiet conversations. However, their museum visit is interrupted when Maxine takes a long phone call from Jon, leaving Jade feeling neglected. Jade is frustrated by Maxine's behavior, as it seems counterintuitive to Maxine's encouragement for Jade to love and take care of herself.

During her solo exploration, Jade crosses paths with another mentor-mentee pair who are flouting the no-photo rule. Brenda invites Jade to join their tour, but Jade is too distracted by Maxine's neglect to enjoy the art. As the group reconvenes, Jade skips the reflection session.

Eventually, Jade finds Maxine, who apologizes for the phone call and offers to buy dinner to make up for it. Despite her annoyance, Jade agrees,



primarily driven by hunger and the limited food options at home. Over dinner, Jade orders the same meal as Maxine, unfamiliar with arugula and the concept of an Arnold Palmer, discovering they're quite enjoyable.

Their conversation becomes a platform for discussing socioeconomic realities. Maxine unintentionally offends Jade by implying North Portland residents, like Jade and her friends, are insular, staying within their neighborhoods. Jade counters with practical challenges like transportation and costs, revealing Maxine's obliviousness to these lived experiences. Maxine brushes off Jade's realism as pessimism, emphasizing the stark differences in their perspectives.

Maxine then inquires about Jade's family, acknowledging the challenges of finding work. Jade is offended by Maxine's patronizing tone, despite understanding her mother's hard-earned successes. When Jade turns the conversation around to Maxine's upbringing, she learns Maxine's mother was a surgeon, affording Maxine a different set of opportunities and negating the need for a mentor.

This disparity leads Jade to question why Maxine chose to be a mentor. Maxine's response is multifaceted: it's partly for financial benefits, but largely driven by a desire to help young women, particularly women of color, with their holistic well-being—a need she felt in her youth.



Despite Maxine's good intentions, Jade is critical of Maxine's inconsistent engagement, having flaked on several occasions, undermining their developing relationship. Maxine acknowledges her failures and solemnly promises to be more reliable.

The chapter presents a poignant exploration of the complexities in mentor-mentee relationships, highlighting differences in social realities and questioning how these affect perceptions and actions within those relationships. Jade remains skeptical, contemplating the differences that separate her from Maxine, who now has just one more chance to prove herself.

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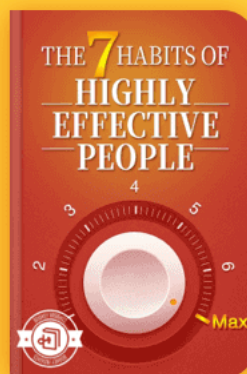
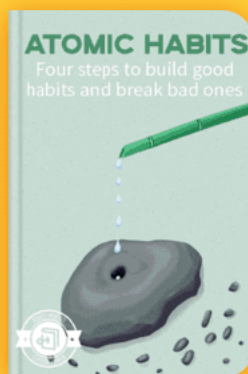
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Chapter 21 Summary:

Chapter 29 of the narrative, titled "La Llorona, The Weeping Woman," brings us into a moment of introspection and observation through the eyes of the protagonist as they journey through the city. The name "La Llorona" alludes to the Mexican folklore tale of a woman who mourns for her lost children, which becomes a metaphor for the chapter's theme of sorrow and regret.

The journey begins on an almost empty bus, where the protagonist encounters a woman who embodies a haunting sense of despair. This woman, with rain-drenched hair and clothes that speak of neglect, enters the bus without fare, mumbling and crying softly. Her presence is a poignant enigma, prompting the protagonist to wonder about her past and who might care for her. Here, the woman becomes the living embodiment of "La Llorona," a figure of melancholy traversing the cityscape.

As the protagonist departs the bus, they embark on a solo exploration of the city, armed with a camera to capture the urban tapestry. The narrative unfolds through vivid descriptions of Portland's iconic landmarks—the bustling line at Voodoo Doughnuts, the culinary oasis of food carts on Alder Street, the umbrella vendor in Pioneer Square, and the architectural wonders like the Portlandia statue and the Arlene Schnitzer's marquee. Each setting, captured in black-and-white photographs, interweaves the listener into the

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diverse stories and silent questions embedded within the city's streets.

A pivotal moment in the protagonist's exploration is the discovery of an unexpected mural on the Oregon Historical Society building. This mural, depicting the historical expedition of Lewis and Clark, Sacagawea, and York with Seaman the dog, presents a scene of exploration and legacy. The protagonist is particularly struck by the representation of York, an enslaved African-American member of the expedition, whose story is often overlooked. The mural metaphorically extends the exploration theme as these larger-than-life figures seem to stride out into the city.

The chapter concludes with the protagonist focusing their camera on York's face, perhaps uncovering stories untold and complexities unacknowledged, much like the protagonist's own journey through the city's layers of life and history. In capturing the mural, the protagonist reflects on past and present narratives, drawing a parallel between historical and personal voyages.

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Chapter 22 Summary:

In chapter 30, titled "Feliz Navidad" (Merry Christmas), the protagonist, Jade, gathers with her friends Lee Lee and Sam to make holiday cards. Lee Lee, who refers to herself as a non-artist, claims she's only there for moral support, though Jade reassures her that creating collages doesn't require exceptional artistic skills. Jade encourages her friends to use recycled Christmas cards from previous years, showing her resourcefulness and creativity. The activity brings back memories of their sixth-grade art class and their intimidating art teacher, Mrs. White, who was never impressed with Lee Lee's artistic efforts. Despite this, Lee Lee remains confident in her own talents, identifying herself as a poet rather than an artist. Their conversation reveals an endearing past of swapping assignments—Jade would draw for Lee Lee, who would, in turn, write for Jade.

As the three friends settle into card-making, they discuss their skills and interests. While Jade is visibly talented in art, and Lee Lee in poetry, Sam reflects on her preference for appreciating rather than creating art, eventually revealing a quiet strength in listening and being a supportive friend. Jade acknowledges this, emphasizing the importance of being a good friend—a talent not everyone possesses. The moment highlights the different ways individuals express and appreciate creativity and talent, underscoring the value of friendship and support.



The chapter reflects on the nuances and dynamics of friendships, showcasing how each friend brings something unique to the group. While Lee Lee reminisces about unresolved feelings tied to an ex-friend, Sam, feeling valued, recognizes the importance of empathy and understanding within their circle. Through the shared activity of crafting cards, the characters showcase the power of creativity to bring people together, allowing them to express gratitude and love in personal ways. As they craft and chat, it becomes clear that their shared experiences and mutual support are what make their friendships truly special, leaving a feeling of warmth and connection as the holiday season unfolds.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The Power of Creativity and Support in Friendship

Critical Interpretation: In "Piecing Me Together," Chapter 30, we explore the profound impact that creativity and support hold in nurturing friendships. Jade's resourceful approach to card making, using recycled Christmas cards, exemplifies how creativity needn't come from extraordinary talent; rather, it's about the intention behind each gesture. As you inspire your friends to tap into their hidden talents, such as Lee Lee's poetry, or support others like Sam, you can forge connections strengthened by mutual appreciation, listening, and shared experiences. This chapter beckons you to appreciate your friend's unique qualities, highlighting how collaboration and encouragement can craft a strong, fulfilling relationship. Embrace creativity as a medium that transcends art, serving as a bridge that binds people with love and gratitude, fostering not only joy but also a deep sense of belonging in those you cherish.

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Chapter 23 Summary:

Chapter 32: Sisters

Since my conversation with Maxine, our relationship has shifted positively. She's been dedicating time to us, free from distractions or lateness. This evening, she invited me to her apartment, and eager to bond, my mom quickly approved. Maxine arranged a small gathering to introduce me to her friends, Bailey and Kira. We made a quick stop at Safeway for snacks, and I helped her set them out in the perfectly organized setting of her stylish apartment.

As her friends arrived, warmth and familiarity filled the space. Bailey introduced herself, her intricate braided hairstyle a visual highlight, while Kira's straightforward demeanor shone through. The conversation flowed easily. We delved into Maxine's recent breakup with Jon, who, despite his attempts to reconcile, was imperfectly remembered for his dependency and job issues.

Realizing the dominant topic of our talk was Jon, I curved the dialogue towards college experiences, a subject that piqued my interest. Kira was in her final year at Portland State, and Bailey recounted her initial struggles in her freshman year at the University of San Diego, finding solace in familiar



comforts. Even as pizza was ordered from a gourmet shop, the discussions transitioned to food and Valentine's Day plans.

The conversation veered sharply into the realm of women's issues, with Kira voicing her disdain for the repetitiveness of college plays like "The Vagina Monologues" and suggesting alternatives like "For Colored Girls." Curiosity piqued, I asked about the play, unsettling the dynamic with innocence, until the answers turned awkward. Just then, the pizza arrived, easing the tension as we rediscovered rhythm in casual banter.

As laughter and teasing ensued over what I should or shouldn't know, I pondered over the dynamics of sisterhood. The night wound down with rounds of Taboo until it was time to call it a night. Maxine prepared to drive me home, and Kira, in a conspiratorial whisper, extended an offer to clarify any "adult" topics shielded by Maxine's prudence.

Maxine's defense of my potential echoed shortly after, a protective assurance I was destined for success, different from "those girls." Her words were both affirming and a reminder of the broader divide I constantly navigated. Despite our budding camaraderie, Maxine's protective stance was a double-edged sword, leaving me questioning the trustworthiness of her support. The evening concluded with a mix of camaraderie and contemplation of the chasms between perceived safety and my quest for independence.



Chapter 24:

In this chapter, the protagonist reflects on her deep fascination with the journey of York, a black man who was part of the Lewis and Clark expedition to the Pacific Northwest—a place she herself longs to escape from. Her mother, while acknowledging her daughter's desire for adventure, asks her to return occasionally for visits. This interaction reveals the protagonist's inner conflict and sense of being torn between her current life and her aspirations.

She contemplates another kind of expedition—her own journey to break free from her current environment. Despite feeling guilty about wanting to leave, she is determined to pave her own path, different from the girls around her.

Maxine, a character who seems to work towards bettering the community, views the protagonist as a stereotype of girls who indulge in fast food and lead unhealthy lifestyles, who know the ins-and-outs of financial struggles, and who navigate the unsafe aspects of their neighborhood. Yet, Maxine does not see the protagonist's full complexity.

Indeed, the protagonist does relate to those struggles but also transcends them. She is driven and academically inclined, using her summers for reading and working instead of leisure. She is pragmatic, aware of the expectations and demands of her family, and harbors dreams of further



education and global exploration.

Maxine's assumptions are both incorrect and accurate. The protagonist acknowledges that while her path diverges from that of the other girls, they are not entirely different. Their lives intersect at certain points, highlighting a shared existence within their community. They are not opposites, but rather, they are connected, occupying the same world and touching each other's paths in significant ways.

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Chapter 25 Summary:

Chapter 34: A Day Out with Sam

The chapter unfolds with a glimpse into the protagonist's routine life, dominated by school and tutoring. Sam, her friend, feels neglected, sensing a drift. The protagonist reassures Sam that she hasn't been social with anyone, not even Lee Lee, whom she used to see daily. Sam believes her, though it withers little of her disappointment.

With an afternoon free, the protagonist and Sam decide on a shopping trip to Pioneer Place. Sam is the one shopping; the protagonist tags along. They visit stores catering to slimmer figures, and the protagonist feels relieved that she doesn't have money to shop, navigating an environment where clothes often aren't available in her size.

Their shopping spree continues, highlighted by Sam moving from rack to rack, evaluating clothes. A salesclerk offers help, asking if she can start a fitting room for Sam. The protagonist, aware of her limited options in these stores, tries to joke but receives a cold response from the salesclerk.

The atmosphere shifts when the clerk accuses the protagonist of loitering, suggesting she wait outside. Struggling with this unwelcome attention, she



eventually leaves the shop, past indifferent or sympathetic shoppers.

Sitting outside, she's approached by a shopper who acknowledges the injustice she faced, suggesting she reach out to the manager. The supportive words, though comforting, highlight the incident's sting.

When Sam reemerges, the protagonist recounts the ordeal. Sam is surprised but tries to reason that the size of the protagonist's backpack might've justified the clerk's actions. This response is disheartening to the protagonist, who questions the underlying bias, whether about race, size, or intent.

The protagonist grapples with the social dynamics at play, as the chapter closes with an exploration of personal dignity amid pervasive prejudice. The chapter delves into themes of belonging, prejudice, and friendship, emphasizing the nuances of social interactions and personal perception.



Chapter 26 Summary:

Chapter 36 of this narrative opens with Jade returning home to the comforting and familiar sound of Fred Hammond's gospel music, indicating her mother's presence. The setting is cozy and domestic, portraying a typical day in Jade's life. Her mother is busy in the kitchen, frying fish, an activity she often accompanies with gospel music, implying it brings her solace or joy during such chores.

As Jade greets her mother, she quickly changes out of her school clothes and starts her math homework. The struggles she experiences with Algebra II are relatable, adding a layer of normalcy to her character that many can connect with. Her mother admits she can't help with the homework, highlighting a generational or educational gap between them, yet reinforcing that supportive mother-daughter bond. Jade resolves to seek help from Maxine, a mentor or tutor figure in her life.

The tension in the scene builds when Jade mentions a flyer about the "Woman to Woman Healthy Eating, Healthy Living" seminar on the fridge. Her mother doesn't react positively. Instead, she feels criticized by the suggestion that her cooking may need to change. This exchange opens a window into the cultural and generational nuances between Jade and her mother, with the latter expressing frustration at what she perceives as judgment from the "uppity" women in Jade's life, Maxine and Sabrina.



These characters represent a modern, possibly more affluent, lifestyle, contrasting her mother's traditional ways, rich in cultural heritage but potentially lacking in modern health consciousness.

The dialogue touches on deeper issues of identity and the pressure Jade faces from different environments—her mother's world and the new one she's being introduced to via Maxine and the scholarship program. Her mother's frustration is lost in a monologue that lays bare her fears and insecurities about change and the potential loss of cultural identity.

The chapter closes with Jade quietly finishing her meal, a metaphor for her consuming and navigating through the complexities of her dual world. Jade's careful attention to enjoying her mother's cooking suggests a deep appreciation of her roots, even as she steps into an expanding horizon.

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Chapter 27 Summary:

Chapter 39 of the story revolves around a backstage tour of the Oregon Symphony, led by a friendly yet intensely energetic volunteer. As the group explores the area, she delves into the rich history of the symphony, proudly highlighting how it was originally called the Portland Symphony Society and was among the first orchestras established in the West before 1900. Her enthusiastic demeanor adds a lively touch to the informative tour, despite her appearance being somewhat contrasting, as her pale skin is emphasized by her black sweater.

The volunteer uses metaphors to explain the orchestra's structure, likening its sections to families: strings, woodwind, brass, and percussion. Each 'family' shares similarities in materials, appearance, and sound, coming together to form the grand ensemble. Her speech, filled with passion and well-rehearsed facts, occasionally shifts to spontaneous comments as she tries to connect with the group.

Sensing a lack of enthusiasm from the visitors, she attempts to bridge the generational gap by acknowledging modern musical interests. She introduces James DePreist, an influential African American conductor who became the music director of the Oregon Symphony in 1980. DePreist's legacy includes transforming the orchestra into a nationally acclaimed institution, a point of pride for the volunteer.



She also shares a personal connection to the legendary contralto Marian Anderson, DePreist's aunt. Anderson, known for breaking racial barriers in the arts, spent her final days in Portland. The mention of Anderson evokes a strong, unexpected reaction from Maxine, who sharply interjects, revealing her own familiarity with Anderson's legacy.

This chapter blends the rich tapestry of Oregon Symphony's history with personal anecdotes, aiming to forge a connection between classical music's past and the contemporary interests of its audience. It's a tapestry woven with pride, cultural significance, and the enduring impact of music on diverse communities.

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Chapter 28:

In Chapter 40, titled "The River," we delve into the protagonist Jade's recent experiences, which have been marked by slow and quiet days. Her mother is working extra shifts to save for a car, and E.J., presumably a close acquaintance or family member, spends almost all their time at the studio, leaving Jade alone at home. While this leads to a cleaner house and food that lasts longer, it also enhances Jade's solitude.

Jade's friendship with Sam is under strain. Recently, there was a disagreement involving a salesclerk, and Sam's indifference to Jade's feelings about the incident troubles Jade deeply. Sam's failure to acknowledge the tension—or even offer a generic apology—makes Jade question the depth of their friendship, as she feels Sam doesn't understand her experiences or emotions.

An unavoidable encounter with Sam occurs when Jade has to accompany her to Mrs. Parker's office. Inside, Sam receives an envelope and is elated to learn she's been nominated for a study abroad program in Costa Rica. This news triggers mixed emotions in Jade. On one hand, she congratulates Sam but internally grapples with disappointment and envy as she was not nominated herself. Although Sam seems oblivious to Jade's inner turmoil, Jade can't shake her feelings of being left out.



As they head to the bus stop, Sam excitedly talks about the information session for the trip, but Jade is too consumed by her own emotions to fully engage in the conversation. Sam invites Jade to the meeting and suggests spending a weekend together, yet Jade remains non-committal, concealing her internal conflict.

The chapter closes with Jade riding the bus back to her neighborhood, a place marked by its polluted river, which serves as a metaphor for her thoughts on inequality and the distribution of opportunities. She reflects on the fish, the river, and contemplates who decides the distribution of resources—symbolically resonating with her situation and feelings of exclusion.

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Chapter 29 Summary:

Chapter 41: Familia (Family)

Jade, the protagonist, finds herself spending time with Maxine after dodging her calls since their previous outing to the symphony. Maxine, determined to reconnect, invites Jade to her family's traditional Sunday dinner, dubbed "Soul Food Sunday." Surprisingly, Maxine, whose demeanor doesn't suggest familiarity with soul food, takes Jade to a fancy bakery in Portland to pick up dessert for the dinner. Jade chooses a chocolate ganache cake, not knowing she's already won Maxine's father over with the selection.

As they drive through Portland's affluent area, Jade marvels at the mansions that look straight out of TV shows showcasing celebrity homes. Upon arriving at Maxine's family's home, a mansion styled with plush greenery, Jade is warmly welcomed by Maxine's family: her sister Mia, brother Nathan, his wife Abby, and Maxine's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Winters.

The dinner setting is unlike anything Jade has experienced. She notices the curated art collection and immaculate organization throughout the house. Mia, an art gallery owner, expresses interest in Jade's artwork, a gesture that piques Jade's curiosity and potential for future collaboration.



During the meal preparation, the family immerses Jade in conversation, inquiring about her life and aspirations as Maxine boasts about Jade's artistic talent and academic achievements. Despite Maxine trying to share Jade's story, Jade feels overwhelmed by the barrage of questions and the subtle nervousness Maxine displays.

The dinner is a sumptuous feast, a glamorous version of traditional soul food. Jade observes the family's balanced excitement over announcements, especially Nathan and Abby's revelation of their pregnancy. Maxine, however, is visibly sidelined during the family exchange, which creates a silent tension around the table.

As dessert is served, Mrs. Winters insists Jade take leftovers home, generously packing a variety of the meal for her family. This kindness stands in stark contrast to the pointed undercurrents of Maxine's relationship with her mother, particularly when it comes to Maxine's current priorities and involvement in the Woman to Woman program, where she mentors Jade.

The tension peaks when Mrs. Winters subtly criticizes Maxine's work with the program, implying she should focus on a "real job." This draws an uneasy line in the conversation that Jade overhears. Feeling like a pawn in a familial dispute, Jade grows uncomfortable and yearns for the simplicity and warmth of her own home, where meals are cherished without pretension.



On the way home, amid the rhythmic silence of the windshield wipers and the dark, winding roads, Jade asks for no explanations from Maxine, retreating into her thoughts, feeling more like an obligation than a mentee.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Emphasizing the Importance of Authentic Family Bonds

Critical Interpretation: In this chapter, you experience the blend of warmth and complexity that comes with being part of a family. Jade's time at Maxine's family dinner highlights the contrast between appearances and genuine connection. By immersing yourself in this scene, you can come to recognize how vital it is to cherish authentic moments with family, free of superficial expectations. This key point inspires you to create and nurture meaningful relationships, appreciating the genuine love and support that transcends material wealth or societal status, much like how Jade yearns for the unpretentious warmth of her own home.

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Chapter 30 Summary:

In this chapter, the protagonist's mother becomes aware of the generous support coming from Maxine's mother, highlighted by food in the fridge and cultural outings such as a visit to the Portland Art Museum and the Artists Repertory Theatre, organized by the Woman to Woman program. The mother understands the benefits that the mentoring program provides.

The conversation shifts to Jade's reluctance to continue with the mentorship. When her mother inquires about Jade's day, even though Jade's response is vague, it reflects her attempts to shield her mother from fully realizing how reliant she is on the support of others.

Jade admits that she is contemplating quitting the program, perceiving herself as a charity case to Maxine. Her mother is surprised and emphasizes the importance of staying committed, reminding Jade of the financial challenges of college and the opportunities the mentorship can offer beyond just financial aid.

The mother stresses the value of learning from Maxine, despite Jade's reluctance. She brings out a large jar of coins, a visual symbol of their financial struggle, to emphasize the importance of seizing the opportunities that could lead Jade to a better future.



Throughout the conversation, Jade's mother encourages her to see past imperfections and extract valuable lessons from Maxine, an accomplished young woman who has successfully navigated a challenging environment. The mother insists that Jade should not dismiss the program lightly, highlighting the larger life lesson of valuing opportunities despite their imperfections.

In the end, Jade is urged to reconsider her stance and find a way to complete the mentorship program, implying significant consequences to abandoning it. The chapter ends with an unresolved tension, as Jade processes her mother's heartfelt plea and weighs her decision.



Chapter 31 Summary:

In this chapter, Jade is grappling with her feelings about the mentorship program, "Woman to Woman," led by Maxine, who has been taking her to upscale places around Portland. Initially excited about the opportunity, Jade now feels disillusioned. She's been lying to both her mother and Maxine about attending the outings, claiming they're canceled or that she has too much homework. This deception stems from her exhaustion with Maxine's well-meaning attempts to expose her to a different lifestyle — one filled with lectures on etiquette and visits to places that highlight her family's financial struggles.

As Jade lies in her room, contemplating the situation, her friend Lee Lee visits, noticing something amiss with Jade. Lee Lee confronts her about her recent behavior and the rumors circulating about her wanting to quit the mentorship program. Jade expresses her frustrations, revealing that rather than learning how to become a successful woman, she feels like she's learning to be someone she's not or cannot afford to be.

Jade's main grievance is that the program feels superficial, teaching her more about adapting to environments she can't permanently access rather than genuinely empowering her as a woman. She confesses feeling alienated, not only from Maxine's world but also from her own friends at Northside, as the program sometimes makes her feel superior, an idea she dislikes.



Lee Lee, with her characteristic wisdom, challenges Jade to voice her discontent to those running the program. She argues that the mentors can't change if they aren't aware of the issues, and remaining silent only perpetuates the problem. Though skeptical, fearing her concerns might be dismissed, Jade admits that speaking up could lead to change. Lee Lee's confidence in Jade inspires her, reminding her of the power of her own voice.

By the end of their conversation, Jade acknowledges her reluctance to address these issues and begins to realize the importance of advocating for herself. Lee Lee's intervention prompts Jade to rethink her approach, recognizing that learning to speak up is as vital as any lesson the program could teach her. This realization mirrors Jade's internal conflict between wanting to fit in and being true to herself. With this, Jade decides to reconsider her approach to the mentorship, empowered by the possibility of initiating real change.



Chapter 32:

Chapter 45: The Truth

The following day, Jade decides to call Maxine and arrange a meeting for Saturday afternoon. When Maxine arrives at Jade's house, she greets Jade warmly, expressing how much she missed her. As they prepare to leave, Maxine's hug conveys her commitment and apologies for any past misunderstandings.

As they drive, the rain tapping on the windshield creates a calming backdrop. Sabrina, a guidance figure in their lives, has often emphasized the importance of eye contact for confidence and truthfulness. However, Jade finds her confidence in staring elsewhere. Despite this, she begins to speak openly, acknowledging her recent unreliability and expressing her dissatisfaction with the "Woman to Woman" program.

Jade confesses a desire for the program to address practical life skills, such as budgeting, rather than just providing experiences outside their neighborhood. She voices concern about Maxine's intentions, feeling that sometimes Maxine's actions, like bringing Jade to family dinners, seem more about proving something rather than genuine care.



Maxine listens quietly, finally responding with an apology and recognizing her mistakes. She admits to overcompensating and occasionally speaking for Jade in situations where Jade can defend herself perfectly well. Maxine reassures Jade of her pride and faith in her, acknowledging the need for personal growth.

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Chapter 33 Summary:

In Chapter 46, the narrative unfolds with Jade and Maxine walking through McMenamins, a venue known for repurposing historic buildings. Maxine takes on the role of a tour guide, sharing her appreciation for how McMenamins transforms spaces, like an old school and a funeral home, into vibrant establishments. As they navigate the halls, Maxine points out a former boiler room that has been converted into a bar and mentions that it may be a place to celebrate Jade's 21st birthday in the future. There's a sense of camaraderie between the two, as Jade reflects on their relationship and wonders if it will last beyond high school.

Their tour continues into a unique movie theater with mismatched secondhand seating, where guests can enjoy food from the attached restaurant. Maxine fondly describes it as an ideal, budget-friendly date spot, hinting at her frequent visits. Jade observes the eclectic decor of the restaurant, noting the beautiful assortment of lights hanging from the ceiling. As they settle into their meal with a view of the garden and outdoor fireplace, their conversation turns more personal.

Maxine references Jade's recent introductions to Kira and Bailey and suggests that Jade isn't the first to empathize with a burgeoning anti-Jon sentiment. Jon, presumably Maxine's significant other or interest, seems to have drawn concern. Jade reassures Maxine by emphasizing their support is



for Maxine, not against Jon. This affirmation brings Maxine to tears, visibly touched by Jade's support.

Strengthened by their candid exchange, Jade feels empowered to suggest that Jon may not be worth Maxine's emotional investment. Maxine acknowledges Jade's perspective and admits the need to establish boundaries and let go. In a moment of mutual growth, Maxine advises Jade to persevere and not quit easily, proposing a pact: Maxine will let go of Jon while Jade remains committed to her program. Both agree, solidifying their mentorship bond and personal growth journey.

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Chapter 34 Summary:

Chapter 47 introduces us to Jade, a student preparing to leave for school. She hastily grabs her breakfast, planning to eat on the bus, but before she leaves, her routine is interrupted by a troubling conversation with E.J., who shares alarming news. The news centers around a local incident of police violence against a Black teenager named Natasha Ramsey in nearby Vancouver, Washington. This event is significant because it's so close to Jade's home in Portland, making it feel personal and immediate.

E.J. reads an article detailing how Natasha was severely beaten by the police at a party, leaving her critically injured. Despite the police's claims of not using excessive force, Natasha's injuries tell a different story. The gravity of the situation strikes Jade, particularly since the incident might never have gained attention without bystanders filming it.

Jade suggests they should pray for Natasha and her family, but E.J. dismisses the idea, arguing that prayer is a "poor man's drug," a crutch for those who lack resources or influence. He contends that real change comes from engaging with those in power, like the police chief or the governor—not through prayer. His comments highlight a theme of frustration and a call to action against systemic injustice.

With Natasha's plight weighing heavily on her mind, Jade feels a sense of



urgency. In her rush, she misses the bus and is running late for school. E.J. advises her to be careful, underscoring a pervasive fear for their safety. This advice is a reflection of the broader societal issue where events like Natasha's are not isolated, creating a climate of caution for young Black individuals.

Arriving at school, Jade's thoughts remain with Natasha. Even as she goes through her day, the incident overshadows everything else. She connects with her friend Sam but decides not to bring up Natasha's case, suspecting Sam might be unaware of it. Throughout the day, Jade continually grapples with the desire to act and feel, underscoring her internal conflict and empathy towards Natasha's situation.



Chapter 35 Summary:

Chapter 48: Ghost

The day unfolds with a heavy heart for Jade as she navigates the school cafeteria with her friend Sam. There's an eerie silence about the recent assault on Natasha Ramsey, an unarmed Black girl attacked by the police. Natasha's name lingers in Jade's mind, a haunting reminder of the vulnerability faced by people she knows who could fit the same description. Jade feels the burden of relief that it wasn't someone she knew, and the urge to connect with her loved ones just to hear their reassuring voices.

As Jade lines up for lunch, her thoughts are disrupted by Ms. Weber, the authoritative cafeteria monitor. Despite her usual distant politeness, Ms. Weber becomes confrontational, urging Jade and the other students to keep the line moving. The interaction escalates when Ms. Weber fixates on Jade after a sarcastic comment from a white student, Hannah, who also crosses the line with inappropriate remarks. Ms. Weber retaliates by dismissing Jade to see Mrs. Parker, the school counselor, and throws away Jade's lunch in a display of authority.

Outside Mrs. Parker's office, Jade overhears Ms. Weber's exaggerated account of the incident, painting Jade as defiant. Frustrated, Jade attempts to



defend herself, but Mrs. Parker encourages her to calm down, suggesting Jade take the rest of the day off to clear her head. Feeling misunderstood, Jade reluctantly agrees, though she is frustrated by the lack of acknowledgment of Hannah's disrespect and Ms. Weber's misrepresentation.

Before leaving school, Jade stops by Mr. Flores's class for homework details. Seeing him immersed in an article about Natasha on his computer screen, Jade's emotions remain raw. The support from her family and friends like Lee Lee and Maxine, who encourage her to assert herself, plays in her mind, but in this moment, her silence is her shield against the unjust situation. As Jade departs, Mr. Flores offers his hope for her well-being, but the weight of the day lingers as she considers the challenges she faces within a system that marginalizes voices like hers.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Systemic Inequality and Resilience

Critical Interpretation: You are confronted with the harsh reality of systemic inequality through the experience of Jade in this chapter. Despite facing unjust treatment from authority figures and feeling overshadowed by the wrongdoings that echo in society, you're reminded of the importance of resilience. Walking in Jade's shoes, you learn that finding strength in silence is sometimes necessary when words fall on deaf ears. The chapter urges you to harness inner resolve and determination to rise above challenges, lean on your support system, and advocate for your truth. It drives home the message that even when your voice isn't immediately heard or validated, your courage and persistence can eventually carve pathways for change.



Chapter 36:

Chapter 52: Perseverance

As spring finally breaks through, offering a respite from winter, the protagonist and Maxine decide to take a refreshing walk through Columbia Park. They opt for an outing that isn't centered around food, embracing the opportunity to walk amidst the park's colossal trees. The protagonist uses this time to open up to Maxine about their friend Sam, recounting incidents at the mall and in the cafeteria line. There's a sense of frustration because Sam doesn't seem to acknowledge issues of race, consistently making excuses for various situations without recognizing the racial undertones.

Maxine advises that it's important to talk to Sam about these feelings. However, the protagonist admits to feeling uncertain about how to initiate such a conversation, especially since they've never had to discuss race issues with a friend before. They reflect on how friendship is meant to be a space of mutual understanding and acceptance, contrasting their effortless relationship with Lee Lee against the current challenges with Sam.

Maxine emphasizes the importance of valuing different friendships for what they uniquely offer and suggests that some friends are worth the effort to maintain, including Sam. She reassures the protagonist that they are worth



fighting for, just as much as any friendship. Maxine also brings up the study abroad program, another conversation the protagonist needs to have with Mrs. Parker.

As their conversation continues, Maxine updates the protagonist about her own life, sharing that she has finally ended things with Jon, sticking to her decision this time. She reminds the protagonist of their mutual agreement to work on their personal growth – Maxine quitting on Jon and the protagonist persisting in the face of disappointment. This conversation is a turning point, reinforcing the importance of not quitting on friendships, dreams, or oneself.

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Chapter 37 Summary:

In this chapter, Jade has a meeting with Mr. Flores, her teacher, where she confronts him about not being nominated for a coveted study abroad program. Upon entering the classroom, she finds him viewing a video about Natasha Ramsey, a girl recently released from the hospital after an incident that garnered public attention. The story of Natasha serves as a backdrop, highlighting larger injustices and perhaps minimizing personal grievances in Jade's mind.

Jade, nonetheless, gathers courage to express her disappointment to Mr. Flores. She reminds him of her achievements and roles, citing her consistent academic excellence and her efforts in assisting her peers, attributes she believes make her a deserving candidate for the program. Jade explains that such an opportunity would significantly enhance her college applications and personal growth, drawing attention to her limited chances of international travel without such programs.

Mr. Flores responds by acknowledging Jade's accomplishments but points out that his aim was to provide opportunities to students who might have less support than Jade does. He emphasizes his responsibility to be fair and to extend chances to a diverse group of students.

The conversation becomes emotional for Jade, as she internalizes a growing



frustration about being perceived always as someone in need of help rather than capable of making significant contributions herself. The encounter stirs feelings of both anger and sadness in her, leading her to leave Mr. Flores's office with tears in her eyes. Despite feeling like her words may not change the outcome, she finds solace in having voiced her feelings and being an advocate for herself. After leaving the classroom, Jade seeks privacy to process her emotions and emerges with a sense of relief for having confronted an issue that had been troubling her.

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Chapter 38 Summary:

In the chapter titled "Spring," we delve into Jade's inner world, where she grapples with her identity and the challenges it brings. Jade yearns to feel comfortable in her own skin, to express herself freely without the burden of judgment or the pressure to conform. She laments the feeling of having to suppress aspects of her identity at school to avoid being stereotyped or marginalized.

The chapter introduces the backdrop of a tragic incident involving Natasha Ramsey, a young Black girl victimized by police violence. The incident resonates with Jade, highlighting societal race relations and stirring complex emotions within her. During a visit to her white friend Sam's house, Jade encounters Sam's grandfather who, despite his good intentions, struggles to fully grasp the depth of Black pain, reflecting a common gap in understanding across racial lines.

Sam is preparing for a school trip to Costa Rica, a symbol of privilege and opportunity often denied to those like Jade. What starts as a casual conversation about the logistics of Sam's trip quickly turns into a painful discussion about racial inequity. Jade voices her frustration about how St. Francis, their school, tends to select who warrants international experiences and who doesn't, often reflecting a racial divide in opportunities.



The conversation intensifies as Jade confronts Sam about her lack of acknowledgment regarding racial inequality. Despite Sam's attempts to minimize these tensions, Jade insists on recognizing the systemic barriers faced by Black students, which result in her being included in programs that focus on remediation rather than empowerment.

The interaction between the two friends reveals a deeper undercurrent of emotional labor that Jade endures, highlighting the difficulty in conveying her experiences in a way that is fully understood by her white peers. The chapter captures the turning point where Jade realizes that voicing her truth could risk her friendship with Sam, as Sam struggles with guilt and misunderstanding, resulting in a tension-filled goodbye.

Jade's internal conflict and desire for an equal chance to prove herself shape this poignant chapter, providing readers with insight into the complexities of race, opportunity, and friendship challenges faced by young Black women.



Chapter 39 Summary:

Chapter 55, titled "Fear," paints a vivid picture of a week off from school for the protagonist and her friends, Lee Lee and Andrea. The three are eager to spend time together, yet disinterested in familiar places like the Jantzen Beach shopping center, especially since Lee Lee wants to avoid her ex who works at Target. Andrea proposes a walk to Columbia Park, hinting at an unspoken desire to see Tyrell, a character she seems to have a soft spot for, despite her protestations. The camaraderie among the girls is evident through playful teasing and heartfelt laughter, underscoring their strong friendship.

As they prepare to leave, Jade, the protagonist, insists on candidly photographing her friends, seeking to capture the authenticity of the moment despite Andrea's reluctance. The group dynamic is further highlighted as they head to Frank's, pooling their money for a treat of wings and JoJos. These scenes illustrate the simplicity and joy of shared experiences and youthful adventures.

The chapter takes a serious turn when the trio witnesses a police stop involving a black woman, an encounter that elicits a palpable tension among them, particularly for Lee Lee who clutches the paper bag tightly in distress. This incident reflects a larger societal fear and the paralyzing anxiety that such encounters can summon in the community. Jade instinctively documents the event, perhaps as a form of resistance or a need to bear



witness, even though there is no immediate danger.

Lee Lee's visible anxiety serves as a reminder of the underlying tensions and fears that persist in their lives, even during a seemingly innocuous outing.

The three friends find solidarity and reassurance in each other, walking hand in hand back onto the street, repeatedly affirming to themselves that everything is okay. This poignant moment reinforces the strength and resilience derived from their friendship as they navigate a world filled with uncertainties.

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Chapter 40:

In this chapter, we follow the narrator as they embark on a walk along Portland's scenic Esplanade with their friend Maxine. The Esplanade, a popular spot for both cyclists and pedestrians, offers breathtaking views of Portland's waterfront park and various bridges, like the Tilikum Crossing and the Hawthorne Bridge. The narrator, intrigued by the canoes dotting the Willamette River, captures the moment with photographs while discussing personal reflections with Maxine.

As they find a bench to sit on, the narrator opens up about feeling incomplete or fragmented. Maxine can relate, recounting her experiences at St. Francis, where people often assumed she received a scholarship solely because she was Black. She shares the exhaustion she faced when expected to speak on behalf of her race, despite her academic excellence. Maxine confides in the narrator about a childhood memory involving her father's real estate advice, which subtly reinforced the notion that Black identity needed to be subdued to secure opportunities, making her internalize some problematic social messages.

Their conversation merges personal experiences with broader cultural reflections. Maxine recalls feeling apprehensive about inviting friends over to her home, fearful of how her Black family's culture would be received by her white peers. Although Maxine is proud of her racial heritage, the societal



expectation to "tone down" her Blackness created a complicated dynamic in her life, needing to balance cultural pride with external stereotypes and assumptions.

As they continue their walk, the bustling boardwalk prompts the narrator to

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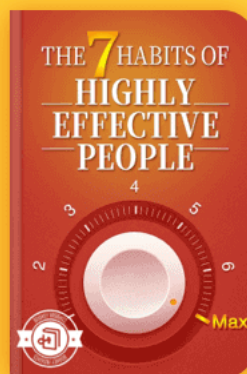
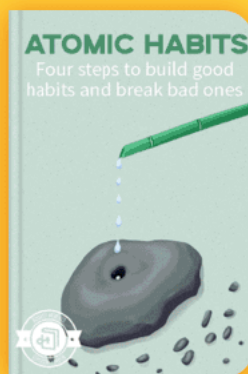
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Chapter 41 Summary:

In Chapter 59, Jade attends the first Money Matters workshop organized by Woman to Woman, which takes place in a nearby church. The pastor kindly offers the venue, and Jade is pleased that she doesn't need transportation to attend. At the workshop, Sabrina, one of the program leaders, acknowledges Jade's contribution in suggesting the workshop's topic, encouraging everyone to express appreciation. This moment highlights Jade's growing involvement and influence within the group.

Sabrina emphasizes the importance of feedback, indicating that the program is designed to cater to the attendees' needs. The workshop aims to provide practical financial advice, especially targeted at navigating finances in college. Maxine's friend, Bailey, is among the guest speakers and intends to focus on managing money wisely, avoiding pitfalls like accumulating debt through credit cards. This surprises Jade, since Maxine hadn't mentioned Bailey's role beforehand.

The workshop is interactive, and the mentors encourage open dialogue, reassuring the attendees that this is just the first of many such discussions. Jade is engrossed, taking copious notes because she values the information and hopes to share it with her family—Mom, E.J., and Lee Lee—instead of the usual tangible gifts. This chapter underscores the importance of financial literacy, community support, and the empowering impact of shared



knowledge. It reflects Jade's commitment to self-improvement and contributing positively to those around her.

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Chapter 42 Summary:

Chapter 61 - Hands

In this chapter, we're introduced to a slice of life at home. E.J., a DJ by trade, has started a gig at a new restaurant, leaving Jade with the house to herself on Thursday and Friday nights. One night, Jade's friend, Maxine, gives her a call. Maxine asks Jade what she's up to and learns that Jade plans to remove her braids so her mother can redo them. Maxine offers to help, claiming "four hands are better than two," to which Jade readily agrees.

Jade is initially anxious about Maxine staying longer than usual. Typically, Maxine only drops by briefly to pick her up or check out her latest art projects. However, the prospect of her seeing the mismatched furniture and imperfections in Jade's home makes her nervous.

When Maxine arrives, the duo gets to work; Jade prepares the tools—combs, scissors, and a water sprayer—while Maxine finds a comfortable spot. They make efficient progress, clipping and unbraiding Jade's hair, leisurely chatting as the task consumes their attention. Once finished, Maxine uses the water spray to make Jade's hair more manageable, granting Jade a rare moment of pampered bliss as her hair is gently combed through.



Just as Maxine is about to leave, Jade's mother arrives home. There's a subtle tension in her voice despite her smiling greeting, likely due to the help Jade received from Maxine with her hair—something she usually does herself. Jade's mother heads to the kitchen, ready to prepare dinner, and invites Maxine to stay, subtly opening the door to companionship beyond just hair care.

In the kitchen, Maxine and Jade's mom exchange culinary tips, with Mom casually instructing Maxine on cooking basics while also imparting life wisdom about overcoming heartache. Jade is tasked with her homework, though she joins the informal lessons by integrating vocabulary practice into the lively kitchen ambiance. As savory smells fill the air, the chapter closes with a tender sense of camaraderie and the comforting sounds of life and learning in the warm kitchen setting.

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Chapter 43 Summary:

In this chapter, the protagonist, Jade, along with her friend Maxine, attends an art event at a gallery owned by Mia, located on Jackson Avenue. Mia stands out as one of the few Black entrepreneurs in the area, and her gallery has become a hub for showcasing contemporary art from underrepresented communities, particularly Black and Latino artists. As they drive to the gallery, Maxine and Jade share a lighthearted moment, singing along to an old song, emphasizing their close bond.

Upon arrival, they join an audience excited to hear Mia speak. Sabrina, another key figure in the event, introduces Mia and highlights the importance of her work in the community. Mia shares her vision of the gallery as a space for marginalized voices, showing transformation slides of the gallery's journey from an abandoned building to a thriving artistic venue. She passionately describes the current exhibit featuring works by Kehinde Wiley, known for his empowering portraits of African American women inspired by historical art.

Jade is deeply moved by the lifelike portraits, which resemble both regal figures and familiar faces from her neighborhood. This resonates with her, and she notes her favorite portrait—a connection she desires to share with her family.



While admiring the artwork, Jade reveals to Maxine her aspiration to intern at the gallery, seeking to learn about running such a business. Despite initial hesitation, Maxine encourages her to approach Mia. Gathering courage, Jade speaks with Mia, expressing admiration for her mission and interest in an internship. Mia is receptive and offers Jade an application for one of the two paid internship positions available, recognizing Jade's potential and previous artistic contributions.

As the event concludes, Sabrina leads a reflective exercise, asking attendees to encapsulate their experience in one word. Jade's word, "inspired," captures not only her personal growth and aspirations but also the impact of the event and Mia's work on her future.

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Chapter 44:

Chapter 64: Opportunity

The second Money Matters workshop organized by Woman to Woman concludes with attendees eager to engage with the guest speaker. Sabrina, a key organizer, approaches Jade with a special request—she asks if Jade could contribute a piece of her art for their upcoming annual fundraiser. This event is designed to showcase student work while raising essential funds for the organization.

Jade, both surprised and honored, agrees immediately. On their way home, she discusses the opportunity with her friend Maxine, who parked at Jade's place so they could attend the workshop together. On arrival, Jade shares the news with her mother. Her mom is initially skeptical, questioning the benefits of donating art that others will profit from, but Jade explains that the event offers exposure to a wealthier audience and is a chance to contribute back to Woman to Woman, which has been instrumental in providing her opportunities and scholarships.

Maxine reassures Jade's mom, understanding her concern about potential cultural biases at such events. Having had similar experiences at fundraisers and gala events, Maxine promises guidance and support, ensuring Jade won't



feel out of place.

Convinced and proud, Jade's mom acknowledges the opportunity, embracing her daughter's growth and artistic endeavors. As they move to the kitchen, where a healthy meal is being prepared, Maxine and Jade's mom

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Chapter 45 Summary:

In Chapter 65, the protagonist, feeling more dressed up than ever before, prepares to attend a Woman to Woman event with the help of her mentor, Maxine. Initially reluctant to wear makeup, she's ultimately pleased with the final look crafted by Maxine. Her roommate, E.J., jokingly suggests she's going on a date due to her appearance, but she clarifies her plans, emphasizing that she's dressing up for herself, not anyone else.

At the fundraiser, she surprisingly fits in, partly due to Maxine's preparation. The event features delightful food, such as shrimp and stuffed mushrooms, and her art piece draws significant attention. People at the event are curious about the artist behind the creation, which is part of a silent auction.

Engaging with attendees, including Gina, a board member of Woman to Woman, she discusses her artistic journey and future educational aspirations. Gina expresses a personal interest in art and extends an opportunity to stay in touch, passing on her card.

Another wealthy couple approaches, engaging with her about her schooling and involvement with Woman to Woman, leading her to share insights gained from the program, particularly the value of using her voice to create opportunities. A man with a perfect smile tries to compliment her, but Gina interrupts him, highlighting the program's talented participants and subtly addressing an underlying prejudice in his tone.



As the night progresses, the winner of the art auction, Andrew, introduces himself and praises her work, encouraging her artistic pursuits. This interaction, along with others throughout the event, leads to her collecting numerous business cards from guests impressed by her passion and talent. Maxine advises keeping and following up on contacts, hinting at potential future opportunities.

The chapter culminates with her reflecting on the evening's validation and newfound visibility and acknowledgment as an artist. Her art is not only about beauty but also carries significant social commentary, addressing issues like police brutality, which resonates with those she meets at the event. The acknowledgment from strangers uplifts her, making her feel seen and valued.

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Chapter 46 Summary:

In Chapter 66, titled "La Tarea" or "Homework," the protagonist has a study session with her friend Lee Lee after school. Lee Lee is tasked with writing an essay on the impact of media in social movements, specifically comparing the pivotal role Jet magazine played in the 1955 civil rights movement by publishing Emmett Till's photo, to modern-day activism on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Their discussion highlights the ongoing evolution of media in shaping public perception and driving social change.

As they finish their homework, Lee Lee shares a poem she has written in honor of Natasha Ramsey, a name that likely signifies someone important or connected to their cause. Inspired by the quality of the poetry and the desire to give it a wider audience, they brainstorm an idea to organize an open mic and art show dedicated to Natasha. This event would allow students to share their poetry and art, creating a platform for young voices.

They plan for Lee Lee to be the MC, reading her poems at the event's opening and closing, while inviting other students to participate. The protagonist intends to contribute her art, and they hope to involve other young visual artists from local schools. They also plan to enlist Josiah's help with social media promotion, illustrating their understanding of modern outreach methods.



Lee Lee suggests charging for entry to raise funds for Natasha's family, who might be dealing with medical bills, highlighting a compassionate aspect of their endeavor. However, the protagonist prefers not to charge, wanting to ensure accessibility, but plans to sell art to support the cause instead.

Excited by their idea, they realize they need permission from Mia to use her gallery, as she had previously mentioned it was meant for the people. This revelation underscores the importance of community support and shared spaces in nurturing artistic and activist expression.

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Chapter 47 Summary:

In Chapter 68, titled "Legacy," we are taken back to 1805 as the historic Lewis and Clark Expedition reaches the Pacific Ocean in November. The explorers, tasked with charting unexplored American territories, establish Fort Clatsop near modern-day Astoria, Oregon, to endure the harsh winter. On March 23, 1806, they begin their journey back to St. Louis, marking the end of their extensive eight-thousand-mile exploration.

One of the expedition's critical yet largely unrecognized members was York, an enslaved African American man who served alongside the explorers. Throughout the journey, York experienced a degree of freedom as he contributed to the expedition—carrying a gun, having his voice heard, and experiencing agency. However, upon returning to St. Louis, a stark contrast emerges. While his fellow explorers are celebrated as national heroes, receiving 320 acres of land each and double pay, York, due to his status as a slave, receives nothing.

York yearned for more than physical rewards; he sought the most valuable prize—his freedom. Despite the taste of autonomy he had during the expedition, Clark, the expedition leader and York's master, denied his request for emancipation, dismissively questioning York's audacity to want freedom. At the heart of York's desires was the longing to reunite with his wife, who lived in Kentucky, and to maintain that profound sense of



freedom he felt standing at the ocean, where boundaries seemed endless and possibilities limitless.

It was not until 1816, a full decade later, that Clark finally granted York his freedom. The chapter reflects on the potential losses York faced without the land, money, and autonomy denied to him. It ponders what York could have created or built had he been given the same opportunities as his counterparts. Would his descendants have carried on a legacy of prosperity, something akin to what various economic opportunities allow some to inherit wealth over generations? This inquiry ties into a broader theme of social inequality, illustrating how opportunities—or the lack thereof—are passed down through generations. York's story is a poignant reminder of the weight of legacy and the inequities that shape economic and social landscapes.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: Legacy of Opportunity and Freedom

Critical Interpretation: In this chapter, York's story becomes a beacon of inspiration, urging you to reflect on the significance of opportunity and freedom. Imagine how opportunities, like those denied to York, shape a person's life and legacy—extending far beyond their individual realm to impact generations. This key point highlights the importance of advocating for equality and creating spaces where everyone can access the same seeds of opportunity. You, too, have the power to honor York's legacy by striving for fairness and justice, ensuring that future generations inherit a world where possibilities are bounded only by their hopes and aspirations, not by their circumstances or status.



Chapter 48:

In this chapter, Mr. Flores, the teacher, assigns an activity to help students practice their Spanish conversational skills in pairs. Each pair is given conversation cards with English prompts and tasked to translate and discuss them in Spanish. Sam and Jade are paired together for this exercise. Despite the structured activity, the conversation between Sam and Jade takes a personal turn, diverging from the scripted dialogue.

The conversation begins with a simple exchange in Spanish as per the card, discussing evening plans. However, Jade soon shifts the focus to a more personal issue, revealing that Maxine, presumably a mentor or authority figure, has been advising her not to give up on people so easily. Sam shares that her grandfather has been encouraging her to listen more and mentions he has been driving her to school lately, which accounts for her absence on the bus.

Jade and Sam continue their candid talk. Sam confides in Jade about her discomfort in addressing topics related to unfair treatment that Jade experiences, referring to a past incident at the mall. This personal exchange highlights Sam's struggle with knowing how to respond supportively. Jade explains that it's not always about Sam needing to take action, but rather about acknowledging Jade's feelings and experiences.



The conversation is interrupted by Mr. Flores, signaling a transition to the next activity and collecting the conversation cards. He seems to sense that Jade and Sam had a much-needed dialogue beyond the assignment, capturing a moment of genuine connection and understanding between the two classmates.

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Chapter 49 Summary:

Chapter 73 - Open Mic

The chapter begins with a heartwarming moment as the protagonist's mother returns home to find her daughter, Lee Lee, and Sam planning an upcoming open mic event at the table. The protagonist, slightly embarrassed, hopes her mother will refrain from drawing any attention to the situation, and her mother obligingly retreats to her room.

The planning for the open mic is in full swing. E.J. is set to DJ the event, enhancing the atmosphere as attendees arrive and transitioning between performances. Mia has taken on the responsibility of managing donations and overseeing art sales, with assistance from Maxine. Both Mia and Maxine are also handling the promotion of the event, focusing efforts on distributing flyers at local schools, Northside and St. Francis, as well as the Native American Youth and Family Center. Additionally, Josiah has arranged to stream the event live for those unable to attend, with support from individuals at St. Francis who will provide updates via live tweets. Sam will serve as the greeter, welcoming guests, distributing programs, and directing them to the art exhibit.

As they brainstorm additional ways to engage participants, Sam expresses a



desire for non-performing attendees to have something to contribute. The protagonist suggests providing printed poems for people to read aloud if they choose. Lee Lee contributes a folder filled with poetry handouts from Mrs. Baker, their instructor, suggesting they offer these to the audience.

Sam eagerly agrees, selecting and reviewing the poems while Lee Lee tidies up and the protagonist prepares lunch. Sam eventually chooses "How We Could Have Lived or Died This Way" by Martín Espada, a choice enthusiastically supported by Lee Lee and the protagonist, who reads the poem and deems it a fitting selection for the event.

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