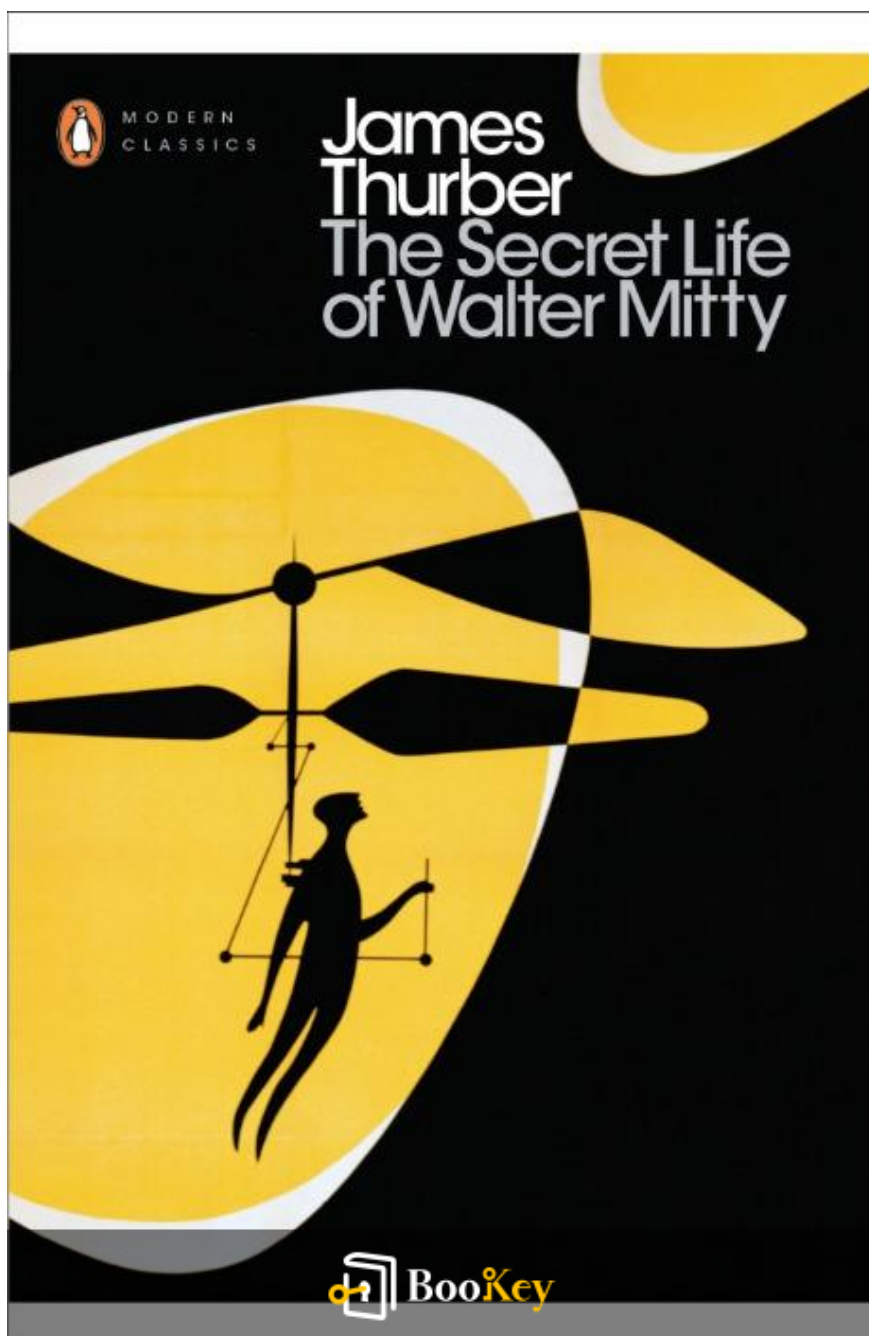


Secret Life Of Walter Mitty PDF (Limited Copy)

James Thurber



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Secret Life Of Walter Mitty Summary

Dreaming Beyond the Mundane of Everyday Life.

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About the book

In "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," James Thurber invites readers into the whimsical mind of a seemingly ordinary man whose dull existence is contrasted by his vivid and adventurous daydreams. As Walter Mitty navigates the mundane routines of his life, he escapes into a series of fantastical scenarios where he becomes a heroic figure, a daring pilot, and a celebrated marksman—roles far removed from the meek husband caught in the middle of a chaotic world. Thurber masterfully explores themes of escapism, identity, and the struggle between dreams and reality, prompting readers to reflect on their own ambitions and the silent battles fought in the imagination. This poignant and humorous tale captivates with its portrayal of the human spirit's quest for significance, making it a timeless read that resonates on multiple levels.

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About the author

James Thurber was a prominent American cartoonist, author, and storyteller, best known for his sharp wit and keen observation of human nature. Born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1894, Thurber became a leading figure in the world of humor writing during the 20th century, with his work frequently appearing in prestigious publications such as *The New Yorker*. He gained fame for his satirical illustrations and for creating memorable characters, such as the daydreaming milquetoast Walter Mitty, who embodies the contrast between mundane reality and vivid imagination. Despite facing significant challenges, including partial blindness, Thurber's unique voice and insight into everyday absurdities have left an indelible mark on American literature and comedy.

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Chapter 1 Summary: What's Up With the Ending?

In the concluding chapter of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," the narrative circles back to Walter Mitty's inner fantasies, emphasizing their significance as a central theme throughout the story. In a moment of mundane reality, where Walter's wife, Mrs. Mitty, steps into a drugstore, Walter stands outside, lost in his imagination. This time, he envisions himself before a firing squad—a dramatic conclusion to a series of five vivid daydreams that punctuate his otherwise uneventful life.

The significance of this ending lies in the dual interpretation of Walter's fantasies versus his reality. On one hand, his rich inner life serves as a refuge from the frustrations and disappointments of his everyday existence, suggesting a sort of victory for Mitty. His imagination triumphs, allowing him to escape from the drudgery of his routine. Yet, the stark imagery of facing a firing squad juxtaposes this notion. It can be seen as emblematic of the societal pressures and criticisms he faces for his daydreaming—those who 'shoot' him down in the realm of reality.

However, instead of succumbing to despair, Mitty's response to this dire situation is one of defiance. In the final moments, he is described as "Walter Mitty the Undefeated," standing proud and unyielding, even as he faces the metaphorical firing squad. This portrayal captures the resilience of the human spirit and the triumph of imagination over adversity. Despite being



perceived as insignificant by others, Mitty's fierce determination and dignity shine through, underscoring a powerful message: while reality may impose limitations, the strength of one's will and creativity can remain unbroken. Ultimately, the chapter encapsulates the tension between fantasy and reality, leaving readers with a sense of admiration for Mitty's enduring spirit.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The resilience of the human spirit

Critical Interpretation: Just like Walter Mitty, you may often find yourself navigating through the monotonies and challenges of daily life. His vivid daydreams remind you that embracing the power of imagination can be your refuge and source of strength. Even when life feels overwhelming, you can draw inspiration from Mitty's defiance against societal pressures—facing your own firing squad with unwavering courage. This perspective encourages you to cherish your dreams and inner visions; they can fuel your resolve and motivate you to confront adversity, proving that creativity and determination can sustain you against the odds.

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Chapter 2 Summary: Literary Devices

Summary of Literary Devices in "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

Writing Style

James Thurber's writing style in "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" is characterized by its playful and imaginative tone, fitting perfectly with the story's central theme of daydreaming. Thurber uses colorful and whimsical jargon, as seen in Mitty's fantastical imaginings of diseases like "coreopsis" and elaborate weaponry like the "Webley-Vickers 50.80." The narrative itself captures Mitty's inner world, describing events such as his drive toward Waterbury amid a storm as occurring "in the remote, intimate airways of his mind." This creative flair not only reflects Mitty's imaginative nature, but also serves to engage readers in his whimsical perspective.

Tone

The tone of the story is one of amused admiration. Thurber presents Mitty's grandiose daydreams with a touch of humor and affection, encouraging readers to see the comedy in his escapism. Unlike the derision of other characters who mock him, the author seems to admire Mitty's creative spirit. This is particularly evident at the story's conclusion, where Mitty's ultimate



fantasy characterizes him as "undefeated, inscrutable to the last," reinforcing the heroism of his imagination.

Narrator Point of View

The narrative is delivered from a third-person limited omniscient perspective, focusing on Walter Mitty's thoughts and experiences. While the narrator is outside of the action, their insights and choice of language often reflect Mitty's consciousness, creating a connection between him and the reader. Through free indirect style, the events of the story are filtered through Mitty's eyes, accentuating his feelings of ineptitude juxtaposed against his vivid fantasies. This technique enables readers to sympathize with Mitty, as his perceptions shape the narrative itself.

Symbols, Imagery, Allegory

The recurring sound described as "pocketa-pocketa" serves as a whimsical bridge between Mitty's mundane reality and his thrilling daydreams. It first appears associated with a Navy hydroplane in a storm and later reemerges in various contexts, linking his fantasies together and adding a comedic element to the narrative. Moreover, Mitty's bumbling jargon signifies his lack of real knowledge about the heroic roles he imagines, highlighting the humorous absurdity of his aspirations. Additionally, symbols such as the overshoes and gloves enforced by Mrs. Mitty represent her overprotective



nature, emphasizing how her attempts to shelter him contribute to his propensity to daydream.

Setting

Set primarily in Waterbury, Connecticut, during the late 1930s, the mundane locations of hairdressers, drugstores, and hotel lobbies contrast starkly with the vivid and dramatic settings of Mitty's fantasies, such as a stormy hydroplane and a courtroom scene. This juxtaposition underscores the dullness of Mitty's real life compared to the exhilarating adventures of his imagination.

Genre

"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" blends elements of mock adventure and comedy. The humorous contrast between Mitty's pedestrian existence and his extravagant daydreams creates a rich comedic effect, portraying him as a lovable yet bumbling hero. The romanticized nature of his fantasies, including encounters with powerful figures and dramatic surgeries, further enhances the story's light-hearted adventure genre, emphasizing the joy of introspective creative freedom.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The power of imagination

Critical Interpretation: Imagine for a moment that you're not just living through the daily grind but truly harnessing the power of your imagination to transform mundane moments into extraordinary adventures. Just like Walter Mitty, who escapes into vibrant daydreams, you too can inspire yourself to envision a life filled with excitement and heroism. This key point serves as a reminder that within each of us lies the ability to creatively reframe our experiences. Even amidst the ordinary tasks, letting your imagination soar can ignite passion and purpose, prompting you to pursue your dreams with a renewed sense of courage and determination.

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Chapter 3 Summary:

In "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," we are introduced to Walter Mitty, an ordinary man with a vivid imagination, who frequently escapes into daydreams filled with heroism and adventure. The story opens with Walter conjuring an exhilarating fantasy where he is a skilled Commander piloting an "eight-engined Navy hydroplane" through a storm— a stark contrast to the mundane reality of his life, where he is driving his critical wife, Mrs. Mitty, into town. She scolds him for speeding and reminds him to wear his gloves, showcasing their strained relationship.

After dropping her off at the hair salon, Walter is left with a list of chores to accomplish, including the purchase of rubber overshoes. As he proceeds through town, the frustrations of his errands are interrupted by more daydreams. First, he imagines himself as a renowned doctor, Wellington McMillan's savior during an intense surgery. In this scenario, other doctors admire his competence as he adeptly manages equipment malfunctions despite the chaos.

Reality intrudes again, as a parking attendant's arrogance jolts Walter back to his mundane existence. Walter's internal monologue reflects his feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment, recalling a past incident with tire chains that left him feeling belittled.



After purchasing the overshoes, Walter struggles to remember Mrs. Mitty's second request, leading to yet another diversion as he envisions himself in a courtroom, defending his honor as a skilled marksman. He confidently asserts that he could have committed the crime with his left hand, proving his resourcefulness. A passing woman interprets his mutterings as lunacy, reminding Walter of how disconnected he feels from those around him.

Eventually, Walter retrieves the puppy biscuits he had nearly forgotten, though he struggles with the brand name. With errands complete, he waits in the hotel lobby for Mrs. Mitty. His thoughts drift again as he peruses Liberty magazine, prompting yet another daydream in which he imagines himself as an Air Captain risking his life for his country.

When Mrs. Mitty emerges, her reprimand about the overshoes is met with Walter's reflective reply about his tendency to think deeply. The chapter concludes as Mrs. Mitty steps into a drugstore, leaving Walter to face an imaginary firing squad with an unexpected sense of bravery, symbolizing his ongoing struggle between the extraordinary life he dreams of and the ordinary life he leads.



Chapter 4: Plot Analysis

Summary of Classic Plot Analysis for "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

Initial Situation:

The narrative begins with Walter Mitty, a seemingly ordinary man who is a naval commander in his own vivid daydreams. This juxtaposition leads readers to initially believe they are entering a fantastical adventure, only to uncover the deeper reality of Mitty's mundane life.

Conflict:

At the heart of the story lies Mitty's internal struggle against the monotonous and often dismissive world around him. This conflict suggests a deeper commentary on the human condition, portraying Mitty as an ordinary man seeking to navigate the ordinary world's expectations and limitations.

Complication:

To cope with this mundane existence, Walter Mitty escapes into elaborate fantasies where he embodies powerful and heroic personas, such as a daring pilot or a skilled surgeon. These escapades represent his yearning for

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excitement and significance, highlighting the stark contrast between his dreams and his reality. This form of escapism portrays a longing for identity and adventure that he cannot find in everyday life.

Climax:

Interestingly, the narrative does not feature a traditional climax. Instead, Mitty's fantasies continue to unravel without a definitive peak, illustrating the perpetual nature of his escape and the absence of a breakthrough moment that drives typical story structure.

Suspense:

The story leaves readers contemplating Mitty's fate: Will he suffer a psychological breakdown due to his fantasies, or are these daydreams simply a harmless refuge from his unremarkable life? This question lingers in the narrative, inviting readers to reflect on the extent of escapism in their own lives.

Denouement:

In the concluding fantasy, Mitty finds himself facing a firing squad, which carries a sense of impending doom yet also resonates with a feeling of finality. This scenario starkly contrasts with his previous adventures, as it



conveys a surrender to his fate, highlighting the bittersweet nature of his escapism.

Conclusion:

The story ends ambiguously, making it clear that Mitty remains "inscrutable to the last." The reader is left to grapple with whether Walter Mitty has achieved some form of victory through his dreams or if he remains ultimately defeated by his refusal to confront his reality. This duality invites discussions on the nature of dreams versus reality, prompting questions about self-awareness and the human spirit.

Summary of Booker's Seven Basic Plots Analysis:

In analyzing "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," it becomes evident that Walter embodies the characteristics of a comedic protagonist who is detached from reality. This form of comedy explores misinterpretations and misconceptions, where the central character deliberately blinds himself to his true situation. As Mitty engages in a variety of grandiose fantasies, he reflects a desire to break free from the constraints of his bland existence, revealing a poignant truth about human fulfillment.

Unlike traditional comedies that conclude with a revelation of truth, "Walter Mitty" diverges by allowing Walter to remain in his fantastical world, with



his wife oblivious to his inner turmoil. This unresolved state infuses the tale with a bittersweet essence that raises questions about identity, happiness, and the tragedy of unfulfilled aspirations. It confronts readers with a deeper understanding of the emotional weight of denial and resignation.

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Chapter 5 Summary: Character Analysis

Character Analysis Summary: Walter and Mrs. Mitty

Walter Mitty

Walter Mitty, the protagonist of James Thurber's classic story, is depicted as an ordinary, ineffectual man overshadowed by the dominating presence of his wife, Mrs. Mitty. His character is marked by a lack of confidence and competence in everyday tasks; he struggles with driving, forgets chores, and is frequently ridiculed by those around him. To cope with his mundane reality, Walter escapes into a vibrant inner world filled with heroic fantasies where he embodies traits he lacks in real life—being a courageous Navy commander, a skilled surgeon, or a brave soldier awaiting a firing squad.

Thurber deftly intertwines Walter's daydreams with real-life events, allowing the reader to glimpse the triggers behind his fantasies. For example, sounds he hears or mundane situations he encounters spark visions of grandeur. The "pocketa-pocketa" of his car and the appearance of a hospital prompt these remarkable imaginings. These physical connections between fantasy and reality serve as a lens through which to explore the deeper emotional themes of Walter's life, particularly his struggle for autonomy and respect in his marriage.



The narrative allows for two interpretations of Walter Mitty. The first perspective views him as a sympathetic character who uses fantasy as a harmless escape from the tediousness of life. This interpretation is supported by the free indirect style employed by Thurber, which encourages readers to empathize with Mitty's plight. The second, more somber interpretation reflects on darker themes of despair, suggesting that Walter's fantasies expose a deeper dissatisfaction with a life governed by expectations and ridicule, ultimately posing the question: Is Walter Mitty triumphantly undefeated in his spirit, or is he perpetually vanquished by his circumstances?

Character Analysis Summary: Mrs. Mitty

Mrs. Mitty is characterized as an exaggeratedly bossy figure, a caricature that underscores her domineering nature in her marriage to Walter. Her dialogue, consisting primarily of nagging and commands, reveals a controlling character whose primary role is to dictate Walter's actions and demean him with constant criticism. She admonishes him for driving too fast, forgets to remind him about essential errands, and expresses concern for his health in a patronizing manner.

While some may critique Thurber for presenting Mrs. Mitty as a stereotype of an overbearing wife, it can also be interpreted that her exaggerated



portrayal serves a larger narrative purpose: to highlight Walter's dreamlike escapes. Her domineering personality starkly contrasts with Walter's meekness, setting the stage for his flights of fancy. This distortion of their relationship raises questions about gender dynamics in marriage and illustrates how Mrs. Mitty's character can be both a comedic element and a catalyst for Walter's retreats into fantasy, reflecting both the limitations and complexities of their union.

In the end, the dynamics between Walter and Mrs. Mitty paint a vivid picture of a man grappling with his identity and desires against the backdrop of domestic life, further enriching Thurber's exploration of human imagination and resilience.

Character	Traits	Role in Story	Interpretations
Walter Mitty	Ordinary, ineffectual, lacking confidence, fantasizes about being heroic	Protagonist who escapes mundane reality through vivid daydreams	1. Sympathetic character using fantasy as escape2. Darker themes of despair and dissatisfaction
Mrs. Mitty	Bossy, controlling, nagging	Walter's wife who exacerbates his insecurities and prompts his fantasies	1. Stereotype of the overbearing wife2. Catalyst for Walter's dreamlike escapes, raising questions about marriage dynamics

Critical Thinking

Key Point: Embrace Your Imagination as a Path to Autonomy

Critical Interpretation: In Walter Mitty's escapades, you learn that allowing your imagination to roam freely can serve as a powerful tool for reclaiming your sense of self amidst the demands of daily life. Just as Walter momentarily transforms into daring personas to counter his insecurities, you too can draw upon your dreams and creative fantasies as an escape and a means to explore your true potential. Instead of being stifled by external pressures or the expectations of others, let your mind wander to discover the courage and determination hidden within, prompting you to take bold steps in reality that reflect who you aspire to be.

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Chapter 6 Summary: Character Clues

In this summary, we delve into the character of Walter Mitty, a man who embodies the struggle between aspiration and dissatisfaction. Walter's daydreams reveal much about his inner life—he imagines himself as a commander, a skilled surgeon, or a fearless pilot, roles that signify his desire for control and authority. In contrast, his reality is marked by a sense of inadequacy, primarily due to his domineering wife, Mrs. Mitty, who often takes charge of decisions and treats him as incompetent. This dynamic reflects Walter's broader struggles in his life, where he is frequently belittled by those around him, such as authority figures like a cop or a mechanic.

Walter's fantasies serve not just as an escape but also as a commentary on his character. They illustrate his strength in the face of derision or suggest a deeper defeatism—whether he is a resilient dreamer or a man overwhelmed by his circumstances is left open to interpretation. The power imbalance in his marriage further emphasizes his passive role. Mrs. Mitty's controlling demeanor is highlighted through their dialogues; she dominates their conversations, often disregarding his thoughts and feelings. Even when Walter attempts to assert himself, insisting he was merely lost in thought, Mrs. Mitty neglects his plea, reinforcing the notion that he is perpetually overshadowed.

Ultimately, Walter Mitty's complex character emerges from the conflict



between his mundane existence and his vibrant inner life, portraying a poignant exploration of identity, control, and the human spirit's yearning for fulfillment amidst life's limitations.

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Chapter 7 Summary: Themes and Quote Analysis

Summary of Chapters: Themes and Quote Analysis

Versions of Reality

In "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," the titular character escapes his mundane existence through vivid fantasies, illustrating a stark contrast between his ordinary life and the grandiose adventures he imagines. Mitty is portrayed as passive and inept in reality, while in his dreams, he becomes decisive and heroic, embodying traits he longs for but cannot attain. The narrative humorously highlights this dichotomy, yet hints at a more somber truth: Walter is unlikely to achieve the greatness he envisions. His daydreams serve as both an escape and a reflection of his dissatisfaction with life.

Key Quotes:

- Walter's fantasy world dominates the narrative, suggesting his need to retreat into imagination for fulfillment.
- The incorporation of real sounds into his fantasies shows how his reality bleeds into his dreams.
- Interactions with his wife indicate an underlying tension, suggesting both a potential mental instability and an oppressive reality.



Dissatisfaction

Walter Mitty's dissatisfaction with his life manifests in his longing for recognition and respect, hating how others perceive him as bumbling and outdated. This story captures a universal feeling of discontent with ordinary life, as Mitty feels trapped in a passive role, mainly defined by his wife's perceptions. Whether his fantasies help him cope with this dissatisfaction remains a question.

Key Quotes:

- Walter contemplates pretending to be injured to alter others' perceptions of him, showcasing his struggle with identity and image.
- His inner monologue reveals a disconnection from reality; others ridicule him, amplifying his isolation.
- The imagery of laughter and derision in the streets illustrates the societal judgment Walter feels he constantly battles.

Men and Masculinity

The story explores the theme of masculinity through Walter Mitty's fantasies, where he embodies traits like bravery and skill, which contrast sharply with his real-life passivity and ineptitude. Mitty's daydreams allow him to fantasize about an ideal man—one who embodies traits he associates with masculinity. This exploration raises questions about the expectations of manhood and how they influence Walter's self-perception and actions.



Key Quotes:

- Mitty's fantasies often include powerful male figures, highlighting his desire to be seen as notable and respected.
- In his imagined scenarios, he exhibits confidence and command, suggesting he craves acknowledgment and agency in his real life.

Marriage

Walter and Mrs. Mitty's marriage is characterized by a significant power imbalance, with Mrs. Mitty depicted as both controlling and dismissive, while Walter embodies a meek, submissive role. This dynamic may serve as a critique of traditional marriage roles and societal expectations. The narrative provokes thought on whether this portrayal reflects a broader commentary on gender relations or simply stereotypes certain behaviors.

Key Quotes:

- Walter's internal struggles reveal the strain in his relationship, suggesting they are fundamentally disconnected.
- Actions like needing assistance illustrate Walter's perceived incompetence, often framed by his wife's domineering behavior.
- His rare attempts to assert himself are met with quick dismissal, reinforcing his subordinate position.

Identity

Thurber's story delves into the complexities of identity, questioning how



much of one's identity is influenced by internal beliefs versus external perceptions. Walter Mitty's character oscillates between his self-image as a competent, heroic figure in fantasies and the inept man the world sees. The tension between these identities raises inquiries about self-perception, age-related limitations, and societal labels.

Key Quotes:

- The language and style shift during Mitty's fantasies, indicating his psychological escape from an unflattering reality.
- His age becomes a factor in shaping his identity, with characters in his dreams reflecting youth and capability.
- Mrs. Mitty's dominance plays a critical role in defining Walter's identity, emphasizing the struggle between how he views himself and how he is perceived by others.

Overall, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" traverses themes of dissatisfaction, masculinity, marital dynamics, and identity, weaving a narrative that highlights the struggles of an ordinary man navigating aspirations through the lens of both whimsy and poignant reality.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The importance of pursuing one's dreams and aspirations

Critical Interpretation: As you navigate through the daily grind of life, the contrast between Walter Mitty's mundane reality and his vibrant fantasies serves as a powerful reminder that it's never too late to chase your passions. Walter's daydreams reflect a deep yearning for fulfillment, pushing you to reflect on your dreams—those often tucked away in the back of your mind. Embracing adventure, creativity, and courage can reshape your reality, encouraging you to break free from the constraints of routine and pursue the life you truly desire. Just like Walter, who finds solace and strength in facing his fears through imagination, you too can embark on your own journey of self-discovery and fulfillment by daring to step beyond the ordinary and embrace the extraordinary.

