**Chapter 6**

During the time that Jack was researching Judge Irwin, several significant events happened in the life of the Stark administration. Tom Stark had a car accident; his drunk driving was concealed from the public, and the grievous injury that the young woman in the car with him suffered was hidden via Willie's bribery.

In addition, Willie has become more determined to build a free hospital—a project with a price tag of six million dollars—to secure his legacy in the state. Tiny Duffy wants Willie to give the contract for building it to his friend, Gummy Larson (which would benefit Tiny as well); Willie angrily refuses. He tells Jack that he wants renowned surgeon Adam Stanton to run the hospital, and demands that Jack "get Stanton." Jack is hesitant, but he goes to visit Adam and pitches the idea. He says that he knows what Adam wants most. It is not money or fame or respect—rather, he wants to do good. The hospital, he says, will allow him to do that on a grand scale. Adam argues that Willie is corrupt, and Jack argues that good things can come from corruption. They part on uncertain terms, Adam playing the piano loudly.

At around that time, Jack secures the evidence of Irwin's corruption from Lily Mae Littlepaugh. While he's still processing what he has learned, Anne Stanton calls him to go out. Jack flirts with her; Anne resists the flirtation, but, as they walk, she says that she thinks Adam should take the job of running the hospital and that Jack needs to convince him to do so. She and Adam have had a significant fight over this question, but Anne feels desperate—she thinks Adam uses his ethical commitments to hide from the world, and this would stop him from doing so. Jack knows that he can force Adam to take the position via the information about his father that he has just uncovered: this would show Adam that there's no real "good" in politics, that his father, Governor Stanton, was no more or less ethical than Willie. Jack tells Anne about this fact, and Anne, upset, runs down a pier. Jack pursues her, and a cop stops them, thinking, it seems, that Anne is either a prostitute or in danger; he threatens to arrest them both. Jack responds by threatening the cop with his own position of power, which makes Anne furious.

A few days later, Anne calls Jack and requests to see the evidence he has found. Jack sends her copies. She shows them to Adam, who says, reluctantly, that he will accept Willie's offer. Anne asks Jack to show Judge Irwin the evidence before he does anything with it, and Jack agrees. Jack goes with Willie and Sugar-Boy to Adam's apartment to formalize the agreement. Adam is still reluctant; Willie informs him that all good in the world has to be made from badness because there are no other materials. Jack considers, as they leave, the contradictions in Willie's positions: why is Tiny Duffy's corruption so much worse than Willie's own, from his perspective? Jack recalls the populist speech that Willie made the night that he foiled White's impeachment, where he said to people that "Your need is my justice." When Jack asked if he meant it, Willie said, "God damn it—there's something inside you—" and did not complete the statement. Somehow these meandering thoughts about contradiction leave Jack with a question: how did Anne know about the hospital offer? Adam didn't tell her, and neither did Jack.

When a jealous Sadie Burke berates Jack for bringing his aristocratic friends into the Boss's orbit, Jack learns the answer: Anne has been having an affair with Willie. Jack walks to Anne's house; a simple nod confirms it.

**Thought Questions (students consider while they read)**

(5 min)

Willie threatened Judge Irwin in Chapter 1. Why has it taken so long for the threat to return to Jack's narrative?

(5 min)

How does Willie's assertion that good must be made out of badness (because there is no other choice) relate to his other views and the broader philosophical bent of the novel thus far?

(5 min)

Why does Adam ultimately make the choice to lead the hospital?

(5 min)

How does the text suggest Jack feels about the evidence he's found on Judge Irwin?

(5 min)

Does Anne like Willie? Does she respect him? Cite evidence from the text.

**Vocabulary (in order of appearance)**

**"It Is Buried Under The Sad Detritus Of Time." (Chapter 5)**

**detritus:**

Litter; debris; disintegrated materials that pile up.

**"…Drawn Together As Though Pulled By The Obscene, Disjunctive, Careful Weight Of The Belly …"**

**disjunctive:**

Separating or dividing.

**"The Old Man Looked Up At Me And Said Querulously, 'What—What Did You Say!'" (Chapter 5)**

**querulously:**

In a complaining or peevish manner.

**"'If You Meant To Imply,' I Said, 'That Politics, Including That Of Your Erstwhile Pals, Is Not Exactly Like Easter Week In A Nunnery, You Are Right.'" (Chapter 5)**

**erstwhile:**

Former.

**"An Oblong Field Where White Lines Mathematically Gridded The Turf Which Was Arsenical Green …" (Chapter 5)**

**oblong:**

An elongated or misshapen rectangle.

**arsenical:**

Sharing a bright tone with a poisonous element.

**"… In The Midst Of The Sepulchral Sheetings And The Out-Of-Time Silence …" (Chapter 5)**

**sepulchral:**

Tomblike.

**"…And This Was The House Of Governor Stanton, Whose Face, Marmoreal And Unperturbed And High, Above Black Square Beard And Black Frock Coat…" (Chapter 5)**

**marmoreal:**

Like marble.

**"'I'll Have The Photostat Certified. But You Must Make A Statement Before A Notary …'" (Chapter 5)**

**photostat:**

An early version of photocopying using a camera formulated to make facsimile copies of documents.

**"So I Went To The Shabby Little Monastic Apartment …" (Chapter 6)**

**monastic:**

Similar in feeling to a monastery; committed to simple living.

**"…Smallish Hips Which, However, Looked As Round As Though They Had Been Turned On A Lathe…" (Chapter 6)**

**lathe:**

A wood- and metalworking tool used to perfectly round edges.

**"He Reflected A Moment, Still Prodding Me On. 'Yeah,' He Said Then, Grudgingly." (Chapter 6)**

**grudgingly:**

Reluctantly.

**"I Had Dug The Truth Up Out Of The Ash Pile, The Garbage Heap, The Kitchen Midden, The Bone Yard …" (Chapter 6)**

**midden:**

A trash pile, usually linked to a kitchen, that can last for centuries and thus show signs of early human habitation.

**"The Season Was Like The Fine Big-Breasted Daughter Of Some Poor Spavined Share-Cropper…" (Chapter 6)**

**spavined:**

Having bulging growths in the bones or veins.

**"…Her Face Like A Riddled Plaster-Of-Paris Mask Of Medusa Except For The Hot Bituminous Eyes …" (Chapter 6)**

**bituminous:**

Containing a particular hydrocarbon substance; glowing like coals.

Chapter 6 Questions

1. Who is George?
2. Why does seeing George and the Scholarly Attorney together cause Jack such a strong reaction?
3. How did Anne find out about Adam's hospital offer?
4. What information shocks Jack at the end of Chapter 6?

**Chapter 7**

Having learned about Anne's affair with Willie, Jack drives west, passing through Texas and Arizona until he hits Long Beach, California, where he checks into a hotel. At the hotel, he finally, fully allows himself to remember his romantic relationship with Anne. When Jack was twenty-one, he realized he was in love with seventeen-year-old Anne, his close friend since childhood. The day after Jack realized this, when the two were out at a movie theater, they went on a walk together and Jack confessed his love. They began a relationship, a passion that drove their summer. They were playful and joyous together. However, a conflict arose when Anne asked Jack what he wanted to do with his life. Jack carelessly said that he might go to law school; he hadn't really thought about his future and it didn't matter to him. It mattered to Anne, though—not because of money, but because she wanted to be with someone who cared about his work. Still, their relationship was loving. They saw each other every day, except for one day when Anne, a skilled diver, took a deep dive and Jack jumped into the pool to meet her underwater and kiss her there. After that, they didn't see each other for two days.

They decided, a few days later, to have sex, but when Jack was overwhelmed by her nudity and beauty, he stopped for a moment, and at that moment his mother and her friends returned home. Jack, now, in California, considers what might have happened—had his mother caught them having sex, she might have forced him to marry Anne, and his whole life would have been completely different.

Jack asked her to marry him the next day, and again at Christmas, but though they had assumed they would someday get married, Anne didn't make the commitment. Jack felt something had shifted in their relationship. The next summer, they fought over Jack's lukewarm interest in law school, and when Anne's father took ill, she went with him to Maine for six weeks. Anne and Jack resolved their fight by letter, and in the brief period when Anne returned before the end of the summer, they continued their relationship, though Jack discovered that Anne had been with another boy in Maine. Anne said, and Jack believed though reluctantly, that it didn't really matter. That next Christmas, Anne and Jack again struggled over marriage and Jack's ambitions. Jack said he'd get a job to support Anne right then, but Anne said it wasn't money she was looking for, but something about making a life together. Jack contrived to get himself kicked out of law school as a result of this conversation, even causing a minor sexual scandal, but he and Anne were never romantically together again.

Jack took the job at the *Chronicle*, left to come close to getting his Ph.D., and, when he returned to being a reporter, married Lois. Jack and Lois had a strong sexual connection, but Jack realized over the course of their marriage that he disliked her as a person, felt contemptuous of her friends, and didn't like the way she insulted his grooming or his work. Jack left her.

Anne left college after two years and drifted, taking care of her father through his long illness, then moving to the city to be near Adam and working at a couple of volunteer causes. She was engaged three different times, but she never married. Jack realizes that he's in part responsible for her current affair with the Boss—she chose it because the Boss knew what he was doing with his life and because she realized, through Jack's research, that her own father was really no more virtuous a politician.

Jack, by the beach in California, realizes that "you cannot lose what you have never had" and "you are never guilty of a crime that you did not commit." This secret knowledge seems important and new to him. Humans are passionate and random; Jack can't be responsible for what he is now feeling.

**Chapter 8**

Still armed with his secret, Jack drives back from California, returning casually to the Boss and not letting him know that he knows about Anne. On the way, he develops the notion of the Great Twitch: all human actions are random, which precludes responsibility. Jack visits Adam and, at his own request, is able to watch Adam perform a new and dramatic surgery, a prefrontal lobectomy.

A series of interconnected scandals begin to click into place. MacMurfee and Tiny Duffy's associate, Gummy Larson, is angling for the contract to build the hospital. Larson sends a man named Hubert Coffee to Adam Stanton's place to harass and pressure him, and Adam responds by punching Coffee while Anne is present. Upset by his own behavior, Adam writes a resignation letter immediately; Anne convinces him not to send it right away and calls on Jack to help stop him from resigning. Jack creates a strategy to help Adam believe that the Boss is still on his side and will be prosecuting Coffee; however, if the case were to go to trial, Jack knows that Anne and Willie's affair would come out. Both Jack and Anne suddenly feel vulnerable, and Jack asks Anne why she began the affair. Anne says she's never met anyone like Willie, and that he wants to marry her, but he can't divorce Lucy while he plans to run for the Senate. Jack didn't know that Willie was planning to run for Senate; Anne says Jack doesn't know Willie as well as he thinks he does.

Jack goes forward with a modified plan with Willie's assistance: Willie gets Adam on his side by encouraging him to press charges, then guiding him into deciding not to because Anne might be traumatized by what she witnessed, and testifying would hurt her. In the meantime, a girl named Sibyl Frey is claiming that Tom Stark got her pregnant, and her father, Marvin Frey, is demanding recompense from Willie. However, Willie and Jack soon learn that Sibyl Frey might have gotten pregnant by any number of boys; Marvin Frey's particular accusation of Tom might have been orchestrated by MacMurfee, Willie's rival. While Jack is helping Willie sort this out, Lucy, who is now living permanently on a farm in the country where Willie occasionally visits, asks Jack to come visit her and tell her the truth about what's going on with Tom. Jack tells her the truth; Lucy, devastated by what's become of her son, wishes that Tom would marry the girl and that she could love the grandchild. She's upset by the way her life has been defined and shaped by politics.

Willie first tries to negotiate with Marvin Frey, but MacMurfee is keeping Frey away from him. Then Willie decides he should leverage Judge Irwin to influence MacMurfee. Willie knows Jack has information on the Judge now, but Jack says he will not share it with Willie; however, he will go to the Judge, show him the information, and see what he can do.

Jack goes down to Burden's Landing. His mother seems not to want him to visit Judge Irwin, but Jack does so anyway. The Judge seems glad to see him, in spite of his behavior the last time they met. Jack explains the situation with MacMurfee to Judge Irwin and asks if he can use his influence with MacMurfee. The Judge refuses, saying that this is MacMurfee's affair and not his. Jack offers to give him some time to consider, but the Judge says his mind is made up. Jack asks if the Judge remembers the name of Mortimer Littlepaugh; Irwin says no and seems to Jack to be telling the truth. Jack shows him all the evidence he has gathered; the Judge accepts it with more equanimity than Jack expected, admitting openly to his guilt in the matter, although he had genuinely forgotten Littlepaugh's name. Jack threatens to destroy Irwin's reputation unless he stops MacMurfee; Irwin says he could stop Jack from doing so, easily, but he's choosing not to. Jack says he'll return the next day for Irwin's decision. Irwin says his mind is made up, and notes as Jack leaves that he never knew that Stanton had stepped in to protect him.

Jack goes back to his mother's to take a nap, but he's woken by his mother screaming that he, Jack, killed his father. It is through her words that Jack learns both that Judge Irwin is dead and that Judge Irwin was, in fact, his biological father, the result of a love affair between Irwin and Jack's mother while both were married to other people. Judge Irwin shot himself through the heart. He is buried two days later; at the funeral, Jack considers who is responsible for his death—Jack, Littlepaugh, the Judge himself? Jack learns the next day that Irwin left his entire estate to him.

**Thought Questions (students consider while they read)**

(5 min)

Does the text suggest that Jack suspected that Irwin was his biological father? Was the reader led to suspect this? Why or why not? What does the relationship between Jack and the reader's intuitions show us about the narrative more broadly?

(5 min)

Why did Anne reject Jack when they were young?

(5 min)

Why did Jack marry Lois, and why did he leave her?

(5 min)

Why do you think Lucy sends for Jack? How does Lucy feel about her family?

(5 min)

Is Jack in love with Anne now? Cite textual evidence.

**Vocabulary (in order of appearance)**

**"And Little Girls Sit On Hassocks And Lean Their Cheeks Pensively Against The Dear Father's Knee …" (Chapter 7)**

**hassocks:**

Cushioned footstools.

**"…And The Fact Set Blaring And Bonging All The Fire Bells And Calliopes And Burglar Alarms In My System…" (Chapter 7)**

**calliopes:**

Musical instruments consisting of a keyboard that activates a series of steam whistles.

**"Little Short Laughs And Giggles And Serpentine Evasions" (Chapter 7)**

**serpentine:**

Snakelike.

**"…How A Creature As Lissome As Willow And Soft As Silk And Cuddly As A Kitten…" (Chapter 7)**

**lissome:**

Supple and flexible.

**"'You'll Look Like A Pickaninny,' I Said." (Chapter 7)**

**pickaninny:**

A derogatory term for a black child.

**"A Beautiful Luscious Bivalve Open And Pulsing In The Glimmering Deep" (Chapter 7)**

**bivalve:**

A mollusk that has two shells hinged together—e.g. a clam or oyster.

**"…The Noises She Made With Her Mouth Resembled Human Speech And Were More Than Rudimentary Demands…" (Chapter 7)**

**rudimentary:**

Basic.

**"…Accustomed Objects Of My Wardrobe Disappeared, To Be Replaced By Proclaimed Or Surreptitious Gifts." (Chapter 7)**

**surreptitious:**

Done in a secretive or stealthy way.

**"If It Was One Of Her Vituperative And Not Sullen Evenings" (Chapter 7)**

**vituperative:**

Verbally abusive.

**"Aunt Sophonisba, A Feeble, Grumbling, Garrulous, And Incompetent Old Colored Woman" (Chapter 7)**

**garrulous:**

Talkative in a rambling way.

**"The Shadows Of Leonine Hunched Mountains" (Chapter 8)**

**leonine:**

Lion-like.

**"'It Is A Case Of Catatonic Schizophrenia,' He Said." (Chapter 8)**

**catatonic:**

In a state characterized by rigid muscles and unresponsiveness.

**"'He Just Has The High Cantankerous Moral Shrinks.'" (Chapter 8)**

**cantankerous:**

Disagreeable, moody, and argumentative.

**"That Absolutely Infinitesimal Gossamer Cord Of Thuggee" (Chapter 8)**

**infinitesimal:**

Immeasurably small.

**"That Absolutely Infinitesimal Gossamer Cord Of Thuggee" (Chapter 8)**

**thuggee:**

Something used for choking or violence.

**"I Obviously Belonged To That Dull And Purblind Race Which Wears Shoes And Trousers" (Chapter 8)**

**purblind:**

Deficient in imagination.

**"Mortimer And I Were Merely The Twin Instruments Of Judge Irwin's Protracted And Ineluctable Self-Destruction." (Chapter 8)**

**ineluctable:**

Inevitable; inescapable.

Possible Discussion Questions for Groups

1. **What does Jack Burden's job with Governor Willie Stark seem to be?**

Jack appears to be some kind of "body man" for Willie: someone who helps Willie to make threats and defend him. He's a very trusted confidante, but it's also clear that Willie has a hard time trusting anyone and tends to manipulate the people around him. Students may be uncertain of what Jack's real role in the administration is; suggest that they continue to collect evidence of his role as they continue to read.

1. **Why do you think Robert Penn Warren chose to use racial slurs in the narrative? Do you think his choice was justified? Why or why not?**

Depending on the demographics, political perspectives, and prior literary experience of your class, emotional responses may vary widely. However, Warren is using a slur completely unacceptable in contemporary parlance, and it may be upsetting to a range of students. Classes should consider that Warren is portraying the Jim Crow South from a white perspective, and the word would, unfortunately, have been in common use at that time. This is a novel of white political insiders, who clearly felt deep contempt for their black constituents. Some students may feel that Warren's choice to use it is simply verisimilitude; others may think that writing and reading the word perpetuates toxic sociocultural attitudes. Make a decision as a class about the way you want to handle the presence of the word and other racist insults in the narrative, acknowledging that there will be more of both as you continue reading.

1. **Describe Jack's relationship with the Stantons. What experiences do they share?**

The Stantons are his oldest and closest friends—they may, indeed, be Jack's only friends, since we don't see him socialize with anyone else besides Willie and his associates. Jack hints at a past romance with Anne, but he doesn't explain why it went awry, nor how the two of them remained connected after it did so. Adam seems to lead a life as lonely as Jack's, although more professionally successful; however, he doesn't seem as harmed by his loneliness as Jack does. He likes playing music, he likes doing surgery, and he likes seeing his old friend and his sister. The three—Jack, Adam, and Anne—share what seems to be an extremely wealthy background on the coast: they grew up in wealthy, sheltered environments, Adam and Anne the children of the governor, Jack the scion of a family at least successful enough to have a town named after them.

1. **Why and how does Willie change over the course of Chapter Two?**

Willie begins Chapter Two as an earnest, backwoods-raised, local administrator, deeply sincere, and well-researched in all his choices. He works so hard that when he discovers he's being manipulated and ill-used by Tiny Duffy and his colleagues, he explodes and instead of sharing earnest facts and figures, he shares his true feelings. This gives him a power over his audience, and he becomes very attached to that feeling of power, using it to build his law practice and eventually win the governorship. By the time Jack meets him again, he's confident, relaxed, and smooth-talking.

1. **Who are the prominent women in this story thus far? How do their roles differ from those of male characters?**

Students are likely to mention Anne, Sadie, and perhaps Lucy. Anne and Lucy are figures of steadiness for Jack and Willie respectively, albeit in different ways. Lucy represents Willie's background and home, but also the control that makes him such an unappealing candidate. She has not thus far been shown to have many interests or ideas of her own except as they affect Willie. Anne represents the best parts of home to Jack; she seems to be making more independent choices than Lucy does, although we don't yet understand why she makes them. She's not centered in work like her brother, nor absorbed by herself like Jack. Sadie is a savvy political operative (though Jack implies that he believes she's developed this skill to compensate for unattractiveness), and much more than the other two women mentioned, she seems to be able to make choices that suit her personality, make her happy, and give her power. In this sense, she has much more in common with Willie.

Short Answer for Chap 7 and 8

1. Why does Willie make a deal with Gummy Larson?
2. **2**How does Tom get injured?
3. **3**What deal does Willie make with Gummy Larson?
4. **4**Who's alone in the dark office, and what are they doing?
5. **5**What does Adam do for Tom, and what are the results?
6. **6**How do Adam and Willie die?
7. **7**Who told Adam about Anne and Willie, and why?
8. **8**Why are Jack's mother and Theodore separating?
9. **9**Where and with whom does Jack live at the end of the novel?
10. **10**What changes Lucy's life again at the end of the book?

**Answer Key**

1. It's his only avenue to stop MacMurfee.
2. During a football game, he's knocked out.
3. He gives him the contract for the hospital.
4. It's Sadie, and she's crying.
5. He performs diagnostic surgery, and learns that Tom will be permanently paralyzed.
6. They are both shot: Willie by Adam, and Adam by Sugar-Boy.
7. Tiny Duffy did, because Sadie told him to do so.
8. Jack's mother has realized that she never loved Theodore, that she never loved anyone but Judge Irwin.
9. He lives with Anne, who's now his wife, and Ellis Burden in Judge Irwin's Burden's Landing house.
10. She adopts Sibyl Frey's baby, who seems to be Tom's.