



The Age of Miracles

Reading Guide

Answer each question with COMPLETE SENTENCES.

Chapter 1

1. Why would “. . . the night workers, the graveyard shifters, the stockers of shelves, and the loaders of ships, the drivers of big-rig trucks” and “. . . the sleepless and the troubled and the sick” notice that something was wrong with day and night before other people (Thompson Walker 3-4)?

2. The author says that some people stockpiled food and others piled into their cars and left their homes when the news of “the slowing” was first announced. Why do you think people react this way?

Chapter 2

3. In this chapter, we see a sharp contrast between ordinary events and the news of “the slowing.” What ordinary events does Thompson Walker describe? Why do you think she includes these ordinary events?

4. The narrator describes her mother as someone who “talked big,” “blustered,” and “overstated and oversold” (Thompson Walker 7). At the end of the chapter, Julia says, “How could we have known that the workings of the universe had finally made appropriate the fire of my mother’s words?” (Thompson Walker 9). What does she mean?

Chapter 3

5. Foreshadowing is when an author gives a hint or clue of what is to come in a story. What is one example of foreshadowing we see in Chapter 3?

6. What is your first impression of Michaela and her mother? What gives you that impression?

7. How do Julia's father and mother react to news of "the slowing" differently? What does this tell us about their personalities?

8. What does Julia mean when she says, "But I guess it never is what you worry over that comes to pass in the end. The real catastrophes are always different – unimagined, unprepared for, unknown." (Thompson Walker 29)?

Chapter 4

9. Julia says of her father, "This was the first lie I ever heard my father tell – or the first time I knew he was lying. But it would not be the last. And not the boldest, either" (Thompson Walker 32). Why would the author choose to include this detail? How does it affect your impression of Julia's father?

10. Why do you think the author defines "coincidence" for the reader (Thompson Walker 34)? What point is she trying to make?

Chapter 5

11. Look up a definition for "phantom limb." Write it here. Why would the author use the metaphor, "I missed Hanna like a phantom limb." (Thompson Walker 35)? What point is she making?

12. What evidence is there in this chapter that Julia and her friends are experiencing a pretty typical adolescence, even though "the slowing" has begun? Give at least three examples from this chapter.

13. Why would the author include the paragraph that begins, "As has been well documented, rates of murder and other violent crime spiked in the days and weeks following the start of the slowing." (Thompson Walker 41)? What is her point?

14. The title of the book comes from a paragraph on page 41. What is “the age of miracles?” Why? Why might the author have chosen it as the title?

15. How does Julia feel about Seth Moreno? How do you know?

Chapter 6

16. What is your first impression of Gene, Julia’s grandfather? What makes you think so?

Chapter 7

17. As “the slowing” progresses, Julia says, “Shows *had* to go on. We clung to anything previously scheduled. To cancel seemed immoral, or it might mean we’d given up or lost hope” (Thompson Walker 69). What do you think she means? Why would it be immoral to cancel something that was scheduled?

Chapter 8

18. At the end of this chapter, Julia says, “This was one of the last real afternoons” (Thompson Walker 80). What do you think she means?

Chapter 9

19. When the President announces that citizens should stay on the 24-hour clock despite “the slowing,” Julia says, “It requires a certain kind of bravery, I suppose, to choose the status quo. There’s a certain boldness to inaction” (Thompson Walker 83). What do you think she means?

20. What problems do you foresee if “Light would be unhooked from *day*, darkness unchained from *night*.” (Thompson Walker 84)?

Chapter 10

21. Look up a definition of “circadian rhythm” and write it here. How would “the slowing” affect people’s circadian rhythms?

22. Why do you think Julia calls the time in her parents’ marriage before she was born a “mythical time” (Thompson Walker 89)?

23. Julia notices in this chapter that her friendships are changing. She says, “It was a rough crossing, the one from childhood to the next life. And as with any other harsh journey, not everything survived” (Thompson Walker 92). Do you think that is true? Why or why not?

Chapter 11

24. Julia says that, “So much that seems harmless in daylight turns imposing in the dark” (Thompson Walker 97). Do you agree? Why or why not? Give an example in your explanation.

25. How has Julia and Hanna’s relationship changed once Hanna returns? Why do you think it has changed?

26. Summarize the last four paragraphs of this chapter, that begin with, “One thing that strikes me . . .” and end with “. . . to feel very quickly the stranger” (Thompson Walker 102). What is the author’s point in these paragraphs?

Chapter 12

27. What are “real-timers?”

Chapter 13

28. What does Seth's reaction to the dying bird tell us about him?

Chapter 14

29. What evidence is there that clock-timers and real-timers aren't getting along?

30. Julia's father says that she's changed. In what way? How does Julia describe her changing personality?

Chapter 15

31. What happens to Tom and Carlotta?

Chapter 16

32. Describe the effects of being a real-timer on Sylvia.

33. Describe the effects of being a clock-timer on Julia's mother.

34. What does Julia discover at the end of Chapter 16?

Chapter 17

35. What effects of too much light are being documented? List at least four.

36. What caused Julia's mother's car accident?

Chapter 18

37. What are the symptoms of "the syndrome?"

38. Why might the real-timers colony be called "Circadia?"

Chapter 19

39. Despite the consequences of "the slowing," we still see signs of a typical adolescence in Julia. Give an example from this chapter of what is typical about Julia's adolescence.

40. At the end of the chapter, Julia throws her purchase into the trash, ". . . so that no one would ever discover how little I understood what seemed so obvious to the other girls I knew" (Thompson Walker 155). What does she mean?

Chapter 20

41. What lie does Julia's father tell? Why would he tell this lie?

Chapter 21

42. What effect does "the slowing" have on food production?

Chapter 22

43. Chapter 21 is entirely about "the slowing" and the focus of the beginning of Chapter 22 is quite different. Why would the author create such a contrast between the Chapter 21 and the start of Chapter 22? What's her point?

Chapter 23

44. Is this book really about “the slowing?” If not, what is it about? Use details from this chapter to support your answer.

Chapter 24

45. Julia says, “Of all the strange phenomena that befell us that year, maybe nothing surprised me more than the sound of that small question rolling out of Seth Moreno’s mouth: ‘Want to come?’” (Thompson Walker 191). What is ironic about this quote?

Chapter 25

46. What is an omen? How might the tree crushing part of Sylvia’s house be considered an omen?

47. How are Julia’s peer relationships going at this point in the book? What makes you think so?

48. What do Julia and her parents discover when they arrive at her grandfather’s house?

Chapter 26

49. Describe Circadia.

Chapter 27

50. Why would the author include the stories about Rolf and the lost wedding ring?

Chapter 28

51. Why do you think Seth would prefer to die in an explosion?

Chapter 29

52. What events show that the consequences of “the slowing” are becoming more serious?

53. How would you describe Seth and Julia’s relationship at this point?

Chapter 30

54. The author says, “Sometimes death is proof of life” (Thompson Walker 237). What do you think she means?

55. What do you think Julia means when she says, “This was the first time I noticed it, the inevitable space between father and man.” (Thompson Walker 241)?

Chapter 31

56. In the last paragraph of Chapter 31, Julia seems to blame her father’s cheating and abandoning the family on “the slowing.” Do you agree that it was because of “the slowing?” Why or why not?

Chapter 32

57. What happened to Julia’s grandfather?

Chapter 33

58. Julia wonders about the difference between coincidence and fate. What is the difference? Why would the difference between coincidence and fate be important to her?

59. Julia notes that “something had shifted” in her parents’ relationship (Thompson Walker 254). Describe the shift.

60. Why do you think Julia’s father defines “paradox” for her?

61. When Seth leaves, Julia says that, “. . . all around me life continued to proceed in only the one direction” (Thompson Walker 263). What do you think she means?

Chapter 34

62. Looking back, Julia says, “It still amazes me how little we really knew” (Thompson Walker 266). What do you think she means?

63. Julia says that she has, “. . . become a collector of stories about unlikely returns” (Thompson Walker 269). What do you think she means? Why would she become a collector in this way?

64. What is the significance of the last line of the book? Why would the author choose to end the book this way?