

Hiroshima  
Chapter 4: Panic grass and feverfew

*Weeds already hid the ashes, and wild flowers were in bloom among the city's bones. The bomb had not only left the underground organs of plants intact; it had stimulated them.*

p. 91

*And, as if nature were protecting man against his own ingenuity, the reproductive processes were affected for a time; men became sterile, women had miscarriages, menstruation stopped.* p. 103

*A Planning Conference, with an enthusiastic young Military Government officer, Lieutenant John d Montgomery, of Kalamazoo, as its adviser, began to consider what sort of city the new Hiroshima should be ...The Planning Conference at a loss as to just what importance Hiroshima could have...* p. 105-106

*"If your God is so good and kind, how can he let people suffer like this?" ... "Man is not now in the condition God intended. He has fallen from grace through sin."* p. 109

*It was war and we had to expect it.* p. 117

description of physical conditions post bomb

p.88

p. 91 from point of view of individual survivor

adjustment to the horror

p. 88

p. 99 "the creeps" and the weeds; compare p. 103 where nature protects humanity against its own ingenuity; connotations of "the creeps"; something offensive, something threatening

p. 118 "exhilarating adventure"

the "strange, capricious disease" – the unknown about the illness impacting upon survivors; lack of knowledge and lack of supplies with which to treat the illness

p. 89, 90, 93, 97-98

p. 90 "malaise, weariness, and feverishness"

p. 98 Doctor is positive to patient but is generally negative about prognosis of such patients

p. 100 "unprecedented disease", "new sickness"; p. 101 details of the illness

p. 113 "He felt tired all the time. "but I have to realise," he said, "that the whole community is tired.""; the illness manifests itself as "malaise" (p. 90)

p. 105 Dr Fujii: "everyone seems to be busy"; impossibility of resting, see also Father Kleinsorge p. 112 can't take naps: Who needs to rest? Why? What is Hersey's attitude towards people who rest? See also p. 114 "The lives most these six people, who were among the luckiest in Hiroshima, would never be the same."

p. 110 scientific explanation of the bomb

Note chapter begins with illness

Miss Sasaki notices the weeds p. 91 – does her infection (recurring, inexplicable, untreatable for a number of reasons) become symbolic?

Miss Sasaki - relig is a food.

Version 2

structures  
→ these provide support → see image of war/leaf

the psychological impact of the bomb

impact upon children p. 99, 118

psychological impact of illness p. 91, 104, 109, 112 NB p. 112 depression plus

conversion to Catholicism

p.113 Dr Sasaki marries in March

but relig belief is not necessary for selfless acts.

for some it is a comfort.

religious thinking around the bomb

What do the priests do and how is this presented? (positively or negatively?)

Insurance, banking p. 87-89 Father Kleinsorge deposits money and then empty suitcase becomes heavy – symbolism, if any here? Or am I over reading?

Conversion/proselytising (to try to change another's religious belief to one's own); "And he went on to explain everything." p. 109 – tone here? Note position

next to long section on science. Note Miss Sasaki's psychological vulnerability; she also draws physical strength from the priest

See also notes on total war: ethical question: priests "often discussed the ethics of using the bomb." P. 117

p. 111 Mr Tanimoto envies the Church its wealth – he has only his failing energy

See also notes on nature p. 91

sci + relig competing x

relig belief is sustaining

What is Hersey's opinion of religion and religious faith? Note the fall of the books, p. 23; images of religious comfort; images of human fallibility; images of incredible compassion and resilience from religious <sup>and</sup> non-religious.

Does he contrast scientific and religious ways of thinking? If so, which, if any is preferred?

What is the difference between absolute and humanist thinking? (Absolute thinking implies inflexibility; concrete thinking; black and white thinking. Humanist thinking implies empathetic thinking, which is not as possible under absolutist thinking.)

Where does Mr Fukai fit into this discussion? Faith? Concrete thinking? Patriotism/ancestor worship? Mental and spiritual collapse?

Scientists and scientific power

p. 95, facts details – compare to focalisation of the bomb's impact from the point of view of a survivor

p. 97 people allowed back into Hiroshima – "without any peril at all"

p. 110 summation of radiation sickness

p. 106 statistics re impact of the bomb

p. 107 description of the power of the bomb: tone? significance of choice of statistics?; p. 99 "baffling cases, these atomic bomb people." tone here?

p. 108 irony "the fruit of the scientists' calculations"

p. 109 – keeping knowledge secret (impact of this on general populace see below)

see also p. 23 the fall of books; why are the scientists amused?

Long section p. 107ff: p. 107 "Scientists swarmed into the city." – strength and intensity of science

how science is needed by humans for good ev. end.

Christian  
beliefs  
practical  
Christianity  
or approval.

Science should be the fuel but the bomb puts ppl in service of science

Contrast scientific knowledge with general rumours that are still circulating e.g. p. 116 ““The atom bomb,” she [Mrs Nakamura] would say when asked about it, “is the size of a matchbox. The heat of it is six thousand times that of the sun.”; mythological imagery used by the general populace to describe the bomb e.g. p. 94 “seven years” of barren land

Knowledge – function of, purpose of in a catastrophe? Might/right of when cost is so high? P. 116-118, p.103 (see also fall of books p. 23; see also ethical questions p. 117-118)

#### Government response

p. 105, p. 113 “limp along”  
p. 90 unpredictable arrival of outside help  
p. 92, 93, 102 difficulties of inadequate medical supplies  
p. 105-106 American reconstruction committee at a loss as to what to make of Hiroshima; assumptions behind this thinking – American rightness in dropping the bomb (i.e. no need for a memorial); erase the past thinking (assumption that Hiroshima has no historical significance to the Japanese); conqueror mentality (no consultation with the local community); short sighted thinking (no imagination to envisage the future significance of Hiroshima to peace movements around the world, nor the American historical narrative)

#### Japanese culture

How does Hersey describe? Define? Represent? To what purpose? Note p. 65 “primitive, childlike” and earlier responses to the Emperor p. 85. Why does Hersey infantilise the Japanese (Orientalist thinking? Necessary to the characterisation of the people for the narrative to work emotionally?)

p. 113 the façade  
p. 114-115 Note Mr Tanimoto’s letter to an American friend – what is Hersey’s reason for including this letter? Why does Mr Tanimoto write the way he does? Who is his audience? What is he trying to achieve? Consider these questions in the context of Mr Tanimoto’s character.

p. 114 post-Blitz like sense of survival (use of familiar imagery for Western audience)

#### America

What are the connotations of the words used to describe America/Americans  
p. 95-97 hatred and resentment of Americans  
p. 99 Americans on Tokyo (away from the bomb) examine Father Kleinsorge  
p. 103 “in honour of the conquerors” (p. 165 Dr Fujii, a survivor)  
p. 110 work for occupation forces  
p. 114 “The lives of these six people, who were among the luckiest in Hiroshima, would never be the same.” Understatement that suggests American culpability?  
p.117 hatred for Americans/war criminals  
p. 92 Dr Sasaki’s fluent German

#### Total war

p. 116-118 Why does this question need to be asked? Does asking rhetorical questions imply an affirmative response – that yes, total war is not justifiable because negative consequences far outweigh the positive? If religious cannot write with certainty – who can? What hope? (compare certainty of religion p. 109)

Relationship of total war discussion to title of the chapter?

Relationship of total war discussion to Toshio Nakamura – resilience (hope); loss of innocence (argument against total war)?

Mrs Nakamura

Opens chapter 4 – why? Her son closes chapter 4 – why?

Sewing machine panic vs. presence of mind/prescience in recording bond numbers so that she is able to reclaim

Quest for independence

Rest?

p. 116 understanding of the bomb

religious belief

How would you describe Mrs Nakamura? In comparison to other characters?

Language

Purpose?

What is the best way to report on an historical event that changes history/contributes to changes in history?

Tone

Impact of ending of each chapter – given context of original intentions re publication

Why title?

Irony

Embedded texts

Letter p. 114ff – note author, purpose, audience – Why does Hersey include?

Toshio's story

Juxtaposition/placement of scenes next to each other

Imagery

Water – bad water follows Dr Fujii p. 93, 104; p. 94 destruction of Hiroshima by water; nature is relentless, impervious to the destructive plans of man?

Symbolism

p. 97 sewing machine

p. 91 weeds – unnatural nature of the bomb has unnatural consequences such as p. 103 infertility

contrast

science/knowledge vs. rumour/mythology

characterisation