

# **Siddhartha Book Notes**

## **Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse**

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## Author/Context

Born in Germany's Black Forest on July 2, 1877, Hermann Hesse was schooled in theology from an early age by his father, a Russian missionary. Lessons in Latin and Greek followed this schooling to prepare for his entrance into the Maulbronn Seminary School. He was admitted but ran away after only six months, vowing to become a poet. After a short stay in a psychiatric asylum, Hesse began working in a bookshop and soon after published his first novel, *Peter Camenzind*, in 1904. It describes a boy who leaves his small village to be a poet. Hesse continued to write and publish, making a trip to India in 1911, the country where his mother, the daughter of a Protestant missionary, had been born. At the onset of World War I Hesse at once involved himself in anti-war activities and edited two German newspapers; during this period his first marriage ended after his wife's nervous breakdown and entry into an asylum where she would remain until the end of her life.

Hesse himself suffered severe stress after this event, the death of his father, and the poor health of one of his sons. He underwent intensive psychoanalysis in 1917 by a student of Carl Jung. This would be followed by the publish of *Demian* two years later, after moving permanently to Switzerland and away from the troubles afflicting Germany. It is from his quiet house in the mountains that Hesse would write *Siddhartha* in 1922, followed by *Steppenwolf* (1927), which reflects his own sorrows about growing old and the changes that have occurred between the present and his past. Soon after, *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1930) tells the tale of two friends bound by their differences, the one finding solace in religion and the other endlessly seeking peace. Another novel was published in 1932 describing a group's pilgrimage in search of knowledge, as they make their *Journey to the East*, reflecting the same sentiment *Siddhartha* had a decade before. His last work, *Magister Ludi*, was finished in 1943 after a ten-year silence, and for it Hesse was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1946. He died at Montagnola, Switzerland, in 1962.

Overall, Hesse's work strongly reflects his own identity crisis, particularly in coming to terms with the past. Often the answer lies in travelling backwards, closer to his roots, as he did after voyaging in 1911 to India, where his mother had been born. Despite his Protestant descent, it is Near-Eastern religion that sets the stage for *Siddhartha*, in addition to his interest in psychoanalysis and the teachings of Carl Jung. Even in light of the stylistic diversity of his novels, there remains one persistent theme in Hesse's work: to understand human existence and define the value of an individual swallowed by a greater society, as Siddhartha finally does. Govinda is forced to continue his search, for he has not experienced the world for himself. *Siddhartha* is a testament to the importance of varied personal experiences as a means of finding meaning in life.

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# Plot Summary

Siddhartha grows up with his friend Govinda in a small village in India. They are taught to believe in ancient Hindu teachings by Siddhartha's father, yet the young man becomes restless and decides to go out and explore the world to find answers to his questions. The ancient Hindu teachings seem silly to him, and according to Siddhartha, they offer inadequate explanations of the ways of the world. Govinda leaves the village with him for different reasons; he admires Siddhartha's intelligence and hopes that he shall become successful by staying with him, as his "shadow," following him wherever he goes. They both lead lives as wandering Samanas, self-exiles of society living in self-denial. They suppress all bodily desires by fasting, breathing control, and living in poverty; only the natural world is embraced as truth, and meditation is practiced regularly. After three years, Siddhartha grows weary of this life, too, and decides to accompany Govinda to visit the Buddha in Savathi. Govinda becomes a disciple of Buddha while Siddhartha continues his journey alone, still wishing to understand the world for himself since all teachings have failed to accomplish this, including the ancient beliefs of the Hindus and this new religion of Buddha. However, Siddhartha wishes to have the enlightenment that Buddha has attained by listening to the voice of his Self instead of denying it.

It is lust that afflicts him first when he meets the beautiful Kamala in the town of Samsara. But in order to be his lover, she requires him obtain shoes, clothes, and money to buy her presents. Siddhartha becomes a merchant, accrues wealth and learns much about lovemaking from this beautiful woman. Over time, the desires of his body rage out of control; he gambles, drinks wine heavily, and becomes greedy. He remains in Samsara for many years, until, struck by his mortality, he notices how old he has become. Realizing his folly and how many years have been lost, Siddhartha simply walks away from Samsara, never to return to his riches or to Kamala. She is left pregnant with his unborn son. Ashamed at his wickedness, Siddhartha contemplates suicide near a river but stops after seeing his reflection in the water and being reminded of his innocent childhood. Falling asleep after this depression, he awakens to see Govinda nearby, who has remained Buddha's disciple all this time and has not changed at all. Siddhartha has changed so much that Govinda doesn't even recognize him and is disgusted to see his rich clothes. Govinda leaves; Siddhartha decides to remain near the river and live with the ferryman, Vasudeva.

Only after living a life of self-denial and then experiencing sins for himself does Siddhartha finally find wisdom about the world. Vasudeva teaches him how to listen to the quiet sounds of the river, endlessly flowing, and he realizes that the world is simply a recurring cycle. Nothing really changes at all. His selfish ego destroyed, Siddhartha realizes the unimportance of one self alone since his life is a part of the greater unity of things that is "Om." Later Kamala dies after bringing his son, Young Siddhartha, to him. The young boy despises his father's gentleness and his boring life near the river, for he has not experienced the world. After his son returns to Samsara, Siddhartha is heartbroken that Young Siddhartha must endure the same trials of sin and depression that he himself has already overcome. Realizing that he cannot shelter anyone from the

world and that each must find his own path towards understanding, Siddhartha heals. He had as a young boy fled from his own Brahmin father and never returned; why should it be so bad now when his son leaves him? It is a part of the world's cycle.

Vasudeva goes into the forest, into the "oneness", and leaves Siddhartha to row the ferry himself. After a few years, old Govinda appears again, wishing to learn from Siddhartha's wisdom. Govinda has remained unchanged, a devout disciple of Buddha, for he has not experienced the world like Siddhartha. Siddhartha's smile and face have finally become much like that of the Buddha, although he had never been Buddha's disciple. Govinda is stunned at Siddhartha's transformation but remains confused as to how he has achieved enlightenment. Govinda has been devout, faithful, and subservient while Siddhartha led a life of sin before coming to peace. These two old men meet there at the river's edge; one has progressed and found meaning in life, and the other has spent life stagnating, by blindly following the teachings of another rather than teaching himself by trial and error. It is personal experience, not age, which teaches wisdom.

## Major Characters

**Siddhartha:** The son of a Brahmin and raised to study Hindu teachings, he is greatly admired for his intelligence and handsome looks while growing up. Despite his popularity, Siddhartha leaves his family village in India to search for meaning in his life. After becoming a wandering Samana for three years and rejecting the teachings of Buddha, he matures after meeting Kamala in Samsara and discovers sin. After twenty years he rejects this life, nearly attempts suicide, and goes to live with a ferryman near the river. Here he reflects on his life, and the restlessness that has followed him is dispelled; he realizes that he has learned from his experiences. Finally, as an old man, Siddhartha finds peace and wisdom, recognizing that everything in the world is a recurring cycle. He experiences the same enlightenment as the Buddha. Note: Buddha's original name before becoming enlightened was 'Siddhartha.' Also, in Jainism a 'Siddha' is a liberated consciousness.

**Govinda:** Siddhartha's 'shadow' and childhood friend. When Siddhartha decides to leave his village to become a Samana, Govinda follows him out into the world, thinking him to be destined for greatness and fame. He hopes to stay close to Siddhartha so that he, too, may rise to glory, rather than finding it for himself. Inspired by Buddha's teachings, Govinda leaves Siddhartha to become a monk. Yet he remains a shadow, following behind Buddha rather than being an independent person. Govinda appears again many years later when Siddhartha contemplates suicide near the river and again when Siddhartha has found his peace near the river when they are both very old. Govinda has not changed at all through all these years. He continues searching to understand the world through others' teachings instead of experiencing it firsthand. He does not develop.

**Buddha (Gotama, Illustrious One, Sakyamuni) :** Buddha is the founder of a religious movement called Buddhism, which presents the world as a cycle of cause and effect and offers salvation to the suffering. He brings hope to many people in India who are restless after years of poverty and sickness. His followers increase rapidly, and wealthy patrons make donations to support the spread of Buddha's teachings, including Anathapindika, who presented the Jetavana grove. Siddhartha admires Buddha for having reached enlightenment but does not trust his teachings because they do not explain what he seeks to understand. Buddha's impending death unites people everywhere to pay tribute to him for his greatness, yet Siddhartha achieves the same state of enlightenment as Buddha by experiencing the world for himself instead of following teachings. Note: 'Buddha' is the Sanskrit word for 'one who is awakened.' Buddha's death occurred in 483 B.C. He was eighty years old.

**Kamala:** A wealthy courtesan, she helps Siddhartha to enter the materialistic world of Samsara by exposing him to greed, lust, and love. After many years, her beauty begins to fade and, made aware of her own mortality, seeks solace in Buddha's teachings. When Siddhartha leaves Samsara, she is pregnant with his son, whom she spoils with gifts and excess once born. Kamala dies near the river after a poisonous snakebite while on a pilgrimage to see the dying Buddha. She sees Siddhartha one last time and

is happy that he has found his peace. Kamala thus dies in peace herself, for she had loved him. Her body is cremated on a hill near the river.

**Ferryman (Vasudeva):** Vasudeva first ferries Siddhartha across the river to get to Samsara, although Siddhartha judges this man to be a simpleton. After twenty years he leaves Samsara and returns to Vasudeva, wishing to become his apprentice. Vasudeva teaches him how to listen and hear the voice of the river. Siddhartha is enlightened, for he begins to understand that the world is a recurring cycle because of this quiet life near the river. After twelve years, old Vasudeva goes off into the woods to die peacefully, leaving Siddhartha alone to manage the ferry. He declares blissfully that he is going 'into the unity of things,' since death is merely a part of the world's cycle.

### **Minor Characters**

**Brahmin:** In India, being 'Brahmin' is one of the highest titles a Hindu priest can reach. Siddhartha's father is a Brahmin and tries to groom his son to become a Hindu scholar like himself. Siddhartha rejects these teachings and leaves the village after his father reluctantly consents. He never sees his son again.

**Samana:** One who lives a life of piety and self-denial, free of possessions and desires. Siddhartha joins a group of wandering Samanas after leaving his family village. Their beliefs foster an increased connection to nature by meditating and using the imagination. Siddhartha hypnotizes the Samana elder when he requests permission to leave. He thinks their beliefs are all just tricks of the mind, although his Samana past later returns to influence him with feelings of guilt during his sinful life in Samsara.

**Anathapindika:** This wealthy patron donated the Jetavana grove to Buddha in support of his teachings, and he establishes a monastery there.

**Kamaswami:** A clever merchant who hires Siddhartha to be his apprentice, supplying him with food, clothes, and a home. The two disagree because mercantilism is just a game for Siddhartha, while the materialistic Kamaswami enjoys earning a profit. Later, Siddhartha becomes consumed by profit as well, until he leaves Samsara. Kamaswami assumes that he had been attacked by bandits, for he cannot understand why anyone would want to give up such a wealthy lifestyle.

**Young Siddhartha:** Young Siddhartha is left in his father's care after the death of Kamala, his mother. Siddhartha falls in love with his young son, wishing that he would love him, too. But he is too gentle, and the boy becomes defiant, despising his father and their boring life near the river. He runs away back to the evils in Samsara, never to return. Siddhartha searches for his son obsessively, consumed with longing to have him again. Later he realizes how selfish he has been, for he left his own father the Brahmin when young and never returned to him, either. Siddhartha realizes that this is merely another part of the world's cycle, and his aching heart heals.



## Objects/Places

**Om:** The Sanskrit (ancient Indian language) word chanted when contemplating ultimate reality. Siddhartha meditates by focusing upon Om repeatedly as a Samana and as the Brahmin's son. Later, he forgets it until, contemplating suicide near the river, it returns and enlightens him. Siddhartha then begins to understand Om as the unity of everything in the world, in a recurring cycle. The voice of the river is this one word, Om.

**Self:** As a young man, Siddhartha's sense of Self (his individual identity) is arrogant, rejecting his father's Hindu teachings. As a Samana, he denies the desires of his Self to try to understand the world. In Samsara, he embraces his desires for many years and pleasures his body by gambling, drinking, and lovemaking. Only later does he form the identity of his Self as being a part of everything in the world and destroy his selfish ego.

**Atman:** The thing Siddhartha seeks to understand. Atman is his innermost essence and what he really is inside. First Atman is confused with being his Self, until he senses it is beneath his Self. Siddhartha thinks his Self is merely his body; by destroying his body from fasting and abuse, the Self will be destroyed, and only Atman shall be left. After staying with Vasudeva near the river, he realizes that Atman is his sense of Self as it connects to the rest of the world. Only after his ego is destroyed and his true identity found does he find his innermost essence.

**Rig-Veda (Vedas):** Four canonical chants called Vedas form a large part of Hindu beliefs. Rig-Veda is one of these, as well as the Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda, and Atharva-Veda. Siddhartha studies the Vedas under the Brahmin's supervision.

**Upanishads:** A string of treatises contained in the Hindu Vedas that deal with broad philosophical problems about life. These, too, are taught as a part of Siddhartha's Hindu upbringing.

**Brahman:** Not to be confused with 'Brahmin,' Brahman or 'Brahma' is the Hindu god of creation.

**Savathi:** The town where Buddha's Jetavana Monastery has been established. Siddhartha goes here with Govinda after leaving the Samanas to hear the Buddha's teachings. Govinda becomes a disciple while Siddhartha continues on his pilgrimage.

**Jetavana grove:** A gift of Anathapindika, this garden in Savathi houses Buddha's monastery. Many followers come to hear the Buddha teach here, where there are many monks with shaven heads and yellow robes who have become his disciples.

**Four main points:** The core of Buddha's philosophy, in addition to the eightfold path. The four main points probably refer to his four noble truths: suffering, its cause, cessation, and the way it leads to cessation.



**River:** Siddhartha crosses the river before entering the sinful town of Samsara. He returns to the river and contemplates suicide by drowning, but his reflection in the water enlightens him. Becoming a ferryman with Vasudeva, Siddhartha learns to hear the voice of the river that is Om, the unity of things, and the river befriends him as if it were a living creature. Vasudeva's face appears to be the river before he dies, flowing endlessly together. The river represents Siddhartha's understanding of life as a flowing of many faces that are all him, all one person unchanging but changing. The river has the 'transitory appearances' that he explains to Govinda, transitory like himself.

**Samsara:** A town filled with greed, materialism, and lust. Here Siddhartha experiences the sin he had always avoided in the past after being so sheltered by his father the Brahmin. After twenty years, he flees and comes to peace by returning to the river; later his son, Young Siddhartha, runs away from the quiet river to return to Samsara, despite his father's attempts to shelter him from the sorrow he had experienced there. Recognizing that everyone must know sin firsthand before gaining wisdom, Siddhartha gives up trying to 'save him' from Samsara's wickedness.

**Songbird:** Kamala's rare bird kept in a cage. Siddhartha dreams that this bird had died, thinking that it is his own inner spirit that has been lost. Kamala sets the bird free to fly away after Siddhartha disappears, for she is heartbroken. Later, Siddhartha realizes that the metaphorical songbird within him is in fact very much alive and rejoices that he has found peace.

**Nirvana:** In Buddhism, this is the absolute state of bliss achieved by destroying one's Self. The highest level of nirvana is reached only at death, although Siddhartha and the Buddha both have reached such a state of bliss after understanding Om and the interrelation of everything in the world. After destroying his selfish ego, Siddhartha finds Atman within and comes very close to nirvana by listening to the river. Govinda has not progressed at all, in spite of his faith in the Buddha's teachings.

## Quotes

Quote 1: "[Siddhartha] had begun to feel that the love of his father and mother, and also the love of his friend Govinda, would not always make him happy, give him peace, satisfy and suffice him. He had begun to suspect that his worthy father and his other teachers, the wise Brahmins, had already passed on to him the bulk and best of their wisdom [but] his soul was not at peace." Chapter 1, pg. 3

Quote 2: "Was Atman then not within him? Was not then the source within his own heart? One must find the source within one's own Self, one must possess it. Everything else was seeking - a detour, error." Chapter 1, pg. 5

Quote 3: "When all the Self was conquered and dead, when all passions and desires were silent, then the last must awaken, the innermost of Being that is no longer Self - the great secret!" Chapter 2, pg. 11

Quote 4: "Siddhartha was silent. He dwelt long on the words which Govinda had uttered. Yes, he thought, standing with a bowed head, what remains from all that is holy to us? What remains? What is preserved? And he shook his head." Chapter 2, pg. 16

Quote 5: "You have renounced home and parents, you have renounced your own will, you have renounced friendship. That is what the teachings preach, that is the will of the Illustrious One. That is what you wished for yourself. Tomorrow, Govinda, I will leave you." Chapter 3, pg. 25

Quote 6: "The teaching which you have heard...is not my opinion, and its goal is not to explain the world to those who are thirsty for knowledge. Its goal is quite different; its goal is salvation from the suffering. That is what Gotama teaches, nothing else." Chapter 3, pg. 27

Quote 7: "I, also, would like to look and smile, sit and walk like that, so free, so worthy, so restrained, so candid, so childlike and mysterious. A man only looks and walks like that when he has conquered his Self. I also will conquer my Self...No other teachings will attract me, since this man's teachings have not done so." Chapter 3, pg. 29

Quote 8: "I, who wished to read the book of the world and the book of my own nature, did presume to despise the letters and signs. I called the world of appearances, illusion. I called my eyes and tongue, chance. Now it is over; I have awakened. I have indeed awakened and have only been born today." Chapter 4, pg. 33

Quote 9: "[Siddhartha] stood alone like a star in the heavens...That was the last shudder of his awakening, the last pains of birth. Immediately he moved on again and began to walk quickly and impatiently, no longer homewards, no longer to his father, no longer looking backwards." Chapter 4, pg. 34

Quote 10: "[Siddhartha's] body was certainly not the Self, not the play of senses, nor thought, nor understanding, nor acquired wisdom or art with which to draw conclusions and from already existing thoughts to spin new thoughts...Both thought and the senses were fine things...it was worthwhile listening to them both...to listen intently to both voices." Chapter 5, pg. 39

Quote 11: "[Siddhartha] is drawn by his goal, for he does not allow anything to enter his mind which opposes his goal. That is what Siddhartha learned from the Samanas. It is what fools call magic and what they think is caused by demons...there are no demons...everyone can reach his goal if he can think, wait, and fast." Chapter 5, pg. 50

Quote 12: "[Siddhartha learns] that one cannot have pleasure without giving it...She taught him that lovers should not separate from each other after making love without admiring each other, without being conquered as well as conquering, so that no feeling of satiation or desolation arises nor the horrid feeling of misusing or having been misused." Chapter 6, pg. 54

Quote 13: "Siddhartha's sympathy and curiosity lay only with the people, whose work, troubles, pleasures, and follies were more unknown and remote from him than the moon. Although he found it so easy to speak to everyone, to live with everyone, to learn from everyone...there was something which separated him from them...[because] he had been a Samana." Chapter 6, pg. 57

Quote 14: "Slowly, like moisture entering the dying tree trunk...so did the world and inertia creep into Siddhartha's soul; it slowly filled his soul, made it heavy, made it tired, sent it to sleep. But on the other hand his senses became more awakened, they learned a great deal, experienced a great deal." Chapter 7, pg. 61

Quote 15: "He envied them [for]...the sense of importance with which they lived their lives, the depth of their pleasure and sorrows, the anxious but sweet happiness of their continual power to love. These people were always in love with themselves, with their children." Chapter 7, pg. 62

Quote 16: "He had finished with that. That also died in him. He rose, said farewell to the mango tree and the pleasure garden. As he had not had any food that day he felt extremely hungry, and thought of his house in town, of his room and bed, of the table with food. He smiled wearily, shook his head and said good-bye to these things." Chapter 7, pg. 68

Quote 17: "The wheel of appearances revolves quickly, Govinda. Where is Siddhartha the Brahmin, where is Siddhartha the Samana, where is Siddhartha the rich man? The transitory soon changes, Govinda, You know that." Chapter 8, pg. 76

Quote 18: "Now, he thought, that all transitory things have slipped away from me again, I stand once more beneath the sun, as I once stood as a small child. Nothing is mine, I know nothing, I possess nothing, I have learned nothing...when I am no longer young, when my hair is fast growing gray...now I am beginning again like a child." Chapter 8, pg. 77

Quote 19: "It is a good thing to experience everything oneself...As a child I learned that pleasures of the world and riches were not good. I have known it for a long time, but I have only just experienced it. Now I know it not only with my intellect, but with my ears, with my heart, with my stomach. It is a good thing that I know this." Chapter 8, pg. 80

Quote 20: "The river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth...in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere, and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past, nor the shadow of the future...Siddhartha the boy, Siddhartha the mature man and Siddhartha the old man [are] only separated by shadows, not through reality...Nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence." Chapter 9, pg. 87

Quote 21: "[Siddhartha learns that] a true seeker could not accept any teachings, not if he sincerely wished to find something. But he who found, could give his approval to every path, every goal; nothing separated him from all the other thousands who lived in eternity, who breathed the Divine." Chapter 9, pg. 90

Quote 22: "It was true that he had never fully lost himself in another person to such an extent as to forget himself; he had never undergone the follies of love for another person. He had never been able to do this, and it had then seemed to him that this was the biggest difference between him and the ordinary people...[now] He was madly in love." Chapter 10, pg. 99

Quote 23: "You want me to become like you, so pious, so gentle, so wise, but just to spite you, I would rather become a thief and a murderer and go to hell, than be like you. I hate you; you are not my father even if you have been my mother's lover a dozen times!" Chapter 10, pg. 100

Quote 24: "Siddhartha realized that the desire that had driven him to this place was foolish, that he could not help his son, that he should not force himself on him. He felt a deep love for the runaway boy, like a wound, and yet felt at the same time that this wound was not intended to fester in him, but that it should heal." Chapter 10, pg. 103

Quote 25: "Had not his father suffered the same pain that he was now suffering for his son? Had not his father died long ago, alone, without having seen his son again? Did not he expect the same fate? Was it not a comedy, a strange and stupid thing, this repetition, this course of events in a fateful circle?" Chapter 11, pg. 107

Quote 26: "The more [Siddhartha] realized it, the less strange did he find it; the more did he realize that everything was natural and in order, that Vasudeva had long ago, almost always been like that, only he did not quite recognize it; indeed he himself was hardly different from him. He felt he now regarded Vasudeva as the people regarded the gods and that this could not last." Chapter 11, pg. 109

Quote 27: "[A]ll the voices, all the goals, all the yearnings, all the sorrows, all the pleasures, all the good and evil, all of them together was the world. All of them together was the stream of events, the music of life...then the great song of a thousand voices consisted of one word: Om - perfection." Chapter 11, pg. 110-11



Quote 28: "From that hour Siddhartha ceased to fight against his destiny. There shone in his face the serenity of knowledge, of one who is no longer confronted with conflict of desires, who has found salvation, who is in harmony with the stream of events, with the stream of life, full of sympathy and compassion, surrendering himself to the stream, belonging to the unity of things." Chapter 11, pg. 111

Quote 29: "When someone is seeking...it happens quite easily that he only sees the thing that he is seeking; that he is unable to find anything, unable to absorb anything...because he is obsessed with his goal. Seeking means: to have a goal; but finding means: to be free, to be receptive, to have no goal." Chapter 12, pg. 113

Quote 30: "Therefore, it seems to me that everything that exists is good - death as well as life, sin as well as holiness, wisdom as well as folly. Everything is necessary, everything needs only my agreement, my assent, my loving understanding; then all is well with me and nothing can harm me...I needed lust [and] to strive for property...to learn not to resist them." Chapter 12, pg. 116

Quote 31: "He saw the face of a newly born child, red and full of wrinkles, ready to cry. He saw the face of a murderer, saw him plunge a knife into the body of a man; at the same moment he saw this criminal kneeling down, bound, and his head cut off by an executioner. He saw the naked bodies of men and women in postures and transports of passionate love. He saw corpses stretched out, still, cold, empty." Chapter 12, pg. 121

Quote 32: "He saw all these forms and faces in a thousand relationships to each other, all helping each other, loving, hating, destroying each other and become newly born. Each one of them was mortal, a passionate, painful example of all that was transitory. Yet none of them died, they only changed, were always reborn, continually had a new face: only time stood between one face and another." Chapter 12, pg. 121

# Topic Tracking: Nature

Nature 1: Siddhartha and Govinda meditate beneath a grove of trees to connect with Om, the unity of the universe. Being off on their own away from the village in nature helps to focus their thoughts.

Nature 2: The wandering Samanas, practicing self-denial from all bodily desires, exile themselves from the rest of society and live in the forest. Siddhartha and Govinda leave civilization to become Samanas, following them into the forest.

Nature 3: Siddhartha meditates after he has become a Samana and projects his mind into nature to understand it. He imagines that he is the dead animal picked apart by vultures, then turned into dust again and again in "painless eternity." Nature seems to hold the answers to a proper understanding of the cycle of life. Living in his family village with the Brahmin, he was not able to explore Nature in his own way. Now Siddhartha has cut himself off from society and lives in the forest.

Nature 4: Buddha has established the center of his teaching in the Jetavana grove. In his monastery monks wander about amongst the beautiful landscape of trees and gardens. Buddha offers salvation to those who are suffering. The Buddha's original enlightenment occurred while he was sitting beneath a tree many years before. Isolated from the main center of Savathi, the picturesque scene in Jetavana offers an escape from "desires and the world."

Nature 5: Abandoning all teachings, Siddhartha views the natural world as it is rather than thinking about the life cycle as he did with the Samanas. The colors in Nature surprise him, for he had never paid attention to them before. He had always tried to understand what everything meant and did not perceive it all for what it is. The flowers and river fascinate him as he walks alone, filled with energy.

Nature 6: Govinda appears in a dream, sprouting breasts from which Siddhartha drinks. The milk tastes like everything in nature and in the world, like Om. Siddhartha embraces the lusty desires of his body, hoping it will make him understand Om.

Nature 7: In a lush garden, Kamala's grove, Siddhartha discovers the woman who shall teach him about lovemaking; in the Jetavana grove he heard Buddha's teachings, yet in Kamala's grove he begins the quest of learning for himself, through experience.

Nature 8: Siddhartha had lived in the wild forest with the Samanas, visited the garden of Buddha at Jetavana, and first met Kamala in her grove at the edge of Samsara. Now he owns a garden of his own. His understanding of nature has changed a lot. Instead of being humble and considering his connection to nature, he selfishly possesses it for himself by owning property.

Nature 9: Preparing to commit suicide by jumping into the river, Siddhartha holds on to the trunk of a tree, gazing down at the water. His reflection on the water's surface



enlightens him, and he suddenly feels connected again to Om and recalls the world's creator, Brahman. He abandons his old materialism and becomes a part of nature again.

Nature 10: Govinda leaves Siddhartha there near the river. The thoughts of suicide have disappeared, and he feels at peace with the world now that he has fled from the town and returns to nature. Siddhartha decides to stay there near the river, for he feels as if it is trying to speak to him. Nature has enlightened him.

Nature 11: The river exemplifies what Siddhartha has learned about the world. Just as water from the river evaporates and falls again as rain, flowing everywhere, so too is life itself a recurring cycle of birth and death. Life in Samsara had merely been a game, for it did not recognize the greater cycle of the world. It is a town filled with materialism and sin. The answers Siddhartha finds are in the river and in nature.

Nature 12: Kamala realizes that she is old and fears death. She takes solace from fear in the Buddha's teachings and donates the garden she had possessed in Samsara to the Buddha's followers, hoping this to save her from her fear. This garden, like the Jetavana grove, becomes a place of escape from the realities of life.

Nature 13: Siddhartha returns to Kamala's garden to find his runaway son. Young Siddhartha was bored living near the river, connected to nature, and he runs away back into the materialistic town of Samsara. His old father had sheltered him from the world, hoping to save him. He wanted his son to have wisdom without experiencing hardship. Before coming to Samsara and experiencing sin for himself, old Siddhartha had failed to connect to nature and the world. The father accepts that it is necessary for Young Siddhartha to learn for himself.

Nature 14: Siddhartha prepares to go into Samsara to bring his son back to the river, but he is saved again by seeing his reflection in the water. Looking at his reflection, he is reminded of his father, the man whom he ran away from and never saw again. The river reminds him of how everything moves in a cycle, a thing he had not understood when living amongst the people. Nature focuses his thoughts and enlightens him.

Nature 15: Vasudeva, whose face appears to be so much like the river, goes off to die in the woods. He does not fear death like Kamala, for he realizes that it is another part of the life cycle. Nature is the place that receives him at the end, calling the forest "the unity of things."

Nature 16: Siddhartha holds a stone for Govinda to see, explaining that it, like everything else, is a part of the cycle of life. The normal society of people is disconnected from the life cycle and hides this understanding beneath religion and teachings. Nature holds the answers, for the stone shall be turned into dirt over time, from which a plant shall grow, which an animal will eat...the cycle continues again and again. Human civilization changes, yet the course of nature remains a recurring cycle of birth and death.



## Topic Tracking: Self

Self 1: Siddhartha wishes to discover his innermost essence, Atman, which exists beneath his individual identity as Siddhartha. It is this essence of humanity that is in every person beneath their individual identities, and it is this that Siddhartha seeks to understand.

Self 2: The Samanas teach Siddhartha how to deny the desires of his body, thinking that by ignoring his body's needs by fasting, resisting cold weather and heat, and controlling his heartbeat, one denies the Self. They believe that the Self lives in the external body.

Self 3: Govinda has surrendered his Self, his individual identity, and chooses to listen to the desires and beliefs of Buddha. Rather than finding knowledge for himself, he clings to another's understanding of the world.

Self 4: Siddhartha is happy that he has been left alone, for Govinda has become Buddha's follower. He is no longer influenced by anyone and listens to his own thoughts, hearing the voice of the Self inside of him.

Self 5: Consumed at first with loneliness, Siddhartha begins to listen more to the voice within him. It drives him to continue walking, although he is uncertain of his destination. He becomes more in touch with the voice of his Self and obeys it rather than ignoring it as he had always done before. Siddhartha has rejected the teachings of others and begins to teach himself through personal experience for the first time.

Self 6: In a dream, Siddhartha is aroused by lusty desires for women. He is fearful of women due to his lack of experience but remains determined to explore these instinctual desires of his body by later asking Kamala to teach him about lovemaking. Siddhartha begins his journey to listen to the voice of his Self by experiencing the world.

Self 7: Siddhartha's Self complains that it is unhappy with his life, focused on satisfying the desires of his body. This reveals that his Self is not the same as his body because the two forces disagree. Siddhartha remains in Samsara because he enjoys lovemaking as well as his life as a merchant. His arrogance increases, and his Self is ignored again.

Self 8: Gambling, drinking, greed, and lust consume Siddhartha and overpower his Self, which had told him to leave Samsara. The voice is quiet and his selfishness increases, becoming as arrogant as Kamaswami himself.

Self 9: Siddhartha is suddenly struck by his own mortality and panics, thinking all to be lost. Kamala's dead songbird in his dream makes him believe that it is his Self that has been killed due to his own ignorance and pride. The shame consumes him, driving him into a deep depression.

Self 10: Siddhartha realizes the folly of committing suicide, for it would accomplish nothing. As a Samana he had denied his Self by abusing his body, and killing himself



now would be equally ignorant. His Self still exists within, deeper than his body. It is only that he is ashamed of the sinful life he had led in Samsara, consumed by materialism and lust.

Self 11: After so many years, Siddhartha hears his Self speak to him again, and he is happy again. Fleeing Samasara, his Self is fascinated by the tranquility of the river, staring at his reflection in the water.

Self 12: The voice of Siddhartha's Self is filled with love for his runaway son, consuming the reason of his mind. For many years he could not understand how people could love, but now he feels it strongly for the first time. This is not the bodily lust he had experienced with Kamala, but instead it is pure love for the son he has created. However, love makes him selfish and controlling, and he refuses to allow Young Siddhartha to return to Samsara.

Self 13: Siddhartha's selfishness is finally destroyed when he realizes how petty his worries are, for they are feelings and hardships experienced by every other person in the world. Why is he so special, as to be pitied any more than them? After this understanding, he finally feels Om and understands it. His inner Self, Atman, becomes one with the life cycle and with all that exists in the world. It is all one flowing, recurring cycle, like the river.

Self 14: Govinda's Self had been surrendered many years earlier when he became Buddha's devout follower. Siddhartha has continued his own path, searching for knowledge through personal experience, suffering and progression. Because of his individual journey, Siddhartha reaches the same enlightenment that Buddha had achieved. Govinda, who had followed Buddha's teachings so attentively, is unchanged and undeveloped because he has followed another's teachings rather than discovering knowledge for himself. Siddhartha has become wise, while Govinda remains ignorant.

## Topic Tracking: Teacher

Teacher 1: Siddhartha becomes restless after hearing the Brahmins' Hindu teachings. They are limited and leave many questions unanswered. After he has been taught everything that these old men know, Siddhartha realizes that there is nothing left that they can teach him.

Teacher 2: The Brahmin is reluctant to allow his son to leave their family village and venture out into the world as a Samana. Siddhartha is determined, however, and waits patiently until his father consents to his request. The Brahmin does not understand why his son is dissatisfied with the Hindu teachings and vainly tries to control him.

Teacher 3: Siddhartha realizes that the Samanas' teachings do not answer his questions. Gradually, he believes that learning from teachings shall never answer his questions since teachings are knowledge from others. Siddhartha wants to discover his own knowledge; Govinda disagrees and thinks that the Samana teachings help one to get closer to the answers.

Teacher 4: Govinda decides to become Buddha's disciple, and Siddhartha reminds him that his individual identity, all that he is, has been surrendered and now he must obediently follow Buddha's teachings. Siddhartha has rejected learning others' teachings to understand life, continuing on his journey alone.

Teacher 5: Although Siddhartha does not wish to become Buddha's follower, he admires the Buddha because he has achieved enlightenment. Siddhartha recognizes his own potential to become just as enlightened by pursuing his own self-discovery rather than studying others' teachings.

Teacher 6: Siddhartha does not regret that he has been a Samana or raised by a Brahmin, for it is by learning these teachings that he is able to reject them and continue searching. They are a part of who he is, although now he embraces the world for what it is rather than what his teachers have portrayed it to be, an illusion.

Teacher 7: After rejecting others' teachings, Siddhartha decides to enjoy the desires of his body by lovemaking. Kamala is chosen to be his teacher, and Siddhartha remains afraid of women due to his lack of experience. Experience is what he seeks to learn now rather than studying Hindu scriptures or meditation.

Teacher 8: Kamaswami turns Siddhartha into a merchant while Kamala instructs him in lovemaking. Yet Siddhartha still does not feel as if he is one of the people, even though he behaves as if he fits in with them. Life in Samsara is all a silly game to him, and he studies these people instead of becoming one of them.

Teacher 9: The two lovers Kamala and Siddhartha have both taught each other. Not only has Siddhartha learned about Kamala's art of lovemaking, but Kamala has also learned from Siddhartha how to be spiritual since he had once been a Samana.

Together they progress; Kamala becomes increasingly spiritual while Siddhartha becomes a better lover.

Teacher 10: Govinda has remained unchanging, still devoutly following the Buddha's teachings, but Siddhartha, who rejected these teachings and has experienced the world for himself, has changed a great deal. Govinda does not understand Siddhartha any longer since he has not developed like Siddhartha has.

Teacher 11: The river teaches Siddhartha many things about the cycle of life. He learns to listen to the world rather than selfishly worrying about himself. Siddhartha realizes that his life is a part of the greater cycle of nature, of Om and the unity of things. Vasudeva has shown him how to hear the voice of the river, and together the two men grow old.

Teacher 12: Siddhartha tries to shelter his son from the suffering of the world, although he has already experienced much hardship himself. Because of his love for Young Siddhartha, the father refuses to let him leave the river to return to materialistic Samsara. He wants his son to become wise like him without having any experience in the world.

Teacher 13: Young Siddhartha has fled into Samsara, never to return. Siddhartha finally accepts that his son is gone after recalling how much he looks like his father, the Brahmin. He had left his own father and never saw him again, so why does he fret now when his son runs away from him, rejecting the life the elder Siddhartha has chosen? Siddhartha laughs at the world's cycle of transitory appearances because he understands it now.

Teacher 14: Siddhartha has achieved his goal of becoming just as enlightened as the Buddha had been by discovering knowledge through his own personal experience, after rejecting Buddha's teachings. Govinda has remained a devout follower of Buddha for many years and remains unchanged, undeveloped, forever seeking to understand the meaning of life. Siddhartha becomes wise, while Govinda stagnates.

# Chapter 1: "The Brahmin's Son"

In a riverside village of India, Siddhartha was raised by his father, the Brahmin. Siddhartha's best friend, Govinda, follows him from day to day, and the two sometimes go off on their own together and meditate beneath the trees, reciting the word Om. As Siddhartha grows older he is admired for his inquisitive mind, openly debating with the village elders about the world and the meaning of life. His father envisages him becoming a Brahmin like himself, teaching the people the ways of the universe, while his mother is proud that she has brought such a handsome man into the world. The village daughters' hearts, too, are excited when he passes by in the street because of his handsome figure. Govinda admires Siddhartha for the beauty of his body, mind, and spirit. Thinking Siddhartha to be destined for greatness, Govinda hopes to follow him closely, thus rising into greatness behind him, like a shadow. Rather than being independent and pursuing his own destiny, Govinda simply wishes to share that of another.

Topic Tracking: Nature 1

Despite everyone's great hopes, Siddhartha becomes restless with the ways of the people in the village and his father's teachings. His mind is filled with further questions about what he has been taught, for he "had begun to feel that the love of his father and mother, and also the love of his friend Govinda, would not always make him happy, give him peace, satisfy and suffice him. He had begun to suspect that his worthy father and his other teachers, the wise Brahmins, had already passed on to him the bulk and best of their wisdom . . . [but] his soul was not at peace" Chapter 1, pg. 3. Siddhartha strives to better understand the innermost essence of Self, which is called Atman, and its relation to the rest of the world. However, the knowledge he has been given already does not explain this. He ponders the origins of the world and his place in it, the nature of what the gods spoke of in the Rig-Veda and Upanishads, and where exactly is the thing he calls Atman, if it is not within his physical body.

Topic Tracking: Self 1

Topic Tracking: Teacher 1

Siddhartha finds hypocrisy in much of what he has learned, especially since the words and verses the Brahmins base their beliefs upon were written such a long time ago. There is nothing they practice in the present that reveals an encounter with or recognition of Atman in themselves. They only pass on knowledge that others in the past have learned for themselves. These burning thoughts haunt him continually, until Siddhartha realizes that his father, too, like the rest of the Brahmins, remains merely a seeker of knowledge; whereas their preaching helps them to better understand the quest for knowledge, they all remain restless and in search of answers. None of them has found Atman. Siddhartha continues to wonder, "Was Atman then not within him? Was not then the source within his own heart? One must find the source within one's own Self, one must possess it. Everything else was seeking - a detour, error" Chapter 1, pg. 5. The young man sees seeking for answers as a waste of time, since the answer is

something that he already has inside of him. The task becomes how exactly he can learn to recognize this and possess it.

Govinda accompanies Siddhartha for a session of meditation in a grove of trees, yet when Govinda stops after the normal meditation time has ended, his friend remains lost deeply in a trance, trying to understand and recognize Atman within himself. Siddhartha thinks only of Om to focus his thoughts, to connect to Brahman, the creator god. He remains restless until one day three Samanas walk through the village, begging for food and dressed in rags. Their humility and new outlook upon life appeals to Siddhartha, who decides to leave and join them the next day. Govinda hears this news and is fearful that the Brahmin will be angry about Siddhartha's decision to leave. But he also knows that wherever Siddhartha goes, he shall follow as his shadow, rising with Siddhartha into greatness. The Brahmin's son remains calm and does not worry about his father, vowing simply that he will leave the next day to become a Samana.

Siddhartha tells his father about this decision, yet he becomes very angry at his son and tries to ignore his request to leave. Siddhartha simply stands waiting, silently, until his father grants permission. All night long Siddhartha continues to wait in the same spot, unmoving, causing his father to awaken continually throughout the night, unsettled. Shortly before dawn, the Brahmin grants his permission. He reluctantly agrees that Siddhartha can join the Samanas and leave the village, requesting only that he return one day to share what he has learned. Siddhartha says farewell, and, as the sun begins to rise and he begins his journey to become a Samana, Govinda, too, arises from the last hut in the town and follows behind his friend, as his shadow. The two friends walk together into the forest.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 2

Topic Tracking: Nature 2

## Chapter 2: "With the Samanas"

The two young men catch up to the Samanas by nightfall and are accepted into their group. Siddhartha gives up everything he had before as the Brahmin's son, including his clothes, his home and his daily habits. He begs for food and wears only a loincloth and a cloak, shunning the townspeople and becoming a wretched figure with unkempt hair and long fingernails. Everything that surrounds him seems to be merely an illusion, including the people and the places he visits. The secret he has sought is within, and he needs to learn merely to recognize it. Everything in the world outside of the Self is false. The only truth for Siddhartha is Atman. By shutting himself off from society, he wishes to destroy all attachment to anything, hoping that "When all the Self was conquered and dead, when all passions and desires were silent, then the last must awaken, the innermost of Being that is no longer Self - the great secret!" Chapter 2, pg. 11.

In this way he begins to separate his mind and spirit from bodily sensation by not eating for long periods of time, resisting the sun's heat or the cold rain and controlling his heartbeat and breathing. He soon learns how to control the sensations in his body by using his mind. With Govinda still following behind him as his quiet shadow, Siddhartha hopes that by destroying his connection to everything in the outside world he may recognize more of what is inside of himself. As time passes, he learns from the elder Samanas how to extend his mind into nature and into death and back into life again by connecting to the natural world while meditating. Denying his Self and forgetting his own memory, Siddhartha learns to understand and embrace the life cycle in the natural world that surrounds him. In many ways, the Samanas live in self-exile, cut off from the rest of society in favor of the forest and nature.

Topic Tracking: Nature 3

After living this way for awhile, Siddhartha begins to grow restless again, just as he had after hearing the teachings of the Brahmins in the village where he had grown up. He realizes that, despite the many times he meditates and forgets his Self, he is always forced to return to it, unchanged and as it had been before, when his meditation ends. He cannot escape from his individual identity as Siddhartha or forget his memories forever, for they always return to him. The Samana explains this to his faithful companion, Govinda. He disdainfully equates forgetting himself while meditating to the same escapism that is practiced by drunkards, gamblers, and those who are lustful with prostitutes. They, too, must always return to reality after the dice game is lost or the alcoholic haze fades. Govinda replies that the drunkard does not progress when he escapes from himself, yet he and Siddhartha do learn and get closer to the answers that they seek. He thinks the Samanas' way of life makes them move forward rather than stagnate.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 3

Topic Tracking: Self 2





Siddhartha does not see himself as getting any closer to answers than "a child in the womb," and begins a barrage of questions similar to those he had asked himself about the Vedas before leaving the Brahmins about the hypocrisy that he finds amongst the Samanas. He states plainly that the Samanas shall always be seeking and merely escaping reality without understanding it, until they die. Govinda becomes upset, declaring that life would mean nothing if there was nothing to seek, for Siddhartha believes that seeking knowledge is a "detour" away from recognizing the essence of what life really means and understanding Atman. Govinda recites a lyric line from the Upanishads for encouragement; although "Siddhartha was silent. He dwelt long on the words which Govinda had uttered. Yes, he thought, standing with a bowed head, what remains from all that is holy to us? What remains? What is preserved? And he shook his head" Chapter 2, pg. 16. He has more questions, but there are no teachers to give him answers. The restlessness grows in his breast.

Finally these two Samanas hear mixed rumors about the teachings of an enlightened man called Buddha, also called names such as Gotama, Sakyamuni, or the Illustrious One. India is in a bad condition due to poverty and sickness, yet the beliefs of this man renew the people's faith and hope, although others think he is filled with hypocrisy and corruption. Govinda urges Siddhartha to go with him to hear the teachings of Buddha, despite the fact that the other Samanas in their group do not trust the Buddha's teachings. Siddhartha is surprised that his friend, usually so passive and obedient, has actually made a decision for himself. For the sake of getting away from the now-suffocating environment he finds amongst the Samanas, Siddhartha agrees to join Govinda on a journey to see the Buddha, warning that he has become distrustful of learning from teachers.

Before they depart Siddhartha tells the eldest Samana that he and Govinda are leaving to hear the teachings of Buddha, just as he had once told his father that he was leaving to become a Samana. The old man becomes angry that they wish to leave, yet now instead of waiting for a blessing to be given, as he did for the Brahmin, Siddhartha uses his learned mental abilities to hypnotize the Samana and force him to bless their journey. Govinda is stunned to see this, declaring that Siddhartha could have become a great Samana, just as he could have become a great Brahmin had he remained with his father. In spite of this great skill, Siddhartha does not see its value, for it does not calm his restlessness to understand Atman, or stop the thirst for knowledge that urges him to move onwards. The questions must be answered somehow but not by learning others' teachings. The knowledge is already inside of his Self. The two friends leave the forest and continue towards the town of Savathi to see the Gotama, Buddha.



## Chapter 3: "Gotama"

When Siddhartha and Govinda arrive in Savathi, they learn from a woman who gives these two Samanas food that the Buddha is in the Jetavana grove that was given to him by Anathapindika. That night they arrive and sleep, awakened at dawn by the bustling activity around them from the Buddha's followers who wear yellow monk robes. There are also newcomers like themselves who have arrived to hear his teachings. Everything around them in the grove is lush garden and trees. Finally the Buddha emerges and joins his followers as they go out to beg in the town's streets in order to buy their one meal for the day. Buddha's appearance is different from those around him, however, for he radiates a certain inner glow that Siddhartha admires greatly. Although he is doubtful of what this man's words can teach him, the Gotama himself remains an impressive person to look at.

Topic Tracking: Nature 4

Finally Govinda and his companion hear the Buddha's words about finding salvation from suffering in life, his four main points, and the interconnectedness of the life cycle. Many people who listen are excited, and when night arrives, they join Buddha's followers. Without waiting to hear Siddhartha's advice, Govinda decides to become a disciple and remain with him in the Jetavana grove. He urges Siddhartha to join so that he might "put an end to the suffering," repeating Buddha's words. Yet Siddhartha is doubtful of new teachings and considers Govinda's choice to be premature. Learning is a "detour" away from knowledge he already possesses within him. Nothing in the outside world knows him better than he already knows himself. He does not seek to end suffering, but instead desires to recognize Atman, the essence of what everything is. He searches for the meaning of life.

But Siddhartha is pleased that Govinda has chosen for himself rather than remaining his shadow and sends a blessing to his friend. He reminds him that "You have renounced home and parents, you have renounced your own will, you have renounced friendship. That is what the teachings preach, that is the will of the Illustrious One. That is what you wished for yourself. Tomorrow, Govinda, I will leave you" Chapter 3, pg. 25. Rather than being independent, Govinda has merely surrendered his individual thoughts and identity and is now just another follower of Buddha. Govinda's opinions shall not mean anything, for he must accept what he is taught by the Buddha and practice it. Siddhartha chooses to continue on his journey because he is independent and wants to choose his own path rather than being told what to do by somebody else. Govinda is now Buddha's shadow instead of following behind Siddhartha. Nothing has really changed for him at all.

Topic Tracking: Self 3

Topic Tracking: Teacher 4

Before leaving the Jetavana grove, Siddhartha speaks with the Buddha about why he has decided not to stay. The teachings make sense to him; however, there is one thing that the Buddha cannot explain, and it is this essence, this Atman, that Siddhartha

seeks to understand. The teachings portray the world as a recurring chain of events, without any of the gods taught by the Brahmins, which can be understood logically by cause and effect. But they do not address what he wants to know. The Buddha replies simply that "The teaching which you have heard...is not my opinion, and its goal is not to explain the world to those who are thirsty for knowledge. Its goal is quite different; its goal is salvation from the suffering. That is what Gotama teaches, nothing else" Chapter 3, pg. 27. Govinda remains behind, for he has chosen simply to end suffering. But Siddhartha's journey continues since he wants to understand the meaning of life and the world. Like the Samanas, Buddha's followers escape from reality without really connecting to it as they lose themselves in meditation. They study Buddha's knowledge instead of discovering their own.

#### Topic Tracking: Teacher 5

Siddhartha realizes that the Buddha has learned to recognize Atman, although this realization is not something that can be conveyed in words. It must be learned only for oneself. Siddhartha asks the Buddha who taught him what he has learned and how he came to be so enlightened; of course, the Buddha had no teacher but himself, and his knowledge came through meditating and experiencing the world. The moment of his enlightenment cannot be explained in words but can only be experienced firsthand. This is the knowledge that Siddhartha wishes to have. The Buddha sends his blessing and hopes that Siddhartha has chosen wisely by refusing to escape from suffering and by choosing his own path. He warns Siddhartha about "the life of the world and desires" although the Samana is firm in his decision to leave, wishing to achieve such a state of perfection as the Buddha has reached.

As Siddhartha sleeps that night before leaving, he recalls the Illustrious One's face and how at peace it was, thinking "I, also, would like to look and smile, sit and walk like that, so free, so worthy, so restrained, so candid, so childlike and mysterious. A man only looks and walks like that when he has conquered his Self. I also will conquer my Self...No other teachings will attract me, since this man's teachings have not done so" Chapter 3, pg. 29. Rather than worshipping the Buddha like Govinda, Siddhartha only sees the Buddha as an example of what he may potentially become later in life. Siddhartha remains restless and separated from those around him, yet he rejoices that he can now do whatever he wants without anyone else to judge him. Siddhartha has become free from any influences, including his father the Brahmin, the Samanas, the Buddha, and now even his friend Govinda. He now has only "Siddhartha, myself," vowing to never follow any teachings again.

#### Topic Tracking: Self 4

## Chapter 4: "Awakening"

As Siddhartha leaves the Jetavana grove where Govinda has remained behind to become a disciple of the Buddha, he wonders what to do next. He did learn something new, however, during his brief stay there. The world is not the supernatural place of gods as had been taught by the Brahmins, the Vedas, and the Upanishads. Instead, it is a rational place of cause and effect. By using his mind now, Siddhartha begins to understand his feelings and rationalize them so that, after seeming merely to escape from the world into his feelings during meditation, now his feelings become thoughts and memories. They "become real and begin to mature." Rather than relying upon unseen spirits or the knowledge of others for understanding, he decides to rely increasingly upon himself. From the Buddha, Siddhartha has learned that he must become his own teacher.

Questions continue to plague Siddhartha as he walks, but he begins to reason and supply his own answers rather than hearing them from someone else. He realizes that he was looking for something tangible and definite in his quest to find Atman and Brahman within himself and to understand the meaning of life. He had foolishly thought that if he could destroy his Self and his individual identity as Siddhartha, erasing all memories of his own life, then Atman would be left and he could recognize it. But it is not that easy to do. Siddhartha gains confidence and decides to embrace his identity, not to deny it. This is his awakening, for Govinda is no longer at his side; he is truly left to his own thoughts, free of all influences. When he was a Samana he was exiled from society together with others; now he is in exile from everyone.

His eyes begin to open to the outside world as he begins to awaken inside. He sees colors around him in nature, in the flowers and the river, not as illusions, but instead as things of utmost beauty. The key to finding unity in everything is to embrace it all at once instead of denying it. Siddhartha realizes how blind he was before while searching: "I, who wished to read the book of the world and the book of my own nature, did presume to despise the letters and signs. I called the world of appearances, illusion. I called my eyes and tongue, chance. Now it is over; I have awakened. I have indeed awakened and have only been born today" Chapter 4, pg. 33. He casts aside all he had been taught by the Brahmin and understands everything again, with a new outlook. Yet it was necessary to have been taught as he was, in order to learn to reject it and gain this revelation. In that sense, it is good to have been lead astray, in order that he could find this new path.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 6

Topic Tracking: Nature 5

After rejecting everything he was before, Siddhartha feels very lonely and isolated. He remains thirsty for knowledge, but he is afraid of what there is now since everything he had known has been abandoned. He has nothing, and with nothing to direct him, he feels lost. There is no Govinda or any teaching to show him the way. There is only himself. The isolation bites into him deeply since he now belongs to no group. He is no

longer a Samana or a Brahmin's son, nor does he have any family to take care of him. Everyone else around him - even Govinda, who had been so faithful and has become a follower of the Buddha - has a community to belong to or group identity. Siddhartha only has himself, with no community of people to embrace him. He wonders, "Whose life would he share? Whose language would he speak?" since the loneliness consumes him so deeply.

In the midst of such despair, something suddenly drives him forward with renewed determination, as he "stood alone like a star in the heavens...That was the last shudder of his awakening, the last pains of birth. Immediately he moved on again and began to walk quickly and impatiently, no longer homewards, no longer to his father, no longer looking backwards" Chapter 4, pg. 34. Siddhartha rejoices in this sudden freedom, realizing that he will never see his father again and that he is alone in the world. But he finds strength in his Self instead of ignoring it and continues eagerly ahead. His destination is uncertain, yet it only lies in front of him, since he has rejected all he has learned in his past. Siddhartha becomes a newborn child, ready to re-experience the world for what it is.

Topic Tracking: Self 5

## Chapter 5: "Kamala"

Siddhartha walks alone and becomes fascinated by all that is around him, seeing it for what it is and nothing more. He had always sought for a deeper meaning in everything, for Atman. Now he does not seek anything but instead experiences it all for what it is. The sun shines around him, and the river flows. He feels the wind blowing through rice fields, and suddenly all is calm within; Siddhartha becomes "so simple, so childlike." Everything is beautiful. Reflecting, the man marvels at what wise words he had uttered to the Buddha before leaving, since they were words which he did not really understand. Yet he had spoken them. He realizes that trying to deny his Self had been wrong. Siddhartha had never even known what his Self was, or what Siddhartha was really all about. Instead, he had only adopted the teachings of others without hearing the thoughts of his Self.

He had inflicted suffering upon his body, yet he knows now that his "body was certainly not the Self, not the play of senses, nor thought, nor understanding, nor acquired wisdom or art with which to draw conclusions and from already existing thoughts to spin new thoughts...Both thought and the senses were fine things...it was worthwhile listening to them both...to listen intently to both voices" Chapter 5, pg. 39. Siddhartha had never denied his Self at all, for he never even really knew his Self before or listened to its desires or needs. The Self had been merely suppressed and kept undeveloped. This awakened identity and sense of Self guide him now as the path continues. Like the Buddha, he hopes to be enlightened by listening to the voice within him instead of ignoring it.

By nightfall he arrives at a river and sleeps in a ferryman's hut before crossing the water that following morning. Siddhartha has a strange dream about his friend Govinda appearing and asking why he would not become a disciple of Buddha with him; then he transforms into a full breasted woman whom Siddhartha is filled with desire for, and he kisses her brown nipple. Sweet milk fills his lips and tastes of many things in nature and in the world. It fills him with pleasure and consumes his senses, for he only now begins to embrace his body's desires. Awakening the next day, the ferryman takes Siddhartha across the river even though he cannot pay him for the service. The ferryman speaks mysteriously, murmuring only that Siddhartha shall return later to repay him, and that he has learned a lot just by listening to the sound of the river. As Siddhartha reaches the other side of the river and prepares to leave, the ferryman sends his blessing of good luck although Siddhartha is arrogant within and judges this man to be simple and subservient, as Govinda had been. Considering himself to be a stronger person, he tells himself that "People are children." Having crossed the river, Siddhartha's journey to explore the desires of his Self continues.

Topic Tracking: Self 6

Topic Tracking: Nature 6

Arriving at a village, Siddhartha sees a young woman washing clothes in a small stream, and he is filled with desire for her. His blood grows hot, as it had been for the



woman in his dream. As the woman grows closer to him, he flees into the forest because he is afraid. He knows nothing of love or sex, since he had always been chaste and denied his body to pursue its desires. Siddhartha's curiosity is raised about this, and although he is afraid of this new world, he wants to become one of the people in it. That is what the voice of his Self tells him to do. Later, he reaches the large town of Samsara where he sees another beautiful woman sitting in a grove of trees surrounded by courtiers. Siddhartha feels such desire and sexual attraction for this woman that he is sad when she departs after giving him merely a nod of her head and a smile.

People in town tell him that her name is Kamala and that she is a wealthy courtesan. Driven, he begins to socialize with more people and has his hair combed, cut and oiled. His beard is shaved off, and his handsome face is revealed again, as it was when he was amongst the Brahmins. The next day when Kamala returns to the grove of trees, Siddhartha is waiting for her expectantly and asks to speak with her. She is surprised to see him so much cleaner than he had been the day before and, at first condescending, she becomes flirtatious. He asks her simply to teach him about sex and love. No longer wishing to hear teachers such as the Brahmin, Samanas, or the Buddha, who speak of abstract things using the mind, he now wishes to learn using experience and by satisfying his body's desires.

Kamala says that he must first have shoes, clothes, and money before she can be his mistress, since these are items that any suitor pursuing a woman must have. He must bring presents to win her affection, too. Siddhartha is excited at how easy the task ahead seems to be and is flirtatious to her in return, mimicking her tone, very different from the pious man he had been before. He recites a love poem for Kamala composed by his own hand, rather than being a verse from the Vedas or Upanishads, the only poetry he had known before. Kamala has inspired him to speak these beautiful words, and she thanks him by kissing him with lips that are "like a freshly cut fig." Thoughts flood through Siddhartha's mind, and he feels so many new sensations unknown before. He is like a child experiencing everything for the first time. He says that his only skills are "thinking, waiting, and fasting," all taught by the Samanas. Kamala is also pleased to learn that he can read and write, since this is a great skill to have, and asks him to return the next day.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 7

Topic Tracking: Nature 7

Although Siddhartha is hungry, he realizes that he shall no longer beg for food since he is no longer a Samana or a follower of Buddha. He gives the rice cake someone has given him to a dog, and he sleeps without eating anything. An increasing pride and self-worth begins to excite him, and he talks more to the people and makes friends easily. Returning to Kamala the next day, Siddhartha learns that she has found him a job using his reading and writing skills. He will work for a rich merchant named Kamaswami, and Kamala advises Siddhartha how to act towards him. Siddhartha is overjoyed while Kamala marvels at how soon he is rising up in the world from a beggar to becoming her lover; he now just has to obtain money from his new job. The two flirt with one another some more, and she asks him where he would be without her help. Siddhartha replies

arrogantly that he had never doubted that she would have helped him, for he simply knew that she would.

Words come readily from his mouth, which had been so silent and thoughtful before. He says only that he "is drawn by his goal, for he does not allow anything to enter his mind which opposes his goal. That is what Siddhartha learned from the Samanas. It is what fools call magic and what they think is caused by demons...there are no demons...everyone can reach his goal if he can think, wait, and fast" Chapter 5, pg. 50. He is self-motivated, seeking to satisfy the inner desires of his Self and of his body rather than ignoring them. Siddhartha now wishes to further his own interest since he disdains the subservience and hospitality of such people as Govinda and the ferryman. He becomes selfish for the first time. Before leaving Kamala again, he blesses her for being his teacher and hopes that "good fortune may always come to me from you." He is not grateful that Kamala has helped him so much already, but instead hopes only that she shall continue to benefit him. The two separate for the day as Siddhartha prepares to visit Kamaswami.



## Chapter 6: "Amongst the People"

The wealthy merchant Kamaswami is an older man with graying hair and a large house. He tests Siddhartha's cleverness by asking many questions and listening to his answers, wondering about his need for possessions. Siddhartha is very clever, recalling his Samana skills of "thinking, waiting, and fasting." He twists the man's words back on him, declaring that just as a Samana lives on the possessions of others, so too does the merchant. He states that life is about giving and taking in return, an exchange of goods and services. Despite Kamaswami's attempts to intimidate Siddhartha, his arrogance remains unyielding and firm. Because of his cleverness and wit, as well as a good writing sample, Siddhartha is hired to assist the merchant in his business and makes many new friends. He is given clothes, food and a home, as well as a portion of the profits Kamaswami earns through business dealings. With this goal attained, he is fit to become Kamala's student in the art of lovemaking and visits her regularly.

Kamawami loves his work and the process of buying and selling goods, yet Siddhartha's interest in this life is merely to be with Kamala and learn. The merchant life is a game to him, and he lacks any genuine interest. It serves its higher purpose to provide him with the money he needs. Kamala teaches him well. Siddhartha learns "that one cannot have pleasure without giving it...She taught him that lovers should not separate from each other after making love without admiring each other, without being conquered as well as conquering, so that no feeling of satiation or desolation arises nor the horrid feeling of misusing or having been misused" Chapter 6, pg. 54. With this woman, Siddhartha even allows himself to be conquered since he remains only a child of learning when it comes to love. It is a time of revelation for him. He abandons the spiritual path he had trodden before; he exchanges the search for Atman and the invocations of Om in meditation for the experience of physical pleasures.

Time passes and Siddhartha grows older. He and Kamswami have recurring differences about the merchant business, and on one occasion the patron becomes angry that Siddhartha had remained in a village for several days, socializing and making new friends, even though he had not found any business there. Kamaswami sees it as a waste since it was a visit serving Siddhartha's personal pleasure and did not make a monetary profit. Siddhartha is calm, reminding him that in the future if he should venture there to do business, the people shall receive him well and future business may develop since he left a good impression. The old man is silent, for Siddhartha says simply that he shall leave if Kamaswami is displeased with his service. Mercantilism is merely a game for him, anyway, and he lacks passion to earn profit, unlike Kamaswami. Although the two disagree often, the rich old merchant admires Siddhartha's ability to befriend so many different people, a skill that he himself lacks. Siddhartha declares that he, unlike Kamaswami, knows how to think and use his mind. More time passes in this way.

As he had been before with the Brahmin, the Samanas, and the Buddha, so too does he become increasingly bored with the life to which he has grown accustomed. No matter how much wealth he gains, how many people he meets, or how many times he makes love to Kamala, he still feels separate from their world. He still does not feel as if





he belongs with them, as the inner voice of his Self begins to complain. Yet he does not change how he acts towards everyone and keeps his restlessness hidden. Siddhartha is fascinated by these people: "Siddhartha's sympathy and curiosity lay only with the people, whose work, troubles, pleasures, and follies were more unknown and remote from him than the moon. Although he found it so easy to speak to everyone, to live with everyone, to learn from everyone...there was something which separated him from them...[because] he had been a Samana" Chapter 6, pg. 57. His past continues to influence him, despite all attempts to forget it and move forward. Siddhartha does not belong with the Samanas, nor does he belong with these people. He remains secretly lost and wandering, no matter how hard he tries to belong to a community of people. He is still alone.

Topic Tracking: Self 7

Topic Tracking: Teacher 8

Kamala remains the closest thing to an equal that he finds amongst these people, closer than even Govinda had been. She recognizes how much Siddhartha's past as a Samana and his skills of "thinking, waiting, and fasting" have influenced his outlook on the world. The young merchant still recalls the Buddha to her with admiration. Kamala knows little about the Buddha and listens to Siddhartha intently. He now calls the Buddha's followers "falling leaves," tossed about by the wind without any free will of their own. They all consent to the will of the Buddha, rather than becoming enlightened themselves. Siddhartha is away from nature and away from meditation, a member of the town now, but he remains a seeker. Although he had sworn to abandon his past and disdains it, it continues to influence his thoughts. He does not realize the extent of this until he has moved on to new things. It is only after he is no longer a Samana that the Samana teachings become important in his memory.

Kamala admires Siddhartha and sees him to be her equal in many ways. She predicts that she will become pregnant one day and have his child, even as Siddhartha grows increasingly tired of this existence. Siddhartha claims that he cannot love her and she cannot love him, for love is merely a game to them. He declares that "people like us cannot love. Ordinary people can - that is their secret." Siddhartha wants to love, but he does not know how to do it even though the simplest people in town around him do it. This frustrates Siddhartha, and his feelings of isolation increase. He does not understand love, nor can he imagine how Kamala could love him, since she has only taught him how to play games. Everything in the town just seems like a game to him. Rather than leaving because of his restlessness, Siddhartha stays in the town and more years pass by.

## Chapter 7: "Samsara"

As time goes on, Siddhartha's Samana heart remains intact, in spite of the new sensations he has awakened in his body. He becomes very similar to Kamaswami, for he obtains enough wealth to buy his own house and a garden near the river, just like Kamala. He begins to share her love of money and luxury, too. Kamala remains his only real friend, in spite of his popularity amongst the townspeople. Eventually his Samana heart begins to fade away into memory, and Siddhartha forgets the old humble values of "thinking, waiting, and fasting." He eats excessively and begins to enjoy fine clothes and drinking wine. "Slowly, like moisture entering the dying tree trunk...so did the world and inertia creep into Siddhartha's soul; it slowly filled his soul, made it heavy, made it tired, sent it to sleep. But on the other hand his sense became more awakened, they learned a great deal, experienced a great deal" Chapter 7, pg. 61.

His mind is a rotting tree trunk, while his body's senses rage insatiably. The inner voice of Self Siddhartha had searched to obey for so long becomes confused with the satisfaction of bodily desires. This voice had made him observe the world around him for what it was, although he felt separated from it before crossing the river and coming to this town, Samsara. Now that he has become a part of the material world, he has forgotten how everything was when viewed through the eyes of the outsider he had been before. He cannot appreciate his environment because he is a member of it; he now owns a garden and holds a job rather than being a visitor. Now others can observe and marvel at him. The quest for Atman is forgotten for now.

Topic Tracking: Nature 8

Like Kamala, Siddhartha is carried around in a chair by servants, and he gambles often. His arrogance is blind, like that of Kamaswami. Yet he still judges the people around him as weak and is oblivious to the fact that he is now one of them. He had long ago compared the meditative escapism of the Samanas to that experienced by drunkards, by lovers, and by gamblers. Now he has become all of these things and remains ignorant, for still "He envied them [for]...the sense of importance with which they lived their lives, the depth of their pleasure and sorrows, the anxious but sweet happiness of their continual power to love. These people were always in love with themselves, with their children" Chapter 7, pg. 62. Siddhartha loses focus and becomes consumed by materialism and all of the vices he had been taught to avoid in his youth. It is this same "world and desires" that he had been warned about by the Buddha, but he remains ignorant.

Topic Tracking: Self 8

The situation worsens. Ironically, as Siddhartha falls deeper into forgetfulness, it is Kamala who begins to awaken and one day asks about the Buddha while the two sit beneath a tree in her garden. She murmurs that she would like to become one of Gotama's followers, just like Govinda. Kamala had once mocked Siddhartha for his Samana beliefs, but now she has changed in the opposite direction of Siddhartha,



becoming more spiritual as he becomes more materialistic. That night the two make love yet again, although this time Siddhartha notices wrinkles beginning to appear across her face and is surprised at how old she looks. He is struck suddenly out of the spell he has fallen into, realizing how much time has been spent here in Samsara, and remarks "how closely related passion was to death." The passion the two have shared together seems to have drained away the beauty of youth so quickly. Passion has made time pass so quickly that the two lovers have changed each other. Kamala becomes more like the spiritual Samana lost within Siddhartha, and Siddhartha becomes more like the old materialistic Kamala.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 9

Siddhartha then returns to his home, depressed, noticing his own wrinkles and flabby skin due to many years of poor eating and material excess. Restless, Siddhartha dreams that he is looking at the cage in which Kamala's rare songbird lives. Now, however, it is stiff and dead on the floor of the cage and he throws it out onto the road. He is filled with a sense of loss within himself, as if his own goodness and purity has died with the bird. After opening his eyes, Siddhartha is sad and begins to ask himself questions as he used to do so many years before, recalling the times when he had been happy and joyful in life. He feels so old and decrepit, as if he were already dead. Memories of his past before Samsara flood his mind. He remembers the excitement when debating with his father and the Brahmins, when he became a Samana, and when he spoke with the Buddha.

Topic Tracking: Self 9

Another awakening begins as his eyes open at last, filled with wisdom. He understands what he has become, how much like Kamaswami he is, and decides to retrace his footsteps back to where he had strayed from the path. Even Kamala is no longer necessary since he has learned all that he can from her about love. Laughing silently at the absurdity of what he has become and how misguided he was, Siddhartha pauses at his garden near the river, thinking about all of his possessions. The old restlessness fills him again, "He had finished with that. That also died in him. He rose, said farewell to the mango tree and the pleasure garden. As he had not had any food that day he felt extremely hungry, and thought of his house in town, of his room and bed, of the table with food. He smiled wearily, shook his head and said good-bye to these things" Chapter 7, pg. 68. After spending so many years to earn wealth, Siddhartha walks away from it all and returns to the river from which he had come.

After his disappearance, many in town including Kamaswami think that he was attacked by robbers. But Kamala knows that he has chosen to leave and why he has done so. Siddhartha remains a Samana within, no matter how much he may try to forget; it is a part of his personal experience, and he cannot escape it. Kamala rejoices in his conquering of her the last time they were together, just as she had so completely conquered him when they had first met so many years before. She releases her rare songbird to fly away forever into the sky because Siddhartha has left her. However, Kamala soon realizes that she has become pregnant with the child of Siddhartha, as

she had once told him would happen. Siddhartha has left in order to recognize Atman and understand the meaning of life, but she shall still bear his son into the world.

## Chapter 8: "By the River"

Arriving again at the river he had crossed, Siddhartha stares into the water, ashamed of what he has become. He feels lost, since there is nowhere left to go. He had lived amongst the people, became a lover and a merchant, yet this path was a dead end. What shall he do now? Clutching a tree at the water's edge he decides that the only solution is to drown himself, thus putting an end to his misery. The songbird of his dream returns to memory, and he thinks the bird is his inner essence that has died. He had been pure before in his youth, but had come to live a life contradicting that, a life filled with sin and excess. All values seem to be lost, and Siddhartha realizes how arrogant he has been. All along he had ridiculed everyone else, but he has become one of them himself. Considering himself to be a failure, the old man prepares to fall down beneath the water, pausing to see his reflection staring up from the river's surface.

While seeing this reflection of himself in the water, Siddhartha utters the old word Om. Just as he had an awakening on the other side of the river before going to Samsara, he awakens again, and all thoughts of suicide cease. He realizes that these thoughts only follow the same childhood path he had followed before as the Brahmin's son and as a Samana, to destroy his Self by simply destroying his body. But the Self is not in his physical body, and neither is the Atman he wanted to understand. Suicide would accomplish nothing. Exhausted by this revelation, Siddhartha falls into a deep sleep, laying there at the foot of the tree near the water. Feeling as if he has been reborn into another life, he awakens hours later. In one day he has already drastically changed from the person he had been in Samsara; he recalled the word Om, the unity of Brahman the creator, and begun to find his peace.

Topic Tracking: Self 10

Topic Tracking: Nature 9

He notices an older man nearby dressed in monk's robes, sleeping. Oddly, it is his old friend and shadow Govinda who had left Siddhartha's side to become a follower of Buddha. Govinda does not recognize him since Siddhartha has changed so much while he himself has remained the same, devout and faithful. Govinda explains that he was worried to see a man sleeping so close to the river and stayed to be sure that he was safe. Realizing that this is Siddhartha, Govinda criticizes him for wearing such rich clothes. Enlightened, Siddhartha is calm and attempts to explain things, although Govinda does not really understand, "The wheel of appearances revolves quickly, Govinda. Where is Siddhartha the Brahmin, where is Siddhartha the Samana, where is Siddhartha the rich man? The transitory soon changes, Govinda, You know that" Chapter 8, pg. 76. Unsure of what Siddhartha is trying to say to him, Govinda continues on his own pilgrimage to spread the Buddha's teachings. Although Govinda is confused, Siddhartha's thoughts become as clear as ever.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 10



Now, Siddhartha truly loves Govinda and everything else in the world. His earlier inability to love is what had separated him from "ordinary people." Kamala was only another teacher when he was with her, for he did not love her. After losing his innocence, Siddhartha understands everything by realizing that he really knows nothing at all. He is going backwards, returning to the river he had crossed years before, while his thoughts recall memories from youth. "Now, he thought, that all transitory things have slipped away from me again, I stand once more beneath the sun, as I once stood as a small child. Nothing is mine, I know nothing, I possess nothing, I have learned nothing...when I am no longer young, when my hair is fast growing gray...now I am beginning again like a child" Chapter 8, pg. 77. While Siddhartha had thought that he was progressing, the world around him, such as the sun, remains unchanged. Nothing has really changed at all, except his understanding of the world's constancy. Through this realization, Siddhartha gains wisdom. The person within who had wanted to commit suicide seems dead, as if it had happened centuries before. Siddhartha, too, is transitory in appearance, for the actual time elapsed doesn't mean anything.

Wisdom fills his mind, and he is happy for the first time in his life. After being reduced to the lowest depths, Siddhartha finds peace. He recalls the Brahmins, the Samanas, Buddha, Kamala, and Kamaswami. With them, he had been in search of one specific answer to understand the world, thinking its secret to be to destroy his physical body or to study people and mimic their behavior. But he never realized that he was one of them all along, and because of this failure, he arrogantly ignored his emotions. The low depths of sin have made him into the very person he had always disdained before. His pride and cleverness are thus destroyed, and finally, Siddhartha becomes humble. He does not judge everything now, but instead accepts it for what it is and is grateful for it; the songbird of the dream that he had thought was dead is in fact very much alive. Now the restlessness begins to disappear for good.

It was his childhood that had begun the arrogance, since his father and the Brahmins had praised Siddhartha so much that he even judged them and doubted their wisdom. The old arrogant, clever Self is invisibly drowned beneath the river's water, and it is the enlightened Siddhartha who survives. He does not regret the life he led in Samsara, for it was necessary that he sin in order to learn from his own mistakes. Everything that has happened is necessary. His distrust of others' teachings for guidance was correct, too. One must be his own teacher based upon one's own experience, "It is a good thing to experience everything oneself...As a child I learned that pleasures of the world and riches were not good. I have known it for a long time, but I have only just experienced it. Now I know it not only with my intellect, but with my ears, with my heart, with my stomach. It is a good thing that I know this" Chapter 8, pg. 80. The Buddha's teachings are wrong because they do not make one enlightened as the Buddha had been; they only transfer his knowledge to them. Siddhartha prefers to discover his own knowledge. Beneath a tree, as Buddha had been when enlightened, Siddhartha is filled with understanding because he has taught himself. Content, he sits staring at the river, thinking that it is trying to tell him something, and he wonders what he can learn from it. The river fascinates this old man.

Topic Tracking: Self 11  
Topic Tracking: Nature 10

## Chapter 9: "The Ferryman"

Siddhartha decides that he shall stay near the river since it holds secrets from which he may learn. He feels love for everything and recognizes himself as a part of it and not as an outsider. Colors are around him everywhere, just as before he had entered Samsara. Things make sense to him now. Siddhartha walks along the river and sees the ferryman standing in his boat and asks to be taken to the other side where he had come from so many years before. Instead of judging this man to be simple-minded, Siddhartha praises him and, offering his rich clothes as a gift, asks to remain there as the ferryman's assistant. The ferryman, named Vasudeva, agrees happily as Siddhartha reenters the hut he had slept in years before. He tells his entire life story. Vasudeva listens well, since this is what the river has taught him to do, replying to Siddhartha that the river is Siddhartha's friend and likes him. Siddhartha becomes excited since the two connect so well in their understanding, and he knows that he, too, shall learn to listen to the river like Vasudeva.

The two ferrymen go to sleep. Time passes and old Siddhartha grows older. The Brahmin's son learns to listen to the river, and his emotions continue to open up and embrace the world, without selfish desires. He begins to realize the importance of himself as a part of a greater whole. Siddhartha speaks to Vasudeva about another lesson the river teaches, that time does not exist. "The river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth...in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere, and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past, nor the shadow of the future...Siddhartha the boy, Siddhartha the mature man and Siddhartha the old man [are] only separated by shadows, not through reality...Nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence" Chapter 9, pg. 87. The river is like Siddhartha himself, and the life of any person. It is unchanging and yet it is always changing within, deeper inside beneath the surface. He now belongs not to a group, such as the Samanas or Brahmins, but instead to everything.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 11

Topic Tracking: Nature 11

The voice of the river is the one word he had known since childhood that is Om, calling together the unity of all things and people at once. Siddhartha becomes more and more like the ferryman as years pass by. They both feel such contentment from the river. Travelers wishing to cross on their boat wonder about these two men since they are so mysterious. They cannot understand what Siddhartha has experienced to reach this great understanding, to fall from the highest peaks to the lowest depths before finding peace. Many simply cross the river without speaking to it as these two men do, for the travelers consider it simply to be an obstacle in their own lives, blocking the way to a destination.

News arrives eventually that the Buddha is dying, and many travelers make a pilgrimage to see him, as if paying homage to a king. Siddhartha thinks of this man lovingly, knowing how arrogant he had been in his youth when criticizing his ways. He



still knows that it was correct to reject the Buddha's teachings, for he would not have experienced the world alone to reach enlightenment, as the Buddha had done. No one taught Buddha what he has learned except for the Buddha's own experience. Why study another man's knowledge forever as Govinda has chosen to do, without ever experiencing enlightenment by one's own trial and error? At the same time "a true seeker could not accept any teachings, not if he sincerely wished to find something. But he who found, could give his approval to every path, every goal; nothing separated him from all the other thousands who lived in eternity, who breathed the Divine" Chapter 9, pg. 90.

Meanwhile in Samsara, old Kamala decides to go on a pilgrimage to see the dying Buddha. She has given her grove to the Buddha's followers and has become a disciple herself. With her loss of beauty she clings to these teachings for guidance, even as her life ebbs away. Walking along the riverbank with her son, the Young Siddhartha, the boy asks to stop since he's tired and secretly complains that his mother is going to see the death of the Buddha, who he doesn't even know. Kamala is bitten by a snake near the river and runs with her son to the ferry where Siddhartha and Vasudeva are. Siddhartha is surprised to see Kamala and recognizes her at once, yet he is even more pleased to see this young boy who is his own son.

#### Topic Tracking: Nature 12

Kamala, who still loves Siddhartha, is dying from the snake's poison. However, she comments on how much Siddhartha looks like the Siddhartha she had first known in her grove, when he was so young, than the sinful man he became after being Kamaswami's merchant for so many years. Siddhartha's son cries because his mother is sick and goes to sleep in Vasudeva's hut. Dying, Kamala marvels at how peaceful Siddhartha looks, noticing how much his eyes have changed from how they were before. Taking her last breath, Kamala notes that Siddhartha looks peaceful and wise like the Buddha, thinking that to see this man's peaceful face before her death is the same as if she had seen that of the Buddha himself. She finds her peace and dies.

Siddhartha closes her eyes and looks at her pale face, knowing that he will one day look like that when he is dead. He is not sad because death is inevitable anyway. Even as he recognizes his own mortality, he has been given a son as young as he once had been, and he is happy. Everything is "eternity" to him, like the river, unchanging yet always changing and flowing. This is the meaning of life that he has discovered, and they are all a part of it. Vasudeva comments that Kamala has died on the same bed as his wife, and they prepare to make a funeral pyre where Vasudeva's wife was cremated. The cycle continues, as Vasudeva sees Kamala as akin to his dead wife, and Siddhartha now sees himself when young in the eyes of his son. He is filled with enlightenment and happiness. Kamala's death is simply a part of this greater cycle, just as his own death shall be. Siddhartha has found his peace.

## Chapter 10: "The Son"

Young Siddhartha watches his Kamala's burial after cremation on the same hill where Vasudeva's wife was buried. Siddhartha feels a growing love for this boy and decides that his son shall stay there to live with him in the hut next to the river. The boy does not adjust very well to these new living conditions; he had been raised in Samsara and pampered by his mother. He had servants before and ate fine foods and wore rich clothes. The life of luxury and excess that Siddhartha had abandoned in the town is what his son now inwardly craves to return to; the father hopes to win his son over by love and patience, wishing that the boy will love and respect him, too.

Months pass by, yet the boy remains defiant and angry that he must live such a life amongst these two old men. He does not care that one of them is his father, for their life is boring and stupid to him. Vasudeva knows this and tries to make Siddhartha understand why his son is not happy. He says that the river has laughed as well, for Siddhartha has made another blind mistake. Now it is not his intellect but instead his emotions and heart that deceive him. Siddhartha does not listen, believing that one day the boy will hear the voice of the river that is Om and understand the cycle of life, too. He forgets his own conclusion that one cannot transfer experience to anyone else, for now he has become like the Buddha, a Samana elder, his own father the Brahmin or Kamaswmai, attempting to inflict his own understanding upon another. He has been blinded by love for this boy and has become selfish by refusing to let the boy leave in spite of Vasudeva's wise advice. He hopes that Young Siddhartha will understand everything without experiencing any hardship himself.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 12

The old ferryman explains that as a father, Siddhartha should try to discipline his son. Siddhartha is incapable of doing this, since he is at peace with everything and is unable to be forceful. Thus he waits patiently for his young son to love him and to be enlightened, as he had been, just by staying there near the river. At the same time he recognizes how his own father's words were unable to keep him from leaving so many decades before. He understands that what he is doing is irrational, yet Siddhartha still allows his emotions to consume him. "It was true that he had never fully lost himself in another person to such an extent as to forget himself; he had never undergone the follies of love for another person. He had never been able to do this, and it had then seemed to him that this was the biggest difference between him and the ordinary people...[now] He was madly in love" Chapter 10, pg. 99. Siddhartha finally allows human emotion to control him through his blind love for Young Siddhartha.

As time continues to pass, the son does not become adjusted to his father's life near the river. Instead, he grows increasingly rebellious and does not love his father; he even learns to despise him. Young Siddhartha wishes that his father would punish him and give him some guidance. But his father is too nice of an old man to be reduced to this level. One day, enraged, the boy screams aloud, "You want me to become like you, so pious, so gentle, so wise, but just to spite you, I would rather become a thief and a



murderer and go to hell, than be like you. I hate you; you are not my father even if you have been my mother's lover a dozen times!" Chapter 10, pg. 100. He is bored with the life near the river, and he runs away, stealing their ferryboat the next night to cross the river and go back to Samsara.

Siddhartha is heartbroken and won't accept that his son is gone. Determined, he and Vasudeva make a raft to cross the river and retrieve the ferry. Their oar has disappeared, presumably broken or thrown away by the son, as a symbol that he does not want to be followed. The sorrowful father obsesses over his lost son, leaving Vasudeva near the river to make a new oar with his hatchet as Siddhartha wanders off into the forest towards Samsara, a path he had walked so many years before. Arriving in the grove where he had first met Kamala when he had been a young and arrogant Samana, Siddhartha pauses. Now the grove is filled with Buddha's disciples wearing yellow monk robes, gifts from Kamala. He remembers everything again: his entire life as a young Brahmin's son, leaving his father to become a Samana, the visit to Gotama where Govinda left him, and now finally this spot where he had met Kamala. The memories flood his soul, and he remembers how corrupt and sinful he had become as a wealthy merchant. He recalls his suicidal thoughts near the river, his second awakening and his new life as a ferryman with Vasudeva.

Topic Tracking: Self 12

Topic Tracking: Nature 13

Everything unifies within his thoughts, and he reflects, recognizing his folly at last, although it hurts him terribly to let the boy go. He does not go any further than that grove, for "Siddhartha realized that the desire that had driven him to this place was foolish, that he could not help his son, that he should not force himself on him. He felt a deep love for the runaway boy, like a wound, and yet felt at the same time that this wound was not intended to fester in him, but that it should heal" Chapter 10, pg. 103. He feels the same sense of loss and pain that Kamala had felt after learning that Siddhartha had left her side, for she had loved him so much. The cycle continues, and with this last lesson learned, Siddhartha lays in the grove, depressed, reminding himself of Om, until Vasudeva comes to bring him back to his hut near the river. The old man comforts Siddhartha, although they do not speak about the lost boy. Siddhartha sleeps in the hut, lamenting what he has lost and what he has finally forced himself to give up.

## Chapter 11: "Om"

Time continues to pass by, yet Siddhartha still misses his son. He understands the love that ordinary people feel now, and when he sees parents with their children, or a man with his wife, Siddhartha understands what they feel like. But this understanding does not dispel the pain of losing his son. He opens himself up to many people who come to be ferried across the river, the obstacle on their journey. Siddhartha is there to bridge them across this gap so that they may continue. Siddhartha knows that he is behaving foolishly, like the rest of the ordinary people, but he cannot make it go away. He is reduced to another state of humility, as he had been after staying in Samsara for so many years. Siddhartha does not share the lifestyle of these other people, yet he understands their passions and their desires in life. He is one of them.

One day, consumed by his grief, the old man begins to cross the river as he had done before, planning to go to Samsara to find his lost son again. The river laughs at him, and in gazing into the waves he sees his reflection staring back. Siddhartha is reminded of how much he looks like his own father, the Brahmin, and recalls how he had left when a young boy, never to see him again. "Had not his father suffered the same pain that he was now suffering for his son? Had not his father died long ago, alone, without having seen his son again? Did not he expect the same fate? Was it not a comedy, a strange and stupid thing, this repetition, this course of events in a fateful circle?" Chapter 11, pg. 107. That is why the river laughs, because Siddhartha had already done the same thing to his own father, yet now when his own son does it to him, he feels such pain and loss. It is all so silly and pointless. Everything moves in recurring circles, and people find themselves in different roles until their lives end. Even in death, they follow a path followed by so many before. The world moves in circles.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 13

Topic Tracking: Nature 14

Excited, Siddhartha finds old Vasudeva. The old ferryman has become so frail that he no longer rows the ferry. He sits in his hut weaving a basket and listens quietly to Siddhartha. Talking aloud makes Siddhartha feel stronger and more confident; he says much, explaining what the old ferryman already knows. He holds nothing back and describes every pain and sorrow he has felt, every happiness, until Vasudeva, listening intently, has a look of peace on his face. Siddhartha suddenly feels as if he is speaking to the river, flowing around his words and healing his sorrow; it is as if he is speaking to God, for the man's attention fills him with such peace and serenity. Then, "the more he realized it, the less strange did he find it; the more did he realize that everything was natural and in order, that Vasudeva had long ago, almost always been like that, only he did not quite recognize it; indeed he himself was hardly different from him. He felt he now regarded Vasudeva as the people regarded the gods and that this could not last" Chapter 11, pg. 109. Vasudeva had done nothing more than listen to Siddhartha's words and to show him how to listen to the river, and now Siddhartha sees that he is like this old wise man. With this last flurry of words to his old mentor, Siddhartha has finished



understanding himself and is now ready to listen to the stories others have to share with him.

Glad, old Vasudeva walks with Siddhartha to the river and they again hear its laughing voice, laughing at the silliness and the unity of everything. Why worry about things, when it all has a place and a meaning? Siddhartha sees faces from his life reflected in the water: Kamala, Govinda, and so many others he had known. They are all within the river, and Vasudeva is in the river, too. Siddhartha sees that the river is inside of him now, as he had seen it in Vasudeva; it is his life, and it is Atman. He sees a cycle there in the water as the river evaporates into rain, which falls again to make water. Everything in the world is a cycle around him; everything is circles and does not change. The river's voices laugh and lament at all of this, at life. Siddhartha realizes the insignificance of his own silly fears and worries and how self-centered they are. They are feelings already experienced before by thousands, by everyone. Why is he so special as to be pitied for his loss?

Gazing into the water, "all the voices, all the goals, all the yearnings, all the sorrows, all the pleasures, all the good and evil, all of them together was the world. All of them together was the stream of events, the music of life...then the great song of a thousand voices consisted of one word: Om - perfection" Chapter 11, pg. 110-11. Siddhartha surmounts this final obstacle. He has yet another awakening here, near the river. Vasudeva smiles, for he knows that Siddhartha now understands everything. Everything in life makes sense now: "From that hour Siddhartha ceased to fight against his destiny. There shone in his face the serenity of knowledge, of one who is no longer confronted with conflict of desires, who has found salvation, who is in harmony with the stream of events, with the stream of life, full of sympathy and compassion, surrendering himself to the stream, belonging to the unity of things" Chapter 11, pg. 111. His old Self is at last defeated as he realizes his own individual insignificance in the faces of eternity and the river. As much as he worries about his pain, the world around does not care because the river simply continues to flow.

Topic Tracking: Self 13

Siddhartha reaches the highest enlightenment here and finds finally what he has sought out since the beginning of his journey. There are no words to say, and he only listens to the river and to the world around him; he is merely a part of everything else. As if his job had ended when Siddhartha reached this understanding, Vasudeva, tired, calmly declares that it is time for him to go "into the unity of things," to go off to die in the woods. He too, must face the same fate so many others have already faced. Why worry or fear? It is a part of the circle, of the cycle, a part of the river he had loved so much. Siddhartha, enlightened, watches the man walk off so peacefully, embracing death now because it is just another part of his life. There is no sorrow felt at their final parting, but instead a sense of joy, as Siddhartha had felt during the death of his beloved Kamala.

Topic Tracking: Nature 15

## Chapter 12: "Govinda"

Time passes by. Siddhartha is the only ferryman now since Vasudeva has died. One day his childhood friend Govinda, still restless and wandering, is in the old garden of Kamala during his pilgrimage and hears rumor that there is a wise man near the river. Although not aware of it, this wise man is Siddhartha. Going there, he sees the old man and asks to be taken across the river. Govinda wants to hear his knowledge of the world. Siddhartha speaks with great wisdom, explaining the flaw of a seeker's life, "When someone is seeking...it happens quite easily that he only sees the thing that he is seeking; that he is unable to find anything, unable to absorb anything...because he is obsessed with his goal. Seeking means: to have a goal; but finding means: to be free, to be receptive, to have no goal" Chapter 12, pg. 113. Govinda is confused by these words as he had been when they had met near the river after Siddhartha had contemplated suicide. He still does not understand because he has not experienced the world, remaining a follower of Buddha while Siddhartha changed so much.

Govinda recognizes this old man to be his childhood friend, Siddhartha, and is stunned again that he has changed so much. They talk a great deal, and Govinda is a guest in Siddhartha's hut that night, as Siddhartha himself had stayed with Vasudeva before entering Samsara for the first time. Now it is his hut, and Govinda is the guest, sleeping in Vasudeva's old bed. The next day Govinda asks about his knowledge, so that he may understand the world like Siddhartha; Govinda remains, even now, the shadow, merely following behind the progress of others rather than progressing himself. Siddhartha explains his distrust of teachings and doctrines, since they do not make one enlightened. They do not open one's mind or emotions as experience does; they do not make one become a part of the world and the unity of things. Govinda still analyzes the world from the outlook of an outsider and a student. "Wisdom is not communicable," Siddhartha tells him again, for it is something that must be learned for oneself by trial and error. Govinda's world has remained closed and limited, while Siddhartha has come to embrace everything and every path one's life may take.

Buddha should not be placed upon a pedestal and worshipped, for anyone may potentially become as enlightened as he was. That is a part of Om, a part of the unity of things. Buddha created a one-sided world of illusion in Samsara and truth in Nirvana, the highest level of consciousness one may achieve. This is not accurate, for the world is everything, the good and the bad. Time does not exist as a progression, moving forward; instead it is like a river flowing eternally, as people cross from role to role in their lives. Siddhartha was the Brahmin's son and later became a father himself, and lost his son. He was a Samana, fearing the townspeople and their lives of sin; later he became a sinner. He was taught not to love, and yet he loved his son, the world, and Kamala. The cycle of learning by experience continues. Siddhartha overturns Buddha's doctrine that one should never love anything, for the Buddha loved the world dearly. Govinda continues to listen attentively, hardly understanding these words. They are the both old men, yet their paths have taken them into widely different directions.





Time is nothing because nothing really changes. By not being arrogant and judging the world, Siddhartha found peace, and through this he has dispelled his Self. Govinda continues to judge things. He has never chosen his own path but has instead merely followed behind the footsteps of others. Siddhartha continues, "Therefore, it seems to me that everything that exists is good - death as well as life, sin as well as holiness, wisdom as well as folly. Everything is necessary, everything needs only my agreement, my assent, my loving understanding; then all is well with me and nothing can harm me...I needed lust [and] to strive for property...to learn not to resist them" Chapter 12, pg. 116. Lust and greed had always been fearful things, for he had never experienced them himself. He had once resisted women and the life in Samsara because he was taught to fear them; after he lived it, he learned much, and aversion was no longer an obstacle for him on his journey.

Raising a stone, Siddhartha explains that he loves the stone because it may become a plant or an animal as it grinds into dirt and changes. The rock is like a person, capable of becoming anything, for it is a part of Om. Govinda has always been a part of Om, too; he only needs to recognize it after he stops searching for something finite, for a tangible goal. The answer is all around him "in the unity of things." Govinda remains confused. Next, Siddhartha expresses his dislike of words themselves; words are the root of teachings, yet words cannot convey an experience. Govinda disagrees, declaring that the word "Nirvana" is a state of being that one attains. Siddhartha replies that "Nirvana" itself is merely a word; it describes an experience that the word itself cannot convey. Words, like time, are an illusion created by people wishing to teach and educate others, but they lose the meaning of experience itself, of emotions and feelings, such as depression or love. Siddhartha explains that love is the most important thing to have in the world, to love a person, a place, and the world. Everything should be embraced for what it is.

#### Topic Tracking: Nature 16

Govinda still does not understand. He remains a restless shadow, destined to follow behind others who experience the world while he stagnates. Before rising to leave, Govinda realizes that, despite his own confusion, Siddhartha appears to be as enlightened as the Buddha had been. He is still curious how he has reached this state of being, asking one last time to hear what knowledge Siddhartha can give him to make him understand since his "path is often hard and dark." The old ferryman only asks that Govinda kiss him on the forehead. Obeying, a great love fills him. Staring into Siddhartha's wrinkled face he sees a river, as Siddhartha had seen upon the face of Vasudeva, flowing with thousands of faces merging together and separating. "He saw the face of a newly born child, red and full of wrinkles, ready to cry. He saw the face of a murderer, saw him plunge a knife into the body of a man; at the same moment he saw this criminal kneeling down, bound, and his head cut off by an executioner. He saw the naked bodies of men and women in postures and transports of passionate love. He saw corpses stretched out, still, cold, empty" Chapter 12, pg. 121.

Govinda's vision flows across Siddhartha's face and grows larger and larger until "He saw all these forms and faces in a thousand relationships to each other, all helping each





other, loving, hating, destroying each other and become newly born. Each one of them was mortal, a passionate, painful example of all that was transitory. Yet none of them died, they only changed, were always reborn, continually had a new face: only time stood between one face and another" Chapter 12, pg. 121. Govinda sees what Siddhartha understands about the world's cycle; Siddhartha's teachings are transformed from words into a vision. Words cannot explain Om, since "wisdom is not communicable," as Siddhartha had once said. Instead, he shows what he has come to learn about the world. Govinda finally feels emotion and a sense of being within, rather than a need to analyze the external world. He loves his old friend Siddhartha, for he has become like the Buddha.

Topic Tracking: Self 14

Siddhartha's face is unchanged now, as it had been, and the vision of enlightenment ends for Govinda. He bows down, paying homage to him as he had paid homage to the Buddha. Siddhartha remains unmoving, smiling, while Govinda cries out of happiness. Siddhartha's smile reminded him of his own life and all that he had experienced and loved before. Govinda does not deny that he loves and embraces it. His questions have stopped. Now, at the end of their lives, when these two childhood friends are very old, Siddhartha and Govinda, the Self and the shadow, are joined together in peace. They once again flow together into one, into the unity of things that is Om. They are both rivers, the world is a river, always changing yet unchanging.

But Govinda does not recognize the potential in himself to become like Siddhartha or Buddha. He is still a shadow, worshipping Siddhartha for his holiness. Siddhartha merely smiles, for there is nothing he can do. One must learn to enlighten and teach oneself. He smiles at what Govinda still cannot understand, knowing that Govinda is a part of everything too yet unable to recognize this. Instead, Govinda worships Siddhartha's understanding and grace. These two contrast each other: the one who experienced the world and the other who simply studied it. It is not age but experience that gives wisdom. Even at the end of his life, Govinda has seen what Siddhartha sees and remains a silent, subservient shadow, paying homage to Siddhartha as if he were a king. Govinda has not found enlightenment and never will, because it is too late.

Topic Tracking: Teacher 14