


☐

I'm not robot

  
reCAPTCHA

Continue

## Atonement chapter summary

Atonement follows a 13-year-old aspiring writer, Briony Tallis, from the failure of her first childlike attempt at the drama, The Trials of Arabella, to her presentation, six decades later, by the grandchildren of the ginger-haired, battered cousins who wanted to be their stars. Briony is the youngest of the Tallises' three children, who grew up virtually the only child because she split from Cecilia and her 12-year-old brother Leon for a decade. Leon, an easy-to-be-lucky banker in London, brings a rich and vain friend, Paul Marshall, home for a summer vacation, launches Briony's play and a formal dinner party in his honor. The cousins, 15-year-old Lola Quincey and twins Pierrot and Jackson, 9, arrive at the Tallis estate as refugees from their parents' divorce. Frustrating rehearsals and rivalries with Lola contribute to the play's collapse, but its demise is motivated more by Briony's decision to write a story about a confrontation she accidentally sees between Cecilia and 23-year-old Robbie Turner, the family landscape gardener and childhood friend of Briony's siblings, whose education was funded by her father. Cecilia is ready to continue with her life, but she feels obliged to pay attention to the family one last summer. Robbie is looking forward to starting medical school. Cecilia and Robbie, albeit vaguely, that they need to clarify their relationship before they leave. Robbie prepares for the festive dinner and taps Cecilia a note that includes inappropriate sexual musings. He writes an expurgated version, but in a Freudian slip he hands Briony the wrong version for delivery to her sister. Briony reads it and is shocked, convinced that Robbie is a threat to her sister. In the library, Briony interprets Robbie and Cecilia, who make love, as a physical attack. As the disgruntled twins run away, search parties are organized, and Briony, alone in search, comes to Lola, who is attacked in the dark by someone she believes is the monstrous Robbie. Briony's imagination sends him to prison. Robbie was released three and a half years later on the condition that he join the British Expeditionary Force in France. Wounded by shrapnel, Robbie and two corporals make the perilous journey to Dunkirk to evacuate them. Cecilia's love, expressed in letters that begin while Robbie is in prison, is all that sustains him when the infection spreads and his strength flags. Cecilia has become a nurse and has cut herself off from her family. Briony follows her sister's career path and the rigours of training in the Nightingale tradition. Briony is determined to make amends by withdrawing her testimony. After treating the first wave of wounded evacuees from Dunkirk, Briony falls for Lola and Paul Marshall's wedding, then Cecilia, who visits Robbie. After a tense face, Briony agrees to reveal everything to the world, that the After a 77th birthday celebration and a diagnosis of vascular dementia, Briony realizes that the story needs to be published posthumously. She ponders how her readers want a happy ending, and she doesn't show Robbie dying of septicæmia on the beach and killing Cecilia in the London bombing. After doing her best to atone, Briony is tired and has to sleep. See chapter summaries diagram Briony witnesses several confusing encounters. Part 1, Chapter 13 These events lead Briony to falsely accuse Robbie, her sister Cecilia's boyfriend, of raping Lola. Part 1, Chapter 13 Robbie is sentenced to prison. Cecilia breaks off all contact with her family. Part 2, Section 2 Robbie joins the British infantry and sees Cecilia for an hour before she goes to the French front. Part 2, Section 2 Robbie dies of septicaemia in Dunkirk. Part 2, Section 6 Lola and Paul Marshall marry. Part 3, Section 5 Briony reveals her intention to publish Atonement after the deaths of Lola and Paul Marshall. Part 4, London, 1999 Cite This Study Guide Copyright © 2016. As a reminder, you may only use Course Hero Content for your personal use and may not copy, distribute or otherwise use it for any other purpose. Summary: Atonement begins with the introduction of the reader into the main character, Briony Tallis, who is a 13-year-old ambitious and imaginative writer with dreams and visions to one day become famous. Briony has written and prepared a play for her older brother Leon, who is coming home from London, where he lives and works, for a weekend with his family. Three cousins from the north, Lola, Jackson and Pierrot, come to spend the summer at the Tallis house, while their parents (Hermione and Cecil Quincey) allegedly try to resolve their differences. Briony gave mother a copy of the piece she wrote, called The Processes of Arabella. Her mother Emily Tallis likes the play while reading, as does her sister Cecilia, albeit somewhat condescendingly. As soon as her cousins arrive, Briony begins to assign roles to them and tries to conduct them in the upcoming performance, which is to be hired for her brother the next evening (see a full description of the play on page 4 below). Lola, two years older than Briony, challenges the director/dramatist (and manipulates her) for the lead role of Arabella in the play, which finally separates Briony after she forces her three cousins to participate. Lola continues to mock the lines in the play, adding a stretchy animosity between the two cousins and the twins, Pay little to no attention to Briony's direction. Together, this destroys Briony's vision of an illuminated moment and a perfect evening prepared for her brother's return. Analysis:The piece Briony aims to perform and perform as a high point of the if her mother reads it, and everything else about it would be dreams and frustrations. This is an obvious foreboding of the mood of self-retribution and theme of lost innocence to the book. Immediately the concept of literary tradition is discussed, McEwan ties fairy tales and folk tales to the simplicity of childhood. Briony feels trapped in her younger body and compares the enthusiasm of her older sister with the play as more condescension than sincerity. The introduction to relationships and love in the book is also sour. We have Emily and Jack Tallis, who never see each other, and Hermione and Cecil Quincey, who get divorced and send their children to be looked after by the Talis. This is an opportunity for McEwan to put the story of bitter love in others, and then to juxtapose Cecilia and Robbie's love as sublime and sweet. The play Briony writes, The Trials of Arabella are a metaphor for what will come from Briony. The spontaneous (remember that the whole first part happens in a day) child is inexperienced and about to commit a crime that will see the world stand up and step on it. LitCharts assigns a color and icon to each topic in Atonement, which you can use to track the topics throughout your work. A lot happens in the Atonement. And then it does some not do what can tamper with the plot. We begin in 1935, a few years before the Second World War, in the English home of the Tallis family. The family is expecting visits from their maternal cousins - young twins Jackson and Pierrot and 15-year-old Lola, all of whom have been temporarily sidelined by their parents' divorce. The Tallis family is also expecting a visit from Brother Leon and his friend, chocolate magnate Paul Marshall. With five (Count 'em, five) people arriving, the house is in a kind of turmoil – especially since father Jack Tallis is in London at his government job, while mother Emily Tallis is largely incapacitated with a migraine. Amid all this hustle and bustle, Robbie Turner, the housekeeper's son, realizes that he is hopelessly and passionately in love with his childhood friend Cecilia Tallis. Their courtship rituals, as will be the case, result in a series of unpleasant sexual performances. Cecilia jumps into a well in her underwear. Robbie accidentally gives Cecilia a letter that he wanted to destroy, in which he tells her exactly what he wants to do with her. Then they do some of these things, not almost privately enough, in the family library. These embarrassing events are witnessed by Briony, Cecilia's imaginative 13-year-old sister. Driven by confusion and her fondness for Dasergehn to make stories, decides that Robbie is a maniac following her sister. This leads to a disaster when the twins run away after dinner and everyone runs to look for them in the dark. Briony finds Lola, who attacked and sees a figure running into the darkness. Although she doesn't see his face, she is convinced it was Robbie and accuses him of the police. Robbie is sent to prison despite the protests of Grace Turner (his mother) and Cecilia, who promises their love and promises to wait for him. The novel now jumps several years to 1940. Robbie was released from prison to join the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), which fights against the Nazis in France. The war, however, went horribly, and so Robbie trudges across the sea in Dunkirk, where he, his companions Mace and Nettie and the rest of the British hope to be brought to England and to safety. Robbie is wounded and increasingly delirious. He is supported only by letters from Cecilia and his hopes for their common future. Eventually, he breaks into sleep and waits for the evacuation, which is scheduled to begin the next day. The narrative shifts to Briony. She's been full of guilt since realizing it wasn't Robbie who raped Lola. Partly to try to atone for what she has done, she refuses to study at Cambridge. Instead, to the shock of her mother, she becomes a nurse in London, where she looks after some of the first British soldiers to be wounded in the war. On one of her days off from the hospital, Briony visits her sister and offers to tell her parents and the court that her statement about Robbie was wrong. She discovers Robbie, who survived the crossing in Dunkirk, in her sister's apartment – scandal! (Or at least the landlady is scandalous anyway.) Although it seems unlikely that Robbie's sentence can be overturned, she promises to withdraw her testimony to an official witness, tell her parents and write them a full account of what she did and why. She also tells them that Paul Marshall married Lola, and that it was almost certainly he who raped her. Cecilia and Robbie don't forgive her because she's ruined her life and it's hard to get beyond that. But there is a certain sense of reconciliation. The last part of the book is told by Briony in the first person. She is now old and a famous author. She has just learned that she suffers from vascular dementia, a condition that will lead her to senility and then death in a few years. We learn that the book – yup, atonement – is her novel and that she is waiting to publish it until Lord and Lady Marshall – Paul and Lola – are dead and cannot complain. She realizes that she will not outlast Lola and that the book will therefore not be published in her lifetime. She also reveals that the book It is quite true and that Robbie and Cecilia did not reunite, but died separately during the war. And if that doesn't make you cry, if you turn the last page, then your heart is a big old boulder. Rock. Rock.