

BACKGROUND	
The novel begins during the end of the Great Depression. The effects of this period can be seen in the poverty and hardship facing the working-class people of Frenchtown. The renovation of the Wreck Centre is an example of one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" civic engagement programmes that tried to cut unemployment.	
The USA entered WW2 as a result of Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbour, an American naval base in Hawaii, on 7th Dec 1941. Numerous US battleships were destroyed and over 2,000 people were killed.	
This event caused a huge feeling of patriotism and thousands of Americans joined up to fight. There was no conscription as there was in Britain during WW2.	
Many young men had interrupted their education to go and fight. The US government introduced the GI Bill which funded ex-servicemen to go back to college and enter new careers.	
There was more emphasis on the economy than on individuals' mental welfare. Traumatized young soldiers like Francis were not supported.	

PLOT	
Chapters 1-3	A badly disfigured Francis Cassavant returns to Frenchtown after WW2. He wants to hide his identity and carries a gun with which to kill Larry LaSalle. In a flashback, he describes meeting Nicole Renard. He suffers terrible nightmares about his experiences in the war.
Chapters 4-5	Francis meets Arthur Rivier and other war veterans at the St. Jude Club who talk about their plans for the future. He still doesn't reveal his identity. He goes to his old youth club, the Rec Centre (or Wreck Centre) and in a flashback he describes their inspirational teacher and leader Larry LaSalle.
Chapters 6-10	Arthur recognises Francis' voice but agrees not to reveal his identity. Francis has won a Silver Star medal for bravery in the war, as has Larry LaSalle. In flashbacks Francis describes becoming the table tennis champion of the Wreck Centre under Larry's guidance and coaching. Francis describes how his relationship with Nicole developed and they see a newsreel in the cinema showing Larry as a war hero.
Chapters 11-12	In flashback, Francis describes Larry returning to Frenchtown as a war hero. That night Larry rapes Nicole at the Wreck Centre. Francis overhears but does nothing. Francis is tortured with guilt and Nicole is scornful and contemptuous of his weakness. Francis considers suicide but joins the army, after lying about his age.
Chapters 13-14	Back to 1945 and Francis visits Larry in Frenchtown, intending to kill him as revenge for what he did to Nicole. Larry admits his weaknesses. Francis leaves and Larry kills himself.
Chapters 15-17	Francis visits Nicole to ask for forgiveness and hoping to restart their relationship. Nicole forgives him but the relationship is over. Francis thinks about his future, will he become a writer or will he use the gun to shoot himself?

CHARACTERS	
Francis Cassavant:	The 18 year old war veteran is the protagonist and narrator. A decorated war hero. Hideously disfigured by a bomb blast in the war, he returns home to find his love, Nicole and have revenge on Larry LaSalle. He is driven by revenge, guilt and trauma from his experience of World War II.
Nicole Renard	Francis' childhood love and friend, who is described as being pure and innocent. She is later attacked by a main character and struggles to deal with this trauma. She feels betrayed by Francis as he witnessed the attack and didn't help.
Larry LaSalle	An inspiration and idol to the children of Frenchtown after reopening the 'Wreck Centre'. He gives Francis' self-esteem by coaching him for the table-tennis championship. After Larry is prematurely aged by the war, he struggles to cope with no longer being the fit, athletic figure he once was. Like Francis, he is a decorated war hero.
Enrico Ruchelli:	A fellow patient with Francis. He has lost both legs and his arm in the war. We see his pain and bitterness beneath the front he puts on for Francis
Arthur Rivier:	A war veteran of Frenchtown, like Francis. Later, he is found drunk in an alleyway and talks about his trauma following the war.
Mrs Bellander	Francis' kindly landlady who sympathises with the wounded veteran. She doesn't recognise him because of his disfigurement.
Uncle Louis	Takes Francis in after the death of his parents. A kind but silent man who does his duty but is not demonstrative with his feelings.
Joey LeBlanc	Childhood friend of Francis seen in flashbacks. More confident than Francis who describes him as a 'big mouth'. Killed in WW2 at Iwo Jima.

NARRATIVE (The method and means by which you construct the events of a story into a plot)	
Narrative structure:	3 or 5 act structure, with flashbacks embedded throughout.
Narrative viewpoint:	The story is told through the experiences of Francis in non-chronological order, through a series of flashbacks. This allows the reader to follow his experiences and the events he recalls develop him as a character and to understand others from his perspective. It also increases the element of tension in the events.
Ellipsis:	Ellipsis is a technique used to shorten time by emitting non-vital parts of the narrative. This is used to show years of Francis' life and key events from this in a few pages.
Binary oppositions:	This is a form of comparison and opposition. Characters who are the opposite of each other create conflict and drive drama.
Withholding and releasing:	Is a narrative device where important information is withheld and only revealed when it is likely to have the most dramatic impact.