5.Kamala
Siddhartha ventures out to find himself and encounters a ferryman who is more than willing to transport him across the river. He asks for nothing in return but Siddhartha’s friendship, which he happily offers. At the bank, he sees a woman washing her clothes, and for the first time, experiences sensual desire. However, Siddhartha’s “inner voice” tells him to walk away, and he unquestioningly obeys the voice. When he enters town, he sees a beautiful woman in a sedan chair and decides that he would devote the next part of his life to earning her love. In efforts to make himself more presentable to Kamala, he returns to the river where he bathes and shaves his head. When he meets Kamala the next day, she is surprised to see a poor samana at her doorstep. But despite his lack of shoes and nice clothes, she falls for his wit, poetic voice, and above all, his unique perspective on life. She tells him that she can only be a wealthy man and suggests that his skills would benefit a merchant friend of hers, Kamaswami. Eager to please Kamala, Siddhartha agrees.

*After Siddhartha leaves Govinda, he begins to view the world in a new light. He understood all that Gotama stood for but also knew that he had to create his own beliefs. He begins to become immune to teachings and decided that the only thing he will listen to is his “inner voice.”*

**Siddhartha**

**by Hermann Hesse**

9. The Ferryman

After talking with his old friend, Siddhartha meets again with the ferryman, whom he had promised his friendship to many years ago during the start of his journey. The ferryman (Vasudeva) didn’t recognize him at first but kindly accepted Siddhartha’s request to take him under his wing. With Siddhartha’s new, ‘go with the flow’ attitude; he unquestioningly worked as Vasudeva’s assistant. When news came that Gotama was becoming gravely ill, many people took the ferry traveling great lengths to see the Buddha before he left the world. Among these people, Kamala, who had been inspired by the stories Siddhartha would tell her about ‘the Sublime One’, decided to take her 11 yr old son across the river to see him. During their walk to the ferry, Kamala gets bitten by a snake and was killed by the venom. Siddhartha was sad because of his lover’s passing but felt no sorrow because he had received the greatest gift, a son.

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*From the river and with Vasudeva’s guidance, Siddhartha learned how to listen without judgment, without passion, with an open and expectant soul. Many found the river to be an obstacle preventing them from their final destination, but Siddhartha saw the river differently. He appreciated how the river was “everywhere at once, without a shadow of a future.”*

1. Son of the Brahman

Siddhartha, a smart and handsome Brahman’s son, was highly respected and treasured in his community. But despite all of this praise and wealth, Siddhartha felt empty. Siddhartha doubted whether the sacrifices, prayers, and long hours of meditation would help him to discover his true, inner self and help him to reach the ultimate goal of enlightenment. Siddhartha yearns to experience something other than his seemingly perfect life. He decides to do this by becoming a samana, a wandering ascetic who rids themselves of all possessions. Although his father forbids this idea at first, his father realizes that he needs to let Siddhartha create his own path. Accompanied by his best friend and loyal follower, Govinda, Siddhartha begins his life outside of the familiar *Brahman* walls.
*Siddhartha thought that life was torment. He wanted to become empty within himself, without desire and without want. Siddhartha, waiting through the night for his father to give his journey a blessing, displays his commitment to this quest.*

3. Gotama

Siddhartha and Govinda travelled to see the Buddha Gotama and listen to his doctrine. As soon as they saw Gotama, they knew it was him. Peace radiated from him and even his slightest movements were calm and content. After hearing his doctrine, Govinda decides to take refuge in Gotama’s law and doctrine, but Siddhartha decides otherwise. He believes that you cannot reach enlightenment based on teachings but that you have to create your own individual path towards your goal. The best friends part ways, and Siddhartha continues his journey alone.
*This chapter really introduces Siddhartha’s hatred for doctrines and teachings. He believes that they cannot teach you as much as experiences, which he has yet to truly have. This chapter also shows a new maturity in Govinda, in that he was able to make a decision about his life without first being accepted by Siddhartha. Govinda begins to follow his own path, even though he is distraught and hesitant after his friend does not follow.*

**Siddhartha**

11.Om
Siddhartha dearly missed his son and could not stop thinking about his love for him and how this feeling was not mutual. He rowed across the river to go to town to search for his son, but as soon as he got out, he could hear the river laughing. His reflection in the water reminded him of his father and how when Siddhartha was an adolescent he left his father to create his own path. Through the river, he realized that he had to do the same for his son. When Siddhartha went back and vented to Vasudeva about his sorrow and suffering over his son, Vasudeva listened and referred him back to the river; it still had more to teach him. When he was listening and watching the river, all the people he had met became the river. Their voices became one. All the good and evil in the world became one. Siddhartha no longer felt suffering and became part of the oneness. And when that happened, Vasudeva realized that his work is done, and enlightened, he walked into the forest to die.

*This chapter really focused on the idea of oneness, and this is the time when Siddhartha finally reached his goal of nirvana. His path to the cessation of suffering was complete because he is now able to understand and love everyone and everything in the world around him.*

6. With the Child-People

Siddhartha follows through with his promise to Kamala and meets with Kamaswami the next day. He tells Kamaswami of the three qualities that define him: his abilities to think, wait, and fast. Although he was initially skeptical of how these innate skills could be beneficial to his company, he was eventually won over by the fact that Siddhartha was among a few who could read and write efficiently. During this first encounter, Siddhartha notices that Kamaswami’s business thrives from possession. Because he has devoted the past years isolating himself from possession, Siddhartha’s “heart wasn’t in commerce”. Because business required him to be in contact with many buyers and other businessmen, he took an interest in observing people and the way they acted like ‘child-people’.
*This is a term we constantly hear Siddhartha saying when referring to the people of the village, and it represents how people go through life with selfish aspirations. These people who are manipulative, carry judgment, and only care about their personal gain. He felt that he and Kamala, of whom he continued to see and spoil, were lost in this world filled with child-people. The worst part is that he slowly saw himself becoming one.*

***“For even salvation and virtue, even ‘samsara’ and ‘nirvana’ are mere words, Govinda. There is no thing that is ‘nirvana’ there is only the word ‘nirvana’”*** *(78).*

***“…love cannot be stolen”*** *(30).*

***“...a rare songbird in a golden cage”***

*(46).*

10. The Son

Siddhartha Jr. copes in his mother’s passing in the only way he knows how; he acts out towards his father. Siddhartha cannot provide his son with all that he is used to and does his best to accommodate his wants and needs. Vasudeva, however, believes that Siddhartha should just take him back to the village where he grew up, set him free, and allow him to make his own path in life. After a fight one day, Siddhartha’s son runs away with their boat and Vasudeva’s sack of coins. Siddhartha’s parental instincts make him go after his son, but when he reaches the village, he realizes that Vasudeva was right all along. He crouches at a tree and allows regret to fill him before Vasudeva comes and takes him back to their hut by the river.

*In this chapter, Siddhartha didn’t want to take his son back the village because he saw what it had done to himself. In that environment, where he was surrounded by ‘child-people,’ he was taken over by pleasure and power. It made Siddhartha sad to see his son leave him and his sorrow left a “wound in his heart”.*

12.Govinda
Govinda’s and Siddhartha’s paths meet for a last time as Govinda travels to the river to see the rumored, enlightened ferryman. Govinda finally recognized Siddhartha, and after spending the night, Govinda asked Siddhartha to share Siddhartha’s doctrine. Siddhartha happily shared his views. Govinda found them confusing, and even laughable, but still, he respected them. And when he asked for one more piece of advice, Siddhartha advised Govinda to kiss his forehead. When Govinda did so, Govinda was able to see figures in the river of all the people he had encountered over his life, and they all were masked by Siddhartha’s calm face. Through this, Govinda was able to glimpse enlightenment and content. Govinda could tell that Siddhartha had reached enlightenment because of the peace that radiated from his body and from his peaceful smile across his face.

*During this chapter, Siddhartha sums up all that he has learned over the course of his life. It summarizes what the book is trying to teach us. Siddhartha told Govinda about how you need to understand and love every part of the world around you. There is nothing wrong with loving things. He told him about how wisdom cannot be imparted, unlike knowledge. You have to acquire wisdom through experiences. He also told him how you cannot separate actions or people into samsara or nirvana because both exist in everything. Oneness is in everything.*

8. By the River

Siddhartha ventures back through the forest, the same way he came in nearly twenty years prior, with nothing more than the clothes on his back. He stops at a palm tree that sat at the river back and seriously contemplated suicide. He hated the person that he had become and would have ended his life at that moment if it hadn’t been for a syllable that he muttered: “om”. That was enough to pull him out of his rut. He then sat beneath the tree, went into a deep slumber, and awoke to find Govinda staring back at him. Govinda doesn’t recognize the Siddhartha with the fancy clothes on his back and the gray in his hair. They exchange a few words, but Govinda sees that Siddhartha is not yet content with the direction of his life (and probably won’t ever be). When Govinda leaves his old friend, Siddhartha feels refreshed and energized.
*The word “om” symbolizes perfection and absoluteness. This word opened Siddhartha’s eyes the concept of reincarnation because at that moment, he felt as if he had lived the equivalent of a whole life and was reborn. The ‘songbird’ in Siddhartha’s heart, which he says died long ago, was now singing. “Om” had introduced him to whole new outlook on life.*

4. Awakening

As Siddhartha slowly journeyed on, he felt extremely alone and like he did not fit anywhere. But this solitude allowed him to reflect on his goals. He realized that he was trying to tear away the outer layers in order to discover his true inner self, but meanwhile he was losing himself. This opened his eyes, and he realized a new beauty in the world around him and become eager to uncover his true self. After this realization, Siddhartha felt as though he had been reborn; he had to begin his life anew.

*Siddhartha talks about how he wanted to get to know the ‘mystery of Siddhartha.’ The entire book focuses on Siddhartha’s journey to uncover this mystery, and this awakening is truly where it begins.*

2. With the Samanas

Siddhartha begins his life with the Samanas. He lives with few possessions and completes practices daily to help him lose the self. He continues this lifestyle over the course of 3 years but soon becomes frustrated with the cycle because it proves to be only temporary. Siddhartha and Govinda decide to neglect the samana lifestyle and go to find Gotama, the Sublime One, who had been rumored to have reached nirvana. When Siddhartha informed the samana elder, the elder became angry. Siddhartha replied by using his newly learned psychic powers on the elder, who soon succumbed to Siddhartha’s enchantment.
*While Siddhartha was practicing losing himself, he would often take the soul of other objects and animals that surrounded him. But because this state of mind was temporary, Siddhartha decided to move on to new practices in order to attain his goal. This introduces the idea of Siddhartha not succumbing to one particular ritual and that a cycle taught through another is often times not the way to reach your goal.*

7.Samsara
During this chapter, Siddhartha became more and more immersed into his work. He slowly began to lose the ‘samana’ in him, as he invested himself completely into his new village life. At the start of his career, he told Kamaswami that he didn’t care about the business, but as time elapsed, Siddhartha started becoming consumed by the luxury of having worldly possessions. He describes this feeling as “...the mental malady of the rich was taking over him.” Siddhartha developed a gambling problem, an addiction that consumed him. Although he was also being consumed by his love with Kamala, Siddhartha realized he was becoming the very child-people he had despised. He decides to close this chapter of his life and leave. At the end of the chapter, we find that Kamala is pregnant with Siddhartha’s child.
*Siddhartha has a dream where he sees a songbird trapped in a cage. This songbird represents Siddhartha and how he lacks freedom being stuck in the cage. At the end of the chapter, we see Siddhartha grow as a person and leave the comfort of the village. Kamaswami is desperate to find him; however, Kamala decided to set him free. Similar to Siddhartha’s dream, Kamala goes to the window and lets her songbird go.*