

'The Daydreamer' by Ian McEwan

Chapter synopses

Introducing Peter: Peter Fortune is introduced. He is a boy with a vivid and active imagination.

The Dolls: Peter fights with his sister, and then gets his own bedroom. When he goes into his sister's bedroom, he imagines that her dolls come alive. The Bad Doll wants to punish Peter.

The Cat: The family cat is old. Peter imagines slipping into the cat's body. He goes on a final adventure, and defeats the other local cats in a fight.

Vanishing Cream: Peter finds an old jar of cream. He imagines it is vanishing cream. He rubs it over his family, making them disappear. He soon regrets making all his family vanish.

The Bully: Peter wonders if he can be certain he exists. There is a bully at school. The bully tries to pick on Peter. Peter is not concerned by the bully because he does not know if the bully is even real. The bully is embarrassed. Peter and the bully eventually become friends.

The Burglar: A burglar is stealing from all the houses on the street. Peter devises a clever plan to stay home and catch the burglar.

The Baby: Peter's aunt and baby cousin come to live with his family for a while. Peter becomes annoyed by the baby. He imagines becoming the baby. He realises that he should show more empathy to the baby.

The Grown-up: Peter and his family go on holiday in Cornwall. Peter and his sister play with children from other families also on holiday. Peter imagines that he is a grown-up. He realises that being an adult is not entirely boring. The novel ends with Peter excited about all the possibilities his future holds.

Influences on 'The Daydreamer'

| Text | Author | How it influenced 'The Daydreamer' |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 'Metamorphoses' | Ovid | Transformations |
| 'Frankenstein' | Mary Shelley | A monster is brought to life |
| 'Metamorphosis' | Franz Kafka | Someone is transformed into an animal |
| 'Oliver Twist' | Charles Dickens | A bully picks on a weaker character |

Key vocabulary

prose – prose is direct writing. It is straightforward.

metamorphosis – a metamorphosis is a transformation

virtue – a virtue is an advantage or useful quality; a good thing

inherent – something that is inherent is inborn; built in

cogito ergo sum – a Latin phrase, meaning 'I think, therefore I am'

summary – a summary is a brief description of something

empathy - empathy is the ability to imagine what it must be like to be in someone's situation

plight – a plight is an unpleasant or difficult situation

Biographical information

- Ian McEwan is an English author.
- He was born in 1948.
- He has written a number of books, including 'Atonement', 'On Chesil Beach', and 'Enduring Love'.
- 'The Daydreamer' was first published in 1994.