

Chapter 1 : Winesburg, Ohio - Mother

Hands () By Sherwood Anderson Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked.

Early life[edit] Sherwood Berton Anderson was born on September 13, in Camden, Ohio , a farming town with a population of around according to the census. Reasons for the departure are uncertain; most biographers note rumors of debts incurred by either Irwin [3] [4] or his brother Benjamin. This period later inspired his semi-autobiographical novel *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* As a newsboy he was said to have convinced a tired farmer in a saloon to buy two copies of the same evening paper. In addition to participating in local events and spending time with his friends, Anderson was a voracious reader. His father had started to disappear for weeks. His brother Karl lived in the city and was studying at the Art Institute. Anderson moved in with him and quickly found a job at a cold-storage plant. Following the example of his Clyde confederate and lifelong friend Cliff Paden later to become known as John Emerson and Karl, Anderson took up the idea of furthering his education by enrolling in night school at the Lewis Institute. Although he had limited resources while in Chicago, Anderson bought a new suit and returned to Clyde to join the military. Fighting had ceased four months prior to their arrival. On April 21, , they left Cuba having seen no combat. For the first of these traits he was frequently teased, but the second brought him the respect it usually does in armies. In his time there he performed well, earning good marks and participating in several extracurricular activities. In the spring of Anderson graduated from the Academy, offering a discourse on Zionism as one of the eight students chosen to give a commencement speech. More importantly, according to Anderson, she "first introduced me to fine literature" [37] and would later serve as inspiration for a number of his characters including the teacher Kate Swift in Winesburg, Ohio. The two were married a year later, on the 16th of May, in Lucas, Ohio. They went to church on Sundays, with Anderson decked out in morning clothes and top hat. On occasional Sunday afternoons Cornelia taught him French. She also helped with his advertising work. Soon, letters addressed to Anderson who personally guaranteed all products sold began to arrive from customers both desperate and angry. The strain from months of answering hundreds of these letters while continuing his demanding schedule at work and home led to a nervous breakdown in the summer of and eventually his departure from the company. According to his secretary, he opened some mail, and in the course of dictating a business letter became distracted. After writing a note to his wife, he murmured something along the lines of "I feel as though my feet were wet, and they keep getting wetter. Four days later, on Sunday December 1, a disoriented Anderson entered a drug store on East nd Street in Cleveland and asked the pharmacist to help figure out his identity. Unable to make out what the incoherent Anderson was saying, the pharmacist discovered a phone book on his person and called the number of Edwin Baxter, a member of the Elyria Chamber of Commerce. All of a sudden, the breakdown became voluntary. The Evening Telegram reported possibly spuriously [65] that "As soon as he recovers from the trance into which he placed himself, Sherwood Anderson Again I resorted to slickness, to craftiness The thought occurred to me that if men thought me a little insane they would forgive me if I lit out It was known to his wife, secretary, and some business associates that for several years Anderson had been working on personal writing projects both at night and occasionally in his office at the factory. The general confusion and frequent incoherence the notes exhibit is unlikely to be deliberate. Later, he married his mistress, the sculptor Tennessee Claflin Mitchell â€” This book, along with his second novel, *Marching Men* , are usually considered his "apprentice novels" because they came before Anderson found fame with Winesburg, Ohio and are generally considered inferior in quality to works that followed. In his memoir, he wrote that "Hands", the opening story, was the first "real" story he ever wrote. These characters are stunted by the narrowness of Midwestern small-town life and by their own limitations. In , he published *Poor White* , which was rather successful. In , Anderson published *Many Marriages* ; in it he explored the new sexual freedom, a theme which he continued in *Dark Laughter* and later writing. For a time, they entertained William Faulkner , Carl Sandburg , Edmund Wilson and other writers, for whom Anderson was a major influence. After several years that marriage also failed. In Anderson became involved with Eleanor Gladys

Copenhaver” In , Anderson and Copenhaver married. They were both active in the trade union movement. In , he was commissioned to go to Franklin County, Virginia to cover a major federal trial of bootleggers and gangsters, in what was called "The Great Moonshine Conspiracy". More than 30 men had been indicted for trial. In his article, he said Franklin was the "wettest county in the world," a phrase used as a title for a 21st-century novel by Matt Bondurant. In , Anderson dedicated his novel *Beyond Desire* to Copenhaver. Although by this time he was considered to be less influential overall in American literature, some of what have become his most quoted passages were published in these later works. The books were otherwise considered below the level of quality of his earlier ones. *Beyond Desire* built on his interest in the trade union movement and was set during the Loray Mill Strike in Gastonia, North Carolina. Hemingway referred to it satirically in his novel, *To Have and Have Not* , where he included as a minor character an author working on a novel of Gastonia. In his later years, Anderson and Copenhaver lived on his Ripshin Farm in Troutdale, Virginia , which he purchased in for use during summers. Designed by Wharton Esherick and executed in black granite by Victor Riu. Anderson died on March 8, , at the age of 64, taken ill during a cruise to South America. He had been feeling abdominal discomfort for a few days, which was later diagnosed as peritonitis. It may be toured by appointment.

Chapter 2 : Hands Summary - calendrierdelascience.com

In Hands by Sherwood Anderson we have the theme of isolation, loneliness, alienation, fear, freedom and connection. Taken from his Winesburg, Ohio collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and very early on in the story the reader realises that Anderson may be exploring the theme of isolation and loneliness.

He recalls that it was "widely condemned," described as "a sewer," and its author was called "sex-obsessed. With the tongs I carried it down into the cellar and put it in the furnace. Anderson, however, like other American naturalists in the early twentieth century, thought that sex should be given its proper place in the picture of life. Stephen Crane had described a prostitute in Maggie, A Girl of the Streets and Theodore Dreiser had let his immoral heroine in Sister Carrie become a successful actress, but none of the fiction writers had dared describe a sexual pervert. Anderson, therefore, was thought of in his day as daringly frank, and Winesburg, Ohio was labeled Freudian. The old man, who is described as fat, frightened, and nervous, seems too ineffectual to be dangerous. His bald forehead "noticed because his nervous hands fiddle about arranging non-existent hair" suggests his loss of strength and virility. The picture of Adolph Myers with the boys of his school is similar to the dream which Wing tries to describe to George, a "pastoral golden age" in which clean-limbed young men gathered about the feet of an old man who talked to them. Unfortunately, Wing has not been allowed to realize this dream, so his creative impulse, his longing to mold his students, has become thwarted. Because a half-witted boy imagined unmentionable things, Adolph Myers was driven from a Pennsylvania town in the night. Production such as this the town can understand and acclaim. Similarly, Anderson felt that the mercenary world had not sympathized with his longing to write fiction, but had rewarded his glibness in advertising. Wing Biddlebaum is not only frustrated but lonely, as are most of the citizens of Winesburg. As the story begins, the old man is seen on his half-decayed veranda late in the afternoon, wishing that George Willard would visit him. Passing along the road nearby are a group of young berry pickers, laughing, shouting, and flirting with one another. These intrusions of the author into the story give the effect of an oral story teller "an effect which Anderson probably learned from his storytelling father. His life no longer has any climaxes; he is a static, not a developing, character. The central symbol of this powerful story is, of course, hands, an image that will be important in other stories in Winesburg. Consistently Anderson seems to suggest that hands are made for creative impulses, for communication. As Wing kneels on the floor, he is described as being "like a priest engaged in some service of his church. Although "Hands" is the story of Wing Biddlebaum, we are also introduced to George Willard, the young reporter who appears in many of the Winesburg tales. Like Wing, George has creative impulses, but at this point, as Wing tells George, "You are afraid of dreams. You want to be like others in town here. You must begin to dream. You must shut your ears to the roaring of the voices. In his Memoirs, Sherwood Anderson says that he wrote "Hands" at one sitting on a dark, snowy night in Chicago. It was, he says, his "first authentic tale," so good that he laughed, cried, and shouted out of his boarding house window. Examination of the original manuscript shows that Anderson was not quite accurate in that statement, but he actually revised very little in this story. However, he did insert last names for his characters several times so that neither Wing Biddlebaum nor George Willard is ever called by a single name. Another change that also seems effective occurs in the sentence, "He raised the hands [changed from "his hands"] to caress the boy. In this helplessness lies the power of the story; "Hands" haunts us because we recognize in Wing Biddlebaum our own helplessness and we see how thoughtlessly society can persecute what it does not understand. Perhaps we see ourselves in both Wing and in the society that has ruined his life.

Chapter 3 : "Hands" by Sherwood Anderson by on Prezi

Sherwood Anderson's 'Hands' is a story structured around the hands of Wing Biddlebaum, which express ideas about truth, beauty, and the grotesque. Truth and our ability to attain it are questioned.

Across a long field that had been seeded for clover but that had produced only a dense crop of yellow mustard weeds, he could see the public highway along which went a wagon filled with berry pickers returning from the fields. The berry pickers, youths and maidens, laughed and shouted boisterously. A boy clad in a blue shirt leaped from the wagon and attempted to drag after him one of the maidens, who screamed and protested shrilly. The feet of the boy in the road kicked up a cloud of dust that floated across the face of the departing sun. Over the long field came a thin girlish voice. Wing Biddlebaum, forever frightened and beset by a ghostly band of doubts, did not think of himself as in any way a part of the life of the town where he had lived for twenty years. Among all the people of Winesburg but one had come close to him. Now as the old man walked up and down on the veranda, his hands moving nervously about, he was hoping that George Willard would come and spend the evening with him. After the wagon containing the berry pickers had passed, he went across the field through the tall mustard weeds and climbing a rail fence peered anxiously along the road to the town. For a moment he stood thus, rubbing his hands together and looking up and down the road, and then, fear overcoming him, ran back to walk again upon the porch on his own house. In the presence of George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum, who for twenty years had been the town mystery, lost something of his timidity, and his shadowy personality, submerged in a sea of doubts, came forth to look at the world. With the young reporter at his side, he ventured in the light of day into Main Street or strode up and down on the rickety front porch of his own house, talking excitedly. The voice that had been low and trembling became shrill and loud. The bent figure straightened. With a kind of wriggle, like a fish returned to the brook by the fisherman, Biddlebaum the silent began to talk, striving to put into words the ideas that had been accumulated by his mind during long years of silence. Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression. The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name. Some obscure poet of the town had thought of it. The hands alarmed their owner. He wanted to keep them hidden away and looked with amazement at the quiet inexpressive hands of other men who worked beside him in the fields, or passed, driving sleepy teams on country roads. When he talked to George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum closed his fists and beat with them upon a table or on the walls of his house. The action made him more comfortable. If the desire to talk came to him when the two were walking in the fields, he sought out a stump or the top board of a fence and with his hands pounding busily talked with renewed ease. Sympathetically set forth it would tap many strange, beautiful qualities in obscure men. It is a job for a poet. In Winesburg the hands had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame. Also they made more grotesque an already grotesque and elusive individuality. As for George Willard, he had many times wanted to ask about the hands. At times an almost overwhelming curiosity had taken hold of him. He felt that there must be a reason for their strange activity and their inclination to keep hidden away and only a growing respect for Wing Biddlebaum kept him from blurting out the questions that were often in his mind. Once he had been on the point of asking. The two were walking in the fields on a summer afternoon and had stopped to sit upon a grassy bank. All afternoon Wing Biddlebaum had talked as one inspired. By a fence he had stopped and beating like a giant woodpecker upon the top board had shouted at George Willard, condemning his tendency to be too much influenced by the people about him, "You are destroying yourself," he cried. You want to be like others in town here. You hear them talk and you try to imitate them. His voice became soft and reminiscent, and with a sigh of contentment he launched into a long rambling talk, speaking as one lost in a dream. Out of the dream Wing Biddlebaum made a picture for George Willard. In the picture men lived again in a kind of pastoral golden age. Across a green open country came

clean-limbed young men, some afoot, some mounted upon horses. In crowds the young men came to gather about the feet of an old man who sat beneath a tree in a tiny garden and who talked to them. Wing Biddlebaum became wholly inspired. For once he forgot the hands. Something new and bold came into the voice that talked. From this time on you must shut your ears to the roaring of the voices. Again he raised the hands to caress the boy and then a look of horror swept over his face. With a convulsive movement of his body, Wing Biddlebaum sprang to his feet and thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Tears came to his eyes. "I can talk no more with you," he said nervously. Without looking back, the old man had hurried down the hillside and across a meadow, leaving George Willard perplexed and frightened upon the grassy slope. With a shiver of dread the boy arose and went along the road toward town. His hands have something to do with his fear of me and of everyone. Let us look briefly into the story of the hands. Perhaps our talking of them will arouse the poet who will tell the hidden wonder story of the influence for which the hands were but fluttering pennants of promise. In his youth Wing Biddlebaum had been a school teacher in a town in Pennsylvania. He was not then known as Wing Biddlebaum, but went by the less euphonic name of Adolph Myers. As Adolph Myers he was much loved by the boys of his school. Adolph Myers was meant by nature to be a teacher of youth. He was one of those rare, little-understood men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness. In their feeling for the boys under their charge such men are not unlike the finer sort of women in their love of men. And yet that is but crudely stated. It needs the poet there. With the boys of his school, Adolph Myers had walked in the evening or had sat talking until dusk upon the schoolhouse steps lost in a kind of dream. Here and there went his hands, caressing the shoulders of the boys, playing about the tousled heads. As he talked his voice became soft and musical. There was a caress in that also. By the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself. He was one of those men in whom the force that creates life is diffused, not centralized. Under the caress of his hands doubt and disbelief went out of the minds of the boys and they began also to dream. And then the tragedy. A half-witted boy of the school became enamored of the young master. In his bed at night he imagined unspeakable things and in the morning went forth to tell his dreams as facts. Strange, hideous accusations fell from his loose-hung lips. Through the Pennsylvania town went a shiver. The tragedy did not linger. Trembling lads were jerked out of bed and questioned. One afternoon a man of the town, Henry Bradford, who kept a saloon, came to the schoolhouse door. Calling Adolph Myers into the school yard he began to beat him with his fists. As his hard knuckles beat down into the frightened face of the schoolmaster, his wrath became more and more terrible. Screaming with dismay, the children ran here and there like disturbed insects. Adolph Myers was driven from the Pennsylvania town in the night. With lanterns in their hands a dozen men came to the door of the house where he lived alone and commanded that he dress and come forth. It was raining and one of the men had a rope in his hands. They had intended to hang the schoolmaster, but something in his figure, so small, white, and pitiful, touched their hearts and they let him escape. As he ran away into the darkness they repented of their weakness and ran after him, swearing and throwing sticks and great balls of soft mud at the figure that screamed and ran faster and faster into the darkness. For twenty years Adolph Myers had lived alone in Winesburg. He was but forty but looked sixty-five. The name of Biddlebaum he got from a box of goods seen at a freight station as he hurried through an eastern Ohio town. He had an aunt in Winesburg, a black-toothed old woman who raised chickens, and with her he lived until she died. He had been ill for a year after the experience in Pennsylvania, and after his recovery worked as a day laborer in the fields, going timidly about and striving to conceal his hands. Although he did not understand what had happened he felt that the hands must be to blame. Again and again the fathers of the boys had talked of the hands. Upon the veranda of his house by the ravine, Wing Biddlebaum continued to walk up and down until the sun had disappeared and the road beyond the field was lost in the grey shadows. Going into his house he cut slices of bread and spread honey upon them. In the darkness he could not see the hands and they became quiet.

Chapter 4 : Hands by Sherwood Anderson

UPON the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down.

Original Text HANDS Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down. Across a long field that had been seeded for clover but that had produced only a dense crop of yellow mustard weeds, he could see the public highway along which went a wagon filled with berry pickers returning from the fields. The berry pickers, youths and maidens, laughed and shouted boisterously. A boy clad in a blue shirt leaped from the wagon and attempted to drag after him one of the maidens, who screamed and protested shrilly. The feet of the boy in the road kicked up a cloud of dust that floated across the face of the departing sun. Over the long field came a thin girlish voice. Wing Biddlebaum, forever frightened and beset by a ghostly band of doubts, did not think of himself as in any way a part of the life of the town where he had lived for twenty years. Among all the people of Winesburg but one had come close to him. Now as the old man walked up and down on the veranda, his hands moving nervously about, he was hoping that George Willard would come and spend the evening with him. After the wagon containing the berry pickers had passed, he went across the field through the tall mustard weeds and climbing a rail fence peered anxiously along the road to the town. For a moment he stood thus, rubbing his hands together and looking up and down the road, and then, fear overcoming him, ran back to walk again upon the porch on his own house. In the presence of George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum, who for twenty years had been the town mystery, lost something of his timidity, and his shadowy personality, submerged in a sea of doubts, came forth to look at the world. With the young reporter at his side, he ventured in the light of day into Main Street or strode up and down on the rickety front porch of his own house, talking excitedly. The voice that had been low and trembling became shrill and loud. The bent figure straightened. With a kind of wriggle, like a fish returned to the brook by the fisherman, Biddlebaum the silent began to talk, striving to put into words the ideas that had been accumulated by his mind during long years of silence. Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression. The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name. Some obscure poet of the town had thought of it. The hands alarmed their owner. He wanted to keep them hidden away and looked with amazement at the quiet inexpressive hands of other men who worked beside him in the fields, or passed, driving sleepy teams on country roads. When he talked to George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum closed his fists and beat with them upon a table or on the walls of his house. The action made him more comfortable. If the desire to talk came to him when the two were walking in the fields, he sought out a stump or the top board of a fence and with his hands pounding busily talked with renewed ease. Sympathetically set forth it would tap many strange, beautiful qualities in obscure men. It is a job for a poet. In Winesburg the hands had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame. Also they made more grotesque an already grotesque and elusive individuality. As for George Willard, he had many times wanted to ask about the hands. At times an almost overwhelming curiosity had taken hold of him. He felt that there must be a reason for their strange activity and their inclination to keep hidden away and only a growing respect for Wing Biddlebaum kept him from blurting out the questions that were often in his mind. Once he had been on the point of asking. The two were walking in the fields on a summer afternoon and had stopped to sit upon a grassy bank. All afternoon Wing Biddlebaum had talked as one inspired. By a fence he had stopped and beating like a giant woodpecker upon the top board had shouted at George Willard, condemning his tendency to be too much influenced by the people about him, "You are destroying yourself," he cried. You want to be like others in town here. You hear them talk and you try to imitate them. His voice became soft and reminiscent, and with a sigh of contentment he launched into a long rambling talk, speaking

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Chapter 5 : Short Stories: Hands by Sherwood Anderson

Sherwood Anderson Hands Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down.

Although she was but forty-five, some obscure disease had taken the fire out of her figure. Listlessly she went about the disorderly old hotel looking at the faded wall-paper and the ragged carpets and, when she was able to be about, doing the work of a chambermaid among beds soiled by the slumbers of fat traveling men. Her husband, Tom Willard, a slender, graceful man with square shoulders, a quick military step, and a black mustache trained to turn sharply up at the ends, tried to put the wife out of his mind. The presence of the tall ghostly figure, moving slowly through the halls, he took as a reproach to himself. When he thought of her he grew angry and swore. The hotel was unprofitable and forever on the edge of failure and he wished himself out of it. He thought of the old house and the woman who lived there with him as things defeated and done for. The hotel in which he had begun life so hopefully was now a mere ghost of what a hotel should be. As he went spruce and business-like through the streets of Winesburg, he sometimes stopped and turned quickly about as though fearing that the spirit of the hotel and of the woman would follow him even into the streets. Tom Willard had a passion for village politics and for years had been the leading Democrat in a strongly Republican community. Some day, he told himself, the tide of things political will turn in my favor and the years of ineffectual service count big in the bestowal of rewards. He dreamed of going to Congress and even of becoming governor. Once when a younger member of the party arose at a political conference and began to boast of his faithful service, Tom Willard grew white with fury. What are you but a boy? I was a Democrat here in Winesburg when it was a crime to be a Democrat. In the old days they fairly hunted us with guns. In the room by the desk she went through a ceremony that was half a prayer, half a demand, addressed to the skies. In the boyish figure she yearned to see something half forgotten that had once been a part of herself recreated. The prayer concerned that. Her eyes glowed and she clenched her fists. I will pay for it. God may beat me with his fists. I will take any blow that may befall if but this my boy be allowed to express something for us both. The communion between George Willard and his mother was outwardly a formal thing without meaning. When she was ill and sat by the window in her room he sometimes went in the evening to make her a visit. They sat by a window that looked over the roof of a small frame building into Main Street. Sometimes as they sat thus a picture of village life presented itself to them. At the back door of his shop appeared Abner Groff with a stick or an empty milk bottle in his hand. For a long time there was a feud between the baker and a grey cat that belonged to Sylvester West, the druggist. The boy and his mother saw the cat creep into the door of the bakery and presently emerge followed by the baker, who swore and waved his arms about. Sometimes he was so angry that, although the cat had disappeared, he hurled sticks, bits of broken glass, and even some of the tools of his trade about. In the alley the grey cat crouched behind barrels filled with torn paper and broken bottles above which flew a black swarm of flies. Once when she was alone, and after watching a prolonged and ineffectual outburst on the part of the baker, Elizabeth Willard put her head down on her long white hands and wept. After that she did not look along the alleyway any more, but tried to forget the contest between the bearded man and the cat. It seemed like a rehearsal of her own life, terrible in its vividness. In the evening when the son sat in the room with his mother, the silence made them both feel awkward. Darkness came on and the evening train came in at the station. In the street below feet tramped up and down upon a board sidewalk. In the station yard, after the evening train had gone, there was a heavy silence. Perhaps Skinner Leason, the express agent, moved a truck the length of the station platform. The door of the express office banged. George Willard arose and crossing the room fumbled for the doorknob. Sometimes he knocked against a chair, making it scrape along the floor. By the window sat the sick woman, perfectly still, listless. Her long hands, white and bloodless, could be seen drooping over the ends of the arms of the chair. You are too much indoors," she said, striving to relieve the embarrassment of the departure. One evening in July, when the transient guests who made the New Willard House their temporary home had become scarce, and the hallways, lighted only by kerosene lamps turned low, were plunged in gloom,

Elizabeth Willard had an adventure. She had been ill in bed for several days and her son had not come to visit her. As she went along she steadied herself with her hand, slipped along the papered walls of the hall and breathed with difficulty. The air whistled through her teeth. As she hurried forward she thought how foolish she was. The hotel was continually losing patronage because of its shabbiness and she thought of herself as also shabby. Her own room was in an obscure corner and when she felt able to work she voluntarily worked among the beds, preferring the labor that could be done when the guests were abroad seeking trade among the merchants of Winesburg. When she heard the boy moving about and talking in low tones a smile came to her lips. George Willard had a habit of talking aloud to himself and to hear him doing so had always given his mother a peculiar pleasure. The habit in him, she felt, strengthened the secret bond that existed between them. A thousand times she had whispered to herself of the matter. Within him there is a secret something that is striving to grow. It is the thing I let be killed in myself. She was afraid that the door would open and the boy come upon her. When she had reached a safe distance and was about to turn a corner into a second hallway she stopped and bracing herself with her hands waited, thinking to shake off a trembling fit of weakness that had come upon her. The presence of the boy in the room had made her happy. In her bed, during the long hours alone, the little fears that had visited her had become giants. Now they were all gone. But Elizabeth Willard was not to return to her bed and to sleep. In the light that steamed out at the door he stood with the knob in his hand and talked. What he said infuriated the woman. Tom Willard was ambitious for his son. He had always thought of himself as a successful man, although nothing he had ever done had turned out successfully. However, when he was out of sight of the New Willard House and had no fear of coming upon his wife, he swaggered and began to dramatize himself as one of the chief men of the town. He wanted his son to succeed. He it was who had secured for the boy the position on the Winesburg Eagle. Now, with a ring of earnestness in his voice, he was advising concerning some course of conduct. He says you go along for hours not hearing when you are spoken to and acting like a gawky girl. What you say clears things up. The woman in the darkness could hear him laughing and talking with a guest who was striving to wear away a dull evening by dozing in a chair by the office door. The weakness had passed from her body as by a miracle and she stepped boldly along. A thousand ideas raced through her head. When she heard the scraping of a chair and the sound of a pen scratching upon paper, she again turned and went back along the hallway to her own room. A definite determination had come into the mind of the defeated wife of the Winesburg hotel keeper. The determination was the result of long years of quiet and rather ineffectual thinking. There is something threatening my boy and I will ward it off. Although for years she had hated her husband, her hatred had always before been a quite impersonal thing. He had been merely a part of something else that she hated. Now, and by the few words at the door, he had become the thing personified. In the darkness of her own room she clenched her fists and glared about. Going to a cloth bag that hung on a nail by the wall she took out a long pair of sewing scissors and held them in her hand like a dagger. When I have killed him something will snap within myself and I will die also. It will be a release for all of us. In her own mind the tall dark girl had been in those days much confused. A great restlessness was in her and it expressed itself in two ways. First there was an uneasy desire for change, for some big definite movement to her life. It was this feeling that had turned her mind to the stage. She dreamed of joining some company and wandering over the world, seeing always new faces and giving something out of herself to all people. They did not seem to know what she meant, or if she did get something of her passion expressed, they only laughed. Nothing comes of it. Always they seemed to understand and sympathize with her. On the side streets of the village, in the darkness under the trees, they took hold of her hand and she thought that something unexpressed in herself came forth and became a part of an unexpressed something in them. And then there was the second expression of her restlessness.

Chapter 6 : SparkNotes: Winesburg, Ohio: "The Book of the Grotesque," "Hands," "Paper Pills"

In his Memoirs, Sherwood Anderson says that he wrote "Hands" at one sitting on a dark, snowy night in Chicago. It was, he says, his "first authentic tale," so good that he laughed, cried, and shouted out of his boarding house window.

After the work is completed, the old writer lies in bed and thinks about death. As he nears sleep, all the people he has ever met pass slowly before his eyes. He sees them all as "grotesques," some amusing, some terribly sad, and some horrifying. Immediately after this experience, he climbs out of bed and writes everything that he saw down in a book, which he calls "The Book of the Grotesque. The old man writes on this subject for hundreds and hundreds of pages, his obsession almost making himself a grotesque; in the end, he never publishes the book. After this peculiar introduction, the first chapter begins. Entitled "Hands," it tells the story of Wing Biddlebaum, an eccentric, nervous man who lives on the outskirts of the town of Winesburg, Ohio. Despite having lived in Winesburg for twenty years, Biddlebaum has never become close to anyone, with the exception of George Willard, a young man who works as a reporter for the Winesburg Eagle. On this particular evening, Biddlebaum is pacing on his porch, hoping that George will visit. As he paces, he fiddles with his hands, which are famous for their dexterity and wanton behavior. He was very talented, but during his passionate lectures, he would often caress the shoulders and heads of his pupils, and one boy accused him of molestation. The schoolteacher barely made it out of town with his life, changed his name, and moved to Winesburg, where he lives in a seclusion broken only by his friendship with George Willard. On this particular evening, George does not come to visit. The next story, "Paper Pills," concerns the aged Doctor Reefy, who has worn the same suit of clothes for ten years. The old doctor was married once, to a much younger woman who died a year after their marriage. She was an heiress with two principal suitors, one who "talked continually of virginity," and one who said almost nothing at all before trying to kiss her. Eventually, she became pregnant by the quiet suitor, and went to Doctor Reefy for medical help. After she had a miscarriage, she and the doctor were married, and during their few months of happiness he would read to her from what he had written on the little scraps of paper in his pockets. Commentary Winesburg, Ohio is an idiosyncratic work, falling somewhere between a novel and a collection of short stories. Its twenty-four sections all involve the inhabitants of Winesburg, and all are connected, though not directly linked as the chapters of a novel would be. The only framing device that Anderson provides for this succession of vignettes is the peculiar prologue entitled "The Book of the Grotesque," in which a nameless old man envisions caricatured individuals obsessed with various truths. This vision provides a key to the rest of the work, since each one of the subsequent twenty-four sections can be interpreted as a portrayal of a "grotesque" human being. Anderson, however, does not make the connection explicit: Wing Biddlebaum, the first character introduced, bears an element of the grotesque in his odd relationship to his remarkable hands, which are the root of all his troubles. By means of flashback, it is revealed that his hands have stripped him of his teaching career and isolated him from the rest of humanity, even to the point of making him change his name. Nearly all of his characters are alienated in some way, either physically or emotionally, from the rest of society. The major exception is George Willard, also introduced in the first section. He does not bear the burdens that life has pressed on the backs of the other characters, and he feels no sense of alienation.

Chapter 7 : Hands | Introduction & Overview

Sherwood Anderson (September 13, - March 8,) was an American novelist and short story writer, known for subjective and self-revealing works. Self-educated, he rose to become a successful copywriter and business owner in Cleveland and Elyria, Ohio.

Sherwood Anderson Hands Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down. Across a long field that had been seeded for clover but that had produced only a dense crop of yellow mustard weeds, he could see the public highway along which went a wagon filled with berry pickers returning from the fields. The berry pickers, youths and maidens, laughed and shouted boisterously. A boy clad in a blue shirt leaped from the wagon and attempted to drag after him one of the maidens, who screamed and protested shrilly. The feet of the boy in the road kicked up a cloud of dust that floated across the face of the departing sun. Over the long field came a thin girlish voice. Wing Biddlebaum, forever frightened and beset by a ghostly band of doubts, did not think of himself as in any way a part of the life of the town where he had lived for twenty years. Among all the people of Winesburg but one had come close to him. Now as the old man walked up and down on the veranda, his hands moving nervously about, he was hoping that George Willard would come and spend the evening with him. After the wagon containing the berry pickers had passed, he went across the field through the tall mustard weeds and climbing a rail fence peered anxiously along the road to the town. For a moment he stood thus, rubbing his hands together and looking up and down the road, and then, fear overcoming him, ran back to walk again upon the porch on his own house. With the young reporter at his side, he ventured in the light of day into Main Street or strode up and down on the rickety front porch of his own house, talking excitedly. The voice that had been low and trembling became shrill and loud. The bent figure straightened. With a kind of wriggle, like a fish returned to the brook by the fisherman, Biddlebaum the silent began to talk, striving to put into words the ideas that had been accumulated by his mind during long years of silence. Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression. The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name. Some obscure poet of the town had thought of it. The hands alarmed their owner. He wanted to keep them hidden away and looked with amazement at the quiet inexpressive hands of other men who worked beside him in the fields, or passed, driving sleepy teams on country roads. When he talked to George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum closed his fists and beat with them upon a table or on the walls of his house. The action made him more comfortable. If the desire to talk came to him when the two were walking in the fields, he sought out a stump or the top board of a fence and with his hands pounding busily talked with renewed ease. Sympathetically set forth it would tap many strange, beautiful qualities in obscure men. It is a job for a poet. In Winesburg the hands had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame. Also they made more grotesque an already grotesque and elusive individuality. At times an almost overwhelming curiosity had taken hold of him. He felt that there must be a reason for their strange activity and their inclination to keep hidden away and only a growing respect for Wing Biddlebaum kept him from blurting out the questions that were often in his mind. Once he had been on the point of asking. The two were walking in the fields on a summer afternoon and had stopped to sit upon a grassy bank. All afternoon Wing Biddlebaum had talked as one inspired. By a fence he had stopped and beating like a giant woodpecker upon the top board had shouted at George Willard, condemning his tendency to be too much influenced by the people about him, "You are destroying yourself," he cried. You want to be like others in town here. You hear them talk and you try to imitate them. His voice became soft and reminiscent, and with a sigh of contentment he launched into a long rambling talk, speaking as one lost in a dream. Out of the dream Wing Biddlebaum made a picture for George Willard. In the picture men lived again in a kind of pastoral golden age. Across a green open country

came clean-limbed young men, some afoot, some mounted upon horses. In crowds the young men came to gather about the feet of an old man who sat beneath a tree in a tiny garden and who talked to them. Wing Biddlebaum became wholly inspired. For once he forgot the hands. Something new and bold came into the voice that talked. From this time on you must shut your ears to the roaring of the voices. Again he raised the hands to caress the boy and then a look of horror swept over his face. With a convulsive movement of his body, Wing Biddlebaum sprang to his feet and thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Tears came to his eyes. "I can talk no more with you," he said nervously. Without looking back, the old man had hurried down the hillside and across a meadow, leaving George Willard perplexed and frightened upon the grassy slope. With a shiver of dread the boy arose and went along the road toward town. His hands have something to do with his fear of me and of everyone. Let us look briefly into the story of the hands. Perhaps our talking of them will arouse the poet who will tell the hidden wonder story of the influence for which the hands were but fluttering pennants of promise. In his youth Wing Biddlebaum had been a school teacher in a town in Pennsylvania. He was not then known as Wing Biddlebaum, but went by the less euphonic name of Adolph Myers. As Adolph Myers he was much loved by the boys of his school. Adolph Myers was meant by nature to be a teacher of youth. He was one of those rare, little understood men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness. In their feeling for the boys under their charge such men are not unlike the finer sort of women in their love of men. And yet that is but crudely stated. It needs the poet there. With the boys of his school, Adolph Myers had walked in the evening or had sat talking until dusk upon the schoolhouse steps lost in a kind of dream. Here and there went his hands, caressing the shoulders of the boys, playing about the tousled heads. As he talked his voice became soft and musical. There was a caress in that also. By the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself. He was one of those men in whom the force that creates life is diffused, not centralized. Under the caress of his hands doubt and disbelief went out of the minds of the boys and they began also to dream. A half-witted boy of the school became enamored of the young master. In his bed at night he imagined unspeakable things and in the morning went forth to tell his dreams as facts. Strange, hideous accusations fell from his loose-hung lips. Through the Pennsylvania town went a shiver. The tragedy did not linger. Trembling lads were jerked out of bed and questioned. One afternoon a man of the town, Henry Bradford, who kept a saloon, came to the schoolhouse door. Calling Adolph Myers into the school yard he began to beat him with his fists. As his hard knuckles beat down into the frightened face of the schoolmaster, his wrath became more and more terrible. Screaming with dismay, the children ran here and there like disturbed insects. Adolph Myers was driven from the Pennsylvania town in the night. With lanterns in their hands a dozen men came to the door of the house where he lived alone and commanded that he dress and come forth. It was raining and one of the men had a rope in his hands. They had intended to hang the schoolmaster, but something in his figure, so small, white, and pitiful, touched their hearts and they let him escape. As he ran away into the darkness they repented of their weakness and ran after him, swearing and throwing sticks and great balls of soft mud at the figure that screamed and ran faster and faster into the darkness. For twenty years Adolph Myers had lived alone in Winesburg. He was but forty but looked sixty-five. The name of Biddlebaum he got from a box of goods seen at a freight station as he hurried through an eastern Ohio town. He had an aunt in Winesburg, a black-toothed old woman who raised chickens, and with her he lived until she died. He had been ill for a year after the experience in Pennsylvania, and after his recovery worked as a day laborer in the fields, going timidly about and striving to conceal his hands. Although he did not understand what had happened he felt that the hands must be to blame. Again and again the fathers of the boys had talked of the hands. Going into his house he cut slices of bread and spread honey upon them. In the darkness he could not see the hands and they became quiet. Although he still hungered for the presence of the boy, who was the medium through which he expressed his love of man, the hunger became again a part of his loneliness and his waiting. Lighting a lamp, Wing Biddlebaum washed the few dishes soiled by his simple meal and, setting up a folding cot by the screen door that led to the porch, prepared to undress for the night. A few stray white bread crumbs lay on the cleanly washed floor by the table; putting the lamp upon a low stool he began to pick up the crumbs, carrying them to his mouth one by one with unbelievable rapidity.

Chapter 8 : Sherwood Anderson Quotes (Author of Winesburg, Ohio)

A summary of "The Book of the Grotesque," "Hands," "Paper Pills" in Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio. Learn exactly what happened in this chapter, scene, or section of Winesburg, Ohio and what it means.

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Anderson's device to designate the whole through the part underlines the story's overall fragmentaries, and points to the impossibility of perceiving and telling experience in an unified totality (hands caressing the children, fruit picking, beating, Adolph's voice, fingers, "wing", etc.).