

## Summary and Dialectical Journal Assignment

Title of book: The Book of Beginnings and Endings

Author: Jenny Boully

Publisher: Sarabande Books

City and Date of Publication: 11/1/2007

### Summaries:

You will need to write a brief summary (3-5 sentences) in your own words for each lyrical essay in the collection, or at least 15 lyrical essays. It would be helpful to write a summary directly after finishing your reading, while it is still fresh in your mind. DO NOT copy summaries from the internet or share summaries with other Honors students reading the same work(s); the summaries must be your own.

"Title" + page # range	Summary:
1. On the Varieties of Winged Creatures (pg.17-18)	In this essay Boully formats her work into different sections using roman numeral headings and italics. She discusses the different types of creatures ranging from those who are from Heaven to those from Earth and those who are manufactured by Man. She uses the word "they" to go into detail about each type of person.
2. On Probability (pg.19-20)	In this essay Boully goes on to discuss her interest in the sheer size of the universe and the possibilities. She compares how learning about things in small seminars is "nil" compared to much larger things such as star-formation, vastness of space-time, the afterlife, etc. She goes on to discuss these ideas and essentially the mysteries behind each.
3. On the Use of Dialogue in Literature (pg. 21-22)	In this essay Boully explains how to create deeper reactions and connections. She

	explores the ideas of deepening the dialogue in plays. She contrasts this with real life interactions that she claims lacks a connection with the soul and with how novels utilize dialogue.
4. The Realization of the Infinite (pg.29-30)	In this essay Bouilly toys with the idea of a machine that can record thoughts and create images. She then later explains that the machine does exist, and it is the human body. She compares these ideas with a short story about her father and how he farms.
5. I. (31-32)	In this essay Bouilly explains an old woman's dream about being a 4-year-old and flying over her childhood home. This dream was happening right before she died so it is described as if she is living her whole life again quickly.
6. Every Winged Thing Passes Unmolested Through Infinity (pg.33-34)	In this essay Bouilly talks about how it is important to trust what is seen instead of trust what is unseen. She compares this to wings found on humans in old paintings and how we don't have wings now.
7. An Introduction to Invertebrate Zoology (pg.35-36)	In this essay Bouilly explains science and Zoology. She goes into detail about specific terms such as "fauna" and "flora." She structures sentences by stating an animal and then describing it.
8. Notebook for the Amateur Naturalist (pg.37-38)	In this essay Bouilly discusses finding the perfect ecosystem. She then goes into detail about the process of collecting and analyzing a specimen. She continues through her essay exploring different types of trees and other small animals.
9. On the Care & Repair of Books (pg.39-40)	In this essay Bouilly discusses the meaning of poetry and explains that some people think poets die even though they really just stop writing. She also lightly discusses that people claim to understand what old poems mean without knowing the poet or truly creating their own thoughts about it.
10. Payne's Grey (pg.41-42)	In this essay Bouilly talks about a love story

	and uses bird references to explore her thoughts. She explains the narrative by starting with the good times, and then hits a turning point where things go bad, and then ends with an ominous statement.
11. Essay on Trees (pg.43-44)	In this essay Bouilly explains two different types of trees: Poplars and Live Oaks. She characterizes Poplars as a person that dies while someone is away. She characterizes Live Oaks as someone who wishes to die.
12. I. (pg.45-46)	In this essay Bouilly explains interacting with a friend that you later lose. She uses metaphors to explore the feelings that come with this event. She also uses flowers to explain throughout her writing, which can be connected back to some of her previous essays.
13. February Fooled the Forsythia (pg.49-50)	In this essay Bouilly explores the idea of a breakup through using a metaphor of seasons. Each season describes a different phase of the relationship and in the end Bouilly describes the breakup. She hints that her essay is about a relationship by placing different aspects of it in her writing.
14. Strange Mechanism for a Dream (pg.51-52)	In this essay Bouilly explores the idea of forever being alive even after death. She uses starts to describe her thoughts on this and repeats the word "forbear." She does this all while setting the scene of the essay in a doctor's office.
15. On the Reading of (pg.53-54)	In this essay Bouilly discusses peoples origins. She uses the analogy of a knife throughout her writing. She then moves in to discuss reading and how everyone perceives books differently.

### **Dialectical Journals:**

Dialectical journals document your interaction with quoted passages from your reading that you regard as thought-provoking, useful, or otherwise valuable in the context of your current project. This assignment should be completed as you read, giving you model passages for your

emulation piece (as well as comparison quotations you can use for your explanation of your emulation piece) – use it accordingly!

**As you read, record extended passages that you find to be powerful examples of the author’s style and voice (the boxes below expand). Analyze each passage thoroughly and add commentary and questions that you find useful for planning your own writing project. Wherever possible, identify specific literary techniques and explain how the author uses them to represent their subject powerfully and uniquely.**

**At least 9 dialectical journal entries are required (you may add rows and do more if you wish):**

## Dialectical Journal Table:

<p><b>1.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> On the Varieties of Winged Creatures</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b> “If they are such miraculous creatures, why then aren’t they able to retrieve such useless items on their won, when they creep in at night, as they do, as they will continue forever to do, when you are sleeping and dreaming?” pg.17</p>	<p><b>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</b></p> <p>In this passage Bouilly is speculating the nature of the type of person that “falls from Heaven.” Before this passage she describes a person who requests to obtain something they left in someone's apartment. In a way, the tone she uses here has a hint of curiosity but more in a mocking way. She uses these rhetorical questions to express what she believes are invalid reasons for a person to behave this way. When she talks about someone breaking into the house to get the item, she means it figuratively. She emulates that people who fall from heaven are considered desirable, so even months after an affair, they still lay in your dreams while you are sleeping, almost as if you can never get rid of them. When interpreting this passage, it seems as if the person still thinks about the returner, and almost wishes they would return.</p>
<p><b>2.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> On Probability</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b> “However, as one grows older-specifically, as one begins that violent snap into puberty-one begins to believe less and less miracles. Children live in miracles, but for the adult a miracle becomes something unbelievable: <i>I can't believe it: it's a miracle</i>, people will say</p>	<p><b>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</b></p> <p>In this essay Bouilly explores the expansive ideas and areas of the world. Throughout this exploration she touches on miracles as being something children believe in, but adults do not. In a way, through her writing, Bouilly makes you want to relate more with the children’s side. She frames the way a child</p>

<p>upon the resurrection of the dead or the ability of some people to walk away from scenes of disasters unscathed. In adulthood, only those events which seem to live in the 0.00000001 percent margins of probability and which seem to have no rational basis for occurring can be attributed to a <i>miracle</i>.” pg.19</p>	<p>views a miracle with a very optimistic and loving idea. It seems as though Bouilly is bullying the way adults view miracles and talks depressingly about how after puberty the young spirited minds of children decline. She uses probability when saying “0.00000001 percent margins of probability and which seem to have no rational basis for occurring can be attributed to a <i>miracle</i>,” to describe how people categorize a miracle.</p>
<p><b>3.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> On the Use of Dialogue in Literature</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b> “What the novel can accomplish that real life cannot is miraculous indeed: a character can express his most inner thoughts, however blase or insane, without dialogue, and still speak to other characters as well as the reader though dialogue. There is something inside that wants to break free but is afraid of impending insanity. How then, in writing or life, to transfer what is inside and have it interact with, enjoy an existence in, the outside?” pg.21</p>	<p>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</p> <p>Throughout this whole essay Bouilly discusses the supreme importance of deep dialogue and how it adds so much to the world. In this passage she goes into detail about the significance of thoughts in novels, and how it is easy to achieve a deeper level because the inner thoughts of a character can so easily be expressed. She explains that even without the use of blatant quote dialogue in books, profound ideas can still be expressed because it is possible to speak to the reader through the page. At the end of this passage she connects this back to life while saying that there should be a balance between what we feel inside and the existence of what we have outside.</p>
<p><b>4.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> The Realization of the Infinite</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b> “It occurred to me that there ought to exist some sort of machinery that could record accurately the thoughts and epiphanies, the visions and idealization of the user. What image of beauty we hold exists so brilliantly, this image so that it becomes viewable by others. If I think of a visual image, the machine would then be able to reproduce perfectly this image in the form of a painting.” pg.29</p>	<p>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</p> <p>In this passage Bouilly is describing her ideal machine. This machine would be able to capture the thoughts of a person and replicate either the poetic words they are thinking or the exact image in their mind. I believe that she would want this machine because as a poet herself, it would probably be very useful. Bouilly then explains that the machine she is talking about takes its best form as the human body. She compares transcribing to metaphors. In this way, as she has done in many of her essays, Bouilly</p>

	<p>connects a large and imaginative idea to something realistic that she can relate to.</p>
<p><b>5.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> I.</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b>          “She prayed desperately for a way to enter; she prayed, although she had already been given the gift of flight, for superhuman powers with which she might mentally break the doors off their hinges, send the glass of windows to shattering. It wasn’t so much that she wanted to be with anyone in the house; it was the idea of being inside the house that moved her prayer, to desperation.” pg.31</p>	<p>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</p> <p>In this passage an old lady is trying to get into her locked childhood home during a dream of hers before she dies. Her desperate need to enter this home can be seen as a need to rekindle her youth and go back to how living instead of approaching death. She wishes for superhuman powers, which is another connection to the idea of miracle that Bouilly explores throughout her essay. With these powers she would be able to enter the house. The idea of breaking into her childhood could be interpreted as she doesn’t feel content with her life or as if there is something missing. The search for more meaning would be able to start in her childhood home, but unfortunately, she cannot enter it.</p>
<p><b>6.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> On the Care &amp; Repair of Books</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b>          “The scholars made notes to reread the works of the twice-dead poet, but of course, never came around to actually doing so. No one would ever understand the appearance of all the animals at the end of the famous poem or why the field butterflies behaved as they did, yet everyone would all say that they <i>understood</i>, that they understood completely and with textual references and secondary sources even.” pg.40</p>	<p>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</p> <p>In this passage Bouilly explains the lost poetry she notices when people don’t take the time to fully read and appreciate old works. She uses the term “twice-dead poet” because the first time they die is when they stop creating poetry and the second time they die is when they are actually dead. She goes on to explain that everyone claims that they understood the writing, when they really don’t. In this way she is criticizing the scholars that never reread the poems by saying they just accept what they initially feel or are told, without really taking the time to understand.</p>
<p><b>7.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> February Fooled the Forsythia</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b></p>	<p>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</p>

<p>“I thought, it would be best to leave you then, but for the insistent larks. One can certainly surmise how it was taken to be a representation of life. (November would be gone soon.) The woods, so thin, so scarce, and the unraveling of the maiden’s scarf, all point to the sparseness of the thin chimney plumes in the distance. Judging by the ice, so thinly conveyed, the couple-in another life, in another painting-would soon hear the thunderous splitting, the heaving of breaking apart.” pg.50</p>	<p>In this passage Bouilly again uses birds to create a metaphor and describe specific actions. When saying “insistent larks” she reveals fighting within a relationship. She also uses parentheses to explore the passage of time, saying November would be gone soon. She uses many different objects to describe the feeling of being in this relationship, but all of those objects are connected to specific seasons to show how as time passage, so does the quality of the connection between the two people.</p>
<p><b>8.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> Strange Mechanism for a Dream</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b>  “When a star “dies,” it still exists; it is only said to “die” because it no longer gives light. So too do I wonder about our living selves: do we begin then, sometime, much later, to give off light? The star still exists; some stars; such as quasars and pulsars, will continue to give off signals, such colossal amplitudes of last life, a life-line showing up on no screen, continuously beeping for a celestial doctor who does not come.” pg.51</p>	<p>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</p> <p>One thing I have begun to admire about Bouilly’s writing is her ability to take a very real topic and mix it with metaphors and an abstract idea, to create a successful lyrical essay. Here, she uses the idea of star death to explain a relationship to human personalities dying, while mixing in metaphors about a doctor and life-line. This makes the passage stand out and also provides a unique flow that keeps it interesting.</p>
<p><b>9.) Title of Lyrical Essay:</b> On the Reading Of</p> <p><b>Quoted passage (+pg. #):</b>  “I forget things. In reading, I tend to always forget the most important things. Greatest flaw: the want for things to turn out well <i>in the end</i>. And so, if <i>sinking stone</i> means <i>sinking stone</i>, then perhaps the heroine does not reach shore after all? (I saw the fluttering curtains, the movie projected onto what we thought, what we believed to be <i>sky</i>, not a screen.)” pg.53</p>	<p>Analysis / Commentary / Questions:</p> <p>In this passage Bouilly states that people want reading to end with a happy ending, and this is a reader’s greatest flaw. She explores the ideas of alternate endings that don’t always end happy using rhetorical questions such as, “then perhaps the heroine does not reach shore after all?” Again, in this passage we see Bouilly use parentheses when taking the context of reading and using a movie to describe it, and then taking it further and relating it to real life by saying it is projected into the sky.</p>