

- 1) The different chapters in this book are individual stories, each with its own structure. I think that 'A little Burst' was about Olive's relationship to her daughter-in-law all the way through. It seems to me that the structure of this chapter-story is different and that all the time it is moving towards the final page(s). I wonder if you agree?
- 2) This story is - obviously - about a piano player. She is called Angela O'Meara. There are five other men who play a part in this narrative.
Ignore this if you want to work it out for yourself :
Malcolm Moody with whom she has had a long relationship
Henry Kitteridge whom she likes and respects
Joe the bartender who seems to like her
Walter Dalton, an alcoholic who flirts with her and gives her presents
'A man in a dark coat' whose name is Simon with whom she had a relationship a long time ago.
- 3) (p. 57) Angie plays in a bar. Would you like to go there? (Why and why not.) The music is not 'background music' but 'a' character in the room.
Commodious - big and comfortable; sprawl - they are not together;
to accommodate o.s. - *u.a. sich anpassen*;
- 4) (p. 58) Angie is described physically and also from the point of view of people looking at her. 'Ease of a ballet dancer', 'kind wrinkles', 'simple expectancy no longer appropriate ...for her age' and much more.
What are you expecting of her (as a character)?
(selectman - *Stadtrat*)
- 5) (p. 58) This is US and not Germany. How do you as a reader react to the Christmas tree?
- 6) (pp. 58ff) Angie's daily routine. Does anything surprise you? Do you think you'll like Joe?
- 7) (p. 60) Do you know of other concert musicians who suffer(ed) from serious stage fright? (*Lampenfieber*)
- 8) 'My hands are hungry' - what does this mean to you?
- 9) (p. 61) Do you think Olive doesn't want to go inside? (I'm not sure what she means.) Can you understand why Angie wants to play Henry's favourite tune?
Off kilter - not balanced.

- 45 10. (p. 62) I wonder what it means to refer to a man as a fairy? (I don't know tho I suspect it mean homosexual)
11. 'Pathetic' tends to mean 'weak, stupid, foolish'. (Later cf p. 72)
(We'll look at the grammar of 'to have people called'.)
Do you remember ever thinking that other people were 'pathetic'?
- 50 12. Nameless man number 5 enters.
Sink....duck - to draw in your head; jog - shake, jolt (*rütteln*)
13. p. 63 Irish coffee = with (a lot of) whisky in it
55 Angie thinks about her mother. What are the bruises? (*blauer Fleck*)
14. The song is by Simon and Garfunkel and even I know the text. When you're weary,
feeling small When tears are in your eyes, I'll dry them all (all) I'm on your side, oh, when
times get rough And friends just can't be found Like a bridge over troubled water I will lay me
60 down . Why does she continue to play Christmas tunes and not play this request, do
you think?
15. How do you understand Angie's feeling of being 'inside' the music that she is
playing, or not inside it? (Through to the bottom of p.63 : 'Get inside' she thought)
- 65 16. Page 61 (middle) 'Tonight Angela was shaky'. Page 62 (bottom) : But she was
shaky tonight. Page 63: (bottom) 'But she was very shaky'.
Page 63: Perhaps we as readers need to follow what Angela does carefully : 'Caught
the motion....'; 'She did not look...'; 'His name.....'. ('smiling her smile' p. 63)
70 'Fall on your knees....But it was like she had fallen....'.
- (The 'watery terror' reminds me of Olive. Where has her mother suddenly come
from? Two references on one page.)
- 75 17. Page 64: So a man who used to be a piano player comes into the bar where she
is playing and she phones her lover to tell him their relationship is finished?
18. Twenty-two years ago from May 2025 is May 2003. How long is that ago for you
or me?
80 '*For Angie time was as big and round as the sky, and to try to make sense of it was
like trying to make sense of music and God and why the ocean was deep. Long ago
Angie had known not to try to make sense of these things....*'.
19. She smiles at the Christmas tree and later imagines it 'perched sideways on the
85 snow.....'. (Normally birds 'perch')
'We shall overcome' - an important song in the civil rights movement.

20. p. 66 Summary of a dream relationship?
(Her mother had taken money from men = prostitution)
- 90 21. p. 67 Do you have any memories of several people with identical clothes like these three blue sweaters?
22. Angie had never had piano lessons (p. 60) and her mother does not allow her to go to music school. How does that affect the reader's picture of her? (What does
95 Angie know she will miss out on?)
23. Page 68. Strout gives us a certain picture of Simon through Angie's thoughts - his playing (p. 66); his breaking of the relationship; his past kind words; ...
- 100 24. At the bottom of page 68 we are told how Angie solves her problems : 'Eventually the feeling went away because others came along'...piece of tinsel (*Lametta*)... How do you react to this?
- 105 25. I like the image of Angie reaching her fingers deeply into the music like making a sculpture (or a cake). There is a real crisis point and then suddenly 'She had quite a headache' - so banal.
26. Page 70: The value of pity?
'She smiled straight ahead of her...she was inside the music....'
- 110 27. Page 71: 'Thin milk, this form of nourishment....'
28. Her mother taught her very practical things.
- p. 72 cunt = *Fotze*; stairwell = *Treppenhaus*
(It's not my style is a phrase)
- 115 p. 73 to pinch : *kneifen*; to figure something out - to come to understand something; slack - *locker*; lose, lost, lost = *verlieren*; loose - *locker, auch lose*
- 120 So we'll see at the end how you judge the structure of the story, not to mention what you think it is telling us.
- I wonder what you would write in a summary of the story in 100 - 200 words? (And definitely not more than 500. That makes it too easy.) By the way, a perfect summary does not use any of the words in the text. E.g. 'This chapter is about a
125 musician who...'