

SYNOPSIS

The Hours is a smart and moving novel written by Michael Cunningham. It tells about the life of three women in one day. It firstly presents the life of Virginia Woolf, who begins to write her novel entitled *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1923. The second woman is Laura Brown, an American housewife living in Los Angeles in 1950, while the third is Clarissa Vaughan, a lesbian editor who lives in New York in the late of 20th centuries.

The story begins with the prologue part on the suicide of Virginia Woolf. She leaves the “good bye” letter for her husband, then she walks to the river near her house. She picks a large stones and puts them inside her pocket, and starts drowning herself into the water. The next chapter of the novel presents Clarissa Vaughan as she walks from her apartment to buy flowers. She is going to host a celebration party for her friend Richard, a poet and novelist who got Carrouters Prize, a literary award for his lifetime works. Then the story moves to Laura Brown who is lying in her bed reading Virginia Woolf’s novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*. She does not have any willingness to go downstairs to greet or prepare breakfast for her husband and son.

Later, the story of Clarissa continues again with her thought of her life as she walks on the street. She also visits Richard in his apartment and checks his condition: the things she keeps doing ever since Richard suffered from AIDS and starts dying. When she gets back to her apartment, Clarissa thinks about her relationship with her lover, Sally. She reflects on how she enjoys living with her for the past fifteen years. Clarissa also has a daughter named Julia. Clarissa does

not like Julia's friendship with a lesbian activist named Mary Krull, who has influenced Julia to shave her head and make her wear combat boots. At that very time, Clarissa begins to think and ponder about those details in her life, all the happy and bitter moments she has throughout her life.

As for Virginia Woolf, she feels desperate because her heavy headache keeps coming and going every so often. Because of her poor health, her husband Leonard decides to move her from London to Richmond, even though Virginia much prefers to live in London. Virginia drowns herself in the writing process of her novel. She deeply thinks about Clarissa Dalloway, the character she creates as the main character in her novel entitled *Mrs. Dalloway*. Virginia is confused to decide whether Clarissa will be in love with a woman and whether she will end her own life. Virginia begins to worry about her creative process. She also feels the sense of anxiety for lacking of capability in managing her domestic affairs or house chores. She sometimes feels envy with her servant, Nelly, as well as her sister, Vanessa, and her mother. It is because those women are the type of "real" women who are able to manage their house chores competently, and they have children to prove their femininity and motherhood.

The story moves into the life of Laura Brown as she continues baking a birthday cake for her husband, Dan. She makes the cake with her son, Richie. Laura wants her cake to be perfect, but it seems that the cake tends to be "not good" as she hoped. Upon feeling disappointment and anger, she throws her cake into a trash bin and bakes another cake. Later, Laura drives alone and goes to a hotel to find a place to continue reading *Mrs. Dalloway*. In her reflection as she is alone, she gets the idea of trying for a suicide.

The Hours ends with a sad yet hopeful point, particularly on Clarissa's part as she is feeling shock due to Richard's sudden death. Richard jumped from his apartment window and died. After the burial, Clarissa, Sally and Julia gather at Clarissa's apartment. Out of sudden, a woman makes a visit to Clarissa's apartment. It turns out that she is Laura Brown, Richard's mother. Laura tells Clarissa about her life story. She was the one who left her family to Canada and led her own solitary life as a librarian. She left a big hole in Richard's life, who kept missing her the whole time of his life. Laura also tells Clarissa how she feels to see the closest persons in her life die before her. It was Laura who wanted to end her life, yet she seems to have always survived from death. The arrival of Laura in the end of the story makes clear the link between the three main female characters in the novel, which are Virginia Woolf (as the woman writing the story), Laura Brown (the woman reading the story), and Clarissa Vaughan (the woman living the story).