

# #1 Book Summary: The Five People You Meet In Heaven, by Mitch Albom

by Allen Cheng

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## 1-Page Summary of The Five People You Meet In Heaven

### Overall Summary

The novel begins with a countdown to the death of Eddie, who works at Ruby Pier and has always wanted to leave. The story is told in flashbacks, as people remember what happened when he saved a little girl from falling off a ride called "Freddy's Free Fall."

Eddie goes to heaven, where he travels through many shifting colors until he meets the Blue Man. The Blue Man was a circus freak at Ruby Pier who turned blue from silver nitrate and had a lonely life because of Eddie. When Eddie was young, he ran into the street after a ball and caused the death of the Blue Man when he swerved his car to avoid hitting him. The lesson is that all lives are connected—even those of strangers.

Eddie travels through the colors again and ends up in a jungle setting. There, he meets the Captain. The novel flashes back to Eddie's youth when he decides to enlist in World War II to prove his bravery. He is stationed in the Philippines, taken captive by enemies, and eventually escapes with his fellow soldiers. While burning down a village during their escape attempt, Eddie thinks that he sees someone moving inside one of the huts. He tries to save them but is shot in the leg and knocked unconscious for several months before returning home permanently crippled and bitter at war's sacrifice on people's lives. In

heaven, it was revealed that it was actually an enemy soldier who shot him while trying to get out of a fire started by Eddie's unit as they escaped from captivity; this man also died during their escape attempt. The Captain teaches him that sacrifice is vital to life and should be sought after rather than lamented over because it brings meaning into our lives—especially if we are sacrificing ourselves for others.

Eddie travels again and sees his father in a diner. He flashes back to his childhood, where he was trying to win the love of his abusive father. Eddie's mother was raped by Mickey Shea, who died saving Eddie's dad from drowning in an ocean storm. Ruby explains that forgiveness is important because it frees you from anger and allows you to move on with your life.

Eddie finds himself in a world of weddings. He sees his wife, Marguerite, and they get married again. They have a happy life together until Eddie ruins it by gambling away their money on his birthday party. Marguerite forgives him and dies shortly afterward from a brain tumor. Eddie is left feeling empty without her because she was the source of all his happiness in life and gave him strength to fight through the darkness that consumed him after World War I. In heaven, Marguerite spends time with Eddie teaching him that love transcends death.

Eddie's life is uneventful and lonely. He spends his last years missing Marguerite, a woman he loved who died. Eddie regrets that he never left Ruby Pier to make a life for himself elsewhere.

In heaven, Eddie meets a girl named Tala. She was killed during the war and reveals that she was the small shadow that Eddie saw in the flaming hut. This revelation causes him to feel even more despair for what he did during the war. But then Tala explains that Eddie redeemed himself by keeping children safe through his job at Ruby Pier, which helped him find peace. He travels around heaven until he reaches a Ferris wheel where Marguerite awaits him.

## **Chapter 1**

The novel opens with the death of Eddie, a maintenance worker at Ruby Pier. It is an ordinary day, and he goes about his usual routine as he does every day. He takes two boys on a ride to make sure it works properly. The story flashes back to when Eddie was a kid and fought for his brother Joe's honor by fighting another boy who bullied him. Back in the present, Eddie feels that he has lost some of his strength from those days long ago but still manages to get through each day the same way he always did—by taking care of things around Ruby Pier like everyone else does there.

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