



Across

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Characters Discussed

Andreas Loser, a teacher of ancient languages at a high school in a suburb of Salzburg, Austria, and an amateur archaeologist who specializes in the excavation of doorways and entryways. He is in early middle age, recently separated from his wife and two children, and on a leave of absence from his teaching post. Loser is a highly introspective man in the middle of a life crisis, searching for a meaning to his existence. He is plagued by the feeling that he is merely an observer of life, rather than a participant. Near the beginning of the novel, he deliberately knocks down a man walking in Salzburg, and this act serves to bring his situation to full awareness. He is concerned intensely with nature and the simple objects around him. Later in the novel, his desire to participate in life emerges, again in the form of a violent act. While walking at night over Monchberg Mountain to play cards with several friends, he sees an old man who is spray painting swastikas on the trees and rocks. He mortally wounds the man with a rock and pushes him over the side of the cliff. Loser feels that, for once in his life, he has acted decisively and experiences no remorse for his act of murder. The next day, he contemplates death and his estrangement from life. At the end of the work, he wanders around the Salzburg area and then travels to Italy to visit the bucolic landscapes portrayed by his favorite writer, the ancient Roman poet Vergil.

The old man, whose identity is unknown. He probably is a neofascist and is approximately in his late sixties. His act of defacing nature by spray painting swastikas on the mountainside prompts the narrator's violent response.

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