

# Fun Home Allusions Cheat Sheet

## Chapter 1

- Old Father, Old Artificer (title page of Chapter 1): The title of this chapter is from James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in which the protagonist is named Stephen Dedalus, itself an allusion to the famous myth of Icarus and Daedalus.
- Icarus (page 4): Son of Daedalus, he flew too close to the sun on waxen wings and fell into the sea.
- Daedalus (page 6): A genius inventor and father of Icarus, he built the labyrinth on the island of Crete, where the Minotaur was imprisoned. He is also famous for crafting wings of wax and feathers for himself and his son Icarus, enabling them to escape Crete by flight.
- "My father could spin garbage into gold" (page 6): A line echoing the fairy tale story of "Rumpelstiltskin," in which a villain granted a poor family the power to spin gold from straw—at a price.
- Jimmy Stewart (page 10): In the 1946 film *It's a Wonderful Life*, Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed fix up an old house.
- Minotaur (page 12): Half-man, half-bull monster at the heart of the labyrinth built by Daedalus.
- *Just So Stories* (page 21): At bedtime, Bruce is seen reading "How The Elephant Got His Trunk," a story by Rudyard Kipling, to Alison.

## Chapter 2

- A Happy Death (page 26): The title of this chapter is from Albert Camus' novel of the same name.
- Albert Camus (page 27): A French writer and philosopher associated with absurdism.
- *Remembrance of Things Past* (page 28): a novel by French author Marcel Proust that explores themes related to memory, the passage of time, love, and art. Its title was later translated to *In Search of Lost Time*.
- The Addams Family (page 34): Created by American cartoonist Charles Addams, *The Addams Family* is about an old-money family that delights in anything disturbing, grotesque, and related to death.
- "And here the story reached its bizarre, Grimmsian climax" (page 42): A reference to the Grimm fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel" about twins who were abandoned in the woods by their impoverished parents and almost cooked in an oven by an evil witch.

## Chapter 3

- F. Scott Fitzgerald (page 62): an American novelist, essayist, and short story writer best known for his novel *The Great Gatsby*. He was married to Zelda Fitzgerald, whom he courted while he was in the army.
- *The Great Gatsby* (page 62): A 1925 novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald about Jay Gatsby, a mysterious millionaire who carefully creates a false persona to win over his former lover, Daisy.
- Henry James (page 66): A 19th-century American-British author best known for his novels that depict social and marital interactions between Americans and Europeans.
- *Washington Square* (page 66): An 1880 novel by Henry James about a father who attempts to put a stop to a romance between his daughter, Catherine Sloper, and her suitor, Morris Townsend, who he believes wants to marry her for her money.
- *The Taming of the Shrew* (page 69): A comedic play by William Shakespeare about the courtship of the strong-willed Katherine by the domineering Petruchio, who wishes to "tame" her into a compliant wife.
- *The Portrait of a Lady*/Isabel Archer (page 71): An 1881 novel by Henry James about Isabel Archer, a spirited young American woman who travels to Europe seeking freedom and self-fulfillment but finds herself trapped in an oppressive marriage.
- "Sunday Morning" by Wallace Stevens (pages 82–83): A poem published in 1915 about a woman who contemplates the need for religion while enjoying a quiet Sunday at home, ultimately finding divinity in the natural world rather than in traditional faith.

## Chapter 4

- Marcel Proust (pages 92–94, 119): The title of Chapter 4, "In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower," comes from the second volume of Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time* (originally titled *Remembrance of Things Past*). Bechdel also references *Swann's Way*, the first volume, whose narrator enjoyed a communion with the flowers of his garden. Proust was gay and fell in love with his chauffeur, Albert.
- The Stonewall Inn (page 104): A gay bar and National Historic Landmark that is famous for the site of the 1969 riots that launched the gay rights movement.
- The Village (page 107): An area of Manhattan, New York, famous for being a gay refuge in the 1980s.

## Chapter 5

- *The Wind in the Willows* (page 130): A children's novel by the British novelist Kenneth Grahame, first published in 1908. It is the story of the characters Mole, Ratty, and Badger as they try to help Mr. Toad after he gets into trouble because of his obsession with motorcars.

- Dr. Spock (page 138): An American pediatrician whose book *Baby and Childcare* (1946) is one of the best-selling books of the 20th century. Dr Spock was widely regarded as a trusted source for parenting advice, encouraging parents to be more flexible and affectionate with their children and to treat them as individuals.

## Chapter 6

- Watergate scandal (pages 154, 172): A major political scandal in the United States, primarily concerning the break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate complex in 1972, and the subsequent cover-up efforts by the Nixon administration. The scandal led to President Nixon's resignation in 1974.
- *The Importance of Being Earnest* (pages 154, 164–166, 168): A play by Oscar Wilde in which two characters create fictional identities and lead double lives in order to escape unwanted social obligations.
- *The Ideal Husband*: A play by Oscar Wilde about a woman who believes her husband is virtuous until she finds out a scandalous secret about his past.

## Chapter 7

- *A Chorus Line* (page 191): A 1975 musical by Michael Bennet about seventeen Broadway dancers auditioning for spots on a chorus line. The musical describes the events that have shaped the dancers' lives and their decisions to become dancers.
- *The Catcher in the Rye* (page 198): A 1951 coming-of-age novel by J. D. Salinger about a disillusioned teenager recently expelled from prep school who grapples with alienation, the death of his younger brother, and a longing to protect innocence, particularly in children.
- *The Sun Also Rises* (pages 220–221): A 1926 novel by Ernest Hemingway that follows a group of expatriate Americans and British in post-WWI Paris and Spain, exploring themes of disillusionment, masculinity, and the search for meaning in a meaningless world.
- *Ulysses* (pages 201–202, 204, 206–211, 221–222, 226, 228–231): A 1922 novel by James Joyce about Leopold Bloom, who wanders around Dublin on a June day, enacting a personal mythology that parallels Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. Bloom represents Odysseus, and Stephen Dedalus represents Telemachus, Odysseus's son.
- *The Odyssey* (pages 203, 213–216, 221): An Ancient Greek epic poem by Homer that tells the story of Odysseus, king of Ithaca, who wanders for ten years trying to get home after the Trojan War. During Odysseus' extended absence, he is assumed dead, leaving his wife Penelope and their son Telemachus to deal with a disruptive group of suitors vying to marry Penelope.
- *Earthy Paradise* (pages 205, 207–208, 220, 229): A 1966 French autobiography by Colette, a bisexual writer.
- *Flying* (pages 217–218, 219, 224): A 1974 autobiography by Kate Millett about coming out.