

Chapter Twelve

In "If These Wings Could Fly," Chapter Twelve begins with a reflection on the structure of writing, particularly the importance of a thesis statement. The narrator appreciates the logic and order that a thesis provides, insisting that each subsequent word must bolster the claim. In contrast, the narrator struggles with poetry, feeling that it resists the confines of rules. The narrator's mother finds beauty in poetry's freeform style, often creating sentence fragments that eschew conventional grammar. Mom's own thesis statement, "My life has meaning because he is in it," governs her actions, as she seeks validation through her relationship with a significant figure in her life.

In a pointed declaration, the narrator emphasizes a commitment to journalism, underscored by a dedication to truth, proper structure, and factual integrity. Unlike the abstract vagueness of emotional expression, the narrator is staunchly focused on clarity and method. However, as the narrator prepares to write a literature paper for class, a personal realization strikes: instead of starting with a thesis for the assignment, they set a personal goal instead: "I will leave Auburn and go to college." This declaration marks a pivotal shift in the narrator's perspective. It crystallizes their ambition and serves as a foundation for all their plans and efforts moving forward.

By this point, the narrator is no longer only engaged with the academic tasks at hand but is actively framing their future aspirations. Just as the mother's life is driven by her emotional thesis, the narrator's determination to leave Auburn now shapes their priorities and pursuits, motivating them to excel academically, notably by crafting a compelling essay for the Auburn scholarship contest. This moment reveals a critical moment of personal growth, emphasizing themes of ambition, identity, and the intersection of personal aspirations with familial influences.