

## *The Bell Jar* – Chapter 3

Again Buddy and her home town prove to be a weak reference for what New York offers: “Before I came to New York I’d never eaten out in a proper restaurant. I don’t count Howard Johnson’s, where I only had French fries and cheeseburgers and vanilla frappes with people like Buddy Willard.” (22)

She enjoys eating: “I love food more than just about anything else.” (22) Everybody is trying to reduce but Esther eats as much as she can. She never puts on weight.

The richness of the meal contrasts with what she has experienced at home: “my grandmother always cooked economy joints and economy meat-loafs.” (24)

Esther carefully observes the people around her: “I’d discovered [...] if you do something incorrect at table with a certain arrogance, [...] you can get away with it [...]. They will think you are original and witty.” (25)

Whereas other people are very self-assured Esther feels she “couldn’t hide the truth much longer. After nineteen years of running after good marks and prizes and grants of one sort and another, I was letting up, slowing down, dropping clean out of the race.” (27)

Jay Cee seems to know that Esther doesn’t feel the same way as the other girls do: “Doesn’t your work interest you, Esther?” (29) she wonders.

Esther looks back at all she has reached at college but still feels very empty. When Jay Cee asks her what she would like to do after her graduation she says “I don’t really know” (30) and feels shocked about her own answer and the truth in it. Jay Cee warns her that she will “never get anywhere like that.” (30) Jay Cee wants her to study languages.

At school Esther managed to accomplish anything. Even in physics and chemistry, subjects she has never liked, she gets straight A’s. She succeeds in persuading Mr Manzi to be exempted from chemistry exams.