The Accidental Tourist

Before Reading

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES (PAGE 93)

ACTIVITY 1 BEFORE READING
1 Rose 5 Julian
2 Edward 6 Muriel
3 Sarah 7 Macon
4 Charles and Porter 8 Ethan

ACTIVITY 2 BEFORE READING
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that the answers are 2, 3, and 5.

While Reading

CHAPTERS 1 AND 2 WHILE READING
Suggested additional answers.
1 Sarah. She married Macon when they were both very young, but she no longer finds him mysterious. She has become tired of Macon’s systems.
2 Rose. She has always cared for someone in the family, and has never had a job outside the home.
3 Edward. He once bit someone on the ankle, and is scared of strange noises in the basement.
4 Julian. He is Macon’s boss, and is younger than Macon.
5 Muriel. She is helpful and quick to make contact with people.

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 3
Encourage discussion and speculation. Do not tell students the answer to question 2 (which is ‘Rose’).

CHAPTERS 3 TO 5 WHILE READING
Encourage discussion. Possible answers:
1 Further apart. Macon’s dinner with Sarah shows that she is not intending to come back to him.
2 Closer together. In spite of the argument about Edward, when the training lessons begin again, Macon kisses Muriel, and feels differently towards her because he knows now she has a son.
3 Closer together. Rose and Julian are slowly and shyly getting to know each other.
4 Further apart. Rose’s relationship with Julian is becoming more important to her than her brothers.

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 6
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that the answer is number 4.

CHAPTERS 6 TO 9 WHILE READING
Suggested answers:
1 Macon talking to Muriel, after he has tried to leave a note giving his excuse for not coming to dinner with her. It shows how lonely and isolated Macon feels.
2 Macon talking to Julian, having just seen the ring Julian intends to give Rose when he asks her to marry him. Macon’s surprise is probably because he is not used to thinking of Rose as a person in her own right.
3 Macon talking to Muriel, about teaching Alexander to fix a faucet. It shows Macon’s interest in practical things, and perhaps also his instinct as a father to teach skills to a son – something he might once have done with Ethan.
4 Macon thinking about Alexander, who has just put his hand into Macon’s after an unpleasant experience he had with some nasty children in the street. This little sign of trust and dependence shows what an anxious, worried kind of person Macon is; he now feels he must worry about all the things and events that might affect Alexander as he grows up.
5 Muriel talking on the phone to her mother about Alexander. It shows that the relationship between Muriel and her mother is not very good, and Muriel’s mother shows little interest in her grandson’s poor health.
6 Muriel talking to Macon, after Christmas dinner with Muriel’s family, when her mother made tactless and critical remarks about Muriel’s failure to find herself a husband. It shows Muriel’s anxiety about the effect these remarks had on Macon, her uncertainty about Macon’s feelings for her, and her need for reassurance.
7 Muriel talking on the phone to her sister Claire, who has been having trouble with her parents. This shows Muriel’s fighting spirit in that she is encouraging her sister to be free and independent, and to pay no attention to parental controls.

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 10
Encourage discussion of the choices open to Macon, and which choice it would be best for him to make.
ACTIVITIES ANSWERS

CHAPTERS 10 AND 11  WHILE READING

Suggested answers:

1 Macon doesn’t like change, and always wants things to stay as they are. He is afraid of getting too involved with Muriel, and gives this general reason for not wanting to marry Muriel.

2 Muriel is worried that Macon might leave her, because this has happened to her before. She does not have much self-confidence, and needs reassurance.

3 Rose is showing the Leary habit of getting lost even in their own neighborhood; or perhaps she is using this as an excuse for leaving her new husband and returning to the family home to look after her brothers, a habit she cannot seem to break.

4 Macon cannot stop worrying. Even though he has just walked out on Muriel, he is so anxious about Alexander’s bee allergy that he phones Muriel to remind her, without really understanding what effect his phone call will have on Muriel.

5 Sarah has returned to criticizing Macon, in the way she used to do before they separated.

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 12

Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that the answers are 2 and 4.

After Reading

ACTIVITY 1  AFTER READING

1 This is Muriel (page 51), on Christmas Day at her parents’ house. She is angry with her mother, who has just been talking to Macon about Muriel’s past love affairs.

2 This is Julian (page 40), spending Thanksgiving Day with Rose and her family. Rose has just run out of the room in tears after her brothers expressed their doubts about eating her undercooked turkey. Julian decides to eat the turkey to show his love for Rose.

3 This is Alexander (page 69). Macon has just received a calendar from Muriel marked with their future wedding day. Macon says he doesn’t want to get married, and Muriel shouts at him for being selfish.

4 This is Charles (page 57). He and Macon are driving away from Macon’s old house after visiting it to see the water damage. Charles was shocked by the condition of the house, and alarmed by the way Macon has changed.

5 This is Sarah (page 64). She has just seen Macon again at Rose’s wedding, and met Muriel. She feels she is a better partner for Macon than Muriel, and is now wondering whether she really does want to divorce Macon after all.

6 This is Macon in Paris (page 84). He has already spent two evenings with Muriel and is getting close to her again, although he is trying hard not to. He has just decided to take her with him on a day trip, and is about to call her room when his back goes out.

ACTIVITY 2  AFTER READING

Acceptable answers to these cloze passages are any words that have an appropriate meaning and fit the structure of the sentence. Students might like to check each other’s work and discuss alternative answers. Some alternatives are given below.

1 Charles talking to Rose about Muriel

She’s just not the right woman for him. She’s not even pretty, and her clothes are awful. And you should see her house! It’s so untidy, and people (friends, neighbors) just walk in and out when they like. And she doesn’t speak proper English either. I just do not understand why he is ruining his life for her.

2 Alexander talking to Claire about Macon

He’s okay. I didn’t like him when he first came. He kept trying to teach me things and make me learn (do, try) things. But then he brought Edward, who is wonderful! And he stops Mom worrying (fussing) about me so much – I can eat all kinds of food now.

3 Julian talking to Rose about Muriel

I’ve met her at last! She’s very (really) lively – always doing things, talking to people. I think she’s just what Macon needs (needed). He’s more relaxed around her; he’s not so worried about all his little systems working properly. She wears strange clothes, but (yet) somehow they suit her. It’s as if (though) he’s not an accidental tourist in his own life any more.

4 Claire talking to her mother about Macon

Leave him alone! He’s a nice man (guy), but you might scare him away if you’re not careful. He’s got a good (well-paid) job, he’s fantastic at fixing things in (around) the house, and he makes Muriel happy. Okay, he hasn’t got divorced yet, but so what? The two of them will (can) work things out in their own way (time).

ACTIVITY 3  AFTER READING

Encourage discussion. Students might well have different ideas about Macon. Some suggested answers:

1 Logical, but also rather thoughtless, as the remark appears unfeeling and unsympathetic, which Macon probably didn’t intend.

2 Afraid of being hurt, cautious, unwilling to take risks.

3 Kind, concerned for other people, but also thoughtless and not very sensible, in that Macon has failed to think his idea through and see how Muriel will look at it.

4 Sensible, thoughtful, concerned for other people.

Although Macon is confused and uncertain himself at that moment, he tries to help Julian and in fact gives him excellent and very practical advice.

5 Cautious, boring, unadventurous, unwilling to take risks, but sensible if your only interest when travelling is to take care of yourself.

Changes in Macon by the end of the story:

Open answers.
ACTIVITY 4  AFTER READING
Open answers.

ACTIVITY 5  AFTER READING
Students may complete this dialogue how they like.
Possible answers:
SARAH: You said you had something to tell me, Rose. What is it?
ROSE: I think you ought to know that Macon is seeing another woman.
SARAH: Another woman? Oh. Who is she? How did he meet her?
ROSE: Her name’s Muriel Pritchett. She’s the woman who came to give training lessons to Edward.
SARAH: Yes, Macon mentioned those lessons. What’s she like?
ROSE: Well, she’s not at all pretty. She’s very thin, has frizzy black hair, and she wears some very strange clothes.
SARAH: And what do Charles and Porter think of her?
ROSE: Charles says she’s not Macon’s type of woman. And she can’t speak proper English, he says.
SARAH: In other words, none of you likes her. Is it serious, this relationship? How often does Macon see her?
ROSE: He’s moved into her house on Singleton Street, Sarah. He’s living with her. And there’s something else you ought to know too.
SARAH: Living with her? I see. And what’s this ‘something else’ I ought to know?
ROSE: This is going to be hard for you, Sarah. She’s got a son, a little boy called Alexander.
SARAH: A little boy? Oh my God.

ACTIVITY 6  AFTER READING
Open answers.