

# **Au Bonheur Des Dames = the Ladies' Delight Study Guide**

**Au Bonheur Des Dames = the Ladies' Delight by Émile Zola**

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# Objects/Places

## Au Bonheur des Dames

Au Bonheur des Dames is the small shop, which with Mouret's luck and business sense, grows to a giant department store that covers an entire city block. The store grows so large, it is like a small, self-contained city that includes not only the dozens of departments, but various other aspects of commodities, as well as living and dining spaces for the employees.

## Neighborhood Shops

There are several neighborhood shops in addition to those owned by Baudu, Bourras, and Robineau. Mademoiselle Tatin has a lingerie shop. Quinette is a glove-maker. Vanpouille are furriers. Bèdorè and Sister are hosiers. Deslignières is a fancy-goods dealer. Piot & Rivoire are furniture dealers. All of these neighborhood shops are bankrupt or nearly so by the growing beast of Au Bonheur des Dames.

## Cornailles

Cornailles is the top ladies' wear shop in Valgones, where Denise worked for two years before moving to Paris.

## Valgones

Valgones is the province from which Denise comes. It is very close to where Deloche has grown up as well.

## Au Vieil Elbeuf

Au Vieil Elbeuf is the flannel shop that Baudu owns. The original owner passes it to his top assistant, who also marries the owner's daughter. Baudu marries the second owner's daughter and inherits the shop as well. When Baudu becomes owner, the shop is very prosperous, but because of competition from Au Bonheur des Dames, he loses more business every year. Baudu does not want to pass the shop on to his assistant until it is doing well again.

## Paris-Bonheur

The Paris-Bonheur is a faille with a blue and silver selvage. Mouret obtains exclusive rights to the silk, then sells it at barely above cost to lure customers.



## Baccalauréat

Mouret and Vallagnosc discuss the uselessness of the baccalaureate. Mouret only took his to please his parents. He recognizes that it opens doors for a young man, but he argues that those doors are not worth opening. He compares the job that Vallagnosc got with his, to the type of money that some of his sales staff makes without the degree.

## Place Gaillon

Place Gaillon is the fountain square just outside Au Bonheur des Dames.

## Vans

Near the beginning of the novel, Mouret launches four vans to work for the dispatch office making deliveries. The green vans are polished and show the name of the shop on each side, with an advertisement for the sale. As the store grows, the number of carriages also expands, much to the displeasure of the other neighborhood shops.

## Bourras' House

Bourras lives in the house next door to Au Bonheur des Dames. The house is so old and in such poor repair, that it only seems to be staying up with the support of the surrounding buildings. Bourras has an umbrella shop and subleases the upper floors to tenants of questionable repute. As part of Bourras' attempt to compete with Au Bonheur des Dames, he makes repairs to the house, but in the end, the repairs are useless against the deterioration of the house.

## Hôtel Duvillard

The Hôtel Duvillard is the old hotel next to Bourras' house. When Mouret buys it, Bourras truly begins to feel the squeeze from Au Bonheur des Dames.

## Rue du Dix-Décembre

The Rue du Dix-Décembre is the new wide boulevard in the neighborhood. It opens up the old neighborhood to the new Paris, and provides a perfect opportunity for Mouret to expand Au Bonheur des Dames.

## Vinçard's/Robineau's shop

Vinçard owns a silk shop in the old neighborhood and, feeling the pressure from Au Bonheur des Dames, wants to get out. He sells to Robineau.



## **Bobbin Club**

The Bobbin Club is a club of the cotton-reelers, which meets at a wine merchant on Saturdays. The Au Bonheur des Dames salesmen have respect for this club, which is a symbol of the increased status of sales clerks.

## **Joinville**

Denise, Pauline, and Baugé take a Sunday trip to the suburbs in Joinville to enjoy the country air. They run into Hutin, who is trying to spend all his money from the week, Albert, who is consorting with more than one woman, and Deloche, who has walked there to save money.