

**Notes on
The Rector of Justin
Book Author: Louis Auchincloss
Notes Author: William Gasarch**

1 Overview

Justin Martyr is a Christian (Protestant) boy's school in New England. The novel takes place in roughly 1940-1946. The headmaster is Francis Prescott.

Every chapter of the book is a collection of Journal Entries (mostly from Brian Aspinwall), letters, and memoirs, or recollections, mostly about Dr. Prescott. We see how he ran the school, for better and worse, and later what happens when he retires. One of the points is how things have changed though that is probably not the main point.

2 Characters

1. Francis Prescott. He is the rector of Justin Martyr. Born in 1860 in America, he was educated in Oxford. He tried to set up a school in America modeled on Oxford, not quite realizing that British education was only for the wealthy and well connected, whereas in America we have the democratic ideal. His attitude on Religion is odd. It was not clear if he was a believer or just thought it was a good thing for the students. Pages 79-87 show him doubting his faith. He dies at the end of the book.
2. Brian Aspinwall. He is a teacher at Justin who is writing (or trying to write) a biography of Prescott. He is torn between making it inspirational, which would leave out some negative aspects, and being honest, which would include them. He is the unifying narrator. When Brian joins Justin in 1939, Prescott is already 80 years old. He fails at writing the biography, as have others before him.
3. Eliza Dean. Prescott's former fiancée (they broke up). They broke up since Prescott changed his mind from being a railroad-businessman to creating the school. The vision to do so came to him in a dream (Page

100). Horace talked her out of marrying Prescott and he was probably right.

4. Harriet Winslow. Prescott's wife. She is ill at the beginning of the book and passes away. They were married 60 years and produced 3 girls but she was always second to the school in importance.
5. David Griscam. An alumni and trustee who is a wall street lawyer. Prescott thinks of Justin as being more democratic and not-elitist compared to other schools, but the fact that alumni are high in society, like Griscam. contradicts that.
6. Horace Havistock. An old friend of Prescott who was in France but got out right before the war. He is began a book *The Art of Friendship*. In it he talks about Prescott saving him from being bullied at Oxford(?) since its only proper to bully freshman, not upper classman.

3 Selected Excerpts

Page 42 Prescott and Aspinwall see a snowball fight between the boys at Justin. Prescott says *You've got to let the boys be animals once in a while. Social life was more attractive when gentlemen defended thier honor with swords and not with lawsuits.*

He later clarifites that life was *more attractive* but not *better*. He also says that hazing (in England) forged great friendships.

He IS aware that this is problematic and involves a tradeoff.

Page 73 In Horace's book. Prescott objects to football being made more tame (touch football) since its meant to be violent.

Page 75 Horace says his bond with Prescott is like husband and wife but NOT in any sexual way- and that its bad that men can't be very good friends without people jumping to that conclusion.

Page 76 Frank thought that society had gone downhill after Lincoln, a great man, was assasiatned. So he had a *good old days* attitude in the late 1890's. Makes me thing that every generation has that.